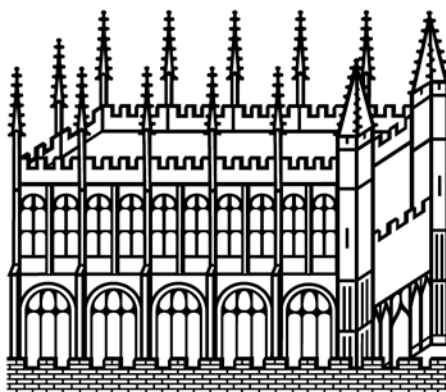




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A FREE CRITIQUE
ON
Dr. CHALMERS'S
DISCOURSES ON ASTRONOMY;
OR,
AN ENGLISH ATTEMPT
TO
“ GRAPPLE IT ”*
WITH
Scotch Sublimity.

* See Dr. CHALMERS'S Discourses—Page 125.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Whilst this Pamphlet has been printing, Dr. Chalmers's trumpeter has not been idle:—like a skilful performer, he has reserved the most vigorous blast for the last—having run through the gamut, he finishes with the top note of his scale, and “pitches” the Doctor side by side with Shakespear—“declaring him to have displayed the most profound knowledge of the human heart.” *Nous verrons.*

A FREE CRITIQUE

ON

Dr. CHALMERS'S

DISCOURSES ON ASTRONOMY.

SEVERAL circumstances concurred to excite an interest concerning Dr. Chalmers's Discourses on the Christian Revelation viewed in connection with the Modern Astronomy, in the minds of those who were strangers to the author. Report stated that the publishers had testified their approbation in the intelligible form of very many pounds sterling: the same authority, that the first edition, and that a very large one, was swallowed up alive. The newspapers were, with great industry, employed to sound forth Dr. Chalmers's praises, and Milton named as the distinguished individual whom he *did not* eclipse. He was spoken of as "a truly valuable

writer, and a justly celebrated preacher, of whom it was impossible to speak too highly ;” as “a most valuable clergyman, distinguished by most profound talents ;” “an admirable and unrivalled preacher, of truly pre-eminent abilities ;” and this hyperbolical praise was made to tell by an allusion to his *Astronomical Sermons*, which the writer in the newspaper declares (the only part to which I can agree), “have sufficiently proved him to be what he justly is.” But, above all, the magnificent discoveries of recent astronomers suggested many interesting combinations, many useful illustrations, to those who knew the riches of revelation ; and the importance, therefore, of uniting therewith a science that tends more than any other to expand the mind, to raise, ennoble, and sanctify the man, by familiarising him with the works of his Father and his God, on a scale of unbounded magnificence.

Dr. Chalmers must be content to suffer all the disadvantage of this high-raised expectation, of which he, or some one else by his assignment, has reaped the profit ; and strong indeed will be the re-action when his volume is considered either with reference to the capabili-

ties of his subject—the loud blazonings of his heralds—or even the pretence of his title-page—for there will be found but little in his volume connected with astronomy that is not, from the popularity of the writings of Fontenelle, Derham, and Hervey, become common-place; and his own estimate of the importance of the discoveries of astronomy, as viewed in connection with revelation, must be very low, since he considers “those of the microscope necessary to neutralize the whole of the argument infidelity derives from the telescope.”—Page 112.

To those who have long known Dr. Chalmers the whole assumes rather a romantic air:—that the itinerant Lecturer on Chemistry and Natural Philosophy, whose neglected flock at Kilmany were but ill compensated for the loss of his mellifluous accents by the stragglers from St. Andrew's—that if others, with Saul, have their thousands, he should, with David, have his tens of thousands—that he should be ushered in to the English Public as the peerless prince of modern eloquence—is an extravaganza that may chance to sink Dr. Chalmers below his true level; for the human mind revolts at imposture, and is apt to consider as implicated those who

derive advantage from it, although they may really be in some measure the dupes of their own vanity. That Dr. Chalmers may be led to estimate himself more correctly than his flatterers would willingly allow—that by knowing his weakness he may know his strength—I charge him with deficiency in the very elements of astronomical knowledge, that which he parades before us being apparently procured for the occasion, assumed “for that night only.” I charge him with insinuating a gross and unfounded calumny against Newton—that he is very frequently inelegant and ungrammatical—his style in general turgid and inflated—his imagery incongruous and involved—and his acquaintance with the true genius of Christianity far from profound.

Many who have heard Dr. Chalmers mentioned as a scholar, and an elegant writer, will see with surprise some of the specimens here adduced of his present work, and will wonder how they could escape an author whose language sometimes approaches to eloquence; who seems, on the whole, well affected to the cause of truth; and whose rank in society raises him above those whose vulgarities, in so many in-

stances, he retains. The charges here made against him shall be supported by distinct quotations from his Discourses; and first to prove that he is inelegant and ungrammatical in his phraseology. I quote from

Page 9.—“*Gratuitously fetched out of an unknown region.*”

Page 10.—“*Carrying forward thousands—to an undone eternity.*”

Page 18.—Having first asked, “what should have been, &c.” he three times together repeats “should it be”; but to make all even, in the next page, he three times uses the past tense for the present; for having said, “*Conceive that St. Paul were at this moment alive, and engaged in the work, &c. should he not still have acted, &c.*” So accurately does Dr. Chalmers balance his errors, that we may compliment him as being right wrong.

Page 19.—“*Surely it would have been vastly more Christian.*”

Page 20.—“*Too characteristic of the more*

declared professors of the truth as it is in Jesus." I refrain from asking Dr. Chalmers whom he means by those whose narrow, exclusive, and monopolizing spirit, he fears, is too characteristic, &c. Perhaps he would answer, it was only to round a period. I submit to him, before he shall *again* round a period on this subject, that that which *characterizes* cannot be *too* characteristic.

Page 27.—“ We know that this earth turns round *upon itself*.” P. 39.—“ The sun turns round *upon itself*. P. 38.—“ Proveth that the ball we tread upon, *instead* of being distinguished *from* the others, is among the least of them.” How this is to be done, if it cannot be distinguished from the others, I am unable to imagine.

Page 40.—“ It is true that we see them not ; but could the eye of man take its flight into those distant regions, it *should* lose sight, &c. ; the sun *should* decline into a little spot ; he *should* at last shrink into a small indivisible atom, and all *should* be reduced to the glimmering of a little star.”

Page 46.—“ But there is still another very interesting tract of speculation which has been *opened up* to us.”

Page 53.—“ It is not for us to bring our minds *up* to this mysterious agency.”

Page 55.—“ And elevated as the wisdom *of him* may be who has ascended the heights of science, &c. how much more elevated is the wisdom *of him* who sits with the docility of a little child—to his Bible!”

Page 57.—“ But *labour it* as we may, we cannot, with every power of expression, make an adequate conveyance, *as it were*, of all our sensations, and of all our circumstances, into another understanding.”

—————“ He wonders at the obtuseness of the people around him ; and *how* he cannot get them to enter into the justness of his complainings.”

Page 59.—“ To set the world on a gaze of admiration.”

Page 67.—“ I trust you understand, how (it

should have been, as how) though it be one of the maxims of the true philosophy never to shrink from a doctrine which has evidence on its side ; it is another maxim, equally essential to it, never *to harbour* any doctrine when this evidence is wanting."

Page 69.—“ They chuse neither to know, nor to believe, nor to assert, when evidence is *a wanting* ; and they will sit (how will they sit ?) with all the patience of a scholar to his task (the most patient thing in the world,) till they have found it (i.e. what's a wanting).”

Page 79.—“ The man who could embark in an enterprise so foolish and so fanciful, as to theorise *it* on the details of the botany of another world, or to theorise *it* on the natural and moral history of its people, is just making as *outrageous* a departure from all sense, and all science, and all sobriety, when he presumes to speculate or to assert on the details or methods of God's administration among its rational and accountable inhabitants.”

Page 81.—“ But here I stop—nor shall I attempt to grope my dark and fatiguing way *by*

another inch among such sublime and mysterious secrecies. It is not I who am *pitching* my adventurous flight to the secret things which belong to God."

Page 125.—" — and whether she *grapple it* with the pride of philosophy."

Page 131.—" — but the knowledge which he cannot *fetch* up himself from the obscurity of this wondrous, but untravelled, scene, by the exercise of any one of his senses, might be *fetch*ed to him by the testimony of a competent messenger."

Page 126.—" And therefore could he only appear before us invested with the character of truth, we should never think of any thing else than *taking up* the whole matter of his testimony just as he brought it to us."

Page 127.—" But of all the tracts of conveyance God has been pleased to *open up* between the mind of man and the theatre by which he is surrounded."

Page 140.—" There is nothing in the whole

compass of *nature*, or of *history*, that can so set his adoring myriads *on the gaze*, as some new and wondrous evolution of the character of God."

Page 142.—" To carry it forward *through among* all the difficulties by which it was encompassed."

Page 158.—" I feel that I have nothing to do but to burst across the confines of this world's history in time, and, out of the futurity which *lies beyond it*, can I gather that which will *blow the argument to pieces*, or stamp upon it all the narrowness of a partial and mistaken calculation."

Page 166.—" Borrow one lesson of *Him* who sitteth upon the throne, *from* the aspect and revealed doings of those who are surrounding it."

Page 221.—" And the test I have now specified *looks hard upon him*."

