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Lyman A. Stewart

ART. I.—*Modern Explanations of the Doctrine of Inability.*

The Inability of the Sinner to comply with the Gospel, his inexcusable guilt in not complying with it, and the consistency of these with each other, illustrated, in two discourses on John vi. 44. By John Smalley, D. D. New York: 1811.

THIS little treatise has long been accounted standard among those who attach importance to the distinction between natural and moral inability, which it elaborately explains and vindicates. It is for the most part characterized by candour and good judgment. It clearly and ably sets forth much important truth. If we were to indicate objections to it, we should call in question certain portions of it, which seem to represent the inability of the sinner as being of the same sort as that of a man to perform any outward act, which he is no way unable, but simply indisposed to do. (pp. 10, 11.)

These instances, however, are few, and aside of the main drift of the treatise. The grand principle which it maintains and successfully vindicates, is that men labour under a real inability to obey the gospel; that this inability is moral, and therefore culpable, yet not, for this reason, any the less real and invincible, except by divine grace. A still more material

Abraham Gossman.

ART. VI.—*Infidelity; Its Aspects, Causes, and Agencies; being the prize essay of the British Organization of the Evangelical Alliance.* By the Rev. Thomas Pearson, Eyemouth, Scotland. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers. 1854. Pp. 620, 8vo.

PLUTARCH cautions his reader to be well on his guard, that in order to escape robbers, he do not plunge into an impassable chasm; that, while escaping from superstition, he do not fall into the power of unbelief, by leaping over that which lies between them, viz., true piety. There are many who see no other choice than between the robbers and the chasm: but the true believer finds a safe path, and avoids both the one and the other. The truth lies midway between superstition and infidelity. These are the two great opposing powers which it meets with in the world. Though apparently opposite, they have the same source. They are but the different poles or manifestations of one evil principle. They generally appear at the same time, and always betray a secret sympathy with each other. At different periods in history, the one seems to have grown up and overshadowed the other; but they have really co-existed, each being the prolific cause of the other. The human mind and the human race passes easily from superstition to unbelief. Religious opinion, and, indeed, philosophical opinion, oscillates between these two extremes, and has scarcely yet attained its equilibrium, or found the centre. "The worldly tone of the inner life suppresses religious feeling entirely, and then turns to unbelief; or, mixing itself up with that feeling, gives to it an interpretation of its own, and thus turns to superstition. The desperation of unbelief surrenders the troubled conscience a prey to superstition; and the irrationality of superstition makes religion suspected by the thoughtful mind."* And this description is not more true of the individual than of the race. The process is constantly going forward. The history of religious opinion is very much a history of these transitions. Men are seen to pass from believing too little to believing too much, and then from believ-

* Neander's Church History, p. 13.

ing too much to believing too little. The forces of unbelief and superstition are not unfrequently, therefore, combined against the truth. Starting from the same point, they recede in opposite directions around the circle, until they meet, and unite their forces against an intelligent faith, and against the written word. It is not peculiar to the present age that the truth should be assailed at the same time by both these powers. It would be strange if they were not found leagued together. And when we consider the giant power with which each is clothed, the hold each has upon our fallen race, and the rapid strides which they have made, or claim to have made, what multitudes have been taken by the robbers, or plunged into the chasm, it is not wonderful that the friends of truth should be somewhat apprehensive as to the result. Though confident that the truth must ultimately triumph, they may well fear the present danger. At least it is well that they should so fear as to arm themselves for the encounter, and avert, so far as may be, the danger which they apprehend.

It is important that we should turn our minds to the point at which the real danger lies. An adroit foe will ever send out his forces and feign an attack which he does not intend to make, while he brings his real power to bear at a very different quarter, and bends his energies to make a successful breach where there is no adequate defence. It may be so at the present day. The form in which superstition now threatens the truth, and with which alone the truth has any serious conflict, puts on a bold front. Owing to the aggressions which it has made in England, and to some extent in our own land, we are in danger of giving it more importance than it really has. We clothe it with a power which it does not possess. We yield too readily its boastful claims: and while we labour to resist its attacks, we are leaving unguarded, perhaps, the point of real danger. At least we are in danger of having our attention too much confined to that which makes a threatening appearance, but has little real power. There are three considerations which go to show that the truth is in much greater danger from a subtle infidelity, than from a bold and boastful superstition.

In the first place, the numerical increase of these powers is

very different. The most reliable statistics prove that Romanism does not increase to any extent, either absolutely, or relatively to other religious bodies. The recent census in England brings out the fact, that there were but about two hundred thousand Romanists found in their churches, during the Sunday on which the census was taken. And though this does not probably give a fair estimate of its power, for the adherents of Rome are not ordinarily found in their places of worship, in the same proportion to their entire number as the members of other religious bodies, it does yet prove that their power is not so great as they had claimed, or as the friends of truth had feared. The census of this country shows that Romanism, notwithstanding the immense immigration, has scarcely kept on a level with the increase in Evangelical Churches. It bears a less proportion now to the entire population than it did some years since. So that in England and in the United States, the two countries in which it professes to have made its most important conquests, its increase has been very small, if it has gained anything. On the other hand, it has been losing many from among its old and most steadfast adherents. There is good reason to believe that in Italy, as well as in Ireland, there is a great change taking place in the habits of thought and the character of the people; that multitudes who have not already shaken off its fetters, are fast coming to that point; and that when the light shall have penetrated further, and those who are now groping their way towards it, shall have come out into the open day, the revolution will be sudden and complete. On any broad view of the case, superstition, so far from increasing its power, is actually going to decay. The state of things with infidelity is very different from this. In some one of its forms, it is making accessions to its numbers, both from within the Church and without. In some lands, the apostasy has been fearful, and for a time well nigh universal. We cannot, indeed, gather statistics to show this, for infidelity conceals itself from view. It has no places of worship, for it scarcely recognizes any being to whom worship is due. It publishes no statements of its progress or numbers, except as these are uttered by over-bold advocates, who reveal, perhaps unintentionally, what they claim and hope for. It manifests

its power, however, in the efforts it puts forth. We infer its strength and increase from the means which it employs to disseminate its views, and the untiring energy with which it employs them. It comes in learned and elaborate works; it enters the field of exegetical study; it appeals to the imagination, as clothed in the forms of poetry; it is taught in novels in which the story is used as the vehicle of its sentiments; in essays, in lectures, and by oral addresses; it has its emissaries in the shop and factory; it breeds amid the dens of vice which infest our cities. Young men follow its oracles, and hang upon their lips as if they were indeed what many of them claim to be, prophets and seers, who stand as the oracles of truth. It boasts, no doubt, of much more than it has really accomplished; but it can scarcely be doubted that it is on the increase, daily gathering its forces for that final conflict between faith and unbelief, "the progress of which constitutes the deepest theme of history."

