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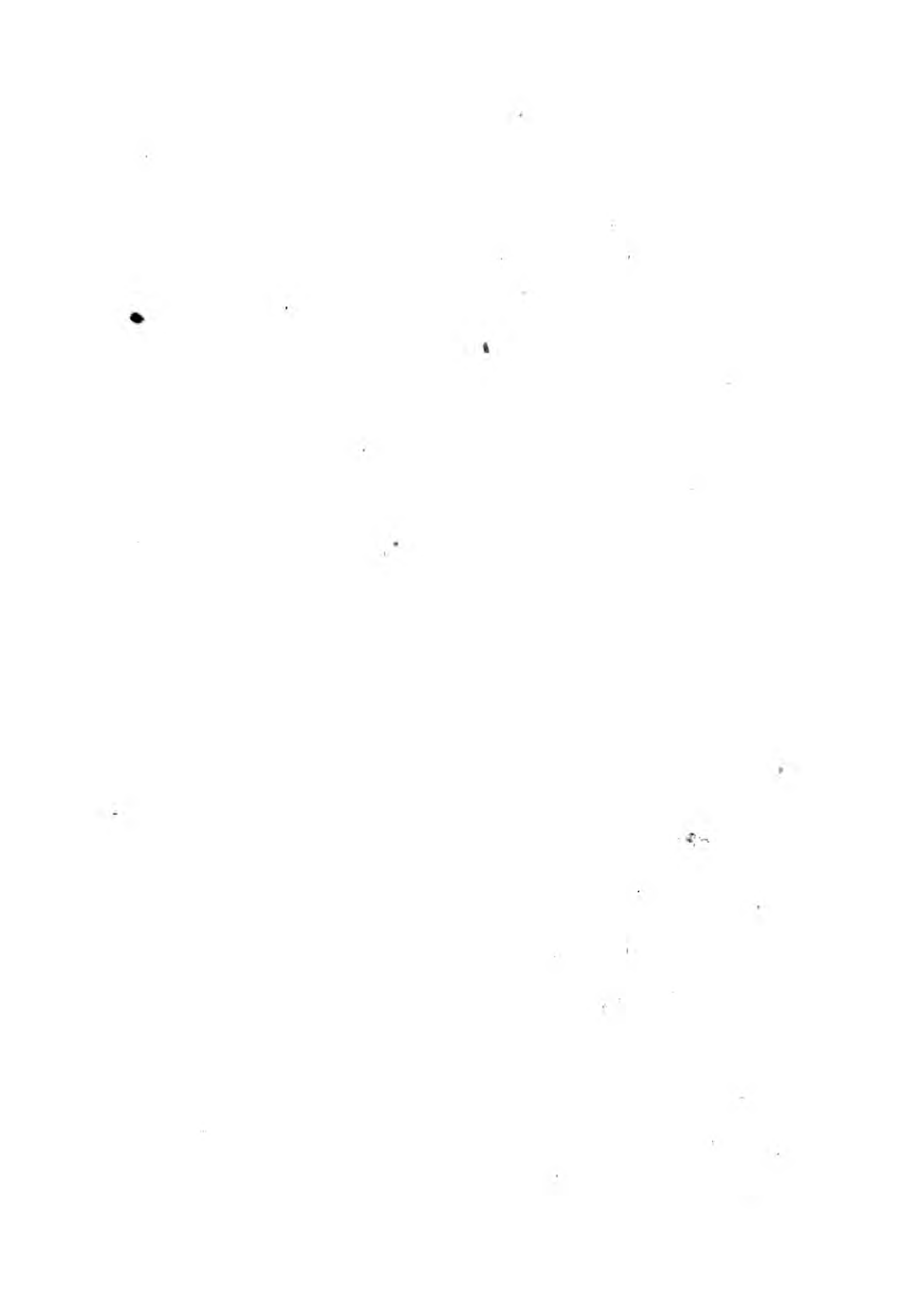


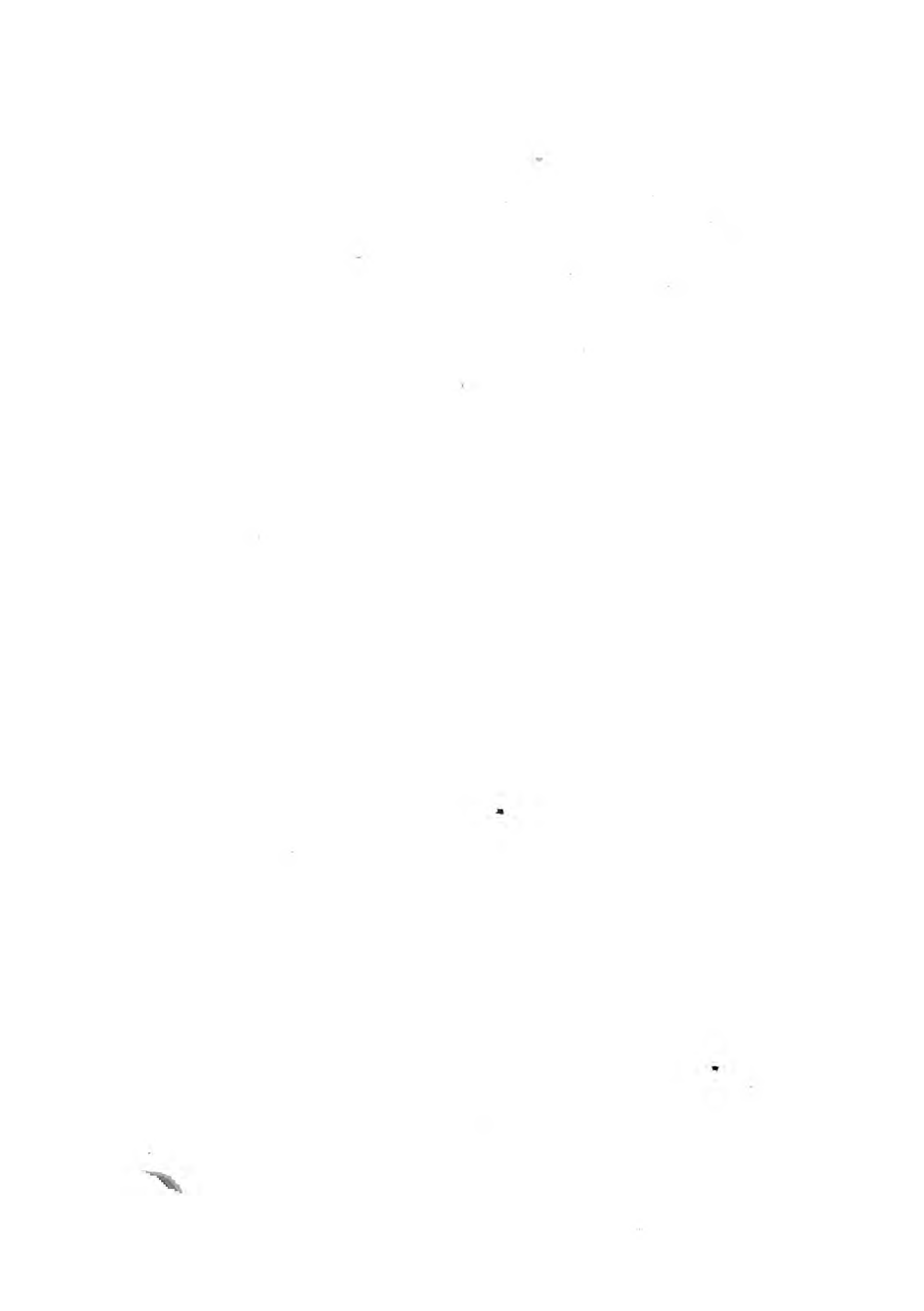


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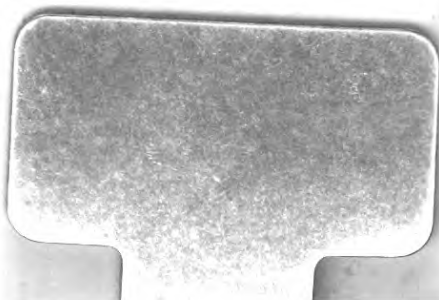
ON

REVEALED AND PROFANE THEOLOGY,

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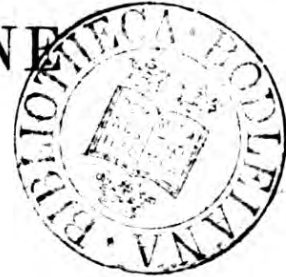
ON

REVEALED AND PROFANE THEOLOGY,

&c.

LONDON :
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REFLECTIONS
ON
REVEALED AND PROFANE
THEOLOGY,



39

ADDRESSED TO

THE RIGHT HON. LORD BROUGHAM;

CONTAINING

REMARKS ON THE SPIRIT AND TENDENCY OF HIS LORDSHIP'S
"DISCOURSE OF NATURAL THEOLOGY,"

AND

ON THE STUDY OF NATURE AS APPLIED TO THE KNOWLEDGE
OF GOD AND THE DESTINIES OF MANKIND.

"Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge."
Second Epistle of Peter, i. 5.

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as
the waters cover the sea."
Habakkuk, ii. 14.—Isaiah, xi. 9.

LONDON:

J. G. AND F. RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, AND WATERLOO PLACE, PALL MALL.

1836.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD BROUGHAM,

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

HOWEVER unworthy the following "Reflections" may appear of being laid before you, I yet venture to address them to Your Lordship, as your "Discourse of Natural Theology" was the original cause of their composition. With the utmost respect for Your Lordship's rank and genius, I must excuse myself from the repeated use of a ceremonious title, which, when writing, I passed over by choice, and when

publishing, by necessity: for I could not but feel, that the conventional forms of reverence were scarcely compatible with the nature of my work.

The critic will undoubtedly detect many imperfections in the following sketch, but he must not suppose that I was unconscious of the faults, which I was too often unable to correct.

I have the honour to remain,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's most humble and obedient servant,

THE AUTHOR.

REFLECTIONS

ON

REVEALED AND PROFANE THEOLOGY.

TO THE RT. HON. LORD BROUGHAM,

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

THE world has taught me to honour the extent and variety of your abilities, as well as the wisdom, zeal, and success, which have distinguished some of your exertions; but I sincerely lament to find my convictions strongly opposed to the spirit and tendency of one of your most important and maturest efforts. If I am in error, it will be enough for me to ground my excuse upon my deficiency of judgment; but if, on the contrary, I am not mistaken, the importance of the truths which I advocate will be more than sufficient justification for my having intruded on your notice.

It is no pleasing duty to inform you, and it can scarcely be gratifying to you to learn, that your full and free avowal of dependence on the Holy Scriptures comes almost too late for the benefit of many, who have

been led to attribute other sentiments to you. At your ripe age, when advancing towards the end of your public career, you declare your faith in the Book of Life and Immortality, it must, indeed, be painful to reflect, that your opinions on the subject of Revelation, have, till near the eleventh hour, been almost unknown and fruitless; or, I had well-nigh said, fruitful of evil. It is well, however, that the declaration is firmly advanced at the last, beyond the misinterpretation of those who might be glad to throw the lustre of your name over the darkness of their tenets. I truly regret that any should ever have supposed you a disregarder of evangelical truth; and I could wish that you may live long, fully to understand and rejoice in the knowledge of God's providence, as seen in the progress of Christianity; and that you may enjoy the delight of seeing your opinions and abilities co-operating with your prayers, when you say, "*Father,*" "*Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*"

We live in an age when Christianity (as was predicted) is taught and exemplified in all quarters of the world; and it is easy to prophesy, that, ere long, there will not be a city under heaven, in which some shall not be found by whom Gospel Truth is known and the Gospel Law obeyed. In the mean time, much remains to be done. A general intercourse and civilization, the schoolmaster and the missionary, with the Almighty's blessing, will continue to work success-

fully. Happy are they who, understanding the high worth of Christianity, can take any share, however slender, in its support and propagation; pitiable indeed are they who are ignorant of the blessing, and indifferent to its universal diffusion. But, how much more deplorable is the blindness of those who oppose themselves to that which has been long and variously foretold, which is manifestly approaching its accomplishment, which is man's only solid hope, and which is assuredly the will of God. Your elevated position seems to me greatly enviable, inasmuch as it makes it easy for you to watch the development of these great events, and, it may be, to aid them with counsel and power; at the same time, also, as it is impossible not to be sensible, that a lamentable want of knowledge and faith is daily to be met with at the threshold of our own doors, it is indisputably a laudable exertion to attempt to destroy the trust and confidence of the forward unbeliever; but, in putting forth a hand to so sacred a work, it is necessary to be very careful, lest the wisdom of man prove "*foolishness*"—lest the effort prove, not only vain, but pernicious.

I can understand that you find, as you profess, an unceasing and ever-growing delight in the knowledge of God, which you derive from the study of His works, and I am, I think, not unacquainted with the pleasure. Yet, it is my full belief, that this pleasure, so commonly gloried in by the disciples of Natural Theology,

belongs, when taken alone, only to the ignorant and the selfish,—to those who are *ignorant* of things vastly more important to them than multiplied earthly proofs of a few of the Divine attributes, and to those whose *selfishness* makes them forget not only their own real errors and wants, but also those of their fellow-creatures. I differ both with you and them in setting so much value on this thing of man's invention, in taking so much delight in a science, which is "*falsely so called*," in that it is exceedingly imperfect, unsettled, and erroneous; for, what are the inferences of human learning, if they do not teach us, that man is evil, as well as that God is good—that man must repent, as well as hope that God may be merciful? All this, and probably more, I believe to be within the proper scope of "Natural Religion," that is, within the reach of rational conviction; and argumentatively, though not originally, independent of Divine Revelation.

Possibly, without the aid of Revelation, no man would ever have gone much beyond the wisdom of Socrates, and few would have surpassed in virtue some of the worthier heroes of ancient Greece; but, to me, at least, it seems easy, by the aid of the Bible, even supposing it uninspired, to arrive at a *rational* certainty, not only of our moral duties, and many of the Divine attributes, but also of man's deep sinfulness, his need of penitence, and even, perhaps, of a Redeemer.

Doubtless, we agree in holding precious our own souls, and the souls of those dear to us, and we must be sensible that the soul of every man is scarcely less precious. I shall, however, adduce an opinion of one whom you praise highly, in order duly to set forth the serious estimation which I entertain of the subject before us: and proceed to shew that the study of Natural Theology is not to be made a matter of casual pleasure, and that we are not to institute a long and uncertain course of scientific induction, as the only or necessary means of approaching the wisdom of Holy Writ.

“Should I suggest in some companies, that the conversion of a hundred sinners to God, is an event of more real importance than the temporal prosperity of the greatest nation upon earth, I should be charged with ignorance and arrogance; but one soul is worth more than the whole world, on account of its redemption price, its vast capacities and its duration. Should we suppose a nation to consist of forty millions, the whole and each individual to enjoy as much good as this life can afford, without abatement, for a term of fifty years each; all this good, or an equal quantity, might be exhausted by a single person in two thousand millions of years; which would be but a moment, in comparison of the eternity which would still follow. And if this good were merely temporal good, the whole aggregate of it would be evil and misery, if compared with that happiness in God, of which only

they who are made partakers of a divine life are capable. On the other hand, were a whole nation destroyed by such accumulated miseries as attended the siege of Jerusalem, the sum total would be but trifling, if set in competition with what every person who dies in sin has to expect, when the sentence of everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power shall be executed.”*

Setting out with this penetrating reflection and with the assurance that you believe in the truth of the Bible, I propose to make some examination of the uses, tendencies, and imperfections of the modern Natural Theology; and, if it may be, to determine more accurately the objects and limits of the study.