Page 226.—" I put it to you all whether your *finding* on the subject *do* not agree with my *saying* about it ?"

Page 238.—“ With the modesty of true Science, which is here *at one* with the humblest and most penitentiary feeling which Christianity can awaken.”

Page 241.—“ And he may further urge upon his hearers, *how*, such is the enormity of Sin, that it is not enough to have found an expiation for it ; *how* its *power* and its *existence* must be eradicated from the hearts of all, &c. ; *how*, for this purpose an expedient is made known to us in the New Testament ; *how* a process must be described upon earth, (written in sand I suppose as the custom was in the East,) to which there is given the appropriate name of sanctification ; *how*, at the very commencement of every true course of discipleship, this process is entered upon with a purpose in the mind of *forsaking all*.” With a few more “ *hows*” this inimitable passage closes ; the only improvement it will admit seems to be to read every time “ as how.”

Page 232.—“ When he now *thinks him* of the majesty of God.”

Page 253.—“ Oh how strikingly is the expe-

rience even of *vigorous* and *accomplished nature at one*, on this point, with the announcements of revelation!"

The nice discrimination with which Dr. Chalmers selects his words, and the richness of his vocabulary, may be seen in the *few* following instances of his use of the word *field*, as a metaphor—few farmers can boast of applying their fields to a greater variety of purposes.

Page 6.—“ So insignificant a *field*.”

Page 9.—“ Within the safe and accessible *field* of human observation.”

Page 10.—“ From those less observed portions of the *field* of revelation.”

Page 63.—“ The *field* of philosophy.”

Page 66.—“ Through the rich and magnificent *field* of his discovery.”

Page 67.—“ Conquests he has made in the *field* of discovery.”

Page 68.—“The *field* of nature.”

Page 70.—“The *field* of warranted exertion.”

Page 71 and 78.—“Within the *field* of actual observation.”

Page 71.—“Sir I. Newton never went beyond this *field*.”

Page 75.—“That he has stepped beyond this *field*, and is now expatiating in the *field* of imagination.”

Page 76.—“Safe and firm *field* of observation.”

Page 80.—“The *field* of immensity.”

Page 85.—“The *field* of human experience—or those *fields* of creation.”

Page 91.—“Lofty and inaccessible *field*.”

Page 109.—“In many a *field* of observation.”

Page 110.—“If in any one *field* of this province.”

Page 113.—*Fields* of creation which sweep immeasurably along.”

Page 119.—“ Take along with you in this *field* of enquiry a lesson which you should have learnt upon other *fields*.”

Page 123.—“ Occupy other *fields* in the immensity of his dominions.”

Page 129.—“ That the whole *field* of his most ambitious enterprises.”——“ The material *field* of his contemplation.”

Page 133.—“ The *field* of legitimated discovery.”

Page 139.—“ That no *field* of cloudless transparency so enchants them by the blissfulness of its visions.”

Page 143.—“ The extent of the *field* upon which this question was decided, has no more influence on the question itself, than the figure or dimension of that *field* of combat on which some great political question was fought.”

Page 158.—“ To the material extent of the

field on which it was executed.”——“Over the *field* of an immensity that knows no limits.”——“He has burst across the confines of this world’s habitation in space, and out of the *field* which lies on the other side of it has he gathered an argument against the truth of revelation.”

Page 162.—“It sweeps the *field* of immensity : it can settle all the earnestness of its regards upon every distinct hand breadth of that *field*.”——“That while it is expatiating over the vast *field* of created things, there is not one portion of the *field* overlooked by it.”

Page 165.—“And when the wonderful extent of the *field* is made known to him, over which the wealth of the Divinity is lavished.”——“By the mere magnitude of the *field*.”

Page 167.—“The infidel then, as he widens the *field* of his contemplations,”

Page 171.—“Whose wakeful sympathy overflows the *field* of his own immediate neighbourhood—to whom the name of country comes with all the omnipotence of a charm (that must be charming) upon his heart, and with all the ur-

gency of most righteous and resistless claim upon his services."

Page 172.—" Expatiate in the might of his untired faculties on so wide a *field* of benevolent contemplation."

Page 174.—" A philanthropy of which, if you ask the extent or the boundary of its *field*, we should answer, in the language of inspiration, that the *field* is the world."

Page 192.—" This is the first *field* on which have been successfully practised the experimental lessons of Bacon."

Page 198.—" On some *field* of mustering competition."

The really pleasing variety of fields we have just passed through, and which are all on Dr. Chalmers's estate, ought to produce him some revenue; but we are now entering upon one which is rather of a questionable character, for the Dr. says it may be peopled with innumerable worlds, and yet "it might be *nothing*." At this though we must not be surprised, for

he says, that what is seen "may be nothing," so that it is difficult to say what may not be.

Page 48.—"What is unseen has no limit, and although all that the eye of man can take in, or his fancy can grasp at, (that I suppose is what is unseen) were swept away, there still might remain as ample a *field* over which the Divinity may expatiate, and which he may have peopled with innumerable worlds. If the whole visible creation were to disappear, it would leave a solitude *behind* it, (unless it were to exit bowing) but to the infinite mind, that can take in the whole system of nature, this solitude might be *nothing*; (it would be nothing to any body,) a small unoccupied spot in that immensity which surrounds *it*, (that is nothing) and which he *may* have filled with the wonders of his omnipotence;" (may be so, as there was *nothing* to hinder it). But we must return after this excursion through the fields, and now take a flight with Dr. Chalmers through the air, and we shall see how far the assertion is warranted that his style is turgid and inflated—his imagery incongruous and involved.

Page 50.—"The universe at large would suffer

as little in its splendour and variety by the destruction of our planets, as the verdure and sublime magnitude of a forest would suffer by the fall of a single leaf." (Now from this I should gather that the forest would turn a little pale when "the leaf quivers on the branch which supports it," else I do not see how the verdure of the forest would suffer at all.) "It lies (what while the branch supports it, is that polite?) at the mercy of the slightest accident. A *breath* of wind *tears* it from its stem, and it lights on the stream which passeth underneath. In a moment of time the life it teems with is extinguished—to the myriads which people this little leaf an event as *terrible* as the destruction of a world." (This is terrible news; but from whence did Dr. Chalmers gain his intelligence? Is he quite sure that their anticipation excites the same terror as the day of judgment will to mankind? But he again puzzles me, for he says "we *differ* from the leaf *only* in this circumstance, that it would require the operation of greater elements to destroy us." (What shall we come to?)

Page 54.—"Nor do we know a *more discreditable surrender of our religion*, than to act as if

she had any thing to fear from her most accomplished adversaries."

Page 55.—"That a *something* may be found with which to combat infidelity in all its forms."

Page 56.—"There is much profound and important wisdom in that proverb of Solomon, where it is said (is a proverb a place ?) 'the heart knoweth its own bitterness.' It forms part of a truth still more comprehensive, that every man knoweth his own peculiar feelings, and difficulties, and trials, far better than he can get any of his neighbours to perceive them." (Who would have thought there was much profound and important wisdom in this ?)

Page 57.—"He does not reflect, *all the while*, that, *with* every human being he addresses, there is an inner man, *which* forms a theatre of passions and of interests as busy, as crowded, &c." (What a busy little man !)

Page 61.—"Nor have they gone along with him as he gave his silent hours to the *labours* of the midnight *oil*."

Page 64.—“He wanted no other recommendation for any *one article* of science, than the recommendation of evidence—and with this recommendation he opened to it the *chamber* of his mind, though authority scowled upon it, and taste was disgusted by it, and fashion was ashamed of it, and all the beauteous speculations of former days was cruelly *broken up* by this *new* announcement of the better philosophy, and scattered like the *fragments* of an *aerial* vision, over which the past generations of the world had been slumbering their *profound* and their *pleasing reverie*.”

Page 66.—“Giving a place and an occupancy.” (What is that?)

——“In that *march* of intellect—he pondered every *step*, and while he advanced with a *firm* and *assured movement* wherever the light of evidence *carried* him.” (To be carried, marching with a firm and assured step, is quite a new idea.)

Page 66.—“Had he been like the majority of other men (not like the majority of himself,) he would have broken free from the fetters

of a sober and chastised understanding ; (Oh ! would that Dr. Chalmers had a pair of these fetters on ;) and, giving wing to his imagination, had done what philosophers *had* done *after* him, (how can that be ?) been carried away (that is not doing,) by some meteor of their own forming, &c."

Page 67.—“ But Newton stood true to his principle, that he would *take up* with nothing which wanted evidence, and he kept by his demonstrations, and his measurements, and his proofs ;” (how neatly arranged, first his demonstrations, then his measurements, and better late than never, his proofs last).

Page 68.—“ What I allude to, is the precious combination of its strength, and of its modesty.—It was by *touching* that which was *tangible*, and *looking* at that which was *visible*, and *computing* that which was *measurable*, (a very extraordinary way of proceeding, certainly,) and, in one word, (by making a *right* and a *reasonable* use of all that proof, which the *field* of Nature around us has *brought* (most fields would require that we should go to them,) within the limits of sensible observations.”

(Which accounts for Dr. Chalmers's noticing of it.)

Page 68.—“ This is the arena (there will be wild work presently) on which the modern philosophy has won all her victories, and fulfilled all her wondrous achievements, and reared all her proud and enduring monuments, (all in the arena) and gathered all her magnificent trophies to that power of intellect (a power of fine words) with which the hand of *a bounteous heaven* (he must mean the right hand as you enter) has so richly gifted the constitution of our species.”——(The intellect of our constitution !!)

Page 71.—“ And thus you may understand how the first man in the accomplishments of Philosophy, *which* the world ever saw, sat at the book of nature in the humble attitude of its interpreter and its pupil ;—(all one to Dr. Chalmers ;) how all the docility of conscious ignorance threw a soft and sweetening lustre (hail gentle dulness) around the radiance even of his most splendid discoveries ;—and, while the flippancy of a few superficial acquirements is enough to place a philosopher of the day on the pedestal of his fancied elevation, (is he

speaking of Dr. Chalmers?) and to vest him with an assumed lordship over the whole domain of natural and revealed knowledge."

Page 73.—"An amusing philosophical romance, full of ingenuity, and having withal the colour of truth and of consistency spread over it—with eloquence that would delight the public, and arguments that would impress—this would be rejected as one of the *puniest imbecilities of childhood*—on this ground and on this ground only—that it was beyond the *reach of his telescope*. As to any *character of truth* or of importance, it would have no more effect on such a mind as that of Newton than any illusion of poetry."

Page 75.—"There is not a man of plain understanding, who does not perceive that this said ambitious inquirer has got without his reach; (what that is my understanding is not plain enough to make out—I have heard of a man being beside himself, but did not know he could get out of his own reach) that he has *ventured* on a dark unknown, where the wisest of all philosophy (a lucky venture) is the philosophy of silence, (Dr. Chalmers is a phi-

losopher of the wisest of all orders of philosophy, when he is asleep) and a profession of ignorance is the best evidence of a solid understanding." (Bad is the best I fear.)

Page 76.—"Got on that undiscoverable ground." (How could Dr. Chalmers find this out?)—"I can conceive it the feeling of every one of you, that I have hitherto indulged in a vain expense of argument—(which I should have thought you could not afford to do) and, it is most natural for you to put the question, (but not in these terms) What is the precise point of convergence to which I am directing all the light (prodigious) of this abundant and seemingly superfluous illustration?"

Page 77.—"They have made their argument against us out of an assertion which has positively no feet to rest upon." (Wonderful, since every body knows that assertions without feet are monstrous.)

Page 81.—"Of a *sinful creation*." (Does Dr. Chalmers know whom he accuses?)

Page 76 —"Of our minute and *solitary* world."

(I suspect the word solitary is torn out of Dr. Chalmers's Dictionary—he does not seem to know the meaning of it—for he applies it frequently to one of a multitude.)

Page 81.—“ Have *awoke* them all from that spiritual *death* to which they had sunk in *lethargy* as *profound* as the *slumbers* of *non-existence*.”

Page 85.—“ He *saw* the *fact* of Christ being a messenger from heaven (most ingenious man, he saw it) in the audible (should it not have been visible?) language by which it was conveyed from heaven's canopy (perhaps he means earth's canopy) to human ears.”

Page 90.—“ But there is one other most important conclusion to which it carries us. It carries us with all the docility of children (what a nice carrier) to the Bible, and puts us down into the attitude of an unreserved surrender of thought and understanding (what a strange attitude) to its authoritative information.”

Page 91.—“ It is *true* that my *fancy* may break its impetuous way into this lofty and

inaccessible field." (A lofty field, which, though inaccessible, is broken into ! Is this true, or is it fancy ?)

Page 89.—“ The *something*, whatever it is, which has dispossessed all these people of their Christianity (with all the omnipotence of a charm, I suppose) exists in their minds in the *shape* of a position which they hold to be true, but which, by no legitimate evidence, they have ever realised. (It must be base born then, for Dr. Chalmers says it exists.)——It is a principle altogether worthy of *being laboured*, as, if carried round in faithful and consistent application amongst these numerous varieties, it is able to *break up* all the existing infidelity in the world.”

Page 103.—“ We *avow* it, therefore, (how candid) that this infidel argument goes to expunge a perfection from the character of God.”

Page 125.—“ With such a religion as this there is nothing to hide. All should be above boards. And the broadest light of day should be made fully and freely to circulate throughout all her

secrecies. But (Dr. Chalmers has just recollected) *secrets she has none*.”——“ And whether she *grapple it* with the pride of philosophy.”

Page 127.—“ It is this (the eye) which sets him as it were on an *elevated* platform, from whence he may cast a surveying glance over the *arena* of innumerable worlds.” (I wonder what sort of a thing an arena is in Scotland.)

Page 129.—“ There is a limit across which man cannot carry any one of his perceptions; and from the ulterior of which he cannot gather a single observation to guide or to inform him. While he keeps *by* the objects which are *near* (they will not be distant, very true) he can get the knowledge of them conveyed to his mind through the ministry of several of his senses. He can feel a substance that is within reach of his hand (generally) ;—he can smell a flower that is presented to him (unless he has a very bad cold) ;—he can taste the food that is before him (if he has any appetite) ;—he can hear a sound of certain pitch and intensity (he must be very deaf indeed else) ;—and, so much does this sense of hearing widen his intercourse with external nature, that from the distance of miles

it can bring him in an occasional intimation."
(Especially in war time.)

Page 157.—“ Is but the *twinkling* of a *moment*.”

Page 164.—“ He is *seduced* by an elevation which he *cannot carry*, (so it carries him) and *from this airy summit* does he look down, &c.”

Page 169.—“ Send forth a *wave* of delighted sensibility throughout the mighty throng of their innumerable legions,”

Page 173.—“ Who, in obedience to a heaven born movement of principle within him, separates himself to some *big* and *busy* enterprise, which is to tell on the moral destinies of the world.”

Page 175.—“ But the men to whom I allude have not imaged the enterprise in the form of a thing unknown.” (They would have been very clever if they had)

Page 218.—“ No *subduing* efficacy whatever to *arouse* it.”

Page 223.—“ Like the head of Medusa, *put* to *flight* all their complacency.” (This is not the head of Medusa, I suppose, that turned the beholders to stone, since to petrify and to put to flight are not quite the same things.)

Page 240.—“ He is then speaking the appropriate language of religion, and is advancing its naked (why naked ?) and appropriate claim over the obedience of mankind.” (An appropriate claim in appropriate language, that is certainly very appropriate.)

Page 242.—“ This is the truth as it is in Jesus in its naked and *unassociated* simplicity.”

Page 246.—“ Could the sense of what is due to God be effectually *stirred up* within the human bosom, it would lead to a *practical carrying* of all the lessons of Christianity.” (Effectual stirring up would lead to practical carrying ; I dare say it would—no doubt of it.)

Page 247.—“ May be arrested and baffled by the weight of some great inexplicable impotency.” (The weight of a great impotency that is inexplicable ; it does seem very inexplicable.)

Page 252.—“ It is here that man feels himself treading upon the limit of his helplessness, (then there’s an end of that)—it is here that he sees where the strength of nature ends ; and the power of grace must either be put forth or leave him to grope his darkling way without *one inch* of progress towards the life and the substance of Christianity.” (What an advantage there is in being a *natural* philosopher, you may measure any thing by *inches*.)

Page 253.—“ He needs that which fixes and perpetuates a *stable revolution* upon the character.” (How things alter, revolutions become stable.)

Have I not adduced evidence enough that Dr. Chalmers has not attained to that correct knowledge on all subjects which evidences itself by easy natural expressions? When a vain ambitious writer, “ pitches his lofty flight” he is in danger of exposing himself as Dr. Chalmers has done ; and, as his newspaper panygerist expresses it “ of proving himself to be what he justly is.” We will now attend to him in the character of an Astronomer.

I have intimated a suspicion that Dr. Chalmers is not the greatest of all possible astronomers—that he is a little deficient, to say the least of it, in that elementary knowledge which in the nature of things becomes familiar to those who are much employed on any science—such as for instance, that the whole is greater than any of its parts—that the Sun and the orbit of the Georgium Sidus are not quite convertible terms. I consider I shall have proved my charge when I have shewn that Dr. Chalmers uses them as such.

In page 25, Dr. Chalmers says, “By a process of measurement, which it is unnecessary at present to explain, we have ascertained first the distance and then the magnitude of those bodies which roll in the firmament.” Now it may seem to be going on “undiscoverable ground” when I assert, that Dr. Chalmers is unacquainted with that “process of measurement” which with so much non-chalance he just declines to explain for the present; but I will prove it, by irresistible internal evidence; for it is impossible that a writer who can consider the sun and the whole solar system as “at one” in point of magnitude, can be acquainted

with this process. This does Dr. Chalmers ; and although it may be said truly that it is not necessary Dr. Chalmers should be a profound astronomer, still less can it be necessary that he should give himself airs as one. In page 35, he says, " If the whole planetary system were lighted up into a globe of fire, it would exceed, by many millions of times, the magnitude of this world, and yet only appear a *small lucid point* from the nearest of the fixed stars ;" and, in page 31, he says, " The sun, at the prodigious distance even of the very nearest of the fixed stars, must have shrunk into a small *invisible* point. In short, it must have become a star itself." After this every one must see it was very lucky for Dr. Chalmers that it was not necessary he should explain the process whereby we have discovered these distances and magnitudes.

Page 34.—" To all common observation the fixed stars remain immoveable." This must be one of the Doctor's discoveries in astronomy, and seems a very uncommon observation ; especially since " the earth, by turning round upon itself," takes the Doctor through an ever-varying scene.

Page 25, Dr. Chalmers says, "That even a few of those stars which appear like so many lucid points to the unassisted eye of the observer, (if Dr. Chalmers will recollect the processes whereby he has measured "first the distances and then the magnitudes," he will allow me to alter "even a few" to *all*,) expand into large circles on the application of the telescope, and are some of them (all but the inferior planets of our own system, that is, 2997 out of 3000; but that is some of them) much larger than the ball which we tread upon, and to which we proudly apply the denomination of the Universe." (Who has not heard of the universal world?)

Page 35.—"The first thing that strikes a scientific observer of the fixed stars is their immeasurable distance." I was going to question this, thinking their number and beauty were impressions preceding that of their distance; but I recollected Dr. Chalmers must know how they strike a scientific observer: yet again I am puzzled to determine if Dr. Chalmers be a scientific observer; for, by a process of measurement, which it was not just then necessary to explain, he has ascer-

tained their distance, which, having himself pronounced to be immeasurable, Dr. Chalmers has done wonders.

Page 52.—“ We cannot anticipate with precision the consequences of an event which every astronomer must know to lie within the limits of chance and probability. (Next door neighbours, possible and probable.) It may hurry our globe towards the sun, or drag it to the outer regions of the planetary system, or give it a new axis of revolution; and the effect, which I shall simply *announce* without *explaining* it, (Now is that kind? O if he would but speak, what wonders he could “open up” to us!) would be to change the place of the ocean, and bring another mighty flood upon our islands and continents.” (Speaking of him as an Astronomer, we may surely say Dr. Chalmers has much to learn.)

A good deal of that which has been objected to Dr. Chalmers is rather calculated to excite a smile than any emotion of indignation; but the admirers of Newton, and all lovers of truth, will feel their blood mantle their cheeks when they witness, from the pen of one whose laboured

panegyric, if it added not to Newton's fame, at least pledged the writer to defend him from calumny, when they see from such a one an obscure insinuation that Newton was infected by some now expiring heresy. The folly of this conduct is the only consideration that extenuates its guilt; for it is incredible that Dr. Chalmers should wish to destroy the reputation of one who had afforded him so fine an opportunity of displaying his classic eloquence—whom he had praised as “retaining the fetters of a sober and chastised understanding,” (P. 66.) who had so much of the ballast of a substantial understanding about him;” (P. 87.) of whom he declares, “when I look at the steady and unmoved Christianity of this wonderful man; so far from seeing any symptom of dotage and imbecility, or any forgetfulness of those principles on which the fabric of his philosophy is reared, do I see that in sitting down to the work of a Bible commentator, he hath given us the most beautiful and most consistent exemplification.” (87) Now it never could be the intention of Dr. Chalmers to give himself the lie direct, as he has done in page 7 of his Preface; of the intention therefore, of robbing Newton of his well-earned fame by a calumnious and un-

founded insinuation I must acquit him, although it must be very much at the expense of his understanding—for weak indeed must that man be who can in the same breath declare that “the sole attribute of Newton’s theology which he had in his eye when he presumed to eulogise it, was his steady attachment to the Bible,” and that “in his apprehension he had abetted the leading doctrine of a sect or system, which, (from its unsoundness, of course) had now nearly dwindled away from public observation.”

If any thing is wanting to form a climax to this, Dr. Chalmers’s conduct furnishes it; for he not only writes a book wherein he claims in the strongest language Sir Isaac Newton as a steady and unmoved Christian, who, as a Bible commentator, gave the most beautiful and most consistent exemplification of those principles on which the fabric of his philosophy was reared. But he then, by a few lines in his Preface, insinuates that Newton did not believe the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, and this not only without authority, but in the very teeth of the document on which those who assert it profess to found it. Dr. Chalmers ought to have read what Newton wrote before he handed him over

to the Unitarians as abetting their system, and he would have found, that although Newton wrote to prove the spuriousness of two texts, commonly adduced in proof of the divinity of Christ, he expressly asserts that in so doing he affects no point of doctrine, or discipline, but merely the genuineness of particular texts. One argument he employs is, that with the reading he contends for, the coherence of the passage better establishes the doctrine it is alleged to prove, than the mere authority of that he disputes;—another, that Christ manifest in the flesh, which he considers to be the true reading, asserts his divinity, since a man manifest in the flesh would be nonsense.

If Dr. Chalmers has been misled by a garbled edition of the Letters in question, (for such there is,) he will long regret his folly in praising Newton for a steady attachment to the Bible, whilst he considered him to have abandoned its most essential doctrine, and hasten to retract the calumny his insinuation contains.

One more charge, and I have done. Dr. Chalmers, I believe with good intentions, takes great pains to prove that a refined taste and

cultivated imagination do not of themselves give a title, under the Christian Covenant, to its blessings; and the indisputable nature of this maxim has betrayed him into an extension of it very unfavourable to the diffusion of that knowledge which alone can make wise unto salvation.

Instead of considering man, as in fact he is, as a being compounded of a certain number of moral and intellectual acts—as approaching towards the excellence of which his nature is capable, in proportion as those acts which constitute its excellence are habitual to him—Dr. Chalmers ascribes to him many feelings which are the precise especial test of spiritual life, and then asserts that “there may be as wide a distance from the habit and character of godliness as if God was still atheistically disowned by him.”

This sweeping and indiscriminating anathema may prevent the growth of true religion in the soul, by excluding its very elements; for if “he may feel with such an emotion—weep with such a tenderness—kindle with such a transport—and glow with such an elevation, as may one and all carry upon them the semblance of sacredness,”

and yet "be as though God was atheistically disowned by him,"—Christianity must be indeed a mystery that can reconcile contradictions, and transubstantiation may as well be believed as a perception of the presence of God be reconciled with complete ignorance of Him. If "to have his devotion powerfully awakened—for his heart, melted and subdued by harmony, to do homage to all the religion of which it was the vehicle—to shed tears of contrition—to be agitated by the terrors of judgment—to receive an awe upon his spirit of the greatness and majesty of God"—be the same as atheistically to disown God, then Christianity is indeed a mystery. "Even the atheist," Dr. Chalmers says, "(when he shall be no more an atheist) when such a belief of God as you all profess dawns upon his understanding—become as one of yourselves, and so be put into the condition of rising from the sublime of matter to the sublime of mind.—Let him now learn to subordinate the whole of this mechanism to the design and authority of a great presiding intelligence; and re-assembling all the members of the universe, however distant, into one family, let him mingle with his former conceptions of the grandeur which belonged to it, the conception of

that Eternal Spirit who sits enthroned on the immensity of his own wonders, and embraces all that he has made within the ample scope of one great administration. Then will the images and impressions of sublimity come in upon him from a new quarter. Then will another avenue be opened, through which a sense of grandeur may find its way *into his soul*, and have a mightier influence than ever to fill, to elevate, and to expand it. Then will be *established* a new and a noble association, by the aid of which all that he formerly looked upon as fair becomes more lovely, all that he formerly looked upon as great becomes more magnificent. But will you believe me (indeed I cannot) that, even with this accession to his mind of ideas gathered from the contemplation of the Divinity; even with that pleasurable glow which steals over his imagination when he now *thinks him* of the majesty of God;—even with all this, I say, there may be as *wide a distance* from the habit and the character of godliness, *as if* God was still *atheistically* disowned by him.”

Need we any further proof that Dr. Chalmers has not quite made up his mind what atheism is, and that Christianity itself floats as a day-

dream before him*. 'Tis true he requires fruits as the test of the presence of the Christian principle, but after having unconsciously enumerated the noblest fruits, the developement of that principle in man whereby he is able spiritually to know God—as filling, elevating, and expanding his soul—as an *established association*, whereby all becomes more lovely and magnificent, he, like the covetous man, not knowing the true value of that which he possesses, craves for more and is never satisfied—all that he has is nothing—all that he looks for is like to be ideal—for where the knowledge, and admiration, and love of God are contemned, I can conceive no means of sanctifying the whole man.

It was my intention to have given some extracts shewing Dr. Chalmers's more happy effusions, but those already given prove that he

* This is in some measure proved by the reason he assigns for printing at the end of his volume the texts which he thinks would illustrate his subject.—“I found that I could not easily interweave them in the texture of the work.”

Hoot awa, man! who but you would have required that you should have found it easy; the public expect that those whom they patronize should take some trouble to deserve it, and you may not find it easy to coin your words in sterling gold to the same standard again.

does not want words, and I cannot undertake to prove that he does not want sense. I shall conclude with saying that if Dr. Chalmers will attend more to grammatical construction—will deny himself the use of low and colloquial phrases—will chasten his style, and analyze his imagery—will abstain from unfounded insinuations—will, if need be, extend his astronomical knowledge—and, which is certainly needful, will learn to discriminate between some of the essentials of Christianity and Atheism—he will certainly have the power both of pleasing and instructing. Dr. Chalmers may live to value the incense of popular applause less than the censures which his Discourses have called forth. It is the opinion of the writer that it rests with Dr. Chalmers to avoid such in future, by exercising his understanding more—his imagination less.

FINIS.