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John Foster on missions



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JOHN FOSTER

ON

M I S S I O N S :

WITH

An Essay,

ON THE

SKEPTICISM OF THE CHURCH.

BY

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PRELIMINARY ESSAY.

IN September 1818, Mr. Foster delivered before the Baptist Missionary Society a discourse on Missions, which, with the exception perhaps of his Essay on Popular Ignorance, was regarded by his friends and by cotemporaneous reviewers as his greatest intellectual effort. Mr. Foster himself speaks of this Discourse as “a thing of very great labor;”* and in a letter to his old friend and instructor, the Rev. Joseph Hughes, respecting the third edition, he says, “Very great pains have been taken with the ‘Discourse’ part of the book; and I am disposed to account the last paragraph in the volume about the most successful sample of amendment in the whole of it. * * How many hours of the utmost effort of my mind it cost to put the paragraph into its present form! What an effort to reduce the wide, and remote, and

* Life and Correspondence, vol. ii. p. 4

shadowy element of the thought to what, I am willing to believe, is now a definite expression. * * During a life which, I acknowledge with regret, has been on the whole a very indolent one, I have never before made a mental exertion that has at all sensibly affected my health ; but this last has done so. The confinement has been almost complete.”*

These facts are the more important to be noticed here, because later in life Mr Foster, in a critique upon the Rev. Dr. Harris's celebrated work, “The Great Commission,” alluded to the missionary enterprise in terms of distrust and even of disparagement, and thus gave to the opposers of evangelical missions and evangelical religion the sanction of his great name and the authority of his latest opinions. No better refutation of the argument of his letter to Dr. Harris can be given than is contained in the *MISSIONARY DISCOURSE* from Mr. Foster's own pen. That discourse was written in the maturity of his intellect, and was justly regarded by himself as one of the greatest and most successful efforts of his life. The letter to Dr. Harris was written in old age ; an old age rendered gloomy and morose by seclusion from the world,

* *Life and Correspondence*, vol. ii. pp. 24, 26.

and by the failure of some of the schemes and predictions of earlier and more ardent years, and when, from a variety of causes, he had fallen under the paralyzing influence of his necessarian philosophy. Indeed, in this very letter, Mr. Foster says, "You will not wonder if a man dried and chilled by seventy years, addicted through experience, if not somewhat given by temperament, to somber meditations; compelled to look much on the dark side, presented, as it is, in immensely greater breadth, in history and the actual state of the world, than the bright one, should think he perceives [in that book] a pervading tone of exaggeration."

These facts will suffice to counteract the authority of Mr. Foster's letter to Dr. Harris, while the republication of the *Missionary Discourse* will serve to counteract the argument of that letter. In the thoroughness of its discussion and the comprehensiveness of its view; in the clearness and strength of its reasoning and the force and beauty of its diction; in the glow of its sentiment and the sublimity of its faith, this discourse stands at the head of productions of its class as an exhibition of the grandeur of the work of missions and of the imperative claims of that work upon

the Church of Christ. There is in it nothing local or temporary ; but it comes to Christians of this generation with all the freshness and power which thirty years ago attended its delivery. It may seem presumptuous to attempt to detain the reader from the perusal of such a discourse, by a preliminary essay from a pen so inadequate to its high theme. And yet, as the name and influence of John Foster have been industriously arrayed against his true character and faith, and against a cause which to the end of life he loved ; and as the state of mind evinced in his letter to Dr. Harris is but a type of views and feelings at least latent in many minds—a state of skepticism in relation to the missionary enterprise as now prosecuted by the Church—it has seemed to the writer that a re-statement of the argument for missions, in the light of such queries and objections, might form an introduction not wholly inappropriate to this great discourse.*

The great work which Christ has committed to His disciples—the evangelization of the world—has been strangely delayed. It was prosecuted with vigor dur-

* The substance of this Essay appeared in the *Biblical Repository* for July, 1848.