The occasion does not seem to call for any exaggerated expression of my sentiments of respect for your high attainments; nor does the manner in which I venture to address you require any of those complimentary concessions with which it is sometimes thought necessary to introduce an opposition calculated to terminate less tranquilly. It will, I hope, content you to be regarded, according to your “Discourse,” as a true believer in the word of God, and I must presume to claim as much for myself. You cannot desire to be supposed above the capability of erring; and for me, I freely own a more than equal

* MS. quotation from Sir Isaac Newton.

liability. In the public opinion the outward advantages will be all your own. Men hold your character high ; your opinions, example, and influence may be said to spread far and wide ; one advantage I shall retain to myself,—to remain unknown. I have nothing to write that requires the sanction of a name or the responsibility of a man ; I have no name that can give force to an opinion, and I feel no responsibility, but for an honest investigation of the right, which is my foremost aim. With respect to the differences in our views, give me leave to observe, that, perfect truth will most probably be the reward of him who has the spirit to seek it most patiently and most impartially. It is right to acknowledge, that my mind may have been led to form some of the following conclusions, in consequence of remarking, among our countrymen of the present day, a too general inclination to dwell upon an imperfect Natural Theology. This opinion is, I perceive, opposed to one in the “Dedication” of the “Discourse,” but I am nowise disposed to retract it : I mean plainly, that instances of the Divine skill and benevolence may be heard adduced almost everywhere, while piety and the just fruits of such reflections are very rare. This kind of cold indifference is about equally erroneous with the scientific enthusiasm of many theologians, and it is perhaps still less hopeful. The only acceptable reverence to a sovereign must be paid in attentive and willing obedience ; that cannot

be called respect which can co-exist with lukewarm homage, not to say wilful rebellion.

My years oblige me to admit, that your experience among men must very far exceed mine; besides, the state of men's minds forms an enquiry which I should be willing here to leave undetermined, did not your own statements go to shew that men rather disregard than doubt the common Natural Theology,—that they are rather negligent than ignorant of it, as I believe, much to their blame and prejudice. You have “often” made the “observation”* “that scientific men were apt to regard the study of Natural Religion as little connected with philosophical pursuits. Many of the persons to whom you allude were men of religious habits of thinking; others were free from any disposition towards scepticism, rather because they had not much discussed the subject, than because they had formed fixed opinions upon it after enquiry. But the bulk of them relied little upon Natural Theology, which they seemed to regard as a speculation built rather on fancy than on argument; or, at any rate, as a kind of knowledge quite different from either physical or moral science.” A later remark of yours, which modifies the preceding one, seems to represent men as learned enough in the knowledge of Natural Theology, if they were but wise enough to profit by

* “Discourse,” p. 1.

their learning. "In truth, it is with Natural Religion as with many of the greatest blessings of our sublunary lot: they are so common, so habitually present to and enjoyed by us, that we become insensible of their value, and only estimate them aright when we lose them, or fancy them lost. Accustomed to handle the truths of Revelation in connexion with, and in addition to, those of Natural Theology, and never having experienced any state of mind in which we were without the latter, we forget how essential they are to the former. As we are wont to forget the existence of the air we constantly breathe, until put in mind of it by some violent change threatening suffocation, so it requires a violent fit of abstraction to figure to ourselves the state of our belief in Revelation, were the lights of natural religion withdrawn. The existence and attributes of a God are so familiarly proved by every thing around us, that we can hardly picture to ourselves the state of our belief in this great truth, if we only knew it by the testimony borne to miracles," &c.*

I coincide with you in the admission, that some Natural Theology is general in the world; and I sincerely desire that it were better.

My own opinion is, that in our own country, few men are wicked enough totally to deny the existence

* "Discourse," p. 211.

or goodness of God, and that most men grant in addition their own sinfulness. I hold, however, that the just and profitable conviction of these essential truths is very commonly defective, especially among men of science. I shall endeavour to apply my remarks, as comprehensively as may be, to those points in which the prevalent feeling is defective; and I shall not scruple to call directly on yourself, wherever I see fair reason to consider you opposed to the spirit of a better guide than the vaunted inductive philosophy.

It is not that I cannot take pleasure in the history of Nature, for I might even boast of having new things to offer in elucidation of the Divine contrivances; it is not from any disinclination to a reflective morality, for the knowledge derived from enquiry of this kind may be both profitable to the investigator, and available in his influence; nor, is it out of any disrespect for the speculative psychologist, to whom I own myself, and I believe the world, to be indebted; but, my objection is the following one, and heartily do I wish that all men, especially all thinking men, would well consider it.

My very grave objection is, that when the study of Nature, whether of matter, life, or mind, raises man to the contemplation of the Great Creator, however pure the sentiments of the creature may seem, however fine and exalted he may suppose them to be, he

is, nevertheless, in a miserable mistake: all his learning is in vain, until the knowledge of the Goodness and the Holiness of God convicts him of his own baseness in the sight of Him who is "*of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity.*"* He who has not learnt to feel and to lament his own sinfulness, must have but a very faint idea of the Divine perfections.

In your dexterous but heedless praise of Natural Theology, for the enjoyments† it affords, on account also of its being intimately connected with our "highest destinies,"‡ and "immediately and necessarily leading to the religious adoration of the Supreme Being,—can we doubt (you say)§ that the perpetually renewed proofs of his power, wisdom, and goodness, tend to fix and transport the mind, by the constant nourishment thus afforded to feelings of pure and rational devotion?" "The delight is renewed at each step of our progress, though, as far as evidence is concerned, we have long ago had proof enough. But that (you observe) is no more a reason for ceasing to contemplate the subject in its perpetually renovated and varied forms, than it would be a reason for resting satisfied with once seeing a long lost friend, that his existence had been sufficiently

* Habakkuk, i. 13.

† "Discourse," p. 187.

‡ "Discourse," p. 193.

§ Ibid. p. 195, 196.

proved by one interview.”* Now, without stopping to look too closely into this last simile, let us suppose it to be made by a hundred men of different characters, and then let us enquire if it would not be more becoming in *all* of them to pass on from the review of the Almighty perfections to the investigation of themselves? Or, is the point up to which you have brought the student the very final one of Natural Theology? What would even a mere rational religion suggest? Let the “long lost friend” be rather an absent father restored; would he not say, “My son, hast thou been mindful of me? Hast thou diligently endeavoured to learn and to do my will? And, hast thou been ever careful to teach and assist thy brother? Shew me in what thou art improved, and how thou hast benefited thy fellows. What is become of the talents I gave thee?”

The son who is perfectly satisfied with himself is not likely to entertain much true reverence even for his earthly parent;† while he that feels his father’s elevated worth, will be painfully affected with the recollection of his own errors, negligences, and disobedience. Let now the “long lost friend” be a once

* “Discourse,” p. 197.

† The thinking himself good is evidence that his moral standard is a low one. The more the goodness of the father exceeds that of the son, so much the more shameful is the son’s self-satisfaction. The clearer his knowledge of good things, the higher his standard of right, the more certain and forcible will be his consciousness of his own deficiency.

forgotten, still neglected God. Has a man no need of penitence who has not set God always before him? Does no part of the blame of ignorance or error belong to himself? Has he been negligent or scornful of learning, and doing, and teaching the will of the God of all goodness, and yet has he no need of repentance, good resolves, and prayers?

Man's sinfulness is, I think, the conclusion of the rational Religion of the Bible, and it is the end of the Natural Religion of all true Christians; it is also the stumbling-block of much intellectual pride, and a subject that many modern theologians seem surprisingly ignorant of, or disinclined to. I marvel not that the Apostle should have spoken of the "*oppositions of science falsely so called.*"* How erroneous are the inferences of science in its growth;—by one deficient fact, the finest train of reasoning is arrested or reversed; by one additional fact the whole view is changed. It is this imperfection of knowledge which is *falsely called science*, and well may we distrust it, well may we be commanded to avoid it. The truths are very simple, that God is good, and that man is sinful—even so ignorant of good, says the Christian, as often to think that he has no need for fear or repentance in the eyes of a righteous God. But "*the preaching of the Cross (of repentance) is to them that perish, foolishness; but unto them† which*

* 1 Tim. vi. 20.

† 1 Cor. i. 18.; 'them' is substituted for 'us,' as St. Paul writes.

are saved, it is the power of God;" surpassing all earthly power, to alarm, arrest and purify, to console, sustain and enlighten the spirit of man.

Solomon declared that "*the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord;*"* and the Son of God, who came, as you write, to bring "*life and immortality to light,*" first commanded "*all men everywhere to repent.*"† Now where would be the need of fear or repentance if man were not sinful, as we know he is? That man must have a very mean knowledge of what is excellent in the creation or the Creator, who thinks himself good, or even passably good; and meaner still must be the wisdom of him who thinks he has no occasion for repentance in the presence of God. Doubtless, the more men value what is good, the more they study it; and the more they learn, the more plainly they perceive themselves wanting. I speak of the Will of God for *good*. If, then, there be any need of repentance, it will not be easy to shew that the necessity ever ends; and it is pretty obvious that the end is not at the moment when the creature, who may, possibly, be immortal, has only just discovered from the motions of an insect, or demonstrated to his own satisfaction from the revolutions of the

* Prov. ix. 10. "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*"

† Acts, xvii. 30. "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*"

world, that there is a God of mighty benevolence and skill. Let us suppose that some are habituated to these reflections, and find a certain kind of pleasure in them, without having cultivated a sense of their own guilt and worthlessness along with their knowledge of the Divine attributes. Is it a time for weak and erring man, with the bare possibility of his own future existence before him, to exult in his knowledge? It were better to cherish the fear which is the forerunner of penitence. It cannot be beyond the pale of natural wisdom to know that God is good, and man evil. My judgment of the natural world has plainly shewn to me, that the thoughts of man's heart are "*only evil continually*,"* as well as, that the Divine goodness is an enduring mercy, scattering good things both on the unjust and on the just.

It is not to be imagined that Christians are averse to the simple spirit of Natural Theology; all men should know, and every Christian knows full well, that the efficacy of an arrangement shews the wisdom of the Maker; that the immensity of a design is proof of the Almighty sway; and, above all, that happiness being the result of a plan, is a sufficient testimony of the goodness of Him who arranged it. There is testimony enough on every point, and it does not seem that the limited and unsettled rules of modern science

* Gen. vi. 5.; and viii. 21.

render the evidence a whit more clear or forcible, although the variety of illustration be endless.

It is, indeed, a remarkable truth, that, whether we investigate the laws of physics,—the order of the heavenly bodies, the structure of the earth, or the mechanism of organized matter; whether we pursue the researches of Psychology through the instincts of animals to the mind of man, or even into surmises of the intelligence of the Creator; or whether we take up the arguments which the feeble labours of man have constructed concerning his moral relations; we are almost inevitably led to know our Maker as powerful, wise, and good, beyond the reach of human reason or imagination. We may be led also to think, that we have a soul responsible, eternal, and capable of pleasure or pain; to fear for the future, to know ourselves weak and sinful, to repent, and to resolve better, to hope that penitence may partly expiate the past, and that better deeds may testify an improving spirit. It seems to me a thing of small importance, that any one should busy himself to establish Natural Theology as a distinct science or branch of study. It may be well enough in accordance with the common practice of worldly philosophers, and indeed, highly necessary to those (few I trust,) who are so peculiarly constituted, that a course of scientific study seems the only route by which they can attain to the knowledge of their Maker; but, to my mind, the accom-

paniments of a system appear only as so many impediments, obscurities, and difficulties, especially when presented to the opening mind. Let us see the readiness with which the simple and unscientific may reach the highest truths of religion.

I quote from the Narrative of the Reverend Mr. Williams, an eminently successful Missionary to the South Sea. Speaking of his exertions among the natives of Rarotonga, he says, "We have not contented ourselves with giving them the Word of God, and teaching them to read it, but we have used every means to lead them to understand it: and I will relate one circumstance to shew how far we have succeeded. We were visited, a few years ago, by one of his Britannic Majesty's vessels, commanded by a gentleman who is connected with a noble family. The vessel happened to arrive at the time of our annual Missionary Meeting, in the month of May, and it was a novel circumstance, that the officers and others of the crew attended our Missionary service.

"After the Sermon in the morning the Public Meeting took place. A Native president took the Chair; several Native speakers addressed the Meeting with peculiar effect; everything proceeded with the greatest order, and the speeches were interpreted to those gentlemen who favoured us with their presence. Some of them, however, who were not quite so favorable to us as could be wished, said that the Natives

were mere parrots, and only repeated what the Missionaries had taught them. At length the Captain's chaplain and some of the officers came to me, and said, 'We have had a warm dispute, and you must give the casting vote; for some of us say that the Natives are mere parrots, and can give no reason for what they say or do.' I said, 'Gentlemen, you will excuse my giving any opinion on the subject; but if you will visit me this afternoon, I will collect ten or twelve Natives, and you shall ask them any questions upon any subject you choose, and I will simply act as an interpreter.' The Natives met, I think, to the number of fifteen: and I did not give them to understand the purpose for which they were assembled; I only said, 'These gentlemen have some questions to ask you.' The questions were then asked: 'Do you believe the Bible to be the Word of God?' They were startled: they had never entertained a single doubt on the subject; but, after a moment's pause, one answered, 'Most certainly we do: undoubtedly we do.' It was asked, 'Why do you believe it? can you give any reason for believing the Bible to be the word of God?' He replied, 'Why, look at the power with which it has been attended, in the utter overthrow of all that we have been addicted to from time immemorial. What else could have demolished that system of idolatry which had so long prevailed among us? No human arguments could have induced us to

abandon that false system.' 'The same question being put to another, he replied, 'I believe the Bible to be the word of God, on account of the pure system of religion it contains. We had a system of religion before; but look how dark and black a system that was, compared with the bright system of Salvation revealed in the word of God! Here we learn that we are sinners; and that God gave Jesus Christ to die for us; and by that goodness, Salvation is given to us. Now, what but the wisdom of God could have produced such a system as this presented in the word of God? and this doctrine leads to purity.' There was a third reply to this question, and it was rather a singular one, but it was a native idea: 'When I look at myself, I find I have got hinges all over my body. I have hinges to my legs—hinges to my jaws—hinges to my feet. If I want to take hold of any thing, there are hinges to my hands to do it with. If my heart thinks, and I want to speak, I have got hinges to my jaws. If I want to walk, I have hinges to my feet. Now here,' continued he, 'is wisdom in adapting my body to the various functions it has to discharge; and I find that the wisdom which made the Bible, exactly fits with this wisdom which has made my body;* consequently, I believe the Bible

* Luke, iv. 4. I think I see plainly, that this reasoning is meant not to make out an analogy, but to establish an identity. It is pretty clear, that one and the same wisdom must have directed the arrangement of the body and mind, and have settled the offices and relations

to be the word of God.' Another replied, 'I believe the Bible to be the word of God, on account of the prophecies which it contains, and the fulfilment of them.' (The Reverend Gentleman here related* several proofs, which were produced by the Islanders, from the Gospel History, of the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies.) After this they came to the doctrines of the Gospel; among others, to the doctrine of the Resurrection; and the question was asked: 'Do you believe in it?' They replied, 'Yes, most certainly.' 'In what body shall we rise?' they answered: 'In a chapter of the Corinthians, it is said, *'It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.'* The Captain would not be satisfied: he requested to know the identical nature of the body which shall be raised. The Natives hesitated some time; and, at last, one said, 'I have it! *'we shall see him as he is,'* and *'be like him.'*† The Captain said again, 'I want to know the precise body which shall be raised.' This occasioned a considerable consultation among them. At length one said, 'It cannot be like the body of Christ when it hung upon the cross: it will be like his glorious body when he was trans-

of each; and moreover, must have been the source of the *perfect law of morality and repentance*. The same attributes belong to the Creator of the world, and the Author of the Holy Scriptures.

* This was related in public by Mr. Williams; and well reported in a monthly journal.

† 1 John, iii. 2.

figured on the mount.' I did nothing more," says Mr. Williams, "than simply act as an interpreter."

Here is wisdom! Whence came this? How far behind are the majority of European Naturalists and the supporters of mere rational deism and Natural Religion! But did the South Sea Islanders come to these conclusions before the blessed light of Christianity shone among them? No. How slender, and yet how strong, was their Natural Theology, when combined with the preaching of repentance and redemption. Do we find that the great masters in science are, of necessity, the more apt to be touched, or more fully convinced, or more fruitfully impressed with religious truths? I answer, No. Witness La Place and Lamark, distinguished modern philosophers, and remarkable for frigid unbelief, with a multitude equally ready to forget, if not to deny the God who made them—in whom they "*live*" and "*move*" and have their "*being*."*

Assuming Christianity to be true, as you believe, the course of man's advance in the proper knowledge of himself and his Maker should, I think, be very much thus:—He finds himself in the world, with some things to enjoy and hope—some things to suffer

* Acts, xvii. 28. "*For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*" This may be supposed a very ancient theological truth—a truth, pagan and barren—a truth, Christian and fruitful without end.

and fear; and, as long since taught by Solomon, and by others long before him, it does seem, that the first and wisest thing to be done must be to look with reverence and anxiety to the Great Author of his being and his destinies. We are well agreed, that but very little knowledge of the creation is amply sufficient to satisfy an ordinary man that his Maker exists, and that His powers and benevolence and duration are exceedingly great. Next, I suppose, that the ability to discriminate good and evil, and the knowledge of the goodness of his God, must grow up in him together; but I cannot imagine that the man has made any real advance in the right judgment, until the contemplation of the Divine Goodness has led him to understand and feel his own human sinfulness. All learning that makes this difficult or tardy, is impediment and evil; for this, I am convinced, is all the wisdom he needs learn from Nature, and the Bible would teach him even this with much greater ease, speed, and security. At all events, having attained this, the barrier to his regeneration is now totally dissipated;—to confess himself sinful, and to repent before God, is the wisdom that carries him on to regard the Truths of Revelation with ever-increasing judgment and satisfaction.

In the absence of a better knowledge and will, even the immature and devious Natural Religion of men may be, it is hoped, a step towards the beginning of

Wisdom. First, to know that we owe our existence to an All-powerful Being, and that, according to general experience, our bodies must return to their native earth; then, to feel either the hope or the fear of a future existence, which feelings, I firmly believe, no man, in his calm untempted senses,* was ever totally devoid of; finally, this universal sentiment, of an immortal hope, ought, in obedience to common sense, to induce every mind to give its foremost regards with deep concern to the Great Disposer of events. It may happen, that the natural philosopher shall learn to admire before he has learnt to fear his Maker; but I cannot think such a state of mind either just, advantageous, or safe. I rather rejoice that, as an infant, before I had mind enough to comprehend more of the Almighty than that He made the world, I had the happiness to be taught, that the All-seeing One abhorred iniquity; and that it was my duty to repent and to pray for the pardon of my continual errors. Let it not be understood that I learned so much perfectly; yet the lesson was in many respects a very available and fruitful one, at an age, when the

* I and, in truth, all Christians are acquainted with but one cause which can compel a man to reject all thoughts of eternity. The practice and love of sin is the sole impediment; and, to whomsoever this applies, "*this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.*" (John, iii. 19, 20. See also 1 John, i. 10.)

studies of skill and induction were useless to me, as they would be to all. Nevertheless, the day arrived when my ignorance and youthful sins tempted me to doubt, though still in fear; but I did not find that half a dozen distinct instances of the Almighty's works were required to set aside my wavering. You speak of multiplied instances adding force to conviction; I learned to feel, that with the increase of understanding there is increase of strength.

I sincerely acknowledge myself very far from competent to display the enjoyments of an enlightened Christian spirit—the pleasures of a truly Christian life; yet I shall endeavour to set them forth; not as opposed to the just satisfactions of a rational Theology, but as superadded to them. I shall delineate a character not difficult to find, but at the same time, so little understood, as often to be disregarded or despised, or even slandered. The man I speak of, is far too well informed to be fairly liable, in the world, to the imputation of ignorance, though he is, from the simplicity of his habits, little versed in the ways of distinction, and not extensively known, or esteemed, or sought. Observe him more closely, and he will be found engaged with steadiness enough in the necessary business of life; but his thoughts do not rest here. He is certainly not less advanced than others of his rank in the natural knowledge of God and His works, and he is far more deeply imbued with vene-

ration for the Bible—its characters of God, its doctrines, its morality, its wisdom, its prophecies, its promises and threats, its history and tendencies. Seeing that the greater part of Scripture is entirely conformable to his reason, he learns to trust the whole. His experience in the wide world of natural things is constantly tallying with the words of Revelation; his comprehensions, convictions, and delight, are continually enlarging in proportion as he pursues the examination; and that which he has to take upon trust is incessantly diminishing. In all the occasions of life, the inexhaustible Volume of Truth is ever his resource for wisdom and strength, solace and encouragement. His ripening knowledge of the Divine goodness makes him more and more sensible of his own imperfections; and the sense of his own errors draws him nearer to the goodness of God;—his repentance binds him closer to the mercy of redemption. Unattracted by the fleeting things of this life, he is more free to seek after the permanent ones of the next. So great a blessing to himself he desires should be enjoyed by all; he finds the doctrines of the New Testament slowly but certainly pervading the world, and the revealed intentions of God in progress of completion; and he rejoices to lend his feeble hands to do the Almighty's will,—to help on the Gospel of peace and salvation, the only heavenly hope of fallen man. His own wisdom becomes almost prophetic. His family,

his neighbours, and the world, share in the blessing which is his portion; there is no poison in his influence his precepts, or example, although some may suffer by despising him. If there be any lack of strength, the arm of the Lord needs it not.

This is the man whose delight is in the knowledge of God's providence. Truly learned in that which promotes the best happiness of mankind, it is ever his foremost desire to pursue this end. His love is an unselfish thing—the welfare of others is his continual aim. He knows the true value of all that this world calls gain and learning, and not less the proper estimation of the so called trials of life,—temptation, grief, sickness, and difficulty; these, for him, are all deprived of their sting, and fraught with a blessing which calls forth his gratitude and praise.

The term *Natural Theology*, in its largest sense, appears to include all the study in which man, applying his reason to the examination of nature, may obtain a knowledge of the Creator and His attributes, and also of His will and intentions relative to men; but, since we are scarcely assured of life for a day, it is essential for us, that necessary knowledge alone should be first sought, first selected, and first secured.* We should therefore disembarass ourselves

* Psalm xc. 12. "*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.*"

at once of all that is unnecessary. I shall endeavour to keep this conclusion in view, while attempting a close search after the little that may be supposed indispensable in human Theology, apart from the inspired Truth. It may be discovered that the Volume of Inspiration contains the whole truth,—that there is no other that is useful.

With this avowed aim, and with the impression that the knowledge of the destination of man's soul is the main object of all rational Theology, I shall here confine myself to a few observations, relating chiefly to the physical and mental endowments of humanity. It will not, however, be the less evident how little natural knowledge suffices to establish, as far as knowledge can, all the truths of Revelation which are *indispensable* to man's happiness and peace. For my present purpose, it may safely be deemed needless to shew how feeble or erroneous human reason has ever been and ever must be, in Theology, while devoid of this Revelation.

We read in the first chapter of the Bible, that "*God created man in his own image;*"* and this line, if it be not a revelation, is the most ancient, and, at the same time, the most profound and fundamental

* Genesis, i. 27. "*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them.*" See also chap. v. 1.

truth of all Natural Theology;* since all our inferences concerning the Divine powers and faculties depend upon the comparison to be drawn between them and human endowments,—between the feeble and fading labours of man, and the effort which made and provides for a whole human race throughout hundreds of generations,—between the dark mind of man and the all-searching Spirit of God,—between the fallen creature and his all-perfect Creator.

You have asserted, that “Revelation cannot be true if Natural Religion is false.”† We might reverse this, and say, that all Natural Religion must be false, if that bright line of Holy Scripture be not true; for, unless the Almighty Creator be in a manner like unto some earthly thing, we can form neither judgment nor conception of him; and, rejecting the likeness of man, we can find nothing earthly to serve, by any possibility, as the image of Wisdom, Power, and Benevolence. Would that I and all could feel, with a more intense regret, how degraded and sinful is this once holy image of the God of all goodness!

* This explanatory line, from the light of Revelation, might have elucidated and strengthened an opinion or theory in the “Discourse,” (pp. 33 and 78.) Having boldly made the assumption, or humbly accepted the Revelation, that a Divine Spirit, something comparable to the human mind, has been at work in all the creation, we cannot but acknowledge that every induction of facts from the natural world favours the assurance.

† “Discourse,” p. 204.

When it is seen that all which is commendable in rational Theology is propounded as such in the Scriptures, we may fairly say, that, if the copious and complete "*Natural Religion*" contained in the Bible be not true, there may be some reason to doubt the remainder of the book; but surely you cannot mean that the validity of Revelation depends upon the unerring truth of any one known human exposition of Theology or Religion; whether it be in your "Discourse," or in the works of Cicero,* or elsewhere.

The Bible is replete with the inductive arguments of Natural Theology and rational Religion.

* You declare Cicero "the ancient philosopher best imbued with religious opinions," (in the "Dedication" of the "Discourse.") I have had the satisfaction to hear you proclaim, in the presence of two or three thousand well informed Christians, that "the Bible is the best of books," "for all men;" (I think I am nearly correct;) and, if this be your candid and carefully formed opinion, you must be convinced that the theology, religion, and morality of Rome and Greece, even at the best, are no longer to be upheld. It is full time, all men should know, that, though there may be some truth and goodness in the ancient classics, it requires something more than a classical knowledge to make the selection with safety. The just prosperity of a country is not unequivocally promoted, when a senator makes Homer corroborate his opinions; neither is it probable that the moral advancement of the nation is hastened by a taste for the pagan poets. The difference between the heathen morality and that of Christianity, is like that which exists between the fruits of the earth before and after cultivation: all is good with judicious culture; without it, little is good, some bitter, some poisonous, and much is unprofitable.

*"I am fearfully and wonderfully made."** This is one among a great number of plain *theological* inferences that occurred in the common and probably youthful reflections of an ancient shepherd, and it is one of those simple and forcible truths that might justly be expected to receive universal assent; the difficulty presents itself only when we are assured that reflecting men have ever lived who could doubt that they had a Maker.

The wonderful contrivances employed in a hand or foot scarcely require the art of the dissector to set them forth; it is manifest that each part is marvellously adapted to its varied and innumerable purposes. The origin, growth, and nourishment of the living body are arranged with so mysterious a skill, that the facts can scarcely fail to astound any one who is willing to dwell, even but cursorily, on the contemplation of them; and the imperfect and partial explanations of the physiologist seem to me calculated rather to perplex than to enlighten the mind in its approach, (if it may be called an approach,) to the Great First Cause.

Should it turn out to be true, which I incline strongly to deny, that every increase in our knowledge

* Psalm cxxxix. 14. *"I will praise thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well."*

of natural causes brings us closer to the Great First Cause,—that science necessarily makes us better acquainted with our Maker,—then indeed must science be a holy and desirable thing. I know not, however, if this be Newton's* meaning, and if it is, still it may be erroneous; it is natural to err in favour of our pleasures. Supposing the universe, the world, or a human frame, to have been set in complete operation at once by the Word of God, every event in the process must have been, and must still be, equally near to the Great First Cause. The parent precedes the offspring in point of time, yet both may possibly have had their origin at the same moment.

I find in physiological enquiries that the chains of causes are not direct lines, which the mind must necessarily pursue, link by link, step by step, up to the Creator; but rather, that the chains of causes are complete circles, with the Almighty hand equally near, equally plain everywhere: so, probably, it was to Newton; and thus some men have ever found it,

* "Discourse," p. 151. Did Newton wish to signify that the knowledge of nature helped to mature his acquaintance with the characters of God, or even more than this? "Every true step made in inductive philosophy is highly to be valued, because it brings us nearer to the First Cause." To be *nearer*, without being aware of it, is of little advantage; but it is far easier to grow in the knowledge of God and His goodness *without* the study of Physics than *with* it. Experience, I think, is with me in this.

look where they might, even in unlearned simplicity. On the other hand it is notorious, that hosts of learned men have not so found it. In their case, I offer a choice of explanations. Either they have busied themselves with the endless circles of natural causes, or they have taken up a chain of so great a length, that their *approach* to the Great First Cause has been actually imperceptible, even through the continuance of a long life.

Were all men to follow science, and work out lengthened chains of causes for amusement, the ablest would construct the longest, but all would soon find their advance arrested by some insurmountable difficulty; which would first occur to the simple, and lastly to the learned; both, however, should attain the point of wonder, abasement of self, and reverence for the Creator. In this respect, the simple man is foremost and most willing; he has least pride: "*knowledge puffeth up.*" The wisdom of this world is "*foolishness.*" "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;*" it is "*clean, enduring for ever.*"

The opinion that earthly sciences may be serviceable in our future being, is not a little doubtful. The man of science might very positively predicate of the future existence, that a more extended knowledge shall form one of its great enjoyments; yet he would quickly perceive the vagueness of his own notions (if they deserve the name) when he should attempt to explain

the relations between the knowledge of the present and that of the future life. It may be that the knowledge of worldly things shall end with this life. It is easy even to conceive that in the world to come, such attainments might prove useless, or even pernicious; a hinderance or a burthen. Beyond the occasions of this life, it must be difficult to imagine the useful application of languages and philology, and even of all human literature; so also of all the arts which amuse our leisure, or minister to our weakness; so again of nearly all the science which treats of animate and inanimate things. Those principles of physics which teach the harmony of the universe, and some elementary statements of the metaphysician, might be suffered to pass as exceptions to the preceding conclusion, but the extremely insignificant rank which all these attainments may hold in the mind liberated from its earthly fetters, is not to be denied.

In many instances, the contemplation of causes, moral or physical, is a practical and habitual abstraction of the mind from all thoughts of our God. Even under favorable circumstances, it has cost the philosophers much care and labour to shew, by the aid of half-matured or dawning sciences, that the great Contriver of man's frame must surely have had a profound comprehension of the elements composing

it, and on which it depends; but on the other hand, the simple and well ordered mind is instantly alive to inductive truths of deeper import. Shall not He, who made the human heart, know all its turnings? "*He that formed the eye, shall he not see?*"* Who supposes, that "*He who planted the ear,*" does not possess far mightier senses? When it is asked, whence that admirable instinct which guides the creatures of the earth and air, it is, no doubt, a philosophical reply to say, He that made the creature must have endowed it with the properties essential to its continued existence, and inseparable from the very circumstances of its birth. Now, these are conclusions formed long before Physics and Psychology were in repute as sciences.

Let us see what the Hebrew writers assert of the mind of man, as indicative of its Author:—"*The God of the spirits of all flesh:*"† "*Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than*

* Psalm xciv. 8—12. The Psalmist exclaims in rebuke, "*When will ye be wise?*" and he seems to feel that his reasoning is unanswerable. "*He that planted the ear, shall he not hear? he that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct? he that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know? The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law;*" and, (ver. 19,) "*In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul.*"

† Numbers, xvi. 22.; and xxvii. 16.

*the fowls of heaven.”** “*He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?*”† Man tilleth and soweth, reapeth and rejoiceth in the fruits of the earth ;‡ and can he think, that He who made him and gave him his wisdom is not wise ? Shall the vessel of clay say, “*He*” that made me hath no “*understanding?*”§ My judgment rather compels me to exclaim, “*O God, Thou hast taught me from my youth.*”||

Does not a wise man detect the mental operations of another, even sometimes when they are concealed ? Does he not form close inferences as to the varying reflections and deviating inclinations of the absent and distant ? Does he not form a pretty distinct survey of the state of men’s minds throughout the world ? And, can it be supposed that the Wise Spirit, who has endowed humanity with such capabilities, does not possess far higher powers of perception, as well as of judgment and action ? Here again, we cannot but remark, how greatly the simple and reasonable Theology of the Bible transcends the scientific induction, with all its parade of accumulated facts. It was no insignificant exercise for a

* Job, xxxv. 11.

† Psalm xciv. 10.

‡ Isaiah, xxviii. 24—29. “*This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.*”

§ Isaiah, xxix. 16.

|| Psalm lxxi. 17.

Newton, even in a learned age, to shew that the structure of an eye betokens a profound knowledge of optical laws; but when the sciences scarcely existed, the Psalmist rose, with ease, to a much higher conclusion; namely, that He who had constructed his frame, must surely have the power to see into the inmost recesses of his heart. The 139th Psalm, which you speak of as a "singularly beautiful poem,"* is a lesson of the most exemplary wisdom—of just theological reasoning, and truly humble piety. "*O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me,*" (ver. 1.) "*There is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether,*" (ver. 4.) "*Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them,*" (ver. 16.) "*Search me, O God, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting,*" (ver. 23. 24.)

The branch of Theological enquiry which relates to the "Unity" of God, seems to me *still* far above human reach; but I suppose that, as far as it is needful to be understood, its difficulties are really none. Not to make any delay, in determining if there be more than one human family on the earth, I shall venture to express my belief that sceptics will not

* "Discourse," p. 212.

long have any grounds for asserting the existence of distinct races of men. I may safely assume the existence of one great human family; and proceed to state the characteristics which are most reasonably to be attributed to the Creator of one people. It is evident, that, in the construction of a single human being, even when only superficially examined, we cannot but perceive an uniformity of arrangement and unanimity of design, characterizing at once the One Presiding Spirit, or, at any rate, plainly marking an unity of intention inaccessible to every objection.* Nor does the single-mindedness of the intention appear the less certain, when we refer to the same Power all that is essential to the created being,—the earth he inhabits, the food which serves for his growth, and the air he breathes, together with the portion of time allotted to him in the world. It is too absurd for any, save a few dreamers, to imagine that all these were formed without any reference to their uses,—the earth, with all its convenience of habitation, undesignedly,—food, so multifarious for nutriment, without intention,—air, the indispensable support of life, the mere effect of an after-thought or an accident.

* Some may doubt even this, for there are sceptics of every shade of unbelief; yet he must have a strange obliquity of mind who can seriously suppose that conflicting powers may have co-operated in the construction of his body, and in the adjustment of all things necessary to its continued existence.

This is an argument capable, of course, of great extension, and perhaps liable to a few objections ; but it must not be forgotten, in regard to the inferences concerning the Ruler of man's destinies, that unanimity of operation, unity of spirit or intention, is much the same thing as unity of Person. It is clear, too, that we reason with sufficient closeness when we conclude, that the Creator of the parent is not less the Maker of the offspring, and so on through a period of four or five thousand years, at the lowest computation. Now, what shall we say of the duration, as well as of the ability, of that Great Spirit, or of the mighty co-operating Spirits, whose we are, by whom we live, and the weak images of whose power we presume ourselves to be?

Such, too, is evidently the reasoning of the Psalmist: "*Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.*"* On another occasion, "*O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days; thy years are throughout all generations.*"† Here also, guided by the spirit of a Prophet, and surely not in opposition to reason, he soars into eternity. "*Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old,*

* Psalm xl. 1. David, or Moses ; probably both.

† Psalm cii. 24.

*like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.”**

With respect to the Goodness of the Almighty, I should feel quite at a loss in what manner to set about the demonstration of it. If a man cannot understand and feel that all animated existence is a blessing, he is, I think, equally inaccessible on the side of reason and on that of Revelation. It ought not to be difficult to see, that, to every living thing, life is a continual pleasure,—every meal a feast. Is not health a blessing? Are not exercise and activity delightful, and is not rest? What is pleasure, and what are the uses of the senses? What is the meaning of enjoyment? What are the exercises of instinct; and of mind,—of learning, reflection, conversation? Here, once more, an apostle of the Gospel speaks best of the Sustainer of all life, as continually “*filling our hearts with food and gladness;*”† and with him the Psalmist David, “*Thou (Lord) openest thine hand and fillest all things living with plenteousness.*”‡

The ordinary evils of life form no permanent objection to all this. Bereavement (which implies past enjoyment,) or affliction is often the means of

* Psalm cii. 25—27.

† Acts, xiv. 17. “*Nevertheless He left not himself without witness, in that HE DID GOOD, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.*”

‡ Psalm cxlv. 16; (Prayer-book translation.)

making men wiser,* better, and therefore happier on earth, as well as more secure in the path of eternity. Knowing this, we might almost desire that the *chastening*s of Providence were dealt out more largely. The exercise of virtue and the growth of wisdom are so dependent upon the existence of sorrow, difficulty, and trial, that without these latter, or a complete regeneration of the world, it is hard to imagine what kind of good could exist amongst us: without these or similar cares, our pursuit after good would be devoid of earthly interest; our knowledge would be deficient in the test of comparison; our relish might fail in the absence of this stimulus—the necessary stimulus, which is derived from the suspension of enjoyment, and, perhaps, even from the actual admixture of pain.

If the preceding account of the Divine Goodness be a reasonable part of Theology, it will not be easy to find a better expression of its force than in the words of the Patriarch, who, notwithstanding, had suffered much. “*I am not worthy,*”† said he, to the Almighty Parent of his race, “*I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies,*”—the worldly advantages wherewith thou hast blessed me; “*and of all the truth which thou hast shewed unto thy servant*”—the mental light which I enjoy. Let us pause to consider. Did

* Job, i. 21.

† Genesis, xxxii. 10.

God make the human mind that invented this fable of Jacob? or, did God make the human mind of Jacob, that discovered these truths? Is it not incomparably more natural to conclude, that God inspired the mind of the patriarch with this sublime wisdom? Was it not a divine gift to expound such things, when nearly all the world besides was sunk in ignorance and sin?

In pursuance of my limited view of a necessary Rational Theology, assuming only just so much of the Divine Attributes as I have already ventured to consider proved, let us proceed to weigh the hope of a future existence for the soul.—It is not to be denied that here is a great impediment in the way of certain minds, whose characters we need not now be very careful to examine. Granting, however, as much as I have assumed, and no more, it is my firm conviction, that he who clearly knows what a truly good man is, cannot find it very difficult to understand, that the Maker of such a being may have made, and very probably has made, him immortal. It is not incredible that the Parent of hundreds of successive generations should recall or perpetuate the life of His most beloved servants.

When I reflect even upon the spirit of Socrates—so fair a morality, surrounded by so general a corruption, love in the midst of hate, strength in the midst of weakness—so much light in the midst of so much

darkness, I find it far more easy to suppose, that the God who illumined the mind of the Grecian sage should also have made him immortal, and have inspired him with the consciousness that he was so, than that the best men, and those most richly endowed by their Maker, should also be those most deeply deceived. This argument of probability applies with the greatest force to the apostles and fathers of Christianity, many of them great and good men, beyond all dispute, even beyond all scepticism. The argument is of course unavailing to the ignorant, but for him, who has been careful to inform himself of the real characters of these and like persons, the conclusion is, I think, almost inevitable. Who can think, that God has ever created a man and made him, so to speak, His "*friend*;"* pure, enlightened, happy; a great and successful teacher of the purest morality and the soundest earthly wisdom; endowed him, moreover, with prescience; and yet left him to propagate an error to all generations, and, finally, to die in the hope of that which is not.† It was said by Rousseau that it is far easier to think the history of the Holy Jesus a truth than an invention; to my reason, it is impossible to know it well and believe it an invention; still less, is it pos-

* Exod. xxxiii. 11. John, xv. 14.

† I do not mean a hope founded on the merits of individuals, but resting upon the knowledge of the goodness of God,—trust in His love,—faith in His righteousness.

sible to conceive such a Being (if created at all) created to perish. But supposing the whole story to be merely an instructive parable, when its entire scope is duly considered, I firmly believe it impossible to imagine, that the God, who formed the mind of its author, should have formed that mind for this world only. As I have already stated of a similar argument, the present is fruitless for the ignorant, and can only be profitable to those who have become acquainted with the Gospel; to the rest, it must ever be said, "*Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.*"* We know, that the want of knowledge is a very natural source of error, and we know, that to judge without knowledge, to prejudge, is prejudice—in the case of scepticism, it may be called the bigotry of unbelief.

A similar reasoning seems to have had some force among men, during the earthly lifetime of Him who we believe rose from the dead. No Jew, I suppose, could doubt that he was descended from Abraham, that is, the Abraham, whose history we read in the Old Testament—a wise and good man, and the especial "*friend*"† and servant of God; of whom, also, we read, that God's own mouth predicted, "*Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and*

* Matthew, xxii. 29.

† "*Abraham thy friend.*" 2 Chron. xx. 7.; Isaiah, xli. 8.—"*And he was called the friend of God.*" James, ii. 23.

all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him (in his seed—Christ). For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him,†*—namely, the blessing of the whole earth, by the influence of Christianity; of which it is now easy to see the progress and not difficult to foresee the completion. But to return to Abraham;—it appears to have been a simple inference, that the God of Abraham might very possibly be pleased to make such a man immortal, and if one, why not many?‡ As Christians, our hopes of eternity rest not on human arguments, but on the Bible's truth, which we implicitly believe. The reasons for this belief have been long sufficiently established.

It does not appear that you directly lay claim to originality in the "Discourse," but the manner in which you treat the labours of a few of your prede-

* Galatians, iii. 16. "*And to thy seed, which is Christ.*"

† Genesis, xviii. 18.; xii. 2.; xxi. 12.; xxii. 18.; xxvi. 3, 4.; 2 Samuel, vii. 16.

‡ "*But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.*"—Matthew, xxii. 31, 2, 3.

cessors in these studies seems to evince that you feel yourself on new ground. You certainly have not done due justice to the rational Theology of the Scriptures, and still less to the illustrations of the science, which are to be found among the works of the most enlightened men in every Christian age. These, it should be remembered, have taken other business in hand than the underground-work, or even the rudiments of Religion; but they have been too warmly sensible of the wants of the erring not to have sought out all the arguments that are most forcible and least objectionable for them; and, although the moderns have re-echoed and expanded those reasonings, I am not aware that they have produced anything novel or more efficient. With regard to those Christian Authors who have written expressly on Theology, it must likewise be remembered, that their object has not been merely scientific—not to shew the ground on which their own conclusions have been formed—not to expound what should be exclusively the foundation of most men's opinions; but their aim has been, and wisely, I doubt not, to address some of the uninformed, the doubting, or the unwilling, as we should address children of similar characters, offering them that which would seem most ready and suitable to the occasion.

The Bible contains so much of *Natural* Theology, or, which is the same thing, so much exact and simple

reasoning on the Divine Attributes, will and intentions, that it would be tedious, even if it were possible, to adduce the whole in this place. If, in a future revision of the "Discourse," you would take the pains to select and subjoin to the different branches of the argument and to the successive points of illustration, the analogous passages in Holy Writ, many of your reflections would be clearer, more profound, or more correct; and, you might then perceive, that the whole train of your conclusions, as far, I think, as they are just or available, was established ages ago, when nearly all the world was immersed in darkness—when magic was science, and idolatry was religion. A remarkable instance this of the wisdom of the sacred writers; and the production of such books, at such remote periods, is, in my judgment, nothing short of a miracle. Supposing them to be the works of men and viewing the whole circumstances, it is almost an unavoidable reflection, that the wisdom of the various writers could be scarcely less than the inspiration of God.

Regarding the Bible, upon the lowest estimation, as a human composition in the ages of antiquity, here is indeed a marvellous system of Theology, in addition to the other doctrines; for, of course, if the Book be not admitted as one of Divine inspiration, its rational [Natural] Theology must be unhesitatingly accepted, just as well as the morality, and the wisdom, and the

actually fulfilled prophecies. It is not impossible to imagine, that some natural theists might look through the Bible and discover very little traces of their science; no doubt, they could not find the modern facts of the physical sciences adduced; yet, it is undeniable, that the plain reasoning Theology of the Bible is quite as just and forcible as theirs; and to my mind it is even more clear and far more comprehensive than that of any other book I have ever seen.

The Christian finds in the Scriptures, not only abundant illustrations of rational Theology and Religion, but almost a direct command not to disregard the striking inferences offered by natural objects and events. "*Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; * * * Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, * * * shall he not much more clothe you?**" "*Behold the fowls of the air, * * * your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?†*"

We read, that "*the ravens neither sow nor reap,†*" and that God "*provideth*" daily for the "*sparrows.*" Our Lord, in sending out his chosen servants, strengthened them with such assurances as this: "*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye*

* Matthew, vi. 28, 30.

† Ibid. ver. 26.

‡ Luke, xii. 24.

*not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.** How deeply reasonable is it, that one should *number* the works of his hands, and, especially, those in which he most *delights*.

When the Psalmist commanded, “*O give thanks unto the Lord; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Talk ye of all his wondrous works,*”† I understand him to have referred, not only to the visible works of the Creation, but also, as he often does, to the wondrous ways of God to man; of which, even the mere followers of Natural Religion may understand something; as of the things which relate to man’s mental constitution, to his moral circumstances and improvement, and even to his possible future existence. In these, all who are willing may plainly perceive the providence and benevolence of the Deity—His knowledge of man’s heart—His mercy, chastenings, and patience—His admirable adaptation of all the duties, the difficulties, and the trials of life.

However wayward a few men may be, to almost all it is certain, that we have reason enough to believe that we are made, and we have happiness enough to feel that our Maker is beneficent. We have duties to perform, that we cannot but suppose to be in accordance with the will of our Maker;—sins to avoid, as unquestionably as if

* Matthew, x. 29—31.

† Psalm cv. 1, 2.

Revelation were undisputed. We may be responsible, we have hopes, we have fears; we have also some things to repent of,—one fatal obstacle may be, that we have neglected to enquire diligently the will of our Maker. What we may have to glory or trust in, each must determine for himself: most of the many and very different writers of Scripture are agreed in this. *“Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.”**

You remark, “This, in truth, is the chief superiority of Revelation, and this is the praise justly given to the Gospel in Sacred Writ,—not that it teaches the being and attributes of God, but that it brings life and immortality to light.”† “Not that it teaches the being and attributes of God!” It would be just as reasonable that I should say, the chief value of your “Discourse” is, not that it teaches even the mode of investigating the being and attributes of God, but, that it may lead men to reflect upon eternity and salvation. Have you not read in the Bible of the God who made and sustains heaven and earth, and

* Jeremiah, ix. 23, 24.

† “Discourse,” p. 208.

all things therein; the fountain of all life, health and joy; the guide of animal instincts; and the source of all knowledge and wisdom, and every good? Have you not read of the ways of God to man,—His knowledge of man's heart,—His beneficence, long-suffering, and mercy? Numerous brightly illustrative instances in testimony of all these Divine properties are scattered throughout the volumes of Revelation. To us men, the highest praise of every earthly knowledge must doubtless be, that it may bring us nearer to that of "life and immortality:" and that Revelation does so much for us, is, you say, its "chief superiority;" but notwithstanding this, you affirm that,—“Upon the particulars of a future state—the kind of existence reserved for the soul—the species of its occupations and enjoyments—Natural Theology is, of course,* profoundly silent; but not more silent than Revelation.”† I cannot decide if there be any incongruities here, but I think I detect the same want of knowledge which has ever charac-

* I might remark, in the first place, it does *not* appear to me, that "Natural Theology is profoundly silent," as a matter "*of course*," or necessity, "upon the particulars of a future state." Is there nothing more to be shewn by the light of Natural Religion? and if there be still some blindness in the world, may there not be yet a little more light within the reach of those who must traverse science in order to become religious?

† "Discourse," p. 133-4.

terized the opposers of the Bible; at least, there is but little regard paid to the threats, and as little value set upon the promises of the Holy Book of "*Life and immortality.*"

"Upon the particulars of a future state" it is a grave and fatal error to teach that Revelation is "profoundly silent." The error is scarcely excusable, though it may be that the *particulars* abounding in the Revelations are not such as you would desire.* Nothing can be more consolatory, nothing more awful than those pictures of the day of judgment, with their mingled promises and threats. How fearfully distinct are the condemnations, "*Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"† "*Till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*"‡ What is the meaning of the *transfiguration*?§ and what is to be understood by the apparition of "*Moses and Elias,*" as well as

* It is possible, and this is the only view I have here intended to shew, that pre-established, unscriptural reasonings, might give rise to different anticipations of the eternal hereafter, and moreover, might predispose some minds to perceive less distinctly the promised futurity of the Bible. The merciful forbearance of Providence, manifested towards sin and error, affords a blessed hope; and we are well assured, by our Lord, as well as by the Psalmist David, that God's "*Mercy is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.*" (Psalm ciii. 17.)

† Matt. xxv. 30.

‡ Matt. v. 26.

§ Matt. xvii. 2. Luke, ix. 29. Mark, ix. 2.

of different "*Angels?*"* Jesus said to a penitent malefactor, "*today shalt thou be with me in paradise.*"† He who has attained a perfect comprehension of the character of our Lord, will not readily relinquish a much clearer foretaste of future bliss, than Natural Theology has furnished. The thorough Christian apprehends less vaguely the nature of the "occupations and enjoyments" of the redeemed who shall "*be with Jesus.*"

* Luke, c. 1. My spirit rejoices to imagine the Angel Gabriel and his deep prophetic satisfaction; when, having already foretold that St. John, the prophet of *repentance*, should precede the Messiah, "*to make ready a people prepared for the Lord,*" (v. 17.) he "*was sent from God*" (v. 26,) to announce the birth of "*Jesus*" (the Saviour), saying, (v. 32,) "*He shall be great, and shall be called the son of the Highest,*" (and "*the son of God,*" v. 35,) "*and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And* (v. 33,) *he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.*" These are predictions which we see daily realized, and Christianity—the "*kingdom*" of Christ, does not seem to be drawing near its end. The plain verification of many such prophecies establishes for truth the history of their origin. I may observe that there is a marked analogy or similarity, almost a *probable* affinity, discoverable between the spirit of the Angel and of the *Blessed Mary*, when we learn that with overflowing heart, she said, "*Behold from henceforth all generations shall call me Blessed;*" (v. 48,) and foretold the accomplishments of the Almighty's designs, "*as he promised to our forefathers, Abraham and his seed, for ever,*" (v. 55, Common Prayer Book.)

† Luke, xxiii. 43.

Speaking to his Apostles, *“Jesus said unto them, verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”** *“I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”†* And again, *“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”‡* *“To sit on my right hand, and on my left . . . shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.”§* In the parable also, *“His Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”||* And, in the same place, *“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.”¶* Our Saviour said, *“In the resurrection they neither marry,*

* Matt. xix. 28.

† Luke, xxii. 29, 30.

‡ John, xiv. 2, 3.

§ Matt. xx. 23.

|| Matt. xxv. 21.

¶ Matt. xxv. 34.

nor are given in marriage, but are as the Angels of God in Heaven”*—“*equal unto the Angels*”†—“*the children of God*”—looking upon Him as a child regards an earthly parent.

Are there no particulars related of Angels in different parts of the Bible?‡

St. Paul says, “*As we have borne the image of the earthly (Adam) so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly*” (Christ):§ “*when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption.*”|| Does the Christian know nothing of “*treasure in heaven,*”¶—“*Joy in heaven,*” “*in the presence of the Father;*”** of “*praise,*” of “*knowledge?*”†† Many circumstances of the life to come are communicated only in parables, but many of these are sufficiently distinct. Can we collect nothing from the story of the Rich man and Lazarus?‡‡ or from that of the Prodigal?§§ Would that there were no prodigality but that of wealth—no lavish waste of political power; no spendthrift scattering of

* Matt. xxii. 30.

† Luke, xx. 36.

‡ 1 Cor. vi. 3. St. Paul even says, “*know ye not that we shall judge Angels?*” Luke, xv. 10. Jesus taught, “*there is joy in the presence of the Angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*” Matt. xiii. 39. “*the reapers (at the last day) are the Angels.*”

§ 1 Cor. xv. 49. || 1 Cor. xv. 54. ¶ Matt. xix. 21.; & vi. 20.

** Luke, xv. 7 and 10.; “*and (Psalm xvi. 11.) at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.*”

†† Rev. v. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. ‡‡ 1 Cor. xiii. 9-12. Luke, xv. 11.

§§ Luke, xvi. 19.

intellect, in science, wit, and learning! It is a most reasonable decree, that "*unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.*"*

In my estimation, the superiority of the Scripture is equally manifest in its earthly prophecies and its predictions of eternity, in its human morality and its attributes of the Almighty—in its natural wisdom and its Natural or Rational Theology, in its promises and denunciations. Again and again I ask could such a book be written by mere men and in the ages of the world's darkness? could so many mere men, of such very different characters, concur, through several successive ages, to produce parts so perfectly agreeing together? I should say, that the "*God of the spirits of all flesh*"† must have endowed the authors with a superiority of wisdom in a degree fully equal to actual inspiration.

What is that sentiment which induces men to rely with so confident a satisfaction upon the man of tried and known wisdom and probity, especially under circumstances of emergency? Is it not something like that with which Pharaoh king of Egypt had recourse

* Luke, xii. 48. The Bible plainly assures us of "*stripes*" for the evil, "*many*" or "*few*," according to their *deeds and knowledge*. "*Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven:*" &c.

† Numb. xvi. 22 ; xxvii. 16.

to Joseph as a man of consummate foresight and prudence; "*can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is.*"* Precisely like this are the reflections which all men make on the Bible, whose studies have been rewarded by even a partial comprehension of its tenour; and I have never heard of such an one who ever found reason to change his opinion.

Natural Theology includes all the knowledge of the Creator which is drawn from contemplating the Creation; and we may allow that ingenuity has accomplished something towards building the Science into a system. It has drawn together innumerable instances from the sciences—physical and moral, to illustrate the existence of a Being, Mighty in action, Wise in contrivance and foresight, Great in goodness, in duration, and in the illimitable extent of His influence. It has shown more or less clearly that man is able to discern good and evil, that he is probably destined for a future existence, that in this world he is full of weakness and wickedness, that he certainly receives the fruits of his doings on earth,† and that he is very possibly responsible for the

* Gen. xli. 38.

† Notwithstanding the unequal quantities of wealth, knowledge, &c. which fall to the lot of man, it is still pretty evident, that the real happiness of the individual depends rather upon a right mind and just conduct from day to day.

actions of his present life, hereafter.—Now, we have also the Holy Bible, which purports to be written by men instructed of God himself, and to contain all the wisdom requisite to man for his happiness here and in the life to come. This Book has, distributed through its pages, a copious reference to the works of God, as evidences of His Wisdom, Power, and Benevolence.

It is possible, that men of science will declare, that human Theology supplies the deficiencies of the Bible on these topics; but, my opinion is exactly the reverse. If a man, by contemplating himself, or the stars, can be satisfied that there is a Maker in whom all his hopes and fears must rest, I say, it seems to me, (an anatomist, and not totally unacquainted with other sciences,) that scientific studies, as introductory to Religion, are only as so much time lost. This truth is overwhelmingly forcible, if the learner may be supposed to die during his initiatory course. More than once have I been intimately acquainted with bright and promising ornaments of this life, who, in the vigorous pursuit of knowledge and fame, have been warned by the voice of sickness or death, that science and reputation had too long tempted them, not, indeed, to deny or forget, but to hold too cheap the mercy of Redemption.

In addition, the Holy Book of wisdom establishes, by the most convincing reasonings, the truth of man's

sinfulness, which, to the wise-hearted, is a self-evident thing: to such again, the hope of eternity scarcely requires to be spoken of twice to be cherished for ever; lastly, to such, the use and necessity of repentance, with the history of man's salvation, when once learned, are far too holy to be cast away. These are peculiar doctrines in the Bible, but I shall content myself for the present with asserting, that they are parts, indispensable parts, of a Natural, that is, Rational Religion, and that the scriptural explanations on these subjects are strictly argumentative, truly forcible, and eminently surpassing all other known productions of the kind. It might be of little avail for us, that "*Life and Immortality*" are brought to light by the Gospel, were it not also fully shewn that "*Sin*" and "*Repentance*" are brought to light by the same means—Sin, the guilt of all men—Repentance, the foundation, through Christ, of every sinner's hopes.

Since there are few things of any kind which may not produce some good, let us enquire, what are the circumstances under which the study of the visible creation may become peculiarly available, or may even be supposed indispensable, as testifying the attributes of the Creator. Supposing an individual, a class of persons, or a nation, in consequence of unfavorable influences, as, for instance, of bad education, ignorant of, or averse to, the revealed will

and promises of God; yet, knowing something of the structure and uses of natural things; being perhaps partially acquainted with metaphysical speculations, or, which is still better, occasionally thoughtful about the moral tendency of human inclinations and actions; in such a case of darkness as to present happiness and future hope; doubtless, it is well, if the student of Nature can be led, step by step, to the throne of God.

Let the worldly wise man learn to seek with ardour in human Theology what he cannot or will not find elsewhere; but it should be a deeply humiliating thought, that he is incapable of better things. Day after day let him inform himself of many and various instances of the Divine perfections and contrivances; let him diligently accumulate proofs of the Almighty goodness, and, if he can, convince himself of all the attributes of the Supreme Being. Then, even supposing all this toil in natural science well accomplished, which few have designedly attempted, few have succeeded in, and very few have done fruitfully, what is next to become of the victim of earthly knowledge, if his life be still prolonged, now that he has completed the foundation, on which, as you say, the truth of Revelation rests? The enduring truth remains: all his learning, all his admiration, and all his adoration of his Maker—all are but vanity, if he know not, what very simple persons can often learn

in a day, that, before the ineffable goodness of God, he is erring, and sinful; and, not only must he know and feel this, but he must steadily set himself to work out his salvation, or, it is plain, the fear of God—the beginning of wisdom, is not in him.

It will often happen, that, when the philosopher shall have attained an imperfect knowledge of the Almighty, he will declare, that, whatever he himself may be, he is such as he was made, and he is not responsible for the acts of his nature; that he has not the power to choose between right and wrong, not the requisite strength, ability, and opportunity to pursue the good: as if it were not a palpable certainty that he follows his own judgment every day, and that, naturally requiring his son and his neighbour to do the same, he would hold them severely responsible for every infringement of his rights. And does our Maker demand nothing of us? has He no rights? Still, possibly, the reasoner might maintain, that, although man is justly amenable to the laws of man, it is enough, with respect to his God, to obey the dictates of his judgment and inclinations with ordinary care; or, at least, that to do better is in vain, if not impossible. Here let us ask, where is the knowledge of God's goodness in him who is not grateful? and where is the gratitude of him who repents not of a thousand sins of wilful ignorance and negligence, of disobedience, and proud self-justifica-

tion?* Let the wise of this world answer. Let them hear, at least, the rational Religion of the truly wise. It was said of Job, "*there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil;*"† and his conclusion was, addressing his God, "*I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*"‡ Almost all the greatly good men of the Bible seem to say, with Daniel, "*O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces;*"§ and, the "*man after*" "*God's*" "*own heart,*"|| whose "*delight*"¶ was always in the law of his God, said, "*enter not into judgment with thy servant, (O Lord,) for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*"** Not even justified! "*Yet,*" said David, in continuance, "*do I remember the time past; I muse upon all thy works: yea, I exercise myself in the works of thy hands:*"†† as if he felt, that it is penitence alone which fits a man to understand and feel the goodness of God.

* In my judgment, it is clear that as man is responsible for his deeds—his habits and studies, he is equally so for the opinions he forms and teaches; and this I deem consistent, alike with reason and Revelation. Man may fall short of the mercy of God with one talent or ten.

† Job, i. 1-8.

|| Acts, xiii. 22; and 1 Sam. xiii. 14.

‡ Job, xlii. 5-6.

¶ Psalm cxix. 70, 77, 92, 174.

§ Dan. ix. 7-8. Ezra, ix. 6-7. ** Psalm cxliii. 2.

†† Ver. v. (Book of Common Prayer.)

The investigation of the physical world may be of avail to furnish evidences of the existence of a Great First Cause, of His skill and of His benevolence; nor will metaphysical enquiry be out of place. Some, in particular, may be in a predicament to require inductive proofs of the existence of mind, its properties, and qualities; or they may be overwhelmed for the want of scientific arguments, or probabilities, to shew, that mind may be immortal.* Assuredly, the contemplation of instinct and intelligence, in all their forms and operations, should impel some to acknowledge the Spirit of the Author of light and life.—Farther, the ethical exposition of man's duties, responsibility, and hopes, however little it appertains, in truth, to the Natural Religion of human invention, may serve to strengthen the better inclinations of a few, and especially of those who entertain no views of a higher or holier nature.

There is, I trust, a probability that, with the diffusion of knowledge, Atheism, both as a profession and

* In the consideration of our *spiritual being*, I fear it will be long ere human reason can attain any definite truth.—We know that our present bodies are perishable; but we cannot know that they contain nothing, material or immaterial, which is imperishable, indivisible, &c. With regard to our bodies, it is by no means inconceivable that the Mighty Spirit who first called them into animation should possess both the power and the will to animate them anew; and farther, supposing a perfect being, it is almost inconceivable that the Almighty Parent should suffer his annihilation.

a practice, may altogether disappear; and doubtless, the now numerous productions of philosophers, in illustration of Natural Theology, are calculated to silence the ignorant, as well as to improve and establish some general knowledge of the Almighty's government; moreover, they may be the quickest to reach those who prefer the inferences of human science before scriptural truths, even although many of the truths be actually the same in Revelation and Philosophy.

I sincerely hope that the time is approaching when every philosophic enquirer may reap the fairest fruit of his studies, by comprehending the beginning of wisdom, the fear of God.

It would be ever a subject of deep regret were I to fall into any wilful misinterpretation of the designed sense of your "Discourse," and I would very cautiously observe upon any peculiarities of opinion; but it is not easy to spare so marked a suppression of the fair scope of Revelation. By Revelation I suppose all men to mean the entire Bible, but in case you have limited the sense of the word to the mere predictions of eternity, or in any other manner, I would willingly qualify my remarks: for the present, however, they must depend upon what is pretty certainly the general acceptance.* It is written in

* The claim which the merely historical portions of the Bible may have to be regarded as Revelation might be resigned or rather left

the Bible, that God "*created man in his own image;*"* and "*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.*"† You cannot in fairness consider such statements as these to be different from Revelation, though possibly you may so distinguish much of the rational Theology of the Bible, in which case, my observations may be understood with the necessary reserve.

Towards the end of your "Discourse," you lay down the conclusion, that, "were our whole knowledge of the Deity drawn from Revelation, its foundation must become weaker and weaker as the distance in point of time increases from the actual interposition."‡

Now, if this assertion is applied to any small selected part of the Bible, it goes for nothing; but if it is applied to the entire Book of Revelation, in my opinion, it is altogether untrue. The Truth, uncontested, but it must ever be impossible for many minds to distrust the Divine origin of the greater part of Scripture. The moral and theological wisdom, the perfect moral law, the prophetic and miraculous power, with the most strict agreement of the several writers, so invariably on the side of truth and goodness, cannot fail of acceptation, as a Divine gift, with all those who believe in the necessity of Regeneration.

* Gen. i. 27.

† Gen. ii. 7. "*And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*"

‡ "Discourse," p. 209.

Wisdom, and Purity of Doctrine, in the Bible, are now and for ever unimpeachable; and, if Natural Religion or reasonable Theology is indispensable, the Law, the Prophets, and the Historical books, are alike fraught with it; far more, it might be supposed, than you are aware of, although you have quoted the Scriptural Theology with some seeming judgment. “Tradition,” you say, in continuation, “or the evidence of testimony, must of necessity be its (Revelation’s) only proof:” excepting always, say the believers, the indisputable internal evidence of the most complete Natural Theology, the most perfect system of morality, and the most wonderful history; excepting also, we say, the witness of prophecy—a host of predictions fulfilled and constantly fulfilling. These are not the only testimonies of the Bible’s truth. Unhappily too many persons are unprepared to know the value of Revelation by its perfections, its uses, and its influence in the world; by the character of its adherents and its advocates, as well as by its analogies, &c. You might advance, that science helps to shew the reasonableness of scriptural truth, and this may be justly said, but most particularly by those who delight in the Sacred Writings; still it is undeniable, that most persons have found the sciences quite unnecessary, and many have proved them altogether in the way—a source of hinderance, blindness, and error.

By this reference to the intrinsic testimony, in favour of the Bible, I have forestalled your next sentence, which is also one of objection ; for, in order to maintain the deficiency of the internal proofs of Revelation, you declare that “perpetual miracles must be wrought to give us evidence by our own senses,” in corroboration of the Revelation ; and you aver that “a perpetual miracle is a contradiction in terms.” This is a mistake. The actual accomplishment of Bible Prophecies is wonderful among miracles, a perpetual miracle, and a miracle perpetually increasing. Like every other miracle, it is perfectly convincing to the candid observer ; but, to those who are resolved not to see, it is equally deniable.* In direct, unreserved contradiction of your assertion, I positively affirm, that, independent of all Theology, not contained in the Bible, the Book of Revelation, instead of growing weaker, is daily gaining strength ;

* *Perfectly convincing*, of all it was intended to assure us of—the influence of a Holy Power : for, surely the spirit of Prophecy has been ever on the side of Holiness, as well as the miracles of Scripture. There is still room left for the exercise of human will. To become a Christian, some pains and some choice are required ; if it were not so, provided human dispositions should continue the same, the world would see, not only the willing carefully labouring, but likewise the unwilling compelled to follow the Will of God ; for, these latter protest, that they will not believe, unless they are compelled ; and accordingly they studiously shun every kind of influence.

not only growing more and more powerful argumentatively, but yearly extending its influence over the world: unfortunately, however, it does not seem to be making that advance among the deeply learned which it has effected almost everywhere besides.

You assert also "that it is a vain and ignorant thing to suppose that Natural Theology is not necessary to the support of Revelation."* I do not desire to pervert your meaning. You cannot of course intend to maintain, of the science of Natural Theology, taken entirely, and as men speak of it, that it is necessary, any more than other human sciences are, to the support of the Word of God; indeed, I am glad to find that elsewhere† you allow, that "one sufficient proof" of "the Deity's power and skill" "is in a certain sense enough:" "a single such proof overthrows the dogmas of the Atheist, and dispels the doubt of the Sceptic." You seem to grant, that a smaller knowledge of natural things than is expounded in almost any one of the Books of Scripture is more than enough of Natural Theology for the "Atheist" and the "Sceptic;" and this is my belief, provided these persons be not something besides—corrupt, or evil-minded—so negligent of the study of virtue as to imagine themselves good. If

* "Discourse," p. 204.

† "Discourse," p. 195.

you should admit that the science of Natural Theology is contained, advocated, and relied upon in the Bible, then I would say, the resources of Revelation are perfect—it requires *nothing* from without; and you surely will not contend that all the so called science, of which you write and so many have lately written, is necessary to the support of Revelation, even supposing all the doctrines of the learned to be well founded: you doubtless would freely allow, that a few distinct instances of the Deity's works, such as those scattered throughout the Scriptures, afford all the support that is necessary to Holy Writ—*all* the rational evidence that can be required of *all* the Attributes of God, and of the object of man's creation.

Do you wish to argue, that it is indispensable to the support of Revelation, that all must be true which is advanced in your "Discourse?" Do you intend to imply, that men must toil through the study of Natural Theology, as you have laid it down? Is it necessary to follow out and credit all your proofs of the Divine Attributes and human endowments, before the Bible is to be received? Do you not rather believe, that the Word of God is our best guide to the knowledge of Him and His Will? Do you not agree with me, that the man is happiest, wisest, best, who has cleaved to it from his infancy? Say, is not he to be pitied, who has wanted the guide

even for a year? What encouragement, solace, and strength has he not lost? Is not his lot an unhappy one, who has scarcely half learned to read it, when all the world's good is fading around him? For him the light of immortality burns but dimly! This, I think, is the universal faith of believers. Setting aside all fixed aversion to Holy Writ and all determined inclination to vice, perhaps, there is not a moment of man's existence—not a feeling of pleasure or pain, not one circumstance of the most chequered life, in which some truths of Scripture are not ready to aid, enlighten and cheer every weak and erring child of the earth. Oh, Man! whosoever thou art, how art thou fallen, if the broken track of human sciences must be the first or only means to lead thee to the knowledge of thy God!

You confide, with great apparent certainty, in the natural arguments in favour of the Unity, Omnipotence, and Eternal Existence of man's Maker; yet their fallacy has been already discussed by reasoners probably not less sagacious than yourself. For my part, relying on the infallibility of the Bible, I firmly believe all these great truths. I see also many reasons to corroborate and none to oppose them; but the arguments in the "Discourse" appear to my judgment very feebly founded. It is not my object to criticise these, but rather to enquire the uses than the imperfections of human Theology.

You proclaim your settled faith in the Book which says human wisdom is folly* and which declares the learning of the earth to be against the Wisdom of Heaven.† Still we are told, it has brought man many advantages, and among these, you would say, are the topics of Natural Theology. Let experience shew what has been the effect of natural knowledge upon most men of our own country or abroad—among the philosophers of France for instance. *Shall we judge them by their fruits?* Men do not “gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.”‡

Shall we say, the evils of human Theism do not belong to it of necessity, but depend upon its perversion? Let us regard it in one of its fairest forms.

* 1 Cor. iii. 19.

† Matt. ii. 25. 1 Tim. vi. 20. 1 Cor. i. 18. “*Wisdom is justified of her children,*” (Matt. xi. 19;) but, the “*beginning*” of this “*wisdom is the fear of the Lord;*” (Prov. i. 7; ix. 10; and Ps. cxi. 10;) and the completion of the same wisdom scarcely carries us farther, since we are commanded to purify ourselves, “*perfecting holiness in the fear of God;*” (2 Cor. vii. 1.) It is true, “*perfect love casteth out fear;*” (1 John, iv. 18;) when the Christian has become so intimately acquainted with the Perfections and Ways of Almighty God, and so practically and devotedly attached to His Law, that the knowledge of his liability to temptation makes him only humble, and not fearful.

‡ Matt. vii. 16. This seems to strike at both the Science and its especial Professors, unless it be not true that Natural Theology has for the most part been fruitless or pernicious, as well as its exclusive supporters.

In reference to the pleasures of scientific Theology *you* say, "We walk with the Deity; we commune with the Great First Cause, who sustains at every instant what the word of his power made. The delight is renewed at each step of our progress, though, as far as evidence is concerned, we have long ago had proof enough."* To me, here is proof enough of the miserable deficiency of man's wisdom. Is there no room in these communings for the deep feeling of self-abasement which the thoughts of God's Holiness should inspire? Is this all the fruit of man's reasoning upon Godliness?† Read once more the 19th Psalm, written when our race was scarcely half as old as now. "*The Heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handy work.*"‡ . . . "*The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments*

* "Discourse," p. 196.

† It may not be strictly right to complain of you for omitting "*the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith;*" unless these are also, as I glory to think them, the more essential matters of Rational Religion—but there is too much reason to complain that the unqualified expression of vain confidence in the presence of God is manifestly opposed to the weightier matters of repentance, watchfulness, and prayer.

‡ Psalm xix. 1.

*of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.**
“Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my REDEEMER.”† No just man can think that the Religion of David is not profoundly rational.

“But when we consider what its [Natural Theology’s] nature is—so intimately connected with our highest concerns—how immediately and necessarily leading to the religious adoration of the Supreme Being, can we doubt that the perpetually renewed proofs of his power, wisdom, and goodness tend to fix and to transport the mind, by the constant nourishment thus afforded to feelings of pure and rational devotion?”‡ To this, I reply, such, undoubtedly, should be the effect, but the facts are, unfortunately, different. Has the world often seen the learned naturalist subsequently becoming a truly good natural theologian, and from the perfections of the Deity deducing the too obvious degradation of himself and his species?

* Psalm xix. 7—9.

† Psalm xix. 11—14.

‡ “Discourse,” p. 195.

Would that this were a common sight; then might we see the learned of the earth devotedly seeking the Will of their Maker—the universal propagation of the Gospel—the command to repent and seek Redemption in the knowledge and love of the “*Word*”—the Wisdom and the Will of the God of all Goodness.

You scarcely anticipate an answer, when you demand, “What delight can be more elevating, more truly worthy of a rational creature’s enjoyment, than to feel, wherever we tread the paths of scientific enquiry, new evidence springing up around our footsteps—new traces of divine intelligence and power meeting our eye!”* Yet, if there is anything unjust in the sentiment of delight which you describe, nothing can be much more unworthy, even although no place can be found for *conscious* self-reproach; and, if there is not a profound sense of sinfulness in the reasoner when he contemplates his Maker’s Perfections, so far from having cause to feel elevated, I would tell him that he sins in pride and blindness, and that he is only augmenting his errors, fortifying himself in them, and increasing the necessity for humiliation and repentance.

The more elevating delight—the more reasonable and more Christian delight, which I shall venture to point out, is, I think, something better; I presume not to say it is the best. The rational crea-

* “Discourse,” p. 196.

ture must indeed learn to regard his Creator with deep reverence; yet it is not only consistent, but essential, that he should first feel how very far he is from what he ought to be, ere his almost impure praise can be acceptable to the God of Righteousness. —Has he always had the heart to follow after the wisdom, purity, and mercy of his Maker? No. Is he not both negligent and ignorant of the right, and does he not still cling to many things he knows to be evil? Yes. Will he still add to his innumerable sins an obdurate self-justification? Let the Christian ever combine heartfelt repentance with his reverence towards God; and then shall he know Peace,—then shall he understand of wisdom, that *“her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.”** A just conviction of his own and the world’s sin is the only key to explain the whole spirit of the Gospel. When the thought of eternity enters his mind, does the enquirer ask for justice, or does he pray for mercy? Mercy must be his sole reasonable hope; and the Bible only can teach him of this mercy, of which it will be his delight to learn.

The bare imagination of the purity of the Almighty should be dreadful to sinful man, and the doubtful hope of God’s mercy should be a source of restless anxiety to him, until he has discovered the way of atonement.

* Prov. iii. 17.

Now, the elevated delight and consummate enjoyment to which I would have all aspire, depend upon the adaptation of Christianity to the evils and wants of mankind. To believe in the wisdom and perfections of the doctrines of Jesus Christ, with pardon and encouragement, consolation and promises, so essential and so abundant for all, is to enjoy the "*peace of God which passeth all understanding.*"* To know well the ways of God's dealing with men, in order to bring them, through His Word and the experience of this life, to repentance, faith, and salvation, is something more; and to give one's heart to promote these holy ways of His Providence is probably most of all.

Must we think, that your exaggerated and almost exclusive applause of a wretchedly imperfect Natural Theology is insincere; or that you judged it unbecoming or inexpedient to avow more? To accuse you of insincerity might seem harsh; for it may well be, that you have been carried away with an ideal opinion, greatly erroneous, of something strikingly bright in ordinary sciences; and, with your known partiality for them, have been tempted to describe a dangerous delusion for a just reality.

"Revelation cannot be true, if Natural Religion is false."† Here you should have explained, what is

* Philip. iv. 7.

† "Discourse," p. 204-5.

the Natural Religion to which you refer, and whose is the system on which so much depends. This is an important question. Possibly you employ the term to signify those principles which relate to the simple attributes of God, and to the future existence of the soul; these form a part of Revelation itself, and cannot be true if the Bible is false. Revelation, again, cannot be true unless these principles, its essential parts, are also true. I think it is not well for you to feel, or to appear so confident in thus expressing yourself, and that you trust too much in your theological reasonings: for my own part, I doubt that it belongs in any way to Natural Theology to determine the Unity, the Omniscience, the Omnipotence, and the Eternal Existence of the Creator of Mankind; and I firmly believe that, independently of Revelation, these things are, for the present at least, totally above you, and all human wisdom. Again, whether our immortal souls be material or not, seems to me ever a vain enquiry.

If you include in your idea of an indispensable and fundamental Religion those doctrines of men which relate to the knowledge and choice of good and evil, to earthly probation and moral discipline, and to future rewards and punishments, I must avow, that I know of nothing deserving the name of Religion besides the doctrines of Our Lord Jesus Christ; independent of which and the Old Testament, you can find nothing which satisfactorily discrimi-

nates between good and evil, as a foundation for the notion of discipline, or for the expectation of rewards and punishments—nothing, that can render the view of trial and progressive improvement, which is so obscure when apart from Christianity, either just, clear, or practically available to good.

Christians cannot but think that your notions of Christianity are still very incomplete. They believe that the Bible introduces new virtues, and expunges some that were supposed true; also that it establishes the just value of all;* that it, and it alone, shews the right distinction of good and evil; and, not only that all pagan theories are erroneous, but that scarcely any other book, even of modern times, can be fully trusted.†

* See the justly valued opinions of Soame Jenyns. (“A view of the Internal Evidences of the Christian Religion.”) These virtues are unhappily still new or unknown, or little valued in the world.

† The Christian world does not think, for instance, as it is taught in the “Discourse,” that Anger is a blessing, but that it is a sin; nor does it agree with your doctrine, that one man’s ingratitude is justification for another’s anger, and that anger is the right remedy for mortification. It would be a very novel thing for a Christian to praise God for such a gift as the capability of being angry. The Christian sets penitence and gratitude towards God high, but gratitude and mere worldly services between men, seem far less estimable in the Gospel. It is our duty to yield them, but it is by no means so well to covet them for ourselves. The “Discourse” (page 65,) introduces likewise the “healing influence” upon the mind, arising from a man’s indulgence in “contempt or even pity:” the Holiness of the Bible sanctions not, but condemns even the pity that is allied to contempt. “*He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth.*” (Prov. xiv. 21.) “*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*” (Matt. xix. 19.) “Love” and

We find numerous grades of writers on morality; but even among the highest of them there are very few whose rules of feeling and conduct may be compared with those of Scripture; notwithstanding this, the world affords some instances of individuals whose dispositions and habits are, by Divine endowment, rather than by the force of education or reflection, very nearly in accordance with the commands of our Saviour. I speak of "*the poor in spirit,*" "*the meek,*" "*the patient,*" "*the peace-makers,*" "*the merciful*" and forgiving, and "*the pure in heart,*"*—persons whose virtues have been in general little fostered by the learned, and as little by the noble and the wealthy. When we reflect on the many devious ethical doctrines of almost all writers who have not rigorously followed the Bible, and, whilst making this reflection, consider the pernicious and lasting influence of all such teachers, we cannot but acknowledge with a wholesome humiliation the justice of their warning and their reward. "*Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" "*Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.*"†

Now, if, as I and thousands believe, the just know-

"*bless*" thine "*enemy.*" (Matt. v. 44.) See also Luke, vi. 32, and the note in John Wesley's Testament.

* Matt. v. ii.

† Matt. v. 20, 19.

ledge of right and wrong is nowhere furnished but by Christianity, it is evident that, without the Bible, the choice between good and evil, must be either a random or an erroneous one: in such a case, the idea of probation and the anticipation of rewards and punishments cannot anywise be less fallacious; yet this, I think, is one of the best points in the ordinary Natural Religion of the world, at this time. "But Revelation cannot be true if Natural Religion is false." There is no need for me to say, that I would not be thought to express any opinion against a true and pure Natural Religion, if any such can be found; but I require very little to convince me that the best exposition of this science, with which I have any acquaintance, is miserably weak and defective, if not often false. Without the Gospel, the doctrines of virtue, and rewards and punishments, bring us back to the dark wisdom of the pagans, or rather to that of a few individuals of them; on the other hand, among enlightened Christians, it is well understood, that many things, *still* very generally praised by men, are "*abomination in the sight of God.*"* Their standard of good is, not that which falls in with the reasonings and inclinations of men, but that which is strictly shewn to be in reason, as well as in Revelation, the Will of the God of Righteousness; and you, as a believer, also acknowledge this; for surely, else, it must be asked, "*despisest thou the riches of*

* Luke. xvi. 15.

*His goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering ; not knowing, that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"** Thus it would appear, that Natural Religion is good for very little, unless the doctrines, which are exclusively those of Christianity, be first acknowledged—unless the commands and the truths of Revelation be admitted, Natural Religion is totally vain. You state, without any sign of hesitation, that "Revelation cannot be demonstrated strictly by an argument, or established by any evidence without proving or assuming" Natural Religion for truth.† I shall not wait to enquire, again, what you imply by the word Revelation, but hold it to mean the entire Bible;‡ and, if I can shew your statement to be false, it must rest with you to decide, in your closet-thoughts, if you are not urgently required to seek pardon for a wilful negligence, in your declining years; and for deceiving others, by example, influence, and precept, in a matter so preeminently important as this—whether men must rely first upon the Revelations of God, or on the religion of human invention, feeble, incomplete, and unsettled, as it is.

* Rom. ii. 4.

† ("Discourse," p. 204-5.) "But Revelation cannot be true if Natural Religion is false, and cannot be demonstrated strictly by an argument, or established by any evidence, without proving or assuming the latter."

‡ I cling to the unlearned argument: "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above;*" (James, i. 17 et seq.) Such is the Bible, (even its history,) it is divine.

I totally deny the truth of what you say; and I shall apply myself to shew, as briefly and forcibly as I can, what I deem to be some of the most plain evidences of the unquestionable truth of the Bible. I contend, that the Bible contains an immense number of distinct predictions, in course of being fulfilled at this very time before the eyes of all men. Witness the state of Christianity, the Jews, the Papal and Mahomedan powers; witness also, many nations of the earth and their individual cities.* This any man can deny, but no man can disprove; and no man can doubt, who will carefully examine the incessantly multiplying proofs. And, if these numerous, distinct, and often literal accomplishments of Prophecy are indisputable, I contend, it is also proved, that they came from the Almighty. I argue thus:—I say, the Prophecies invariably profess to come from God, and the Prophecies are verified in immense numbers, beyond all dispute; and I ask, where is the philosophic induction, where is the common sense, that can see, as all may, the mass of verifications, and can then hesitate to accept the one assurance that accompanies them all? Is there a man on the earth, who, if he found an ancient book of wonderful predictions and in his own time beheld the fulfilment of hundreds, not to say thousands of them, and read, in the same book, that these things were foretold by Alpha

* See Bp. Newton, Keith, &c.

or Omega—is there a man, who would doubt? An objector might insinuate, that it is possible the accompanying statement of the Author's name may not belong to the original series of Prophecies. In reply to this, I would declare, that it is absolutely impossible for any man to disunite, even with his pen, the Prophecies and the Name of their avowed Author. The whole tenour of the Prophets is, "*He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit of God saith;*"* and to *Him* alone are the truths ascribed. "*Lo,*" says a Prophet, "*I am come unto thee: have I now any power at all to say anything? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak.*"† "*Must I not take heed to speak that which the Lord hath put in my mouth.*"‡ Every word of command, or Revelation, or wisdom, purporteth to come from God and none else. "*Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the Word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people:*"§—"come ye," saith

* Rev. ii. 7, 11, 17, 29; iii. 6, 13, 22; xiii. 9. Matt. xi. 27; xiii. 9, 43. Jer. ix. 20, &c. John, iii. 32, 11; v. 20, 30; viii. 26, 29; xv. 15. If it were asked of me, what is the object of the Bible? I should think of no better reply than to say, the Bible is written to show mankind that they are to "*be taught of God,*" and of *Him* only, in the ways of Goodness and Wisdom. John, vi. 45. Jer. xxxi. 34. Isaiah, liv. 13. Matt. viii. 10, and x. 16.

† Numb. xxii. 38. (Balaam.)

‡ Numb. xxiii. 12.

§ Isaiah, ii. 3, 4. Micah, iv. 2, 3. Christianity spread from Jerusalem!

the Prophet, *let us walk in the light of the Lord.*”* Now, what name could be substituted for that of the “*Lord?*” What does the word “*Lord?*” mean? How remove the *Name* and leave the sense? . . . It is certain, that countless events, foretold of old, are come to pass, and it is certainly impossible to separate the Prophecies from the assurance that they are of God. Is it not equally certain, that we must believe this assurance? Who does not rely implicitly on one who has long and invariably dealt truly with him? Who would refuse to trust wholly to one whose integrity was testified by such numbers? It seems to me a conclusive argument without further steps.† Here are verified predictions, for which no other source can be imagined; here is an assertion, for which no substitute can be invented; but, notwithstanding all this, the wisdom of man, as it were, expressly to verify the wisdom of Holy Writ, declares that Revelation “cannot be demonstrated strictly by an argument,” or “established by any evidence,” “without proving or assuming” the principles of Natural Theology.‡—If, as we are sure, the one sole

* Isaiah, ii. 5.

† This argument is here but feebly illustrated: its application is evident to the whole train of fulfilled Prophecy; and not less to all and each of the different perfections of the Bible. “*The Law of the ‘Lord’ is perfect.*” (Ps. xix. 7.)

‡ Here appears some room to apply the saying of our Saviour,

and peculiar tendency of the entire Scriptures is to make all mankind wiser, better, and happier here, and, as far as we can judge, fit them most certainly for a moral transfiguration hereafter; if also, Revelation is the only resource in this respect, what becomes of the evil suggestion, that the Bible, or any part of it, may be delusive by the design of its Author. Whatever secondary spirits may be at work, it is clear, that those of the Bible have had no intention, in constructing the Scriptures, to do honour to themselves, evil to man, or despite to God. Whatever evil spirits Natural Theology can discover, it must dispose of according to its own wisdom and abilities. All reliance on this kind of subtle reasoning (or rather surmising,) serves only to exemplify the Scriptural Truths. "*Thou (Lord) hast hid these things from the wise and prudent.*"* The old prophecy was, "*the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid;*"† and the Apostle's reflection upon this and similar predictions was: "*For it is written,*

"*Lord,*" "*thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hath revealed them unto babes.*" (Matt. xi. 25.) To become such a *babe*, we must cast away the poor wisdom of the earth, with its still meaner pride, and be ready, with a lowly new-born spirit, to be "*taught of God;*" with whom "*the wisdom of this world is foolishness.*" (1 Cor. iii. 19.)

* Matt. xi. 25.

† Isaiah, xxix. 14.

*I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty;—And the base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought the things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.”**

In pursuance of the *innate* evidence of Revealed Truth, let us examine the general contents of the whole Scriptures, and see what is wanting or is evil. *Do we not here find* the various works of nature adduced in testimony of the Divine Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, in far greater abundance, as you admit, than suffices to “overthrow the dogmas of the Atheist, and dispel the doubts of the Sceptic?” and might I not add, to convince every heart open to the knowledge and love of what is good? *Do we not here find* a moral law of the most perfect kind, greatly surpassing all others known in its efficacy as

* 1 Cor. i. 19, &c.

to human happiness, whether here or hereafter? *Do we not here find* the history of ages and people, which is strictly in accordance, as relates to humanity, with what is elsewhere to be learned of these periods, and with what is very well known of human dispositions and characters? *Do we not here find* a series of books, unquestionably composed by several different ancient authors, at various and distant periods; and do we not find in them, that the several attributes of the Almighty are everywhere and uniformly represented the same; the revealed knowledge being strengthened by rational inferences of His purity, and abhorrence of iniquity, His love and merciful patience, His perfect knowledge and constant watchfulness, His infinite duration, power, wisdom, and goodness; but very especially of His instant insight into the thoughts of man's heart, with the mode of His proceeding by kindness and chastening, by teaching and inducement, by patience and long-suffering, to reclaim man's wayward inclinations? *Do we not here find* an immense train of occurrences, foretold, and fulfilled, in the course of the history; and an equally astonishing chain of circumstances, long ago predicted, and now in progress of fulfilment, so that they who run may read? *Do we not here learn* of miraculous interpositions, which were fully believed by all men of those ages, whether friends or foes, and denied by none, good or evil?

Miracles, affirmed by men of such high character as renders it impossible to doubt their veracity, and makes it easier to believe that these things were than that their history is fabulous,—miracles, purporting always to come from the Author of all good, from whom alone they could come, so obviously and unexceptionably in support of the same good?

In one of your suppositions,* granting the fact of miracles having been performed to corroborate a message of Revelation, you advance, that “even this strong evidence would not at all establish the truth of the doctrine promulgated by the Messenger; for it would not shew that the story he brought was worthy of belief in any one particular except his supernatural powers. These would be demonstrated by his working miracles. All the rest of his statement would rest on his assertion. But a being capable of working miracles might very well be capable of deceiving us.” You have omitted to shew that this argument does not apply to the Natural Theology of mortals,—that a being, capable of creating this world, and all that it offers to the ken of the philosophic enquirer, might not by any possibility be capable of deluding them, or of suffering them to be deluded. Are there no instances of deluded learned

* “Discourse,” p. 205-6.

men? The "Discourse" affords several examples of illustrious philosophers deluded inextricably; and I would suggest, that such a delusion might be rendered more beneficial than many profound researches; for, if humility and penitence are essential to salvation, the wise and mighty should be deeply indebted to whatever can break down the strongholds of self-applause. It is highly to be desired that the consciousness of their errings were far more efficacious to produce the right sense of lowliness.

My heart sickens with these daring and wicked surmises of evil spirits, in connexion with the perfect Law of God. I am inclined to trust, that you have no intention of applying this supposition to Christianity, but wherefore should you introduce it? Can you expect that good men, now, or in any age to come, should ever regard it without a sentiment of pity for the mind that furnished forth such an invention,—calculated only to disturb the weak? It seems to me a likely thing, that the Creator of men should leave the self-satisfied philosopher to delude himself with inductions about abstract things, in the wilful neglect of habitual piety and virtue, as they are described in the Gospel; but who shall pretend to attach the idea of deception to the Wisdom, the Morality, or the Prophecies of Scripture; and to that oft-repeated truth, that man is weak and sinful? Some I fear

there may yet be, who shall refuse to consider these things and be "*wise*;"* I pray that their number may decrease.

I know not upon which of your labours you would rather rely for a lasting approbation in the world, but I suppose you have produced nothing of greater importance to mankind than your "Discourse;" I cannot, however, forbear to express my conviction, that, with all the truly good, now and for ever, the argument of possible demoniac deception, applied by you to the sacred characters of the Bible, can be looked upon only with mingled pity and disapprobation.†

If you are a believer, it is more than strange; but if you are altogether indifferent, it is characteristic enough. Yet, should this doubt or objection rise up in the thoughts of any one who desires to live according to the will of his Maker, and in the hope of eternity; or even should it enter into the mind of any one engaged in sin, or determined to cast away the fear of God and the expectation of the life to come, together with the love of all that is holy and good on earth, the unsettled spirit will do well to examine and remember what it is that he is tempted to doubt or deny. And this brings me to resume my rapid survey of the *innate* Scriptural evidences, the strength of which, even in my feeble hands, seems almost irresistible.

* Hosea, xiv. 9.

† "Discourse," p. 205—209.

The Bible contains a host of the undisputed doctrines of wisdom that have illuminated many in every age since they have been known; and it contains no doctrine whatever of an opposite character.

The Bible contains innumerable Prophecies, fulfilled, and in constant daily fulfilment.

The Bible contains a wonderful history of the Almighty attributes, doings and intentions, a great part of which is perfectly rational,—strictly consistent with philosophical truth.

The Bible contains the most profound and rational history of human nature that can be found in the world.

The Bible contains a moral law of unexampled perfection.

The Bible contains promises of eternal life, and threats of eternal death.*

The Bible contains a condemnation of every sin, encouragement for every real virtue; wisdom and strength for every weakness, solace for every pain; rest and peace, hope and joy, for every willing soul.

The Bible contains a miraculous story, which, in the judgment of all, it is impossible to believe false, when it is understood; a story, the events of which *every one* believed who witnessed; and none ventured to deny until long after their occurrence.

* Life, the blessing of eternity;—Death, the wages of sin, destruction from all hope, peace, and light.

I have not the least knowledge of any one exception or objection to all these attributes of Divine Revelation; and such has been the conclusion of all the Christian churches and communities that have ever existed.

Who can fairly contemplate all this, and remain in doubt? Which is the part to which doubt can be affixed? How can any one part be selected, without destroying the whole? Such a selection is absolutely impossible. What is there here referrible to an evil spirit? Is it the morality, or the wisdom; the prophecy, or the promises; the comfort, or the hopes; the avowed infinite perfections of the Creator, or the proclaimed errors of the creatures? Is all this a falsehood?—for its parts are actually inseparable; or, is that spirit wrong that can imagine doubts or difficulties against so much all-acknowledged truth and goodness, simply because there is much in Revelation which he has not learned, or cared to comprehend? This seems a kind of argument cumulative, almost resistless; and when we consider that every one of these several views is rendered in the Bible as clear and unexceptionable as the nature of the case could admit, and that every one is inseparable from the rest, by any artifice short of the destruction of all; the truth, which all must see, appears so pledged for the verity of the parts not yet understood (by the individual enquirer), that it is easy to believe, and

understand the universal assurance of mature Christians, that the increase of their comprehension is as constant as their reading.

A similar argument to the above has been stated by Mr. Wilberforce.* And the names of lay philo-

* "Anxious, however, in my little measure, to contribute to the support of this great cause, may it be permitted me to state one argument, which impresses my mind with particular force? This is, the great variety of the *kinds* of evidence which have been adduced in proof of Christianity, and the confirmation thereby afforded of its truth; the proof from Prophecy,—from Miracles,—from the character of Christ,—from that of his Apostles,—from the nature of the doctrines of Christianity,—from the nature and excellence of her *practical precepts*,—from the accordance we have lately pointed out between the doctrinal and practical systems of Christianity, whether considered each in itself or in their mutual relation to each other,—from other species of internal evidence, afforded in greater abundance in proportion as the Sacred Records have been scrutinised with greater care,—from the accounts of contemporary, or nearly contemporary writers,—from the impossibility of accounting, on any other supposition than that of the truth of Christianity, for its promulgation and early prevalence: these, and other lines of argument, have all been brought forward, and ably urged by different writers, in proportion as they have struck the minds of different observers more or less forcibly. Now, granting that some obscure and illiterate men, residing in a distant province of the Roman empire, had plotted to impose a forgery upon the world; though some foundation for the imposture might, and indeed must, have been attempted to be laid, it seems, at least to my understanding, morally impossible that *so many different species of proofs*, and all so strong, should have lent their *concurrent* aid, and have united their *joint* force in the establishment of the falsehood. It may assist the reader in estimating the value of this

sophers, such as Pascal and Locke, Newton and Bacon, among the advocates of Revelation, will not suffer us to entertain, even momentarily, the idea that enlightened Christianity is merely a deep-rooted and cherished delusion, as theists and others imagine.

You relate that, "when Christianity was first promulgated, the miracles of Jesus were not denied by the ancients; but it was asserted that they came from evil beings, and that he was a magician." And you declare, that the "argument"* of these objectors "was not at all unphilosophical:" I suppose you mean that it was rational. Now, whilst I exonerate you of any evil intention in this, I feel justified in attaching a severe rebuke to the opinion, false and pernicious as it is. "*O full of all subtlety and all mischief, . . . wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord.*"† "*Thy money (thy wisdom) perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money (with earthly learning). Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent, therefore, of this thy wickedness, and*

argument, to consider upon how different a footing, in this respect, has rested every other religious system, without exception, which was ever proposed to the world; and, indeed, every other historical fact, of which the truth has been at all contested."—*Wilberforce's Practical View of Christianity*; (end of Chap. V.)

* "Discourse," p. 206.

† Acts, xiii. 10.

*pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.**

To find you thus singularly misled, might, on a less awful occasion, serve to cheer as well as fortify the Christian in a very different confidence. If there be in your declaration no enduring shame done to the inductive reasoning in which you trust, surely the pride of intellect must at least suffer a painful fall. Let us suppose the wisest of the pagan sages, even him "best imbued with religious opinions," in the calm evening of his days. Place such an one in the midst of the wasting pestilence, as when Athens was desolated. Let us suppose him long a fearful and helpless witness of the raging plague, when he discovers one going about doing good—healing the sick, teaching true wisdom to the poor and simple, consoling the sorrowful, relieving the distressed, rebuking only and alarming the wicked; by practice and by doctrine inculcating every good, and condemning every sin. Imagine this and then consider whether the philosopher could think that these deeds were, or even might be, of an evil spirit? Would he not sooner exclaim, and with perfect truth, Blessed is he whose life is passed in such exertions of benevolence? But what if our sage could trace the perfect fruits of these deeds multiplying through

* Acts, viii. 20—22.

eighteen successive centuries, and behold, in the nineteenth, this diffusive goodness extending with accelerated impulse over the world? What if he beheld you—one of the torch-holders of modern philosophy, casting only a momentary shadow of suspicion upon the Holy Original of Christianity?

I cannot stay my animadversion even here. There is, perhaps, some one spirit whom these reflections may concern besides ourselves. It would be a great consolation, if I could be certified that your error is a casual one of ignorance or forgetfulness; though in such a case it would yet be fearful enough. You have laboured to excuse, if you have not gone near to sanction, the most enormous blasphemy. The man who, by reason or through Revelation, has acquired any commonly mature notions of God and of Goodness, will readily enough acknowledge that all goodness must depend on the Spirit of God;—that Holy Spirit, who “*moved upon the face of the waters,*” in the teeming hour of the Creation, and prepared the way for order, light, and life—that Holy Spirit, to whom alone we can attribute the purity, piety, and wisdom of the Word of God; and to whom alone we may safely refer all that is good in the spirit of man, and all that is just in his endeavours.

Can any folly or can any sin surpass that which confounds the work of the Spirit with the deeds of Satan—which declares evil to be from God, or

righteousness to be of the devil? What is there in the Bible that any could proclaim to be of the devil? whilst a Chancellor of a Protestant country is ready to maintain that such an "argument" "is not at all unphilosophical"!*

Christians believe that the Spirit of God dwelt on earth with Our Lord Jesus Christ; and the following passage from St. Matthew,† striking to the foundation of your daring error, contains the words of God, dictated by His Holy Spirit, through our Blessed Saviour. When the Pharisees accused Jesus of working his miracles of benevolence, through the power of Beelzebub, His reply was, "*He that is not with me (in the "regeneration"‡ of the world) is against me; and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad. Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the*

* The Parable, employed on the occasion to which you refer, tells us, that "*a house divided against itself cannot stand.*" (Mark iii. 25.) Of this I venture to strain the application to your philosophy, or rather false philosophy,—a weak, unsettled, inconsistent thing, which cannot hold together. Is it "not at all unphilosophical," to assert that the Gospel of St. John might have originated from a devil? This Gospel narrates but a small part of the words and deeds of Jesus Christ.—Is it philosophical to suppose of the very "*many other things which Jesus did,*" (John xxi. 25,) that they were less Divine or more demoniac? I would trust that you have written hastily, or that I have mistaken your meaning.

† Matthew, xii. 30—37.

‡ Ibid. xix. 28.

Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: BUT WHOSOEVER SPEAKETH AGAINST THE HOLY GHOST, IT SHALL NOT BE FORGIVEN HIM, NEITHER IN THIS WORLD, NEITHER IN THE WORLD TO COME. Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."

I find some satisfaction in an observation of yours on this subject, which is somewhat redeeming, and therefore willingly adduced in this place. The Prophet, you say—"the messenger in question might have power to work miracles without end, and yet it would remain unproved either that God was omnipotent, and one, and benevolent, or that he destined his creatures to a future state, or that he had made them such as they are in their present state. All this might be true, indeed; but its truth would rest only on the

messenger's assertion, and upon whatever internal evidence the nature of his communication afforded."*

You will pardon my saying, that a better estimation of the "Internal Evidences" of the Gospel than you avow is an essential part of your only safe trust. "Internal Evidence" is that with the nature of which you ought to be familiar; but how little must you know of Christianity and its progress among mankind, to hint or dream any defect of "Internal Evidences." Who can deliberate successively, upon the Wisdom, the Morality, the Piety, the Miracles, the Prophecies, the History of God, and of Man, and of Eternity, contained in the Bible, and ask for external evidence? What has been the faith of all the best men since the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ? What is there of good in the world, for which we are not indebted to the propagation of His Doctrines? What even of good in the boasted Natural Theology, not originating in Scripture? Did Newton prefer the Natural Theology, or the contemplation of God's Word, and the verification of God's Prophecies, fulfilled and fulfilling, and to be fulfilled? Did Locke hold first and foremost the pursuits of Metaphysics? Did he not rather teach—"Study the Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament: therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, Salvation for its end,

* "Discourse," p. 207.

and Truth without any mixture of error for its matter.”* Truth—reasonable truth—for its testimony; Salvation for its attraction; God for its security.

Nothing is more indispensable for you to know; indeed, you may be fatally guilty until you are forward to proclaim that the evidences of the Bible are overwhelming to every one that seeks the truth with care. The instances of sagacious unbelievers who have learned to believe are very numerous; on the other hand, there never was one, and I am prophet enough to foretel, there never shall be one found, to shew that, while living in the simple practice of Christian virtues, he carefully sought the evidences of the Bible’s truth, and was not lastingly convinced. Again, I would demand, what your meaning is in saying, “It is plain that no sufficient evidence can ever be given by direct Revelation alone in favour of the great truths of religion”?† You allow that miracles prove something, and you

* Locke’s Posthumous Works. I quote from the Apologies of Bishop Watson, whose works, though not perhaps profound, I esteem highly meritorious—unanswered and unanswerable; as have been, I think, all the regular argumentative defences of our religion. The professors of atheism, theism, and freethinking, have afforded so few examples proportionately of even worldly good men, that their causes, with rare exceptions, sink from inherent weakness.

† “Discourse,” p. 207.

grant that "Internal Evidence" should have its proper weight; but you seem to attribute unreal ambiguities and difficulties to the Book of Revelation, for the sake of declaring, in favour of your little known and still less matured science, that "the doctrines of the existence of a Deity and of his Attributes, which Natural Religion teaches, preclude the possibility of such *ambiguities*, and remove all those *difficulties*."* Are you not aware, that very few men know anything whatever of scientific Theology, and that the greater part of those few are far from considering the science free from greater difficulties than Revelation? Know you not, also, that many learned natural theists are nothing else that even approaches to good; and that many have been misled by science to despise or disregard all Revelation?

Once more, with respect to the support which Revelation derives from Natural Theology, and which support you aver to be essential or indispensable, do you mean to assert for a moment, that the Apostles and early disciples of Christianity, placed any reliance on the boasted inductive Theology? Did they not avowedly disregard all human learning? Did they not declare, what experience has ever since shewn, that the wisdom of the earth was vain to help, and powerful to hinder the knowledge and love of God?

* "Discourse," p. 207.

Would you assert, that the scientific Natural Theology has had any share in extending the kingdom of Christ over the world? or, would you not rather confess that Martyrs and Missionaries, and all the true and humble servants of our faith, have in the main been ignorant of the knowledge you teach; and that they have gloried rather in the economy of Salvation than in the processes of natural life? Are you not aware, that, according to the most common daily experience, and in undeniable fulfilment of ancient predictions, many hundreds of human beings are hourly falsifying your statement of the necessity of Natural Theology? unless you can grant that they are justly satisfied with the rational Religion of the Bible.

Is not the host increasing on all sides of single-minded men, studying the Bible alone; following its dictates; growing in its wisdom; rejoicing in its promises; reposing in its consolations; living upon the "*bread of eternal life*"? It might be said that these are ignorant, but their lives do not prove it; and in my judgment there is none of the wisdom of the learned to compare with that which brings men to know, that they are fallen in the sight of their God, —that they have nothing to hope but from His mercy, through the expiation of Jesus Christ.

It is highly desirable, that you should produce a just and perfect view of your so called science, and represent far more distinctly the service it is calculated

to render to Christianity, and the mode of its operation in promoting the settled Will of Almighty God.

As a Christian, finding wisdom and strength, peace, and hope, in Revelation, and devoutly wishing that all men may find the same, I regard Natural Theology, like all other learning, as useful only in connexion with the Scriptures, to strengthen our faith and obedience to the Revealed Will of God.

There yet remains an opinion, contained in the last paragraph of your "Discourse," which appears to call for the most careful scrutiny, if not for the severest reprehension, especially if we regard it as the concluding observation of a Christian, as well as a natural theologian. "It is remarkable how little is to be found of particularity and precision in anything that has been revealed to us respecting the nature of the Godhead. For the wisest purposes it has pleased Providence to veil in awful mystery almost all the attributes of the Ancient of Days beyond what natural reason teaches. By direct interposition, through miraculous agency, we become acquainted with his will, and are made more certain of his existence; but his peculiar attributes are nearly the same in the volume of nature, and in that of his revealed word."

"It is remarkable how little is to be found of particularity and precision in anything that has been revealed to us respecting the nature of the Godhead"! Is it really true, that you consider the Book of

Revelation silent with regard to the wisdom, power, and goodness of God? or that you deem the doctrines relating to these Attributes, so simply rational,—so self-evident, even to pagans and barbarians, as not to be truly matters of Revelation? Do you think that science has rendered these truths of four thousand years in any respect more certain? There should be some difficulty in believing that Moses, fostered amid the idolatries of Egypt, was not illumined by some ray of the eternal wisdom, when "*the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands . . .*"* The spirit of the Prophet Jeremiah seems deeply laden with the Truth of Revelation in declaring to an evil and unrepenting world, the voice of the Almighty, "*I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth.*"†

The writings of most scientific men in these days, contain a Theology very different from, or very far beneath that inculcated in the Holy Scriptures. The Books of Revelation might almost be said to be written chiefly for the purpose of teaching mankind the "nature," that is to say the properties—the powers, dispositions, and intentions of the Creator. How

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

† Jer. ix. 24.

copious are the declarations, as well as the explanatory instances of His *purity, benevolence, and perfections*. How fully is it shewn, that He *despiset not any*; that He is *unwilling that any should perish*; that He is *merciful, patient, long suffering, ready to forgive, waiting to be gracious, chastening in love, well pleased with the sacrifice of good deeds, and, although not without a dreadful severity, yet listening to the prayers of all, even of sinful men*. How incomprehensible is your error, or do I misunderstand you when you write,—“For the wisest of purposes it has pleased Providence to veil in awful mystery almost all the attributes of the Ancient of Days, beyond what natural reason teaches”! We might hail with delight that “natural reason” (even almost as a revelation) that would enable us to distinguish the Divine Attributes, as we learn them in the Bible. It is true, that the Scriptural account is in a great measure consonant with reason and experience; but it is not true, according to experience, that natural reason teaches the knowledge of these Attributes as they are revealed.

The natural wisdom with which we are endowed, may assist us to study the Bible truths, but there is little hope of happy progress for him who is satisfied to rely upon his own unaided reason in investigating the Revelations of God. The man who most clearly understands whence he received the gift of reason,

will most surely know the source to which he must look for the increase of his wisdom. Thus spoke the prophet Daniel:—“*I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom ;*”* and to this wise and holy man, “*greatly beloved,*”† it was revealed, “*Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.*”‡ The like occurred also to “*Cornelius,*” “*the devout centurion.*”§ Thus, and thus only, does it happen now to Christian men. “By direct interposition, through miraculous agency, we become acquainted with his (the Almighty’s) will:” and, incontrovertibly, the knowledge of His “Will” is a vast accession to our knowledge of His “Nature.” By the same means, you say, “we are made more certain of his existence;” and can we entertain a clearer conviction of His “existence,” without a riper sense of His Divine Nature and Perfections ?

“His peculiar attributes are nearly the same in the volume of nature, and in that of his revealed word.” The Almighty’s Attributes are, indisputably, the same everywhere, and through all eternity ; but, where are the learned in natural things,—where are the Theo-

* Dan. ii. 23.

† Dan. x. 11.

‡ Dan. x. 12.

§ Acts, x. 1, 2.

logians and Philosophers who have well learned the knowledge of their Maker and His Will without the study of Revelation? Where is the instructed or unlearned unbeliever who has convinced himself, that, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;”** and has discovered the law, *“Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;”*† or, who has found out the truth, *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God?”*‡ Where is he whose natural reason has taught him so much of the benevolent nature of the Ancient of Days as, that, *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him, is not condemned: but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the*

* 1 John, i. 8.

† Matt. ii. 3, 4, 17.

‡ John, iii. 3.

*light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God?"** Do not all these things serve to distinguish, most determinately, what belongs to the Nature and Attributes of the Almighty? "*God is a Spirit:*"† What could be desired more "respecting the nature" of a Spiritual "Godhead?" How is it that "natural reason" has fallen so far short of the Divine Revelation in its treasures of instruction, such as this:—"Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."‡ . . . It is not the religion of nature, but the precepts of Christ which have taught us to say, "*Father,*" "*Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.*"

* John, iii. 16.

† John, iv. 24.

‡ Matt. xxviii. 19.

Handwritten text, possibly a signature or date, located in the lower right quadrant of the page. The text is faint and difficult to decipher, but appears to consist of several lines of cursive or semi-cursive script.

POSTSCRIPT.

BEING but little acquainted with the writings of the learned, though habitually enquiring into the wisdom of Holy Writ, I feel it incumbent upon me to acknowledge the distrust with which these Reflections have been made public; yet I trust that they are not opposed to the truths of Scripture; and, however feeble the language may be in which they are written, I would indulge a hope that they may induce some to devote more attention to the Inspired Writings. My labour would be more than repaid, if it were but the means of leading one to the Book of Life.

We find that the numerous doctrines of the Bible greatly excel all others, and therefore we feel convinced of their Divine origin. Admitting that certain portions of Scripture are more especially *Revelations*, we cannot, I think, positively withhold from any the character of Inspiration; still less can we determine between that which is revealed of God, and that which is not.

Probably few have diligently studied the Sacred Books, without conceiving the wish that more had been revealed, particularly on some favorite topic of enquiry; but, notwithstanding this natural curiosity, we may be certain that the Bible contains the knowledge which is best adapted for us, and that, humanly speaking, its stores are inexhaustible. Besides, it is not very clear that our present condition could admit of any additional information concerning those mysteries most commonly enquired of,—and with so little consideration.

When the diversity of opinions prevalent in the world is considered, it will afford a powerful inducement both to humility and charity; and when it is remembered that a succession of changes is indispensable to the maturing mind, we may be inclined to entertain some respect even for mistaken judgments. Thus, it is wrong to despise the smallest thing, for the reason that upon it may depend matters of the greatest importance.

THE END.

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