A second consideration, which diminishes the danger from the superstition of the present day, in comparison with that which we may fear from unbelief, lies in the nature of these two systems, the one standing before us in a tangible, organized form, the other being invisible and subtle. We know the forces of Romanism, the resources upon which it relies, and its method of attack, and we are so far prepared to meet it. Its pomp and show, its display of numbers and strength, attract our notice. It never leaves us in ignorance of its victories. It publishes, and placards, and obtrudes upon our notice in every way, each change in its favour, as if the friends of truth were called upon to tremble, because some one here and there has been lured into its fold by the splendour of its ritual, or by its deceitful promise of rest, as children are attracted by a gaudy toy, and weak minds, or minds impatient of investigation, impose upon themselves, and take the promise for the reality. And though it is proud in its assumptions, and boasts itself as if it had laid its hand upon the very citadel of the truth, it is not to be feared as if it were an unknown and untried foe. It is not so with unbelief. It is invisible in a great measure, and the invisible is always the most fearful. It works beneath the surface. Thousands of minds may be in-

sensibly corrupted as to their principles, without its being known. The seeds may be planted long before they germinate and produce their fruit. Men are commonly unbelievers in heart long before they announce it, either in the form of words or actions; possibly long before they are conscious of it to themselves, at least so conscious of it as to admit it in a distinct assertion. Men are far gone when they can say, without a blush of shame, and a secret trembling at the fact, "We are infidels." This is pre-eminently true of those who have been educated believers, and who know in some sense the value of that which they have lost. They are shocked at the result which they have reached, and of course are loth to admit it. For a time they tremble when they find themselves loosed from their ancient moorings, drifting upon the sea of unbelief, blown about with every wind, and ready to be engulfed by the yawning waves. It takes time for them to recover their self-possession—to acquire a courage which will enable them to look the result in the face, and admit what they have found to be true of themselves. We become aware of the ruin when it is almost beyond reparation. Infidelity, therefore, in its very nature, and the mode in which it progresses in the world, is not so likely to arouse our fears as superstition, although the danger may be equally near, and the work which it does is far more disastrous.

There is still a third thing which leads us to believe that the great and immediate danger arises from the progress of unbelief. All the mental habits and tendencies of the age expose us more to its assaults. There is little probability that the superstitions of the Middle Age can be reimposed upon the minds of men. There are few who will submit to be bound in the fetters which the Reformers cast off; and fewer still who will voluntarily return and put their necks beneath the yoke. It is not impossible, indeed, that the world should recede from the light, and walk in darkness. There is no absolute certainty that such may not be the result. We are not sure that the habits of thinking, the modes in which truth is sought, the patient and careful investigation which lies at the foundation of all true science, and which science tends to produce, the freedom with which men pursue their inquiries without regard

to authority, the independence which the mind claims for itself in its speculations, give us actual security from such a result, but they unquestionably render it very improbable. Men are not disposed to yield the prerogative with which God has endowed them, of thinking for themselves. It is not easy to erase from the soul the conviction, that in the matter of its religion it has the right and privilege of a direct and individual approach to God. The sense of responsibility for its faith as well as practice, which grows out of this conviction, is well nigh indestructible when it has once been awakened. And yet these convictions must be removed, men must be brought to abandon that which they hold most dear, and all the mental habits of the race must be changed, before the world can be brought back to the bondage from which it has been released;—a revolution, which, as all history shows, never takes place suddenly, but through long processes, and by imperceptible degrees, like the geological changes which have passed upon the surface of the earth, or like those changes which are still going forward in the relative positions of the land and sea. If the world ever returns to its bondage, it will be by a path which leads through the wastes of unbelief. The change will come as a reaction from infidelity, just as the older forms of infidelity were a reaction from the superstitions of the Middle Age. Men will choose the robbers, who, though they strip them of all that they hold dear, may yet spare their lives, in preference to the leap into the chasm, which is certain death; just as some of old, escaping from the robbers, took without thought the fatal leap. And if there were no middle path upon which a man could walk securely, there are few who would censure such a choice; for it were far better, doubtless, to bow to the authority which that corrupt Church claims, and to worship God, (though he should be worshipped in partial ignorance,) according to her command, than to deny our religious nature altogether, and be without God in the world; or, what amounts to the same thing, fall down and worship ourselves. There is no important difference between the man who denies that there is a God, and him who calls himself divine; for religion, in any intelligible sense, is alike impossible in both cases. Both are at the bottom of the chasm, although the fall

may be rather more stunning in one case than the other. The danger from Romanism lies chiefly in this, that it may be resorted to as a refuge from the desperations of unbelief, as some form of superstition has ever followed in the wake of infidelity.* We are not saying that Rome has not a fearful power; or that the Church should not resist her progress as a most fearful calamity to the cause of truth and righteousness; or that her efforts should be less vigorous than they are; but that the chief danger lies in a subtle unbelief, which in its various forms, falls in with the tendencies of the day, and is sapping the religious principles and convictions of men, and which, if not checked, will sweep away the faith of many, and leave them to whatever false system may offer satisfaction to the quenchless aspirations and emotions of our religious nature. We think that the mind of the Church should be turned towards this foe; that while she strives to guard the truth from the perversions of Rome, she should guard it, at least with equal watchfulness and zeal, against the desolating forces of unbelief; and that both from its nature as laying waste every thing that is good in its track, and from the whole tendency of our mental and social condition, this latter is the more immediate, impending, and fearful danger, and of course calls upon us to meet and resist it, in whatever form it may appear.

The essay of Mr. Pearson is important to this end, inasmuch as it tends to bring before the minds of those who are set for the defence of the truth, the real nature, and to some degree the magnitude, of the danger to be apprehended. Its object seems to be rather to describe the character, and the variety, and number of the enemy's forces, than to furnish the armour with which they can be met. And this is a valuable aid. It requires considerable reading to keep even with the advancing tide and ever-changing form of unbelief. Infidelity has a wonderful plastic energy. It adapts itself readily to the demands and character of the age. While it remains the same in substance, it changes its form with every varying circumstance of

* We see this result already in Germany. Some have passed over and given in their adhesion to Rome. It is altogether probable that others will follow, unless there should be a more powerful revival of true religion, of which there are signs of hope. It is not wonderful that between the two, good men should sympathize more with Rome even than with Strauss, Feuerback, and Bauer.

society. It attaches itself to everything which may give it plausibility, and gain for it easier access to the minds of men. It is sure to come up in a new shape, and baptized with a new name, with every crisis or revolution in society, and with every new form of philosophical speculation. Error or unbelief is never self-sustaining. It betrays its weakness by seizing upon some partial truth for its support. It always sets out with such a truth as its starting-point. It always lays this foundation upon which to rest the superstructure it is building. And as the Bible is a many-sided book, as its truths come into contact with men, and society, and systems of philosophy, at various points, at each of these points, sometimes contemporaneously, but more often in succession, infidelity manages to hang its objections, and by an ingenious misstatement or perversion of the truth, gains for itself an apparent ground upon which to rest, and a form which is apt to deceive the unsuspecting. As these social changes are going forward with unprecedented rapidity, and men are pushing their investigations in all directions with unwearied energy, and sometimes with far too bold a spirit, as if there were no limits beyond which it became them to tread with reverence; as the human mind seems to be teeming with new plans, and thoughts social, political, and philosophical, are worked out into clearer and more intelligible forms; it is not wonderful to find infidelity availing itself of this state of things, and putting on a new form, that it may gain new adherents, and assailing those fortresses of truth which it had found hitherto impregnable, by new methods, and exulting, as it were, with fresh hopes of success. Indeed, the friends of truth, in this respect, are like those who defend a broad and open land against a wily foe, who are called to protect this point, and then the other, but each, it may be, from its peculiar situation, by a very different process. It might require courage and skill, but that courage and skill under a very different application. The foe might be the same, but the outward form in which he appears, and the modes of attack, might vary. It is thus with the unbelief of the present age. It is unwearied, restless, and changing. Modern infidelity, therefore, may denote very different things to different persons. It needs to be accurately defined and described. That which

was modern a few years since has become obsolete. Abandoned and laughed at by its own friends, some bolder or freer thinker has struck out a new path, and the whole host are now following hard after him. A new star reigns in the ascendant. Whoever, therefore, will patiently follow error in its devious course, wade through the works in which it appears, in which a little that is new is mixed up with much that is stale with age, and rightly discriminate what is modern from what is ancient, what objections have been answered a thousand times to the world's satisfaction, from those which yet require to be answered, performs a good service to the cause of truth, and deserves well of her friends. And this is the work which the author of this essay has done with a good degree of success. It is chiefly descriptive rather than argumentative.

In some respects, we wish that the author had given us a more profound and thorough refutation of the errors which he describes, or that he had reduced the size of his essay, so that it could have been placed within the reach of the multitudes who are in danger, to whom the poison comes in so much cheaper a form than the antidote. There are obviously two classes of works required in this controversy with unbelief, especially in the present day, when the error is brought down into a popular form and penetrates every class of society, from the highest to the lowest, from the most cultivated to the most ignorant, alike infests the walks of literature and the sinks of pollution and crime. It is no longer the retired thinker alone who is carried away by his own speculations, lost in the fog in which he has enveloped himself, and shut out the light of truth, but these retired speculations are brought down to the comprehension of all, and sent forth to do their destructive work. We need, in the first place, profound and philosophical refutations of the system of unbelief; works in which the error shall be met in its very source. We must not only trace the stream to its fountain, but cast into the fountain that salt of patient and Christian thinking, which shall cause it to send forth sweet instead of bitter waters. Connected, as infidelity always is, with systems of philosophy, it must be shown that these philosophical systems from which it springs, are false, and then a true system must be substituted in its room; or

that they are but partially true, and then the true must be separated from the false, so that the features upon which infidelity grafts itself shall be seen to be not true; or that though the system itself is true in all its essential features, the infidelity which is attempted to be grafted upon it, is an excrescence, that it holds with the philosophy by no necessary, or logical, or vital connection. Its pretended supports must be taken from under it, so that it shall be left to stand upon its own basis, or indeed not to stand at all. We are convinced that the core of the controversy lies here; that laying aside the moral causes of unbelief, the great cause lies in philosophies constructed in a wrong method, or based upon false principles, or embracing false results, because of an imperfect analysis of the powers and faculties of the mind, and a partial view of the facts upon which all true philosophy rests; that the power which these systems exert cannot be broken until men are brought to receive a true philosophy; and that the prevailing forms of infidelity will not, therefore, be entirely removed until this is done. The older deism of Collins, Bolingbroke, and Tindal, fell with the philosophy upon which it rested before the profounder investigations of Reid. The materialistic infidelity of Condillac and Cabanis expired with their philosophy, although it may well be questioned whether it has not given place to a still more destructive unbelief, rising out of a philosophy which, though far more pretentious, comes little nearer the truth. And the same process must go forward still. We may satisfy ourselves, and perhaps the larger part of men, of the utter groundlessness of modern infidelity by other methods than this. We may prove it bad by its fruits, which would certainly be no difficult task; we may array against it the primitive and indestructible convictions of our moral nature; we may show its inconsistency with itself; but to remove the ground upon which its advocates rest, to take away the force of the argument which they press so often, that their system is the result of close and logical thinking upon the undeniable teachings of our reason, and of course cannot be opposed by our moral nature, if the author of both be a beneficent being; to take away this standing place, we must have a more comprehensive and truer philosophy, which shall

commend itself to the unbiassed judgments of men, as grounded upon a careful and searching analysis, upon the widest induction of facts, and at the same time strictly logical in its processes. The true limits of the powers of the human mind and of the field of its knowledge must be fixed, which in itself would overthrow the very position on which their infidelity rests; for it rests upon the assertion that the human reason can know and comprehend the Absolute, and is in itself, therefore, the source of all moral and spiritual truth. One such work, or a work which should even in a small degree approximate to it, and contribute something towards such a result, would be of incalculable value to the cause of truth. It is scarcely necessary to add that such a philosophy would unavoidably be humble and Christian in its tone. For the very first fact which strikes us when we look within, and ever remains prominent among the facts of consciousness, is that we are limited and dependent; and that humility, therefore, ought to be and is a fundamental condition to successful investigation. It might claim with propriety what the Edinburgh philosopher claims, and perhaps not without truth, for his own scheme: "The foundation of our philosophy is humility. For it is professedly a scientific demonstration, of the impossibility of that wisdom in high matters which the Apostle prohibits us even to attempt; and it proposes, from the limitation of the human powers, from our impotence to comprehend what, however, we must admit, to show articulately why the secret things of God cannot but be to many past finding out. Humility thus becomes the cardinal virtue, not only of revelation, but of reason; and philosophy is found to be the most useful auxiliary of theology."*

We need, on the other hand, a class of works which shall contain the results of such thinking, in a popular form, and then sent forth from the press in such a shape that they should come within the reach of every man, however limited his resources, who stood in danger of being lured into unbelief, or who was anxious to satisfy his doubts, and to find the truth. For the class of men who stand most in danger are just those

* Sir William Hamilton's *Discussions*, p. 588.

who have neither the leisure nor the power of attention and thought, to read with advantage profound discussions. They are the artizans, mechanics, and young men in business; and, going further, they are the ignorant, those who are without property, the dwellers in the narrow streets and packed houses of our cities, the day labourers at the forge and in our factories. (For infidelity in its more modern forms differs in this respect from its previous manifestations, that it seeks to carry itself into every rank of society, and applies its formulas with no small influence, to every question in life.) These are the men who need to be informed. And this must be done, not by costly works, but by smaller essays, or tracts, put within the cheapest rates, and expressed in terms level to the comprehension of the lowest ranks, in the common language of uncultivated men. In this respect, the friends of truth might well learn a lesson from her foes. For we could scarcely overstate the efforts which infidelity is putting forth in this field, nor the artfulness with which its appeals are addressed to the ignorant, and to those who suffer misfortune, or groan under the inequalities of life. There is no rank in society, among whom passion and prejudice have more unlimited sway, in which infidelity is certain to produce such disastrous results. It is this which clothes it with such fearful power. No man who thinks, can anticipate without trembling, the time when these masses shall become thoroughly impregnated with the principles of infidelity; principles which are not only destructive of all religion, but lead to the violation of all the sanctities of life—and then have their passions aroused by the artful appeals of their leaders. It is just here, therefore, that the great, immediate danger lies, and this is the point which we are called to guard, at any expense and effort, and by all that we hold most dear.

The book before us belongs to neither of these classes, but occupies a position between the two. The author starts out with the obvious truth, that infidelity, in its essential feature, is a negation, rather than an affirmation; that it consists in a denial of the common faith of the Christian world. Under this general denial, he enumerates the several forms “of Atheism, in which the negation is complete; Pantheism, or the

denial of the Divine Personality; Naturalism, or the denial of the Divine Providential Government; Pseudo Spiritualism, or the denial of the Divine Redemption, (including as it does, the doctrines of the Trinity, Atonement, and Spirit's influences); Indifferentism, or the denial of Man's Responsibility; and Formalism, or the denial of the power of Godliness." Under each of these heads, the author gives a historical view of that particular form in which infidelity has manifested itself, from the introduction of the Gospel, to the present day; and then follows the history either by a statement of arguments in favour of the truth, or by some remarks which show the practical workings of the system to be bad; or that its objections lie against Providence as well as the Bible; and thus indirectly furnish a proof that the system described is without foundation. With most of the information contained in this part of the volume, our readers are already familiar, from previous articles on this general subject.*

It is no doubt true that the older forms of infidelity, though proved untenable, and abandoned by their advocates, have numerous adherents among us still. The pestilence which carries desolation through the land may have passed away, and yet sporadic cases may appear, here and there, and of the most deadly type. But the most recent, and perhaps the most prominent form of unbelief, is that which goes under the name of Spiritualism; by which is meant the theory which asserts that whatever revelation of "moral or spiritual truth God makes to man, must be from within, and not from without." It substitutes as our authority the "moral sentiments," or "religious intuitions," or "spiritual insight," or the truths of our "religious consciousness," for an outward revelation of truth addressed to our minds in distinct propositions. It denies the possibility of a book-revelation within this field, or, what amounts to the same thing, the possibility of a revelation at all, in the strict sense of that word. It does not question the genuineness of the Bible, but claims that the spiritual truths, of which its authors were conscious, were conveyed by them in forms, and through conceptions, which were the most unfortu-

* *Biblical Repertory*, January 1839, and January 1840.

nate; that the spirit is lost in the letter; and that we may, therefore, deny every thing which is distinguishing of Christianity, its doctrines, and the evidence upon which it rests, and still remain Christians—still hold fast to the essence, which a few of the present day have had the skill to separate from the “degraded types,” and “unfortunate conceptions,” under which it has been buried for centuries. As described by its advocates, this “Christianity, (*i. e.*, this spiritualized essence,) is dependent upon no outside authority. We verify its eternal truth in our soul. It bows to no idols, neither the Church, nor the Bible, nor yet Jesus, but God only. Its redeemer is within, its salvation is within, its heaven, and its oracle of God.” These spiritual truths underlie all religions, as they lie in every soul, and each man has the power, not only of receiving them when revealed, but of discerning them for himself. There is therefore “but one religion, as there is but one ocean.” Fetichism, Paganism, and Christianity, are but different and clearer developments of the “Absolute religion.” “Religion is the same—not similar, but just the same—in every man, differing only in degree.” “Of course, then, there is no difference but of words, between revealed religion and *natural* religion; for all actual religion is revealed in us, or it could not be felt.” Or as described in slightly different terms by another of its advocates: “What God reveals to us, he reveals *within*, through the medium of our moral and spiritual senses.” “Christianity has practically confessed,” (when or where?) “what is theoretically clear, that an authoritative *external* revelation of moral and spiritual truth, is essentially impossible to man.” And as this would not be a sufficiently broad basis to sustain the structure which is to be reared, it is claimed that these truths of “spiritual insight” are in open contradiction with the doctrines of the Bible. “If the Spirit within us, and the Bible without us, are at variance, we must either follow the inward, and disregard the outward law, else we must renounce the inward and obey the outward.”* Who can doubt which side of the alternative these men who are gifted with such wonderful insight would choose? It would be strange if they should not follow the inward light, which shines

* See the chapter on Spiritualism, and the Eclipse of Faith.

upon them so clearly; although the world has agreed with remarkable unanimity in calling that light darkness. We cannot but admire the modesty with which these men announce their discoveries. Certainly some little vanity might be pardoned in men endowed with such spiritual vision; who have been raised up as great prophets and seers to *reveal* to the world the delusions under which it lies. We say *reveal*, because these men claim to do for their fellows what they deny to be possible for God to do for them. They make a book-revelation of moral and spiritual truth.*

There are two invariable symptoms of this form of unbelief. It has an abhorrence of all evidence or proof, and makes strenuous opposition to creeds and formulas of faith. These are an abomination to it. It cannot abide a proposition so stated as to admit of proof or refutation. It cries out against a creed as if it were an instrument of torture to the soul. It deals with sentiments, feelings, the glorious truths which come out so clearly when we look within, but truths which do not admit of expression in the forms of words, with undefinable intuitions, with the teachings of consciousness—teachings, indeed, which lie beneath the consciousness of most. Its advocates are seers—sayers more properly. They never reason, but utter. And if you are not convinced, if the utterance does not make a response in your own soul, all that can be said is, that you are still, with the mass of the world, in darkness, living under the “unfortunate conceptions” which conceal the pure idea. It is in vain to reason with a man to convince him that he has a “spiritual insight,” which he declares, after an honest search, he does not possess. One might as well reason with the blind, to convince him that he sees. Connected with this opposition to all proof, or argument, and creeds, it makes great pretensions to a comprehensive charity. It is indifferent what a man’s “spiritual insight” reveals to him, provided he holds that this is the only source of moral and spiritual truth. Its charity has an enormous capacity. It swallows everything, and that without a grimace or effort. Fetichism, Mohammedanism, Judaism, Christianity, “are all

* Eclipse of Faith, p. 73.

the same religion, differing only in degree." The good and the bad, provided they live according to the teachings of their "spiritual insight," are alike worthy and alike safe. Or, to use their own terms, "Many a swarthy Indian, who bowed down to wood and stone; many a grim-faced Calmuck, who worshipped the God of storms; many a Grecian peasant, who did homage to Phœbus Apollo when the sun rose or went down; yes, many a savage, his hands smeared all over with human sacrifice, shall come from the East and the West, and sit down in the kingdom of God." The man who can utter such sentiments, and dignify them with the name of charity, without a blush of shame, has certainly gone far beyond our insight. We cannot strain our vision so as to see how that which is false can by any process be viewed as true, or that which is diabolical can be justified as virtue.

It is not difficult to trace this system to its source. It follows directly from the pantheistic philosophy, although it does not always appear in connection with it. The process in which it originated is this. A broad distinction is drawn between the powers and functions of the understanding and reason. The office of the understanding is simply to give form to the knowledge or facts which come to us through other sources. It is the constructive faculty of the mind. The reason, on the other hand, is the organ of truth. It is not constructive, but intuitive. The understanding deals only with truths and facts already within the mind; reason perceives truth; understanding furnishes the forms, but never the material of our knowledge; reason has a direct intuition of the material; it is the organ by which the mind not only possesses or forms those primitive universal and necessary convictions which all men have, but by which it has also a direct and immediate intuition of spiritual or supersensual truth; indeed, a direct beholding and comprehending of the Absolute. And this reason, it is said, is not personal, but impersonal, and dwells alike in every man. Reason is thus deified, or the human and divine reason is the same. If all this is so, then two things follow, upon which this whole scheme rests; first, that there can be no revelation of truth in the form of doctrine, or truths formally and logically expressed, but that all truth must be revealed in the

form of religious intuitions; and second, that the reason, or religious consciousness, being the same in every man, every man has the power of discerning, without external aid, all these truths for himself. Hence their often asserted position, that religion is one and absolute.

The connection between this system of unbelief and the pantheistic philosophy, may perhaps be stated more clearly in another way. This philosophy, as is well known, starting far back in the depths of our nature, in which it seeks for some certain standing-place; starting in some simple assertion which most would readily admit—which, indeed, is partially true—proceeds, step by step, to build up the system by the most rigid processes of reasoning, until it comes out with the conclusion which destroys the distinction between God and the creation; making the world but a process or evolution of Deity, and the human mind, as the intelligent part of the creation, that in which God comes to a consciousness of himself. The soul, therefore, must have all truth within itself. An external revelation becomes impossible. All things are a necessary and unending process. Men are a part of Deity. And hence we hear certain members, though all do not go so far, speaking of their leaders as God-inspired men, and claiming the same inspiration for heathen sages as they concede to the apostles and prophets, or even to Christ himself.

It will be seen that this scheme involves two points, and but two. First, that all revelation of spiritual truth must be from within, or through the intuitional consciousness, and that each soul is sufficient for itself; and secondly, that these results of spiritual insight or the intuitive powers, are at variance with the doctrines of the Bible. It is necessary that it should maintain both these positions, in order to give it the least show of strength.

We do not propose to enter at any length into the argument here. It would require more time and space than we have at our command. It may be urged, however, against this scheme, that it proceeds upon an entire misconception of the nature of religion. It makes religion a feeling, an intuition, a sentiment; instead of a principle, a belief of the truth, and an obedience to it. It views it not only as a life, but as a life to

the exclusion of doctrine and duty; as if, indeed, there could be any intelligible spiritual life apart from a belief and love of the truth, and a practical obedience to it in the life. We can frame no conception of a spiritual life, which does not involve faith, love, and duty. If there is this higher life of the soul, it must have a vital connection with the truth, and that truth so expressed that it be understood in order to be felt. But the moment that spiritual truth, in its logical or doctrinal form, or what is equivalent, a form in which it can be apprehended and received by the mind, is seen to be a necessary element in the spiritual life, that moment this scheme falls to the ground. For then a revelation becomes possible without as well as within, *i. e.*, becomes possible, because necessary to the existence of the spiritual life. Hence it is that we hear this unceasing cry about creeds, and confessions, and evidences.

It may be urged again, that the distinction between the logical and intuitional consciousness upon which some of its advocates rest, is pressed too far. For while there is ground for this distinction between the reflective and intuitive faculties, there is danger, lest the distinction be applied to an extent which facts will not justify. Man is a "complicated unity." All the powers of his nature, though they may be separated in analysis, work together, and for each other. We should be slow to admit that the understanding has no other office than to give form to the phenomena which come through our senses, or to the "higher truths or laws" which come through the intuitions of reason. "It is one and the same indivisible mind, which is the subject of religious thought and emotion, and of any other thought and emotion. Religious truth, like any other truth, is embraced by the understanding—as indeed it would be a queer kind of truth that is not—is stated in propositions, yields inferences, is adorned by eloquence, is illustrated by the imagination, and is thus, as well as from its intrinsic claims, rendered powerful over the emotions, the affections, and the will."*

A third thing which bears against this scheme is, that it is inconsistent with the truth of history or the recorded expe-

* Eclipse of Faith, p. 309.

rience of men. Its advocates differ very widely among themselves. They are not agreed what are the truths which lie so clear to the spiritual vision. One asserts that his insight leads him to believe in the immortality of the soul, another stands in doubt, his vision does not clearly decide, and still another asserts stoutly that the soul is not immortal. It would be hard to gather out a confession of faith, or any number of truths to which they would subscribe. And if it could be done, it would be seen that they stand on nearly the same ground with the older Deism, and are fairly open to all the arguments by which that system has been often and thoroughly refuted. And this want of argument among themselves prepares us for the admission, that the state of men in the world is not such as their theory requires. This absolute religion, which is claimed to be one and the same, does not prove to be so, even its friends being judges. It would be so, it is said, if all the "proper conditions were fulfilled." But practically the conditions are not observed. "The conception which men universally form of God is always imperfect, sometimes self-contradictory and impossible." Or, according to another, there are various principles which mislead and seduce the spiritual faculty, and so prevent that unanimity which might otherwise have been attained. A beautiful commentary this upon the sufficiency and validity of that internal revelation which supersedes the necessity of any revelation from without! The insight must be clear, indeed, which leaves the vast majority of men in error, and error which is consistent with the grossest conceptions of God. The truth is, when we seek for this absolute religion, it cannot be found. Beyond the influences of the Bible, men walk in the thickest darkness on all the questions which concern their origin, their present condition, or their future destiny and hopes. The utmost which they can gather from this boasted spiritual illumination is uncertainty. They get but faint and distant glimpses of the truth. And even those who live within the influence of this external revelation, and yet deny its authority and necessity, are not greatly in advance of the heathen. They enjoy the reflected light of that truth whose direct and life-giving beams they might share if they would. They have clearer intuitions, because of the

Christian influences by which they are surrounded, but they too are oppressed with the most painful uncertainty. All history confirms this. And besides this failure to reveal what man needs to know, and what the human race has been perpetually groping after, "seeking after God if haply they might find him;" what are we to conclude as to the authority of this inward revelation, when even those who announce it differ so widely among themselves? How is a man to know whether his inner eye is clear—whether he actually sees what he thinks that he sees? On what ground is he to come to a certainty? And without certainty on questions like these, the soul cannot rest. Is every man to follow his own light without question, or is he to compare it with the results which others have reached, or with some fixed standard? and if so, what? What right has one man to set up his "spiritual faculty," or the truths which he thinks he has discerned, as a standard for other men, or for humanity? To whom shall we go for the one and absolute religion? And if it fail thus to give either light or certainty, as history and experience, the very sighs and hopes of the ancient sages, the groans and tears of humanity in pagan ignorance, seeking rest and finding none, the uncertain answers which come back from the soul when questioned even in a Christian land—all unite to teach us, what becomes of its boastful claims? We are aware that an argument of this nature might be constructed against the Bible; but it would be invalid, because the Bible teaches that man is not in his normal condition; that he needs the light which it claims to give; and that men walk in darkness, because they will not come to the light.

A fourth thing which disproves this theory, is, that there is no such variance as is claimed to exist between the teachings of our inner nature when fully and fairly stated, and the teachings of the Bible. There is the fullest harmony between them, so far as the inner revelation (if we may use this term, although it appears a clear misnomer,) can be compared with the outward, and beyond that point the inward leads us to expect just what the Scriptures reveal. Natural religion not only harmonizes with revealed, but leads us to anticipate, in some degree, what that revealed religion shall be, *i. e.*, it leads

us to hope that the questions to which it gives rise, and to which it furnishes no satisfactory answer, shall there find their answer, that the great problems which meet every reflecting soul, shall receive a clear solution. The clearest spiritual intuition which meets every one when he turns his eyes within, is, that man is not in his normal condition, that his nature has undergone a dreadful fall. The doctrine of sin and depravity is the teaching of natural as well as of revealed religion. It is not so clearly seen, but still sufficiently evident to bring it within the class of truths which belong to the "revelation within," that God is just, and that sin, therefore, must be punished if he govern the world. We do not appeal simply to the consciousness of men to establish these intuitions, but to every religion which has arisen among men, which embraces them, and indeed offers a remedy. The light within gives us reason to hope, if it be not the remnant of an original external revelation, that though God is just, he may be approached by sinful men, through some mediation in the way of sacrifice or atonement. Every false religion embraces this also. We may add that every man comes to the conviction—a strange conviction on the supposition that this theory is true—that he is helpless and ignorant, needs light from some external source, needs indeed just that which the Bible reveals in the doctrine of the Spirit's influences. All these intuitions which serve to prepare the way for an external revelation, or to awaken the sense of want in the soul, are just as clear and universal as are the truths which belong to "spiritual insight" as their source. But surely no one will pretend that there is any contradiction between these truths and the doctrines of the Bible as to the fall and redemption. There is much more in the Bible than could have been conjectured from the "inward revelation;" but so far as it goes, there is a perfect harmony between them. The most fundamental position in their theory proves to be without support. It falls before the slightest examination. We say the most fundamental position, for if we should grant what they claim, that there is an interior illumination through which every man could gain a distinct and certain knowledge of the elementary "moral and spiritual truths," which we may grant for the sake of the argument, although all

experience proves the claim to be unfounded; there would yet remain the possibility and necessity of an external revelation to satisfy the deeper questions which the soul ever asks, as to how God may be reconciled to sinful men, and man be restored to his primitive and normal state. And that the Bible furnishes professedly the answers to these questions—answers which we have seen accord well with the fairest conjectures of natural religion—is in itself a convincing proof that it is *the revelation from without*, which is necessary if men are ever to be saved from the present fearful ruin.

And besides all this, if their theory be true, and they will be consistent with themselves, it will lead them inevitably to deny that there is a personal God, who governs the world. For if every man receives from within all “moral and spiritual truth,” and every other truth which relates to our being, or to the government of God, is to be tested by these intuitions; to be received or rejected according as each man thinks that they agree with his intuitions or not; then it will follow, since the same objections lie against the revelation which God makes of himself in his works of creation and providence, as against the Bible; since there is sin in the world, and inexplicable suffering, under his providence, that they must embrace either Pantheism, in which moral evil, with all its results, is regarded as a necessary step to a higher good—a link in the endless chain; or Atheism, which denies the being of God, and leaves us to explain sin and misery as the parts of an inexorable fate under which we live, and shuts out of course from the soul all hope either of relief or cure.* It appears to us, therefore, that what the prophet said of the degenerate and idolatrous race to whom he was sent, may be fairly said of these modern infidels: “Your fathers have forsaken me, saith the Lord, and have walked after other gods, and have served them, and have worshipped them, and have forsaken me, and have not kept my

* See Eclipse of Faith, 148, 149. The author of this work puts the advocates of this theory in this dilemma, from which escape seems to us impossible: “Either the supposed truths of their spiritual theory are known to all mankind or not; if they are, surely their books, and every such book, is the most impertinent in the world; if not, these authors did well to write, supposing them to have truth on their side; but then that indicates the possibility and utility of a book-revelation;” or, as he elsewhere proves, leads to the absurd conclusion, “that that is possible with man, which is impossible with God.” p. 292, 88, 89.

law, and ye have done worse than your fathers, *for behold ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me.*"

We had proposed to call the attention of our readers to a still more recent form of infidelity, which assumes the title of "Secularism," and holds for its fundamental principle that the truths of the present world are the only truths of which we are or can be certain. But a system which virtually denies man's religious nature, buries beyond the prospect of resurrection all his most sacred hopes and aspirations, and degrades him very much to the level of the brute, can never prevail to any extent, nor exert any great power even over those who profess to receive it. It has no claim therefore to special notice. The reader may find it described and refuted in an Appendix to this Essay.

We come now to the second point of the Essay, in which the author proceeds to describe the causes which have been most efficient in the production of the results before described. They are found to be in general, "the moral state of men," which inclines them to resist the evidences upon which the truth rests, and to resist the truth itself, which in its nature and tendencies runs counter to their depraved inclinations; and in particular, "speculative philosophy, social disaffection, the corruptions of Christianity, religious intolerance, and the divisions of the Church." Each of these causes is dwelt upon at considerable length, and with great ability; although perhaps, relatively to each other, too much stress is laid upon the divisions of the Church, and too little upon the tendencies and results of the speculative thinking of the age. We are inclined to think that too much of the unbelief of the world is laid at the door of the Church. It is quite too common a charge against her, on the part of those who oppose her progress; and quite too readily granted on the part of her friends. Every intelligent man must be conscious that he is imposing upon himself, when he pretends to justify his own persistency in sin by the imperfections of Christians, or his denial of the Bible, because the Church has been sometimes stained with impurity, and rent by divisions. He must be conscious that the ground upon which he pretends to rest is not the real ground; and that

in pleading it, he is only attempting to cover up or excuse what he has not the courage to avow. It is rather the occasion, therefore, than a real and efficient cause of unbelief. It is an afterthought raked up to justify what the unbeliever feels to be without reason or excuse. We pass from this part of the work with a single remark further; that while our author does not profess that his enumeration is exhaustive or complete, and there may be therefore other causes which are at work to produce the same end, he has yet selected the prominent causes, which are operating with tremendous efficiency, and in some instances, never with greater efficiency, than at the present day. We regard this part of the essay as likely to prove more valuable than the first.

Having thus defined its causes, we are brought to notice the agencies of which infidelity makes use. It propagates itself through the press, the clubs, the schools, and the pulpit. It is obviously of the greatest importance that the Church should know not only the nature of the foe, and the causes which have given it birth, but with what weapons it carries on its warfare. Few are probably aware of the extent to which each of these agencies is employed by the enemies of the truth. It is clearly shown, we think, that the power of the press is used with equal, if not greater effect, against the truth, than for it. We feel unwilling to admit that it preponderates on the side of unbelief; but the array of facts which our author presents in regard to France and England, is startling, if not such as to carry conviction to most minds. We see not why the case should be greatly different with us. There are three great forms in which the press is employed for this purpose; the periodical press, including the daily and weekly journals, and the larger monthlies and quarterlies; the light literature which is current and so widely read; and the more laboured attempts to sustain their principles, in philosophical discussions or essays. The most alarming feature of the first class, is the studied indifference which it maintains upon all subjects which touch upon spiritual religion, or even upon those doctrines which are the common faith and heritage of Christians. There are few journals in which common questions are discussed in a decided Christian tone. The great

social and political questions are discussed and decided mainly upon the low grounds of expediency. It has somehow come to be felt, by what authority we know not, that the great practical principles of the Bible are to be kept separate from political problems, as if a nation's religion could be excluded from all the fields of its activity, or as if such an attempt could be successful, without leading a people into infidelity. We regard the remarks of the author as just and important. It is time that these questions were taken out from the limits of mere worldly prudence, and settled by an appeal to the conscience of the people, and the higher and more indestructible parts of our nature. In addition to this silent influence against a practical Christianity, there are alarming issues which are inculcating infidelity. The author shows that the weekly papers which have the largest circulation, "are or were of an irreligious and demoralizing character." "A respectable London publisher states, that while cheap religious periodicals have made limited progress, either in number or interest, the corrupt printing press has been unceasingly at work." "The present circulation in London of immoral unstamped publications, of a half-penny to three half-pence each, must be upwards of 400,000 weekly." "Besides this, there are the importation of French novels, and prints of such a character, that they could once be obtained only by stealth, but are now sold openly where other periodicals are kept for sale." Our author divides them into three classes. First, the avowedly infidel, which have for their object, as described by themselves, "to induce the people to shake off religious belief, to cut the cable by which theology has a hold on practical affairs, and to let it float away to the undefined future to which it belongs." They circulate at an extremely cheap rate, and are read by the young men gathered in shops and factories.

A second class are those which are polluting; works which pander to the vilest passions and lusts of men. Mr. Mayhew, in his "London Labour and London Poor," says that one sheet-seller "assured him that his master alone used to get rid of 10,000 copies of such work on Saturday nights and Sunday mornings, the principal customers being young men."

A third class, which is properly described as labouring in

the same cause, whether intentionally or not, is the latitudinarian or neutral press, which is filled with light reading, republications of French works; a constant reiteration of the idea, either open or concealed, that men are not responsible for their belief. We speak with some confidence when we say, that this class is very large, in our own country. And no one who has observed the intentness with which such papers are read, and the very wide circulation which they attain, can doubt that they are powerfully at work undermining the principles of men, and preparing them to embrace any system of error which may present itself as plausible to their minds, or promise to free them from the restraints of the Bible. The larger part of these papers go into families which take but the one, and are commonly read from beginning to end, and by all the family. They are filled with some sickening love-story, or some thrilling tale, in which all the sympathies of the reader are artfully enlisted in favour of some desperate criminal; or in which, what is still worse, characters who are living in open and shameless vice, and constantly uttering the most corrupting sentiments, are yet so clothed as to please the imagination or fancy of the reader, and secure his approbation. The usual religious sentiments of such papers are either mawkish sentimentalism, or such as break the way to an open rejection of the gospel.

If we come to the larger monthlies and quarterlies, the state of things is very much the same. The *Westminster Review*, it is well known, is in the hands of an infidel publisher and editor. Its leading religious articles are designed to favour the more modern unbelief. The larger number of the literary quarterlies of our own land, manage to maintain an entire indifference upon all questions of Evangelical Religion. We demur to this attempt to exclude religion from fields of human activity, first, as we have said, from all social and political problems, and then from literature. What Arnold said of the press in his day was never truer than at present: "We do not need articles on religious subjects half so much as articles on common subjects written with a decidedly religious tone."

If we turn from this field to another, we shall not see much

that bids us hope. There are constantly issued in our cities, publications which are powerfully destructive in their tendencies. We cannot better define the class, than to describe one which came to hand not long since. It offered itself as a gospel to the poor, and then proceeded by an appeal to Scripture—introducing our Saviour himself as the great reformer—to establish these two principles: that the poor have an equal right to the possessions of the rich, exhorting them to bide their time, but to be in readiness to take what belonged to them when the time should come, or when opportunity should offer; and secondly, that marriage was an unjust and tyrannical institution, and ought to be destroyed. All this was done, not in the bare form in which we have stated it, but in the most plausible method, and with a style calculated to persuade men of the sincerity and purity of its author. At the same time, there was no concealing of the principles taught. Every thing was brought down to the comprehension of the most illiterate, and the whole accompanied with a glossary, in which every unusual word was explained in terms common to all. We read such a book, and their name is legion, with a kind of wonder that society still exists, or that there is so much virtue remaining in the world. The wonder is, that men are not more corrupt than they are. We feel ourselves driven back to faith in the restraining grace of God, even for temporal security. And these works are put out in such a form that they come within the reach and means of any who choose to read them. There is good reason to believe that their circulation is not confined to cities, but widely extended throughout the land, scattered like seeds of death. It has been affirmed by the *Edinburgh Review*, as quoted by our author, that the total annual issue of immoral publications exceeds by twenty-nine millions the total circulation of most of the religious book and tract societies of England and Scotland, with some seventy religious magazines beside. It has been affirmed more recently, that the purely infidel press of London issued publications to the amount of more than twelve millions, during the year 1851. It is probably not better in our own land. Germany, it is said by one of her own citizens, is filled with a flood of pamphlets, novels and romances, making the

pantheistic philosophy popular, and of course infidelity has spread further and further. "The secret of wickedness has long sneaked about, but no one would credit, up to the year 1848, when truly we were convinced:" and we are daily receiving importations from that land.

Besides all this, there are a large number of works, literary, scientific, and theological, which are either openly opposed to the Bible, or contain principles utterly subversive of it. We have our philosophies of religion which recognize no revelation, properly speaking. We have exegetical works, infected more or less with the analogical principles of the German commentators. Translations from these authors meet with a ready sale. Literature contributes its aid to an extent unknown before. Books of essays, compilations of lectures, a certain kind of metaphysical and sentimental poetry which sees no distinction between God and nature; to some extent history also, filled with false views of providence, and the destiny of the race; all these are sent forth with the design of overthrowing the ancient faith in the Bible. Taking the whole field in which the press operates, we can hardly doubt that its preponderating influence, for the present, is against the truth, or indifferent to its interests—that that instrument which God has chosen, above all others, for the advancement of truth and goodness, has been strangely turned to work their overthrow.

We have presented these facts, collected chiefly from the Essay before us, that our readers might know from what source the danger comes. Infidelity is not so much to be feared from the strength of her positions or forces, as from the disguised and secret attacks which she makes. There never was a time in which philosophical formulas were applied to such an extent as at the present day. There never was a time when infidelity knew so much how to find its way among the masses of the people, or in which she put forth such vigorous efforts to carry out her knowledge into an actual result. It is these efforts to popularize itself, its artful appeals to the pride and vanity of men, which clothes it with such fearful power, and leads us to fear sometimes for the present, while yet confident in the ultimate triumph of truth and right, that we are to see a wider spread moral depravation than we

have yet seen; or that the desolations which ever follow in the rear of unbelief, and which we have seen afar off, may yet come upon us.

Charles Hodge.

ART. VII.—*A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Church of England on the Validity of the Orders of the Scotch and Foreign Non-Episcopal Churches.* By W. Goode, M. A., F. S. A., Rector of Allhallows the Great and Less, London. New York: A. D. F. Randolph, 683 Broadway, 1853.

THE question, whether the Church of England recognizes the validity of the orders of non-episcopal churches, is one which concerns it much more than it does them. They are not the worse for non-recognition. They are not thereby curtailed of any spiritual power or advantage. They enter no claim to be regarded by Romanists or Anglicans, as constituent portions of the Church visible and catholic. They can as well afford to have their church standing denied, as the United States could bear to have their national existence called in question.

The case is far different with the Church of England itself. To refuse to recognize those as Christians who are Christians; to refuse communion with those in whom Christ dwells by his Spirit; to unchurch the living members of Christ's body; to withhold sympathy, fellowship, and co-operation from those in whom Christ delights, and who are devoted to his service; to take sides in the great conflict, between true and false religion, between the gospel and ritualism, against the truth and against God's people, is a very great sin. It is the sin of schism which all churchmen profess to regard with special abhorrence. It supposes wrong views of the nature of the church, of the plan of salvation, and of the nature of religion. We do not wonder, therefore, that the evangelical spiritual members of that Church are anxious not only to free themselves from the imputation of this sin and