ing the first three centuries : the gospel was carried into Armenia, Iberia, Arabia, Persia, and even India in the East ; into Ethiopia and other parts of Africa ; into Gaul and Britain in the West. But this primitive zeal in propagating the gospel declined as Christianity became corrupted, and as the Church was converted into a vast hierarchical organization, and eventually allied itself with the civil power. True, the numerical strength and the area of Christendom continued to increase. The downfall of the Roman Empire brought Christianity and civilization into contact with the tribes of the North, and several of the German nations became nominally Christian. Even during the dark ages nominal Christianity continued to spread, chiefly in the North of Europe ; occasionally, as in Russia in the eleventh century, it was inaugurated as the religion of the state ; and the Church became at length the great central power of the world. Here and there the pure gospel was kept alive ; now and then a sincere and devoted missionary would go forth and labor in the spirit of primitive times ; but this long period witnessed mainly but the enlargement of the nominal Church, and the extension of an ecclesiastical corporation ; by no means the thorough evangelizing of the world—

much less the conversion of mankind to the faith and obedience of the gospel. The sixteenth century was the age of reformation; its powerful agitations were confined within the pale of Christendom; its work was renovation, not aggression; although the Romish Church, weakened in many parts of Europe, embarked in various "projects of hierarchical ambition" in pagan lands. Loyola stands pre-eminent as a model of missionary zeal. The seventeenth century witnessed occasional incipient missionary movements among the Swiss, the Dutch, the Swedes, the British, and the inhabitants of the North American Colonies, which were rather the quickening of the Church into life than the activity of life itself. The last century gave birth to numerous missionary associations, and reduced to system the work of evangelizing the world, then distinctly recognized as a Christian duty. The present century has carried out that system with increased zeal and energy, and on an enlarged scale; has multiplied benevolent associations and the means of prosecuting the work of missions, and has established that work in the hearts of Christians as the great enterprise of the Church. There are now in Protestant Christendom upward of twenty principal

foreign missionary societies or boards (exclusive of district, local, and auxiliary associations), whose annual income exceeds \$3,000,000; whose missionaries, numbering nearly 2000, occupy 1400 stations, employ fifty printing establishments, and about 5000 native and other assistants; while the missions combined exhibit some 200,000 converts in Christian communion, and a still greater number of children and adults in schools.*

Now all this is high-sounding and seems like progress. It seems as if the Church had indeed resolved to make the missionary enterprise "the glory of the age," and to bring it to a speedy consummation. Relatively, there has been progress—rapid, great, and encouraging; and yet the evangelizing of the world, rightly viewed, is to be looked upon rather as a work which has been and yet is retarded, than as a work progressing rapidly toward completion; as a work which ought long since to have been done, but which has been and yet is unworthily delayed. How strange that after 1800 years, with the known will of Christ that His gospel should be everywhere proclaimed, and

* These statistics are necessarily imperfect; they are chiefly derived from Hoole's "Year Book of Missions."

with the facilities afforded in every age for doing that work, it should still be true that the world—the great preponderating mass of earth's inhabitants—“lieth in wickedness,” that, in the eloquent language of Foster, Christianity, after “laboring in a difficult progress and very limited extension, and being perverted from its purpose into darkness and superstition for a period of a thousand years, is at the present hour known, and even nominally acknowledged by very greatly the minority of the race, the mighty mass remaining prostrate under the infernal dominion of which countless generations of their ancestors have been the slaves and victims—a deplorable majority of the people in the Christian nations strangers to the vital power of Christianity, and a large proportion directly hostile to it, while its progress in the work of conversion, in even the most favored part of the world, is *distanced* by the progressive increase of the population.”* Such a picture is widely different from that scene of millennial glory which many have supposed was about to be ushered in. A little cool arithmetic will suffice to dispel the dream of the conversion of the world in our generation, and to show us that, “at

* Letter to Dr. Harris. Life and Correspondence, vol. ii.

the rate of the progress hitherto of genuine Christianity on the globe, thousands of years may pass away before that millennium can arrive." The work is not yet finished ; the work is only yet begun. Not yet is Immanuel satisfied with the fruit of His travail ; not yet has He accomplished that which He has purposed to do through His redeemed Church. But when we consider the earnestness of His command, the largeness of His promise, the wisdom and the munificence of His arrangements, and the intensity of His desires, in respect to the conversion of the world, we can find a solution of the painful mystery of its delay only in some supposed restraint on Divine influence, some hindrance on the part of those who are commissioned to fulfill the mighty plan.

The kingdom of Christ has been retarded in various ways by the social and political condition of the world. And yet Christianity would have proved itself, ere this, to be the great reforming power in the political and the social institutions of men had not its influence been crippled and arrested by some other cause than those institutions themselves. The full power of Christianity, in opposition to all false systems of religion, of government, and of social organi-

zation, has not yet been proved ; for the condition of the exercise of that power, namely, a lively Christian faith, imparting vitality and efficiency to the appointed instrument of the work, has not been fulfilled on the part of the Church. *The prevalence of skepticism in the Church in respect to the facts and principles on which the work of missions proceeds, is, in our judgment, the main hindrance to the immediate evangelization of the world.*

There are several fundamental facts involved in the missionary enterprise, in respect to which there is a prevailing skepticism in the Church.

1. *There is much skepticism in the Church, with respect to the actual condition of the heathen world.* That the heathen are, for the most part, in a state of deep moral and social degradation, is beginning to be generally understood. Their true condition was long hidden from the Christian world. Mere secular travelers gave us entertaining accounts of the manners and customs of different nations, with occasional outlines of their philosophical tenets or their religious belief, and sketches of their sacred places and their institutions and modes of worship ; but they seldom described the general state of morals, or held up to repro-

bation their prevailing vices and crimes. Commercial residents in heathen lands have comparatively little opportunity of learning the moral characteristics of the people. They go there for a single object, the purpose of gain; they seldom contemplate a permanent residence; they have little intercourse with the natives, except in the way of trade; they commonly acquire but a superficial knowledge of the language, the literature, the religion, and the morals of the country. It was not till Christian missionaries, ordinarily men of intelligence as well as of veracity, went among the heathen, that the moral state of the world became truly known. Reports made by men who were not writing for amusement, reputation, or profit, and who had no personal interest to subserve by misrepresentation; by men accustomed to the study of character, and conversant with the morality of the Bible; men having an eye to detect and a soul to abhor every form of depravity; the reports of such witnesses disclosed to us a state of moral degradation among the heathen of which we had not before conceived. And though this testimony has been occasionally contradicted, by transient visitors and superficial observers, by parties interested in the continuance of the present

state of things, and by those whose moral sense is so obtuse that vice to them seems virtue, yet it is so abundantly confirmed by many independent witnesses, that the deep moral debasement, the revolting pollution of the heathen world, has come to be regarded as an awful fact. There is little if any doubt on that point, among well-informed persons in our day.

The apostle Paul, in the opening chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, enumerates twenty-two different forms of wickedness, many of them exceedingly gross, which were prevalent among the heathen of his time. The accuracy of his delineation is confirmed by cotemporaneous history and literature, and by the monuments of profligacy and lust exhumed from the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii. Tholuck has furnished us with the most sickening details of the depravity of ancient civilized Greece and Rome; and modern missionaries to India and other idolatrous countries, assure us that this same first chapter of Romans, which can hardly be read in a Christian assembly, certainly not with appropriate exposition and illustration, is an exact description of the state of the heathen in our own time, and is recognized as such by the more intelligent and honest among the heathen

themselves. Says one,* “I have read this tremendous catalogue to assemblies of Hindoos, showing from facts which both they and I knew, that each of these sins belongs in a high degree to their national character. I have asked the heathen themselves, whether the crimes enumerated by the apostle were not their national characteristics. Never, that I remember, did I fail to hear them confess that such was the case.”

Testimony like this is so abundant, that the moral degradation of the heathen may well be regarded as an established fact.

But while it is acknowledged that the heathen are thus degraded, it is not so generally felt that their degradation is the result of their own willful apostasy from God; that they are guilty, responsible beings, under the condemnation of the law of God, and in danger of eternal misery. Many look upon the heathen as comparatively safe; more likely to be saved without the gospel than with it; inasmuch as the knowledge of the gospel would (they think) only bring them into a state of accountability, from which, through involuntary ignorance, they are now exempt; and they affirm, that a benevolent Deity will not con-

* Rev. Mr. Eckard.

denn such ignorant and helpless creatures, in the day of final retribution.

Such views and feelings are at least latent in the minds of many Christians. They are to be traced partly to a defective view of the nature of human depravity, and partly to a morbid state of the sensibilities, leading to a superficial view of the benevolence of God.

If the heathen are held accountable for their moral state, we admit that it must be on the score of their willful disobedience to known law. We do not pretend that they will be judged by the revealed law, but by the light, if any, which they really have—by the law, if any, written on their hearts. There can be no moral depravity where there is no accountability; and there can be no accountability where there is neither the knowledge of the moral law nor the power to know and to keep the moral law. But it is claimed that the heathen have no means of knowing their duty, and that their depravity is, not their crime, but their misfortune. They are said to be “carried on in the mighty impulse of a depraved nature, which they are impotent to reverse,”* and, there-

* John Foster; letter to Dr. Harris. *Life and Correspondence*, vol. ii.

fore, to be devoid of responsibility. If so, the best security for the future happiness of mankind lies in the ignorance and gloom of heathenism, and the possession of the gospel is a calamity and a curse to any of the race. It will, therefore, be the dictate of benevolence, not only to refrain from sending out missionaries, but to recall those already in the field, and to suffer Christendom itself to relapse into barbarism.

But what can be more contrary to common sense and to Scripture than the supposition that a state of depravity, even of the most appalling wickedness, exists in the world, for which men are not accountable ; to which they sustain the relation, not of responsible agents, but of passive instruments and sufferers ?

The heathen are capable of discovering the being and the essential attributes of God ; for these must be learned from the light of nature—from the works of God—if they are known at all. Though a professed revelation may first call our attention to the fact, and may present it in a more clear and impressive view, we must, in the order of thought, derive our first knowledge of God from the visible creation. This the heathen are capable of doing, and for not doing this the Scriptures themselves declare them to be guilty and

condemned. "That which may be known of God is manifest in (or among) them; for God hath showed it to them; for the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." (Romans i. 19, 20.) Still further, it is alleged, that they were not only capable of knowing God, but that they actually did know Him, and suppressed the truth willfully for unrighteous ends. And it is a remarkable fact, that almost every system of religion in the world had, in its origin, and exhibits in its sacred books and in the writings of its expounders, ideas of the unity and the perfections of the Deity mainly coincident with those of Revelation.

Zoroaster says of God, that "He is the first of all incorruptible beings, eternal and unbegotten: He is not compounded of parts. There is none like nor equal to Him. He is the Author of all good, and entirely disinterested; the most excellent of all excellent beings, and the wisest of all intelligent natures; the Father of equity, the Parent of good laws, self-instructed, self-sufficient, and the first former of nature."

The following is what is termed the holiest verse of

the Vedas, or sacred books of the Hindoos. "Let us adore the supremacy of that divine Sun, the Godhead, who illuminates all, who recreates all, from whom all proceed, to whom all must return, whom we invoke to direct our understandings aright, in our progress to His holy seat. What the sun and light are to this visible world, that are *the supreme good and truth* to the intellectual and invisible universe; and as our corporeal eyes have a distinct perception of objects enlightened by the sun, thus our souls acquire certain knowledge by meditating on the light of truth which emanates from the Being of beings; that is the light by which alone our minds can be directed in the path of beatitude. Without hand or foot, He runs rapidly and grasps firmly; without eyes, He sees; without ears, He hears all; He knows whatever can be known, but there is none who knows Him: Him the wise call the great, supreme, pervading spirit: without cause, the first of all causes; all-ruling; all-powerful; the creator, preserver, transformer of all things."*

In like manner, in almost every system of heathenism, even among our own aborigines, we find some traces of the knowledge of the true God, mixed up,

* Sir William Jones's Works.

indeed, with much that is ridiculous and false, yet distinct enough to show the universal capacity of man for knowing God, and to justify the condemnation of idolaters. Wherefore the heathen are inexcusable and are under condemnation, "because, that when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful." Idolatry is always condemned in Scripture as a crime; it is never extenuated. No intelligent convert from heathenism to Christianity, ever thought of exculpating himself from the guilt of his previous life on the plea of ignorance, or of a want of capacity for knowing and obeying the true God and the great law of his moral being. On the contrary, many among the heathen, even prior to conversion, have admitted the truthfulness of Paul's delineation of their character, in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans; and that, too, without the least attempt at self-justification. Moreover, the prevalence of sacrifices for sin and offerings to appease the gods, the forms of justice which they observe among themselves, the instinctive promptness with which they resent and avenge personal wrongs, the horror which they manifest at crime as committed against themselves, and the almost universal doctrine of a future state of rewards and punishments, all show

that they have a moral sense; that they can distinguish between right and wrong moral action; that they know or could know enough of the true God and of His moral government to render them accountable, amenable to law. This is alleged over and over again in the Scriptures. "They changed the truth of God—the true and living God—into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator; for *this* cause God gave them up to vile affections. Because they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind."

Those who have a revelation, can not easily determine how much truth the human mind might discover without it. Undoubtedly the works of God are illuminated by His Word. We see a brighter glory in the creation because we have from infancy received it as an historic fact, that "in the beginning God made the heavens and the earth." Still, in the order of nature, we must and do derive our knowledge of the existence and the attributes of God from His works and not from His Word. We must know that there is a God before we can know that we have a revelation from God.

That which claims to be a revelation may possess a character so remarkable as to furnish evidence within itself of its divine origin. But in estimating that evidence, we either compare these internal marks with our previous knowledge of God, derived from His works, or we reason from the supernatural character of the production in question, to the existence and the attributes of God ; thus inferring the existence of such a Being from a work, a production, which must have had a divine author. In neither case would we take the mere testimony of a professed revelation as the ground of our belief in the existence of God. Either we do already believe in God from His works, and receive a revelation as from Him because it comports with what we already know of Him, or we make the character of that professed revelation itself, as something plainly supernatural, a proof of the existence of God.

A revelation from God may throw a clearer light upon His nature and character as previously seen in His works ; but it is from His works, in the order of thought, that our knowledge of His existence and attributes must first come. We enter a cavern hung with stalactites and paved with marble and precious

stones, bearing with us a dark lantern, whose straggling rays serve only to disclose to us massive and shapeless piles, whose dim outlines add terror to the gloom; and after groping our way through one or two chambers we grope back again without having seen any of the beauties and wonders of the cave: whereupon a guide offers to attend us, and, with blazing torch in hand, lights up that vast cavern with an unearthly radiance; that single torch being multiplied in rainbow colors from mirrored walls and jeweled pavements, while pillars and pendants of translucent marble, now sheathed in light, are seen sustaining and adorning the spangled arch of this magic temple, whose thousand echoes wake to the music of distant water-falls and the detonations of subterranean cataracts. Now what has wrought this change? The guide has produced none of these marvels. The pillars were there, the polished walls, the jeweled arch and tessellated pavement, all were there when first we entered; but we had no torch. Not venturing to expose our feeble rush-light, we had placed it in a dark lantern, and had therefore groped in solitude and gloom. Had we opened the lantern the discovery would have been ours.

Now here we are in the vast temple of God's creation—the pillared firmament above our heads, the jeweled earth beneath our feet, and forms of beauty and grandeur everywhere around us. But we want light. Did we but take the light of reason, of our discerning faculty, and pour it forth over these works of God, God would Himself be visible. His power, His wisdom, His love, His divine supremacy, would be clearly seen; all things would become radiant with a celestial glory, while reflecting in endless repetition and countless diversities, the first few rays of light from that thoughtful, inquiring, self-enlightening mind.

But if that mind be wrapped up within itself, if reason be veiled by sense, shut up as it were in a dark lantern, glimmering only through its crevices, there will be no God in creation, no temple of the Infinite One; nothing but the grotesque, distorted and gloomy images of a bewildered fancy. Even if the heaven-kindled torch of revelation illumines the world, that mind will see nothing of God till its sensual veil is removed. But is God, therefore, not to be seen in nature? Is He not there? May He not, though personally invisible, yet be understood, from the things that are made, in His eternal power and Godhead?

If man is too depraved to judge of the evidence of the being of a God, or to form any just decisions upon moral truth, without a revelation, then, surely, he is disqualified, from the same cause, for judging of the evidences of a revelation. But human reason, with all its weakness and imperfection, in one way or another, must judge of the evidence of the existence of God, or the fact of His existence can never be established in a single human mind. And we go even farther, and claim, that not only the existence, but also the *benevolence* of God, is discoverable from the light of nature, and must be proved from that source, or it can never be proved at all. Could we believe that God is good upon His own declaration, if in six thousand years He had given no evidence of goodness to His creatures; if He had not given them a constant witness to that fact, in that “He did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness?” Besides, in order to receive the testimony of the Word of God to His benevolence, we must assume the very fact to be proved, namely, that God is *too good to deceive His creatures*, and is therefore to be believed when He declares that He is good! Revelation may throw a

luster upon the divine benevolence which we would not otherwise discover, or it may bring that benevolence into view under new and interesting aspects ; but the heathen are condemned in Scripture, “because when they knew God they glorified Him not as God, *neither were thankful.*” But how could they be condemned for being unthankful, declared to be “without excuse” for their ingratitude, if they were incapable of discovering, without a revelation, that God is good ? The fact is settled by Scripture itself, that the heathen are under condemnation for known and willful sin.

The state of the heathen world, then, is not merely a state of degradation, but of *guilt* ; a state of voluntary apostasy from God. The sad record of their deeds is not the story of the misfortunes of the race, but the story of its depravity, a depravity whose dark and slimy flood grows deeper and more turbulent as it rolls on from generation to generation. The darkest shade of the picture drawn by Paul is that of guilt. To doubt this, to question whether the heathen are in a state of guilt and condemnation, morally impotent because morally perverse, is to question the first truths in moral science, and to dispute the plain,

declarations of the Bible. Such is the evidence of their responsibility and guilt in the Scriptures themselves, that a doubt on that point is culpable skepticism. But there is abundance of such skepticism in the Church, sometimes avowed, more frequently indulged in secret, and exhibited only in a want of zeal to save the millions that are perishing.

This skepticism is attributable in part, also, to a morbid state of the sensibilities which inclines the mind to a distorted view of the benevolence of God. There is something so horrible in the thought that millions of our fellow-men are exposed to eternal misery, that we are glad to find relief from it any where; to imagine that the case of the heathen is not so deplorable as it seems to be, and that even if they are guilty as well as degraded, a benevolent God will not suffer them to perish eternally. This state of feeling was strongly developed in Mr. Foster toward the close of his life. He speaks of the condition of the world as "transcendently direful, when viewed in connection with the doctrine of the eternity of future misery." And its very direfulness led him to reject that doctrine. "It amazes me," he says, "to imagine how thoughtful and benevolent men, believing that doc-

trine, can endure the sight of the present world and the history of the past. To behold successive, innumerable crowds carried on in the mighty impulse of a depraved nature, which they are impotent to reverse, and to which it is not the will of God, in His sovereignty, to apply the only adequate power, the withholding of which consigns them inevitably to their doom—to see them passing through a short term of mortal existence, under all the world's pernicious influences, with the addition of the malign and deadly one of the great tempter and destroyer, to confirm and augment the inherent depravity, on their speedy passage to everlasting wo—I repeat, I am, without pretending to any extraordinary depth of feeling, amazed to conceive what they contrive to do with their sensibility, and in what manner they maintain a firm assurance of the divine goodness and justice.”* The amount of all which is : It is too horrible to conceive of the heathen as being in a damnable state ; therefore they can not be in such a state. If the idea of their future misery is so repugnant to our sensibilities ; it is much more so to a being of infinite benevolence ; therefore God will surely save them, and therefore

* Letter to Dr. Harris.

we need not be greatly concerned for them. But what, we ask, do good men, believing in the necessity of penalties to support law, “contrive to do with their sensibility” when a criminal is executed, or is sentenced to imprisonment for life? “and in what manner do they maintain a firm assurance of the goodness and justice” of the judge who pronounces such a sentence? Why this is the very thing that gives them that assurance. The contrary course would make them tremble for the welfare of the state. Mere sensibility, mere sympathy for suffering as such, must give place to an enlightened and comprehensive benevolence. Just so do good men, “believing the doctrine of the eternity of future misery,” men of keen sensibility but of enlightened understandings, look upon the heathen as in a lost condition, without impugning either the goodness or the justice of God, and look upon them with the more tender and available compassion on that very account. It was Mr. Foster’s philosophy of human depravity, as a state appointed by God for sovereign reasons, and which men are “impotent to reverse,” which led him to question whether the heathen or the race at large would ever be punished by a just and good God. The view of

the state of the heathen world which is given by Paul, the common-sense, matter-of-fact idea of voluntariness and consequent responsibility, wherever moral depravity exists, scatters all such sentimentalism and skepticism like vapor. But defective views of the nature and extent of human depravity, together with that distorted view of the benevolence of God which arises from a morbid sensibility, do in fact produce skepticism as to the actual condition of mankind at large—their guilt and danger—in minds less profound than Foster's, and less interested than his was at one period in missionary labors. Such skepticism is one of the most serious restraints upon the missionary enterprise of the present age.

This topic, although of painful interest, must here be dismissed, to take up a second form in which skepticism exhibits itself in relation to the missionary work.

2. *There is much skepticism in the Church, as to the purpose of God that the world shall be evangelized and converted to Himself.* Admitting that the heathen are in a state of guilt and condemnation, and on that account are proper objects of Christian sympathy and effort, it is still questioned by some, whether the plan

of redemption in its final results comprehends the conversion of the world at large; whether God does not, for wise reasons, intend to destroy the heathen, instead of gathering them into the kingdom of His Son. This view arises from a misunderstanding of prophecy, and from a disregard of the connection between the divine volition and human agency with respect to such a work.

There are many who take the ground that the thorough evangelization of the world is not contemplated in prophecy; that all which was ever intended to be accomplished in this way, was done in the first two or three centuries of the Christian era; that Christ will set up His kingdom on earth by a series of judgments, destroying the wicked, and giving undisputed possession to His saints. Now, that great political and social changes are foretold in the Scriptures, and that appalling judgments are to be visited upon the nations, is plain to every reader of prophecy. These judgments are likened to the most terrible catastrophes in the material universe. The sun is turned into darkness, the moon into blood, the stars fall from heaven, the mountains and the islands are moved from their places. These strong figurative expressions in-

dicate great and it may be sudden and violent changes. But these changes are to be connected with the progress of religion; they are to result from, or will contribute to, the spread of the gospel. They are not to be independent movements of Providence, much less are they to supersede the appointed means of grace: but they form a part of the great system of means for the salvation of mankind. In this view, whether still in the vista of the future, or already transpiring before our eyes, they become incentives to effort rather than a restraint upon effort. Such changes have always attended the progress of true religion in the world; they belong to a great series of events in the providence of God, all linked together by His purpose to recover this lost race to Himself. The civilized world was prepared for the easy diffusion of Christianity in the beginning, by the conquests and the political unity of the Roman Empire. And when Christianity as a system had become strong enough to endure the shock, the way was opened for introducing it among the uncivilized nations of the North, by the forcible dissolution of that same empire. "And be it remembered," says a late writer, in reference to these changes, "be it remembered, that these

are events, which, though described by us with a stroke of the pen, filled the eye of the prophet with a vision of broken thrones, and his ear with the shriek of expiring nations, events which, when they occurred, threw the earth into political convulsions, and the history of which might be easily expanded into blood-stained volumes.”* They were in fact changes so portentous as to be well represented by the convulsions of nature. Just such changes will God bring about in the fulfillment of His promise to His Son, that He shall possess the earth. And yet these predicted changes make many skeptical respecting the import, if not the reality, of such a promise.

A favorite proof-text with those interpreters of prophecy who suppose that there is nothing but judgment reserved for the mass of mankind, is the declaration of the second Psalm: “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel.” From this it is argued, that the heathen are given to Christ only to be extirpated or destroyed, so that He may reign without an enemy on earth; and, therefore, that it is vain to attempt to convert them. But is that the scope of this prophecy?

* Harris.

Whom is Immanuel to break with a rod of iron? *What* is He to dash in pieces like a potter's vessel? Mere masses of men, or *nations* in their corporate capacity, whose social, religious, and political institutions obstruct the progress of His kingdom? For what purpose is the power of the sword given to the Messiah, but that He may secure His promised inheritance—an inheritance not of mere territory, but of willing subjects, brought into obedience by moral influences, when political obstructions shall have been removed by His wonder-working providence? Jehovah, amid the solemn pomp of the Messiah's inauguration on the holy hill of Zion, forewarns the kings and rulers of the earth of the destined triumph of His kingdom. He bids them cheerfully submit to it, lest it should bear them down. "The world I have given to my Son; the people whom you rule are His inheritance; in vain will you oppose the progress of His kingdom; enter your territories it must; peaceably if it can, forcibly if resisted; under your thrones or over them, onward it must move, though its tread be the convulsion of empires, the shaking of the earth. