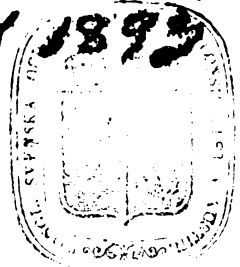


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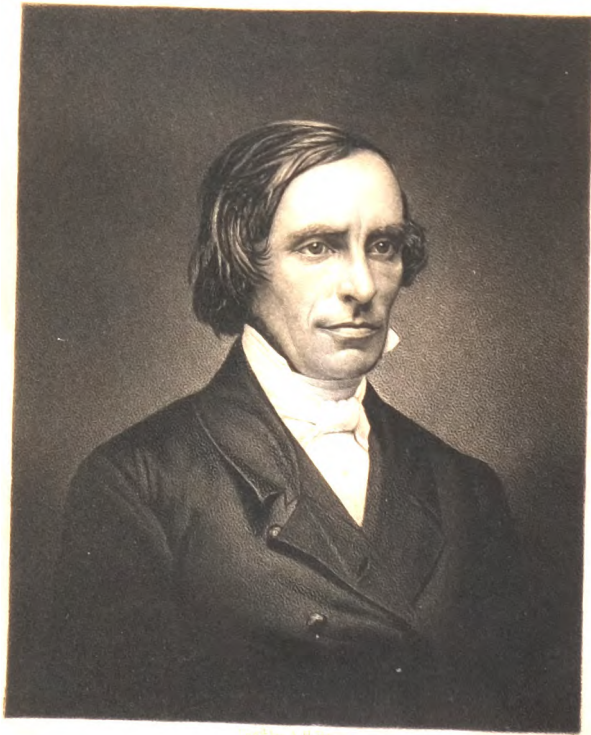
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2.



A. V. Van Zandt

The Necessity of a Revelation:
AND
THE CONDITION OF MAN WITHOUT IT.

BY REV. A. B. VAN ZANDT,
PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA.

1. From the strenuous efforts of the most philosophical skeptics, in every age, to disprove it.

Though the language of these men is like that of the builders of Babel, a confusion of tongues, yet their object is the same : the subversion of the truth, by superseding its necessity, and erecting a fabric of human folly, pride and power, which shall reach unto the heavens. Let the necessity of a Divine revelation be granted, or proved, and the entire superstructure of these self-styled philosophers will crumble to the earth. Its foundation is laid in the assumption, that nature contains sufficient notices of God, and his government, and sufficiently discernible to the human intelligence, to lead us on to virtue and happiness. In the vaunted fulness and sufficiency of this universal code, they affect to find *prima facie* evidence, that any other must be the invention of designing men, and dishonoring to the Almighty. Some, therefore, to depreciate the disclosures of revelation, exalt their own discoveries. Others, compelled to concede the narrow limits of human knowledge, would persuade us to rest satisfied in our ignorance. And others still, find the goal of all intellectual achievements and the end of all inquiry, in the murky darkness of universal doubt and uncertainty. These, contending that darkness is better than light ; these, that the glimmer of a few straggling stars, is all that we ought to desire ; and those, that the dim twilight of reason is brighter than the noontide splendors of the Gospel.

Now, whence this effort to extinguish the felt necessity of a revelation, and to supersede its teachings, but from the conviction, that this necessity acknowledged, would carry with it, also, a presumption and probability, of a revelation actually given ? The historical argument, indeed, has not been left unassailed, and not a few have been the efforts to impeach the Divine authority of the Scriptures, from their own contents. But underlying all these attempts has been the assumption, that a revelation was unnecessary, and therefore not to be looked for. If the contrary can be shown, as to the premises of this proposition, the converse to the conclusion must also follow, our enemies themselves being judges.

2. The presumption drawn from the necessities of our condition, acquires additional force, from the actual expectation, based upon these necessities, of the best cultivated minds of ancient heathenism, that a revelation would be given.

The mind struggling after truth unrevealed, soon finds the limit

of its attainment, and longs for superior aid. It is when the discoveries of revelation are connected with unwelcome truths, and its authority enforces ungrateful precepts, that a human philosophy seeks some pretext to discard it. Then, often availing herself of so much of its light as shall serve to define her own vague impressions, she vaunts her ability, in discovering the rudiments of religion, and elaborating these, into an attenuated system of morality, she arrogantly propounds it, as the perfection of wisdom. It was not among those who were left only to its guidance, that the sufficiency of the human reason was asserted. It was not till called to grapple with the claims of the Bible, as an inspired book, that men learned to deny the necessity of a Bible. So far as there is any speculation upon the subject, man's need of supernatural guidance is felt, where it is not enjoyed, and the religions of heathenism, universally, contain the formal confession of this need. The only vitality which they have, and which for so long has animated the enormous mass of their monstrous errors, is the perverted truth of God in communication with man. It is because the mind yields to this truth, with almost instinctive readiness, that the mystic leaves of the Sibyl, and the vague responses of the raving Pythoness, obtained any credit in the world. We may wonder at the credulity of even a classic age, which could be decided, upon the most momentous undertakings, by the casual flight of a bird; the relative position of the stars; or the yet more indeterminate auguries derived from the entrails of a beast. But the foundation for a belief so absurd, is laid deep in the constitution of our nature. These were but the erratic goings forth of the mind, after a supernatural guidance, from the impressed conviction that man needed, and might expect, the direction of Heaven. The sagacity of civil rulers enabled them to practise upon this impression, and invest their enactments with the sanction of Divine authority. Much more have the founders of false religions always claimed for their teachings a direct revelation, and found the claim easily admitted. If a few gifted minds, in an age bordering upon "the fulness of the times," were able to discover, and to discard this empty pretence, it was not without a confession of the actual and apparent necessity upon which it was based; it was not without the expression of a hope, more prophetic than the oracles, that that necessity would, at some time, be met. In the monuments of the brightest minds of antiquity, there are found several passages, containing, at once, the confession of their ignorance,

and the felt necessity of a Divine interposition. "The truth is," says Plato, "to determine or establish anything certain about these matters, in the midst of so many doubts and disputations, is the work of God only." Again, in his apology for Socrates, he puts these words into the mouth of the sage, "You may pass the remainder of your days in sleep, or despair of finding out a sufficient expedient for this purpose (the reformation of manners); if God, in his providence, do not send you some other instruction." But the most remarkable passage, is in the well-known dialogue between Socrates and Alcibiades, on the duties of religious worship. Alcibiades is going to the temple to pray, Socrates meets him, and dissuades him, because of his inability to manage the duty aright. "To me," he says, "it seems best to be quiet; it is necessary to wait till you learn how you ought to behave towards the gods, and towards men." "And when, O Socrates! shall that time be, and who will instruct me," says the wondering disciple, "for gladly would I see this man, who he is?" "He is one," replies Socrates, "who cares for you; but, as Homer represents Minerva taking away the darkness from the eyes of Diomedes, that he might distinguish a god from a man, so it is necessary that he should first take away the darkness from your mind, and then bring near those things, by which you shall know good and evil." "Let him take away," rejoins Alcibiades, "if he will, the darkness, or any other thing, for I am prepared to decline none of those things, which are commanded by him, whoever this man is, if I shall be made better." Such were the utterances of nature's longings, for that revelation which has since been given to the world.

3. In favor of the presumptive argument, for which we contend, we remark again, that the expectation thus expressed, is justly founded upon the known attributes of God.

Let it be observed here, however, that the idea of obligation on the part of God, to bestow the desired boon upon mankind, is utterly excluded by the origin and nature of that necessity under which they labor. The revelation, of whatever kind it was, given to man at his creation, though measured by his wants, was not granted as his right. No such claim can be based upon the mere relation of creatures to their Creator: much less can it be made out, in favor of those, who originally endowed, have "become vain in their imaginations," and whose "foolish hearts" are thereby "darkened."

Nevertheless, there may be a well-founded expectation of a desired good, where there is no valid claim to its enjoyment. Such an expectation will be more general or defined, according to the extent of our knowledge. If derived from obscure analogies it is indefinite and vague, and therefore only partially fulfilled by the event, yet the event which disappoints it in part, may at the same time justify the reasoning upon which it was built. I may know enough of God and his government to infer the probability of a revelation, and yet the very analogies from which I reason, will themselves teach me, that I do not know enough to anticipate beforehand, the extent or mode of that revelation. If, then, passing beyond the only conclusion which my information will warrant, I go about to form a definite conception of my own, as to the *how*, or the *when*, of this supposed revelation, the event may entirely disappoint all such expectations, and yet by fulfilling, justify, the primary inference.

It is by these considerations, that we vindicate our argument from the objection, that God has not given to all men a revelation, though all men are under a like necessity. If a revelation is to be inferred from the condition of men, it may be said, that a universal revelation ought to be inferred, since all men are in this respect in the same condition. But as all have not been blessed with the light of the truth, the fact is, therefore, in opposition to the inference. Now, if the argument necessarily implied, that man's necessities constituted a claim upon his Maker; or if it professed to proceed upon so clear a knowledge of Jehovah's purpose, as to determine beforehand, the extent and mode of any Divine communication, this objection would be fatal. But as man has no claim of right, and can expect the desired boon only as the bestowment of grace, he cannot know beforehand, that God will make no distinctions in its bestowment. He cannot anticipate the degree, or any one circumstance in the manner of imparting the supposed revelation. Such detailed and definite expectations are not warranted by his information. Their being disappointed by the event, therefore, can in no way impair the force of an inference, justly derived from ascertained premises. To say that there are considerations which warrant the expectation of a Divine revelation, is one thing: but to say furthermore, that such a revelation if given, will be universal, is a very different assertion, and one which would require a very different set of analogies to prove it.

Assuming then, the necessity of our condition, we argue, that

the expectation of a Divine revelation is justly founded upon what may be known of God and his government.

In the exercise of those attributes which are deemed essential to every reasonable conception of God, he has created man with a physical, intellectual, and moral nature. With varied dispensations towards races, and ages, and individuals, we yet find that he has made ample provision for man's physical and intellectual wants. The earth, though bearing the marks of changes, unfriendly to its products and its clime, and in some of its widespread regions yielding a precarious, and in some a scanty, and in all a seemingly reluctant support to her teeming populations, is yet, by evident design, adapted to man's physical constitution. The very difficulties of its climate and soil, requiring skill and labor to overcome them, as they stimulate to exertion, furnish also "verge and scope" for the exercise of his intelligence. If gifted with faculties seeking a wider range than the daily supply of his necessary wants, he is surrounded also with objects appealing to his curiosity and inviting his research: he is in the midst of a world of wonders which ages would be too short to explore, and himself the greatest wonder of them all. If, with still more adventurous thought, he would rise from the actual to the probable, and from a real to an imagined existence, his discursive fancy may weave into unnumbered combinations the elements of being, or a bold speculation may busy itself in conjecturing or discovering the reasons of things. By the wise arrangements of the Creator, there is then abundant employ and a rich reward to the utmost stretch of his intellectual powers. But man has no less certainly a moral, than he has a physical and intellectual nature. There is that within him which recognizes the distinction of right and wrong, and gives no unequivocal notice of his accountability. Yea, he has a religious nature; a sense of the Divine existence, if you will, which, not until he has reasoned himself into metaphysical madness, or besotted his soul by long habits of sensuality, will permit him to say in his heart "there is no God," or leave him wholly insensible to the obligation of his worship.

Might we not then expect, from the analogy of his dealings in other things, that God would make provision also for this part of man's nature? And might we not expect it the more, by as much as this is the highest and most distinguishing element of his complex being? Is it conceivable, that whilst caring for all

his subordinate wants, as he manifestly has, God should leave him unprovided in this the most essential want of his nature: that he should leave him with the consciousness of obligation and accountability, and yet uninstructed in the relation which he sustains to his Maker, and the paramount duties growing out of that relation?

It is a monstrous supposition, which sober Deism itself would reject, with indignant scorn. And yet on the assumption that man needs a revelation, by just so much as this supposition is at war with right reason, and the analogies of the divine government, by so much the opposite presumption gathers strength and force—that a revelation would be granted. The Deist would, of course, contend that God had made ample provision for man's moral and religious nature without a revelation. But we are arguing now upon the assumption that he has not, and we say, that that assumption being granted, or the fact being proved, even Deism itself must admit that a revelation is probable.

Now thus much, we have deemed it necessary to say, towards exhibiting in advance, the nature and strength of that presumptive argument, which from the necessities of our condition, infers a revelation. Standing thus by itself, the argument, of course, claims not to have the urgency of a demonstration. But establishing a probability, that probability may serve as a link in the chain of induction, which binds us down to a positive and unavoidable conclusion. We have intimated already, that the inference of a revelation as probable from its alleged necessity, is but a part of the general argument in its affirmative aspect. The expectation of a revelation brings us to the Book itself, and we come to the investigation of its claims, not as if it were an unlooked-for phenomenon, but as to an event, which from its antecedent probability, has already an established title to our credence; a title which can only be set aside by being actually disproved. There is here a presumptive claim which casts the *onus probandi* upon the opposite party. Arrived at this presumption, we hold then that the argument has made progress, and the evidence of revelation in any of its departments gains force and urgency from this foregone probability.

But the probability thus derived especially leads us—and in the attitude of expectants, an attitude perfectly compatible with exemption from prejudice—to examine the claims of any supposed revelation, with particular reference to those necessities on account

of which it was given. And if we find in the Bible an adaptation to the felt wants of our spiritual nature, we are brought to the direct conclusion, upon the principles of Deism itself, that the Bible is a revelation from God. For just as we argue from the adaptations of external nature, a designing cause, we may also argue from the adaptations of Scripture its supernatural and Divine origin. As conclusively as in the one case, these adaptations prove the being of a God; those, in the other case, transcending as they do, the discoveries of the human intelligence, prove the Bible to be from Him. Thus much, Dr. Chalmers fully concedes, and in conceding it, shows that his previous exceptions can only hold against those defective representations of the argument, which make of the presumption a certainty, or suppose the reasoning to stop short at the inference, and passing over the intermediate steps, to leap at once from the bare probability of a revelation, to the conclusion that the Bible is that revelation. It is only with reference to such a view that we can understand him as saying that "the argument is altogether premature if we base it upon the necessity alone." We may certainly base upon the necessity the strong presumption which we have considered, and that presumption leading us to examine and find the perfect adaptations of Scripture to our felt necessities, we may thus "arrive at the truth of the gospel through the medium of its necessity," and by "a pathway" too, sufficiently "solid" for even the Herculean tread of a Chalmers. "The fitness of the Bible," he says, "or of the truths which are in it, to the necessities of the human spirit, may as clearly evince the hand of a designer in the construction of this volume, as the fitness of the world, or of the things which are in it, evinces the same hand in the construction of external nature. They are both cases of adaptation, and the one is just as good an argument for a revealed as the other is for a natural theology."

If we have occupied considerable space in exhibiting the true ground and scope of our argument, it is not more than seemed to be required by the treatment which it has received. If we have succeeded in establishing its logical propriety and force, and marking out the track by which it advances to a just and definite conclusion, we shall follow, with the greater interest and satisfaction, the several steps of its progress.

The main question is now before us, and we shall endeavor to substantiate what we have hitherto assumed.

THE NECESSITY OF A REVELATION.

In exhibiting the proofs of this necessity, we shall have no occasion to depreciate the powers of the human reason; to overlook its achievements in the varied departments of knowledge, or to deprecate its most unfettered exercise. There is no such antagonism between reason and revelation, as that the claims of the one, can only be made good at the expense of the other. It is to the reason that Christianity addresses itself, as a system claiming to be Divine. It is the province of reason to judge of its credentials. And it is always the faith of a rational conviction which our religion demands. Reason has, then, an important office to perform, not only in natural theology, but also in supernatural. It is her province, by deductions from the works and the ways of God, to lead the inquirer on to the vestibule of truth. It is hers to enter with him into the temple itself, and pointing out the glories, and beauties of the inner sanctuary, it is hers, together with her disciple, to bow in adoring reverence at its shrine.

The question is not, whether reason can teach us anything concerning God and duty, but whether she can, unaided, teach us everything which it is necessary for us to know;—not whether she has any light, but whether she has light enough, to dispel the darkness which envelopes our condition and our destiny. Her instructions may be authentic and truthful, but at the same time they may be indefinite and incomplete. Her light may be light from heaven, and yet, like the lightning's fitful flash, or the pale glimmer of the stars, it may only reveal our danger, without revealing also the way of escape.

Nor is it our purpose, in this discussion, to portray the horrors of heathenism, ancient or modern, and presenting the dark picture of its degrading rites, disgusting manners, and cruel maxims, to bid you look upon this as the utmost effort of the unaided reason. Your whole moral nature, revolted at the appalling spectacle, would recoil from the assertion, that this was the last and highest result of reason's struggle after truth. You would say, and justly say, that it is not amid barbarous and savage tribes we are to find the measure of our intellectual and moral attainments, any more than we would look for the perfection of our physical nature among the dwarfed, deformed, and crippled inmates of a lazaretto. And yet the horrors of heathenism have their lesson upon this subject; a lesson which we cannot ignore or escape. They reveal

to us, at least, the depths of that abyss into which erring humanity may plunge, if left to its own guidance. Moreover, account for this monstrous departure from the principles of even natural theology as you may, the tremendous fact is still before you, the incontestable evidence, that reason is not universally an adequate guide. If it could be proved that, in any case, her discoveries were commensurate with our wants, it must still be admitted that to millions of the race, and for countless ages together, she has not served as a guide to even the rudiments of truth; she has not saved them from the utmost degradation of which our nature is capable.

But turning from savage to civilized society; from the barbarous and semi-barbarous to the most enlightened and polished nations and ages of antiquity, the result of our inquiry will be scarcely more flattering to the pretensions of reason as a sole guide in religion. There is room to believe, and ground for the assertion, that the most eminent sages and philosophers were more indebted for any just views of the being and attributes of God, and the relations and obligations of man, to immemorial tradition, the lingering light of the original, or the scattered rays of the Mosaic revelation, than to their own independent discoveries. And yet, with all this extraneous aid, how meagre and imperfect their systems at best; how inoperative in restraining and removing the idolatry and superstition of the masses. Upon the primary questions of natural theology, their doctrines were obscure, and conjectural, and contradictory. Upon all that pertains to the worship of God, they were silent, from a confessed incompetence to speak, or acquiescent in absurdity, because ignorant of a more excellent way. Upon questions vital to man's happiness, both here and hereafter, the great problems of his origin and his destiny, they were content with the wildest dreams of poetry, or despairing of a satisfactory solution, they awaited in dread uncertainty the disclosures of hereafter.

The question of reason's competence might fairly and safely be rested upon her actual achievements, or more properly speaking, upon her obvious failures, in the ages preceding the advent of the Son of God. The philosophers of the Academy, the Porch, and the Grove, must be admitted, on all hands, as the competent witnesses and examples of her power. They lived in an age of learning and of leisure; they walked and talked amid the noblest creations of art; and their lives, devoted to philosophy, were spent beneath the shadow of Parnassus, and beside the cool flowing

streams of Helicon. And yet, what is their concurrent testimony, direct and indirect, but the unequivocal and unanswerable evidence, that "the world by wisdom knew not God."

But it may be alleged, that in this, as in other respects, the world has grown wiser, as it has grown older; that science has made progress in these latter days, and penetrating farther into the arcana of nature, reason has been able to strike out new light and discover new truths concerning God and his government. Not, therefore, to the sages of antiquity, but to modern philosophy, the appeal should be made. Be it so; we have nothing to object against this transfer of the inquiry, if so the inquiry shall be properly conducted. But we must put in a caveat here, lest the light of revelation should be confounded with the deductions of reason.

It is a notorious and instructive fact that the most full and conclusive systems of natural theology, extant in the world, have been constructed by Christian writers. And the reason is obvious. There is an immense difference between gathering up and marshalling the proofs, which go to establish an ascertained conclusion, and marching up by a long line of existent but scattered evidence to the same conclusion, as yet undiscovered. It is just the difference between a demonstration and a discovery—the one may be comparatively easy, to those with whom the other is simply impossible. To say then, that in the unaided exercise of reason, human philosophy, in the nineteenth century, is capable of constructing a system of doctrine and morals which shall be exempt, by its superior elevation and purity, from many of the objections which lie against the various systems of antiquity, is to assert what cannot be proved by the simple production of such a system. Philosophy has now for nineteen centuries lived and breathed, under the light of revelation. And for her now, to claim as discoveries of her own, truths long ago announced, and found that claim upon her ability to demonstrate what has been known for ages and demonstrated too, would only be equalled in absurdity, by one who in this day, having sailed from Europe to America, should claim, on the ground of that exploit, to have discovered a continent. The question is not, what can be proved by reasoning to be true; but what in its unaided exercise the reason can discover.

What, then, has modern philosophy whereof to boast, over the sages of antiquity, beyond that, which she owes to the light of revelation? We are not advised of any new principle in morals

evolved by the progress of physical science. If there has been a more complete analysis and classification of our mental exercises, neither has this changed the quality of actions, or added a single precept to the code of human obligations. More just and exalted conceptions of God and his government may now enter into the speculations of philosophy. But we claim it for revelation to have originated those conceptions, and the claim can only be disproved by authenticated examples of the like, which cannot be traced directly or indirectly to the influence of its teachings.

There are many truths to which the mind readily assents as soon as they are proposed, and for the establishing of which it can easily gather up abundant and conclusive evidence, but which yet lie upon the very borders, if not actually beyond the limit of its discovery.

Like Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream, there may be some lingering and indefinite recollections, not enough to recall the embodiment or the outline of the departed image, though assisted by all the arts of the magicians and the wise men of the world; and yet enough to recognize it instantly when it is made to stand out in all its proportions of gold and silver and brass and iron, by the revelation of the Prophet. So there may be lingering lines and traces of the Divine character, written upon the heart, and written upon the external creation, which by the light of nature alone, men cannot read for themselves, but which illumined by the light of revelation become at once the legible and impressive records of God and his government. And under the clear shining of a sun, in the heavens, the philosophy of our day may decipher these records, and expatiate through all the fields of natural theology, and attain to some exalted conceptions of God and duty, the while discarding, but not the less indebted to that supernatural light, by which all her inquiries have been directed to a just conclusion. But the question of her capacity, is not to be settled by ascertaining how much of truth she can demonstrate, but how much she can discover.

Now, to settle this question, the only legitimate appeal is to experience. We must judge of what man can do, by what he has actually done; and accurately to judge, it must be by what he has done under circumstances which preclude the suspicion of aid derived from that revelation which he discards. Under any known circumstances, indeed, his efforts must be regarded with the unavoidable impression of a lingering tradition, more or less

defined, which had its origin in a higher source than his own intelligence. But subsequent to the advent of the Son of God, the dim remains of tradition have given place to the effulgence of Gospel truth. And, under the blaze of this truth, the whole field of inquiry has been so illumined, that even the skepticism which has most wilfully shut its eyes, and, mole-like, has burrowed the deepest, has still found its caverns, to some extent, lighted up by its rays. Reason cannot now, if she would, construct a system of natural theology, which shall be the product alone of her own deductions. Truly to find out her power, we must go back to the theologies of antiquity, or we must take our estimate from the abominations of that heathenism which has as yet been unvisited by the light of revelation.

But to vindicate our argument to the fullest extent, and establish the inadequacy of reason, it is not needful to press this advantage, or insist upon the inquiry taking either of these directions. Natural theology, in its highest development, is yet inadequate to meet the obvious and felt wants of humanity.

1. And it is so, first, because its teachings are so diverse, and therefore uncertain, concerning even the first principles of religion. Those of its disciples who have carried their speculations the farthest, and whose circumstances have been the most favorable for the discovery of truth, are by no means agreed in their doctrines, or in the processes by which the truth is to be reached. To a great extent, the history of modern philosophy has been the history of motion without progress; conflicts and victories without conquests; deductions and dogmas without discoveries; the rise, prevalence, and decadence of systems, without satisfaction, certainty, or safety to the inquirer. From the ample and diversified page of nature without, and the irregular actings and agitations of the spirit within, as the data of their investigations, each one has had his interpretation, his theory, his dream, until, in the endless jargon of the schools, the mind bewildered, has accepted words for wisdom, sound for sense, and the latest as the greatest and the best exposition of truth.

(1.) Take, for example, the teachings of philosophy concerning the being and attributes of God, and from the polytheism of Greece, to the pantheism of Germany, where did ever her deductions meet and centre in a Divinity,

"A God full orb'd,
In the whole round of rays complete,"

worthy the worship of an ingenuous mind, and meeting all its aspirations and desires? The light of nature, to those who have followed it only, has not always brought the conviction of that cardinal truth, the existence of a God. Thus, one disciple of reason would solve his doubts by a silly experiment, and he staked his faith in this article upon the issue of throwing a stone at a tree, whether he should hit it or not. And another, a poet, not unknown to fame, amid the inspirations of Alpine scenery, deliberately writes himself an atheist. But, convinced that *God is*, there remains still the question, "What is God?" And philosophy, not in all her disciples exhibiting the modesty of a Thales, has yet exhibited her incompetence to reply, in every attempted answer to that question. Surveying the vast, complicated, and yet admirably adjusted and harmonious mechanism of the universe, she returns from her research to tell us of a mechanical God: the artificer of worlds and systems; known to his creatures only by the evidence of skill and contrivance, in every organization of matter. Turning, then, to the world within—the chaos of human emotions and passions—and from the heights of abstract contemplation, looking down upon the actings and agitations of the heart, she deifies the less degrading elements of character, and presents us with the God of sentimentality; the Divinity of the imagination; an apotheosis of some hero of romance. Again, constrained by unaccountable events, and phenomena that fall not within the operation of ascertained laws, to acknowledge some constant connection between God and his works, and yet shrinking from the implied personal supervision and control of a universal Governor; by the potent alambic of her sophistries, she forthwith transmutes both the God of sentimentality and the Creator of the universe into the universe itself; "a power without personality, an essence without feeling;" the dream-God of modern pantheism.

"Man must have a God." But if left to himself, by searching to find Him out, he will form his own divinity, and he will make it a god after his own image. Or, if made sensible of the absurdity of deifying his own tastes and desires, and disgusted with a Divinity which bears so strong a likeness to himself, he seeks to rise to a more exalted conception of God; in the mazes of speculation he elaborates an ethereal essence, too impalpable and unreal to be the object of human love or aversion. Embodying, then, a vague, unintelligible idea, in the amplitude of high-sound-

ing words and phrases—as an idle fancy gives colossal shape and limbs to the mist-cloud of a summer morning, he virtually vacates the throne of the Eternal, enthroning there the phantom of his brain.

Listen for a moment to the oracular utterances of a High Priest of modern philosophy. “Thy life, as alone the finite mind can conceive it, is self-forming, self-representing will, which clothed to the eye of the mortal with multitudinous sensuous forms, flows through me and the whole immeasurable universe—here streaming as self-creating matter through my veins and muscles—there pouring its abundance into the tree, the flower, the grass.”*

We may cease to smile at the narrow and distorted conceptions of God—the deities of an earlier and darker age, when in our own there emanates from the schools of philosophy, such sublimated nonsense as this.

(2.) In the department of morals, the teachings of philosophy are no less diversified and inadequate. If it were true, as has been asserted, that every cardinal precept of the Bible, may be found somewhere in the writings of some one or other of uninspired men; yet they would also be found scattered too widely, to be gathered into a system, modified and neutralized by contradictory doctrines; and founded upon such different and debatable grounds of obligation, as materially to weaken, if not wholly to destroy their weight and authority. The mind bewildered in its notions of God, can never have clear and settled conceptions of duty.

(3.) So also concerning futurity, reason can give us nothing but diversified conjectures. Granted, that her deductions are so direct and conclusive, as to leave the conviction of an existence beyond the grave, yet it is at best, a conviction, which may be characterized as an apprehension rather than a hope. Until some traveller returns from the unseen regions of the dead, or a revelation from God lifts the veil which intercepts our views, imagination may picture its scenes in the dreams of poetry, and conscience may anticipate its reversion with alarm; but reason can never pronounce with certainty or satisfaction.

2. But even though we should grant that, to a few gifted minds, the toil of patient and profound investigation might be rewarded by the discovery of all necessary truth; yet their deductions, lying far beyond the reach of the mass of mankind, and clothed

* Fichte. See McCosh, on “Method of Divine Government.”

with no manifest authority from heaven, must be wholly inoperative as restraints, and entirely inadequate as guides.

The utmost that can be claimed for natural religion, implies in its disciples, an extent of intelligence, reflection and reasoning, to which the great mass of mankind never attain. And though the maxims of the few may be delivered to the many, yet regarded only as the opinions of men, they have always failed to preserve public morals and order.

The reign of terror, in France, was the jubilee of unbelief. Revelation discarded, and Christianity proscribed, natural religion had an open field, in which to work out its results, and make full proof of its power. In an age of learning and refinement; an age of distinguished progress in science and the arts, at a period bordering upon the nineteenth century; and in the fairest capital of Europe, with philosophers for its priests, the temples of God for its altars, and unlimited power and wealth for its support; what was the result? The story has been often told, and in the annals of the world's history it will stand a record to all coming time, of human depravity unrestrained, misery unmitigated, and crimes without a parallel. Atheism, practical and avowed, obliterated all reverence for the being and authority of God; lust and cruelty triumphed over prostrate order and virtue; a cannibal fury trampled upon the instincts of nature; and with hands dripping gore, with banners inscribed with names of blasphemy, and with bacchanal songs upon their lips, a phrenzied people march to the very altars of religion, to crown and consummate their extravagance of impiety, by enthroning a harlot as the goddess of reason!

That such excesses are at variance with the principles of natural religion, and the dictates of right reason, will not be denied. We appeal to them, not as the examples of what reason would teach, but as the examples of depravity triumphing over reason, when, discarding revelation, she exalts herself as the guardian and guide of public morals. We appeal to them as the instances, in which the fountain of iniquity in the human heart has poured out the tide of its bitter waters, sweeping away the frail barriers which human philosophy had reared; overflowing its ancient channels, and ploughing up the very foundations of society. Take away the hold which revelation has upon the conscience, and the elaborate theories, profound maxims, and admired precepts which a philosopher may excogitate in his

study, will fall as powerless upon the ear of an excited populace, as falls the snow-flake upon the billows of the storm-tidden ocean. Even Robespierre confessed, that to save France from lapsing back into barbarism, it was necessary to find a God, or to invent one. And when the far-reaching sagacity of Napoleon restored the former religion, in spite of the scorn and ridicule of the philosophers, it was well said by one of his counsellors, "The natural religion to which one may rise by the effects of a cultivated reason, is merely abstract and intellectual, and unfit for any people. It is revealed religion which points out all the truths that are useful to men, who have neither time nor means for laborious disquisition."

3. But we have now arrived at a point in the argument, from whence we may take higher ground. We have alluded to the confessed inadequacy of the unaided reason, as discovered in the varied religions of heathenism. We have considered her achievements, when receiving important, but unacknowledged aid, from the revelation which she discards; and we have found that, even then, her discoveries and her influence have not been equal to her pretensions. Let us now estimate her teachings under the most favorable circumstances, when the whole field of investigation is lighted up by revelation, and when her inquiries are all directed towards ascertained conclusions.

The question is not now what reason can discover, but what she can *prove to be true*. So far as the character and government of God are manifested in his works, nature, rightly interrogated, always gives truthful answers. The incompetency of the unaided reason, as it has thus far appeared, is to be ascribed mainly to the misdirection of her inquiries, and the lameness of her deductions. The accumulated experience of the past, therefore, proves the necessity of a revelation, by as much as it proves that reason never would have discovered even those truths which the volume of nature contains. With that volume before him, written all over with the handwriting of God, man has not been able to read the truth, or if he has, by the potency of an evil heart, he has also "changed the truth of God into a lie."

But let nature have an interpreter, and yet we hold, that when interrogated in every part by an instructed reason, her responses will be too few to satisfy our wants—wants increasing with our knowledge. It was the wise and profound saying of D'Alembert, that "man has too little sagacity to resolve an infinity of ques-

tions, which he has yet sagacity enough to make." Now this appears to be precisely the case with Natural Theology. There is a limit to her instructions, beyond which she cannot carry us; and yet beyond that limit lie unresolved the most momentous questions of our condition and destiny. Natural Theology brings us to these questions, and leaves us there. She states the conditions of the problem, but gives us no solution. She sets before us the difficulty and the danger, but she points to no way of escape, except as her silence, when further interrogated, intimates the necessity, and inspires the hope of another and safer guide.

Let us look at a few facts, and the conclusions to which they lead.

There is in man a certain law, faculty, or sentiment (call it by what name you please) in obedience to which he universally recognizes the distinction of right and wrong. This is one of the most obvious facts in human nature. It may have been obscured, at times, by the speculations of philosophy, but, throughout the whole circle of metaphysics, the fact has still been acknowledged, whilst the contention has been about questions of nomenclature, or theories of explanation. As little has philosophy invaded the generally conceded and felt supremacy of conscience. "Upon whatever," says Dr. Adam Smith, "we suppose that our moral faculties are founded, whether upon a certain modification of reason, upon an original instinct called a moral sense, or on some other principle of our nature, it cannot be doubted that they are given us for the direction of our conduct in this life." "The rules, therefore, which they prescribe, are to be regarded as the command and laws of the Deity, promulgated by those vicegerents which he has set up within us."* Cicero, in his celebrated passage, represents the conscience, in like manner, as a universal law, clothed with Divine sanctions. "Nor does it speak one language at Rome and another at Athens, varying from place to place, or from time to time, but addresses itself to all nations, and to all ages, deriving its authority from the common Sovereign of the universe, and carrying home its sanctions to every breast by the inevitable punishment which it inflicts on transgressors." "Had it strength," says Butler, "as it has right, had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world." Its right to the throne of the human heart

* Theory of Moral Sentiments, p. iii. chap. v.

is acknowledged, even when that throne has been usurped by some dominant inclination or passion.

“Cast your eyes,” says Rousseau, “over all the nations of the world, and all the histories of nations. Amid so many inhuman and absurd superstitions—amid that prodigious diversity of manners and characters, you will find everywhere the same principles and distinctions of moral good and evil. The paganism of the ancient world produced, indeed, abominable gods, who on earth would have been shunned or punished as monsters, and who offered, as a picture of supreme happiness, only crimes to commit, and passions to satiate. But Vice, armed with this sacred authority, descended in vain from the eternal abode: she found, in the heart of man, a moral instinct to repel her. The continence of Xenocrates was admired by those who celebrated the debaucheries of Jupiter,—the chaste Lucretia adored the unchaste Venus,—the most intrepid Roman sacrificed to Fear.”*

Now these quotations are given, not so much to establish, as to express a truth, to which the consciousness of every man responds, that there is within his breast a power, principle, or sentiment, which recognizes moral distinctions, and delivers its decisions with the authority of a judge, and with the high sanctions of present and prospective pain or pleasure.

But from this truth, we easily rise to another. The monitions of conscience imply a rule of duty, and a ground of obligation. The acknowledged supremacy of conscience, even where its dictates are disobeyed, is the confession that this obligation is paramount, and this law is heaven-derived. The sentences pronounced by this judge within the breast, are felt to be the echoes from a higher tribunal. And the sanctions with which they are clothed, proclaiming the Divine regard for virtue, and aversion to sin, proclaim also the righteousness of God, and a moral government administered by Him, connected with rewards and penalties. If, from the constitution of external nature, we infer the wisdom and power of God, so, from the original moral constitution of man, we may also infer other and higher attributes. And if upon that constitution he has impressed the law of righteousness, we may be sure “it must have been transcribed from the prior tablet of his own nature.”

But, it may be objected, the decisions of conscience are too diversified and contradictory to warrant this inference. The

* Quoted by Dr. Brown, Lect. 75.

apparent want of uniformity in our moral judgments will not be denied; an examination of the facts, however, would show that this diversity is more apparent than real. The conscience, like a court of law, decides upon an action according to the evidence laid before it, and if it ever approves the wrong, or disapproves the right, it is because the understanding has presented a false issue to its decision, being itself either misinformed or misled.

But if we look a little more closely into the operations of conscience, we shall find that its sanctions do not terminate with the present pleasure or pain, consequent upon its approval or disapproval. For the time being, its voice may be so far overborne by the turbulence of passion, as hardly to awaken the sensibilities. But when its sentence falls upon the heart, like the voice of doom, and its reproaches, like a whip of scorpions, yet its inflictions always imply something more than any measure or degree of present remorse. Memory has recorded the deed of guilt, and whenever the record is perused, conscience repeats its sentence, and re-enacts its punishment. Nor is this all. In every decision of this judge upon any particular act, whether it be for the first, or for the fiftieth time, the pleasure of its approval is always linked to the inspiration of hope, and the pain of its condemnation is enhanced by the apprehensions of fear. Thus conscience herself proclaims, that her sentence and her sanctions are not ultimate, but the prognostics and precursors of higher rewards, or heavier vengeance, consequent upon the final sentence of the infinite Judge.

Now, it is in full view of these ascertained truths;—that God is a righteous moral governor, and will maintain the distinction of right and wrong, in the administration of his government, by rewarding the one and punishing the other; that conscience, yet further, pronounces upon the character of every man, and its verdict, in regard to the individual, is always, *Guilty!* This, her sentence, is recorded in every breast, and for the proofs of the fact, we have but to refer to every man's consciousness. Such, then, is our condition, according to the teachings of natural theology;—there is a righteous God, administering a government of retributive justice, and by the testimony of our own hearts, we are *guilty* in his sight: and, yet more;—this consciousness of guilt brings terror in its train. We feel that the disapproval of conscience is not the ultimate punishment; is not all that we deserve; but is itself the confession, that we deserve some-

thing beyond it. The guilty mind turns involuntarily towards the future, and, unable to penetrate its darkness, looks upon its darkness with instinctive apprehension. So far as past experience or observation throws any light upon that darkness, it serves but to heighten that apprehension. For, whenever we have suffered what may be styled the natural consequences of sin, in the pains and penalties attendant upon a violation of the laws of our nature, we have not found any degree of present suffering, satisfying the demands of conscience, or silencing its voice; but the rather awaking its sterner rebukes, and its more fearful denunciations. And when, in others, we have seen the consequences of a single sin, or a series, mysteriously interwoven throughout the whole history of life, and bringing down accumulated sorrows upon hoary age, the conscience of hoary age has still re-enacted its sentence, and, in the very hour of dissolution, it has still thundered through the chambers of the soul the verdict of *Guilty!*

And this brings us to still another fact, which, together with the preceding, will give us the true conditions of a problem, which natural theology may propound, but cannot solve.

It is manifest, from the constitution of our nature, and the dispensations of Providence, that God exercises a moral government over the world. But it is equally plain, that, in this present world, the sanctions of that government are not fully developed. We see enough to conclude that He is a God that "loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity," and yet we do not see a system of rewards and punishments, invariably meting out to individuals according to their deserts. The spectacle of flourishing impiety and suffering virtue, whilst not so constant as to unsettle the conviction of a righteous government, is yet too common to admit the supposition that present allotments are its ultimate rewards. But from the manifest tokens of retribution on the one hand, and the occasional discrepancies between character and condition on the other, there is but one conclusion to be derived. We live under a moral government, which, as to its sanctions, is not yet fully developed. Conscience has pronounced its sentence, but the execution is postponed. Analogous to those cases, in which the transgressor enjoys for years a seeming impunity, until suddenly the consequences of his sin overtake him, so there may be reserved for a futurity beyond the grave, the punishment of sin which has passed through life with a seeming exemption. The difficulties which surround the administration of Divine Providence, demand

this explanation ; and conscience confirms it, by those presages of the future, which still attend the sinner down to the very gates of the grave ; there she dismisses him from all further sorrow and suffering on earth, and yet she sends him thence into eternity, with the verdict of "*Guilty*" upon his soul, to await the final award.

Given, then, by the deductions of Natural Theology, a righteous Governor, a broken law, a condemning conscience, and a retributive administration, which carries its sanctions into the other world, and we have now the problem to be solved, the grand question upon which human destiny hinges, "How can man be just with God?"

We come with this question to the disciple of Natural Theology, and we demand an answer, other than that which revelation has given, which shall yet be satisfactory to the reason and the conscience.

He certainly will not point us to the altars of heathenism, streaming with the blood of beasts, or dyed with human gore. There we may read the confession of guilt, and the felt and fearful demerit of sin ; but no words of pardon are written there, which reason recognizes as the handwriting of God.

He may refer us to the evident proofs of the Divine benignity, in the azure beauty of the heavens ; the balmy breath of spring ; the odor of spices ; the song of birds ; the teeming earth, robed in its mantle of green, radiant with sunlight and flowers, or rich in the golden sheen of its waving harvests. But if, in these, he would find the impress of a benevolence which knows no wrath, the darkening heavens frown upon the false induction ; the burning simoom of the desert, or the borean blasts of winter, sweep away the idle hope ; the desolating tornado, or the dark wing of the pestilence, leave destruction and misery in their path, and the yawning earthquake answers back to the crashing thunder of the clouds, that the God of nature, moving in terrible majesty, is a God to be feared as well as loved.

Will he tell us, then, of those natural consequences of sin, its effects upon the body, and the mind, and the condition, in this present world, as its only and sufficient expiation ? This connection between sin and suffering, though it may be real, is not always apparent. To the utmost of our apprehension, it is often interrupted, and oftener still disproportionate. When it occurs as a most manifest retribution, it does not silence, but rather stimu-

lates, the reproaches of conscience, and the apprehensions of the guilty. It reaches onward, sometimes, from the early dawn to the evening shadows of life, and, linking the sorrows of old age to the transgressions of youth, it marks a progression of punishment which has no necessary termination at death, and which reason and conscience concur in extending into eternity.

But we are told of a repentance, which recognizing the authority of the law, and implying some kind and degree of sorrow on account of its transgression, may come in the place of suffering, and equally satisfy the Lawgiver.

If such is indeed the fact, it can only be known by means of some communications, more or less direct from God himself. But revelation discarded, it must then, either be written on the heart, legibly as the law itself, or it must be ascertained by induction and inference.

1. But, so far as our observation of God's dealings extends, there is nothing to warrant this inference. What are called the natural consequences of sin, and which are but so many intimations of the Divine purpose to punish it; are not suspended by the repentance of the sinner. Contrition the most hearty, brings not back to the debauchee his ruined health and fortune; unlocks no prison doors; empties no hospitals. The connection between sin and suffering, so far as we can trace it, is uninterrupted by repentance, and argues not forgiveness, but its opposite.

2. Is the conclusion, then, rested upon the analogy of human conduct? This would require us first, to show that any of the relations which men sustain to each other, is in every respect the counterpart to that which we sustain to the Almighty, and then, that our conduct in that relation is heaven directed. It is true that a parent forgives a penitent child, and God is our Heavenly Father. But then it is also true that our Heavenly Father is *God*. As creatures of the same mould our authority over each other is limited, and can bear but a faint analogy to the prerogatives of Jehovah. A sense of our infirmity and errors should make us forgiving, whereas the essential attributes of Deity, would rather imply in Him, an inflexible justice. It is, then, at best, a precarious inference, which from the analogy of human conduct would conclude, the probability of Divine forgiveness.

3. But will it, then, be said, that God has written the law of forgiveness upon the heart, side by side with the law of obedience,

and by the same light by which we read the one, we may learn the other also ?

Wherein such an arrangement would differ from a direct repeal of the law, it must, from the known principles of human nature, serve only to stimulate transgression, by a seeming restraint, and render it the more daring, by an actual impunity. It would be substituting repentance, for the penalty of the law, and certifying the sinner in advance, that a life of iniquity, when the limits of its enjoyment had been reached, could all be expiated by the brief sorrows of contrition. But let us examine the record, and we shall find that no such law of forgiveness has been written upon the heart. The denunciations of conscience do indeed call the sinner to repentance, and her sentence becomes the more severe, and his guilt is increased by every disregard of that call. But when it is regarded, and the culprit at her bar, stands convicted and penitent, recognizing the authority of the law, and his own demerit, does conscience thereupon dismiss the cause and the criminal, from all further jurisdiction and impeachment for that crime ? So far from it, it is the most alarming element in her sanctions, that her sentence hands him over to a higher tribunal, and meanwhile she holds him as in durance, by keeping before his mind, ever and anon, his sin and its demerit. His tears cannot wash out the record, but the more sincere his repentance, the clearer his conception of the turpitude of his sin, and the more distinct his acknowledgment of its ill desert, without the slightest implication of forgiveness, in the exercises of his own heart. The connection between repentance and pardon is not a doctrine of natural Theology, whilst the connection between sin and suffering most clearly is. The question then returns upon us, with all its urgency, "How shall man be just with God ?" The grand problem of humanity remains yet unresolved, Natural Theology having served only to develop its conditions, and press home the necessity of an adequate and authorized solution. This limit to its teachings, is well summed up, in the nervous language of Chalmers. "There is in it enough of manifestation to awaken the fears of guilt, but not enough again to appease them. It emits, and audibly emits a note of terror; but in vain do we listen for one authentic word of comfort from any of its oracles. It is able to see the danger, but not the deliverance. It can excite the forebodings of the human spirit, but cannot quell them—knowing just enough to stir the perplexity, but

not enough to set the perplexity at rest. * * There must be a measure of light, we do allow; but like the lurid gleam of a volcano, it is not a light which guides, but which bewilders and terrifies. It prompts the question, but cannot frame or furnish the reply. Natural Theology may see as much as shall draw forth the anxious interrogation. "What shall I do to be saved?" The answer to this comes from a higher theology.*

From the insufficiency of Natural Theology, then, as manifested in the errors and abominations of heathenism; in the limited and defective systems of a classic age, blending numberless absurdities with a few elementary truths; in the results of modern philosophy; and in the law of conscience; we conclude, that the necessity of a Revelation, is no longer an assumed, but a demonstrated fact.

1. But if so, this necessity, as we have seen, overthrows that entire fabric of infidelity, which is built upon the assumption of the sufficiency of nature's light.

2. It furthermore rises above the ruins of that hypothesis, a well-founded presumption, which in the light of God's attributes, becomes a strong probability, that a Revelation would be given.

3. From the vantage ground of this probability, we are brought to inquire for that revelation so justly expected. And by as much as the Bible is superior and eminent beyond comparison, among all alleged communications of the Divine will, by so much, this probability becomes a direct evidence to its truth. The proofs of its Divine original, in all their variety of miracles, prophecy, and precept, gain strength and urgency from this foregone probability. But if, besides, we find in the Bible a complete correspondence and adaptation to those wants of our nature which proclaim its necessity, the argument, here, becomes demonstrative, and is, precisely, that reasoning from effect to cause, by which, from the adaptations of external nature, we prove an intelligent Creator.

To exhibit, fully, this correspondence and adaptation, would require another Lecture, yea, it would require a volume. But, from even entering upon a field so inviting, we are precluded, not merely by the vastness of its extent, but because unwilling to trench upon a topic which belongs more properly to others. You will have no reason to regret the limits, thus imposed, and for ourselves, we are well content to perform the humbler office of an usher, to an

* Bridgewater Treatise.

argument, which we regard as one of the most convincing within the whole range of the Evidences of Christianity.

But if we may not extend our argument, and carry it home to a legitimate conclusion in the track which we have indicated, we may, perhaps, prepare you the better for that conclusion, and deepen the felt conviction of the necessity of a revelation, by recurring for a moment to

THE CONDITION OF MAN WITHOUT IT.

It is recorded of a tyrant, whose cruelty rivers of blood could not satiate, that in the greediness of a cannibal ferocity, he uttered a wish, that the whole Roman people had but one neck, and with a single blow he would destroy them all. By their manifest desire to extirpate the existence, and the very name of Christianity from the earth, the advocates of infidelity confess to a wish even yet more atrocious.

We do not judge them too harshly, in saying this, for whilst we would not ascribe to them, in all cases, a malice prepense, in that which they desire, yet we do maintain, that he labors to inflict a greater injury upon his race, who ignorantly or otherwise seeks to shut out the light of heaven from the human mind, than he who could find it in his heart to annihilate a nation. Happily, the purpose of unbelief is quite as impracticable as the fiendish thought of a Nero, every assault upon Christianity having only served to establish it the more, by bringing out into more bold relief the accumulated and accumulating evidences of its truth. But let us suppose the object of infidelity to be accomplished, the light of revelation to be extinct, and Christianity forgotten from among men: would it not be like striking out the sun from the heavens, and bringing back upon the earth the darkness of chaos, and transforming the abode of man into a void and formless waste?

1. To estimate how much society owes to the Bible, we must estimate the value of all those civil and social institutions, which distinguish the most enlightened from the barbarous and semi-barbarous nations of the earth. To trace the progressive influence of revelation in the world, is to trace the progress of civilization. Commensurate with the increase of the one, has been the advance of the other, and the same causes which have obstructed and hindered the former, have invariably retarded the latter.

It is believed by many, and upon the ground of evidence which

cannot be easily set aside, that it is to revelation, the world owes its knowledge of language and of letters. It is at least certain that the literature of the world, has in every age, received from this source its highest impulse and aid. It is here alone that history, carrying back her records to the birth of time, and across that void, which antiquity had sought in vain to fill up with her fables, absurd and monstrous, dates her narrative "*In the beginning,*" and leads it on from thence, with a consistent chronology, and in annals bearing the manifest impress of truth, down to the authentic monuments of an age, comparatively recent, which but for the Bible, had been the earliest within our knowledge. Poetry and eloquence have ever found their finest models in the Scriptures, and the loftiest genius has not been ashamed to borrow its inspirations from them. "It is not undeserved homage to this sacred book to say that philosophers and great men of other times, lighted their torch in Zion, and the altars of learning caught their first spark from the flame that glowed within her temple."* Natural science has found in the Bible a key to many of the mysteries of Creation, and in all her departments, has received from it aid, more than she has been always willing to acknowledge. In the leaf of every plant and flower, botany reveals the marks of creative wisdom and design. But it may be questioned, if the preconceived attributes of God, did not first give direction to her inquiry, and guide to her discoveries. The maxim that "Jehovah has created nothing in vain," we hold to have been the basis of all those minute investigations, which have evolved from the organism of insects, and animalculæ, the same proofs of omnipotent skill and contrivance, which appear in the constitution of man, and the creation of a world. So also on the broader scale of a more extended inquiry, the knowledge of a Great First Cause, has guided the labors and aided the discoveries of the astronomer. He has advanced with a bolder stride through the fields of space, and stretched his thoughts to the compass of theories more extended and sublime, from a more just conception of Almighty power. We verily believe, that the stupendous disclosures of this noble science would never have been attained, or if attained, would have so overwhelmed the mind by their vastness, as to beget a suspicion of their truth, but for the previous knowledge of Him

* Dr. Spring. See on this whole topic his admirable book, "Obligations of the World to the Bible."

“ who leads Orion forth
And guides Arcturus round the north.”

It cannot be doubted that the human mind, freed on the one hand, from the darkness of that superstition, which overcast the brightest intellects of ancient paganism, and exempt on the other, from that tendency to universal doubt and distrust, which always pertains more or less to skepticism ; under the genial light of revelation, and certified of those great facts which it contains ; acts with a more confident freedom, springs to a higher vigor, and expands to the grasp of sublimer truth. “ Why is it that the chief secrets of nature have been penetrated only in Christian times, and in Christian lands, and that men whose names are first in the roll on which science emblazons her achievements, have been men on whom fell the rich light of revelation ? ” It is true, unbelief and atheism have also had their representatives among these illustrious names. But their eminence has been attained under the light which they discarded, by the aid of its influence, and in spite of their errors. Compare the present advancement of science in any of its departments, with the brightest days of oriental philosophy, and find a satisfactory reason, if you can, for that astonishing progress which has marked the Christian era, especially in its later centuries, other than the influence, direct and indirect, of the Christian Scriptures.

It would be easy to trace this influence, also, in the progress of the useful and elegant arts ; in all those contrivances of skill and inventions of genius, by which the elements of nature, once so formidable as to be deified, or so subtle as to be deemed supernatural, have been subjugated to the necessities, the convenience, and the pleasures of men. But we mark the influence of revelation more distinctly, in its healthful effects upon the varied relations of life. We owe to the Bible, all the hallowed associations and nameless endearments, that cluster round the domestic hearth, and impart its magic power, to the place we call our *home*. It is Christianity which consecrates the union of willing hearts, in the marriage bond, and pronouncing its benediction upon their plighted vows, environs this relation with those solemn sanctions, which are the safeguards of virtue, and the barriers to the unlimited concubinage of lawless passion. Under its tutelage parental instinct becomes “ strong as death,” and binds the mother to the cradle of her infant in all the tender assiduities of watching and weariness, by a tie which only grows and strengthens with each new demand

upon her care and toil. While the history of pagan nations, and the habits of licentiousness engendered by a philosophy which owns no law but desire, give us the manifold and mournful proofs, that a mother may forget her sucking child and cast it out, a sacrifice to the demon of superstition, or to the demon of lust. The Christian family circle, the home of love and piety, is itself, a triumph of the gospel, which proclaims its pre-eminence, even if it had no other.

But it has also triumphs upon a larger scale. Where among all contemporary nations will you find a form of government, which can bear a comparison with the inspired and equitable code of the Jewish theocracy? Study then the subsequent history of governments, and you will find, that since the dawn of the Christian era, wherever the principles of civil and religious liberty have prevailed, wherever public order and personal safety, the just authority of government, and the highest immunities and welfare of the governed have been combined, there the influence of the Bible has been proportionably felt and acknowledged. There have been despotisms, it is true, under the name of religion, but when tyranny puts on this mask, it is always careful first, to put out the light. "Christianity," says Montesquieu, "is a stranger to despotic power." "Religion," says De Tocqueville, "is the companion of liberty in all its battles and conflicts, the cradle of its infancy, and the divine source of its claims." England owes to the Bible the great charter of its liberties. And our own Republic stands this day, unexampled in the history of the world, simply because it is a land of Bibles. Take away the influence of this book from our wide-spread country, and how long would it be, under the necessary and rapid degeneracy of public morals, before the decisions of the ballot-box, would give place to the decisions of the sword, the prerogatives of right to the power of might, law to lust, government to anarchy, and anarchy to despotism?

We may not further pursue this train of thought, but with these suggestions, we point you to the manifest influence of revelation upon the literature, the learning, the arts, the domestic ties, and the political relations of mankind, and pointing you at the same time to the absence of this influence where alone it is absent, amid the darkness of heathenism, we ask, if the condition of man without revelation is not, of necessity, a condition of barbarism?

2. But there are still other aspects of his condition, presenting a yet more melancholy picture.

There is in every breast an abiding conviction, which neither the pleadings of sophistry, nor the dominion of passion, can wholly extirpate, of an invisible almighty power, the disposer of events, and the arbiter of destiny. So universal is this, that it may with some propriety be styled "a sense of the Divine existence." Man must have a God, simply because he cannot possibly prove, and he has never been able, effectually, to persuade himself, that there is none, though many a "fool may have said it in his heart." But if God is revealed to us, only in his works, our utmost knowledge of Him, can only serve to awaken apprehension and stimulate our fears. In the phenomena of nature there are indications of wrath as well as goodness. In the events of life, there is a succession and intensity of sorrows, would justify the sentiment, that "man was made to mourn." And in the presages and premonitions of conscience there is "a fearful looking for, of judgment and fiery indignation." With no better support than the deductions of a fruitless and bewildered philosophy, man is called, then, to encounter "all the ills that flesh is heir to." And he must meet at every turn of life, with afflictions which he cannot explain, with sorrows which know no solace. By a sudden calamity, or a succession, the garnered wealth of years is swept away, and hope expires within the breast of him who has neither the fortitude to endure, nor the ability to retrieve the unlooked-for reversion. The grave closes upon the objects of a tender regard, and there is nothing to restrain, or to sweeten, the bitter tears of the mourner. Disease invades the frame, and we cannot tell, whence cometh sickness, nor why. We mark the dread approach of Death by the painful harbingers of his coming, but his aspect of terror is unrelieved, for even when his skeleton hand is on our brow, and the light of life is darkening, we know not, 'what is Death!' or 'what is there beyond it!' It is a hard blow to bear, when he who yesterday was rich, stands to-day amid the wreck of a departed fortune, penniless and bankrupt. And we wonder not at that sullen gloom of disappointment, sometimes deepening into despair, and seeking in suicide an end to its sorrows, of those who in a Christian land, are yet wanting in a Christian's consolation.

To the heart of sensibility, it is a harder blow, when one, in whom its life, and love, and hopes are centered, to whom the very

soul is knit by a thousand nameless ties, is torn from the last embrace, and hidden from the eyes forever. A man may put on the stoic then, and wrap about him the frigid maxims of a cheerless philosophy, but they soothe not the anguish of a bleeding heart. Nothing but a voice from beyond the grave can waken, again, the inspiration of hope, and whisper its throbbings into peace. Read the touching lament of Augustine for his friend, while yet his darkened soul was moving in a heathen element, and you will understand what an apostle means by "sorrowing without hope." "At this grief," he says, "my heart was utterly darkened; and whatever I beheld was death. Mine eyes sought him everywhere, but he was not granted them, and I hated all places, for that they had him not. I became a great riddle to myself, and I asked my soul, why she was so sad, and why she disquieted me sorely; but she knew not what to answer me. If I said, '*trust in God,*' she very rightly obeyed me not; because that most dear friend, whom she had lost was, being man, both truer and better, than that phantasm she was bid to trust in. Only tears were sweet to me, for they succeeded my friend, in the dearest of my affections." But there is a grief too great for tears, and if you take away the light which Revelation sheds upon the tomb, and then are called to stand upon its brink, and hear the rumbling earth as it falls upon the confined dust of the loved and lost, if your heart has ever swollen with a true emotion, you will know, what is that greater grief.

To you, young gentlemen, in the morning freshness of your day, and with your sky as yet, perhaps, unclouded, these considerations may seem to have but little urgency. But, mark it! you will not have travelled far in the appointed pilgrimage of life, before you will both find and feel that life is not that bright and sunny scene which youthful hopes had pictured it. It has its shadows, too, deep and sombre shadows. It has its sorrows, which Heaven alone can heal. Man's devious pathway to the grave is, full often, a "*via dolorosa,*" in which he needs a comforter, as well as guide. You may destroy his sensibilities, and, as he approximates the brute, he will cease to feel. You may dethrone his reason, and, in the delirium of passion, he will laugh away his cares. Thus, without the Bible, he may stumble on through life in stern and sullen gloom, or, insensate and reckless, stifling his nature, and forswearing humanity, he may bound along, as gaily and as madly as e'er a gibbering maniac among

the tombs; but, as a rational and sentient being, without the Bible, he can only tread his sad and tearful way bewildered and desponding.

But grave or gay, reckless or thoughtful, it is a brief pilgrimage at best, and life's battle, or its *ballet*, ends in the strife of death. Under whatever aspect we may view it, this inevitable event is the most momentous in the history of man. Be it so,—that physically it is but “the turning of a few ounces of blood into a different channel,” and thereafter an eternal sleep;—yet who that knows the boon of being, recoils not from the thought of that being's end, as the incomparable calamity? There is a greater, we do allow, and it is only the guilty fear of this could ever have fathered the wish, or endured the thought, of the soul's annihilation. And yet that thought, that wish, can never so possess the mind as to exterminate that fear. Tell us not of death-scenes, calm and peaceful as the Christian's dying hour, where no Christian's hope was known. Is it the untutored savage upon his couch of turf, who dreams of happier hunting grounds? If you could yourself become a savage, ignorant as he, like him you might also die the victim of a fond delusion. It avails no more to plead the few examples of classic story, except you can also reinstate the Olympian gods, and make to yourself a gospel of Charon and his boat. And as for the boasted instances of modern philosophic calmness, we aver, that, upon the principles of Deism itself, it can be shown that such calmness, if it is real, is a treason against nature, and an outrage upon right reason. If Natural Theology cannot demonstrate that there is a hereafter, much less can she demonstrate that there is none. Under a dread uncertainty of a future state, coupled with a conscious guilt, which, in the prospect and probability of retribution, deepens into remorse, tell me then, ought man to be calm, in this dire necessity of his nature? Only an authentic voice, from the eternal throne, can possibly give him the assurance, that with the destruction of the body, his being ceases, or that, continuing to exist, his existence shall not be one of suffering. But nature has no such voice, and all her utterances, fairly interpreted, contradict the hope. To die without the light of revelation, is to take a fearful leap into an abyss of darkness, and on the brink, conscience, like an avenging spirit, points to a thousand evil omens, in the spectral array of long-forgotten sins, and cries in the dying sinner's ear, “'Tis an abyss of woe!”

If, then, with respect to his civil and social relations, man's condition without the Bible is a condition of barbarism, no less, with respect to his personal spiritual interests, is it a condition of unmitigated, hopeless misery. On the supposition which we have considered, if we conclude not that this is a God-forsaken world, it must be because there are in it the manifest tokens of Divine displeasure. Man struts his little hour upon its surface, ignorant alike of his origin and his destiny. Doubtful and desponding, he reaches the goal of mortal life, pressed down by present sorrow, and yet shrinking and aghast at the thought of "greater ills he knows not of." He dies! scarce knowing whether he should most desire a conscious immortality, or an eternal sleep! The grave closes upon him, but no promised resurrection consecrates his dust, no words of hope are written on his tomb!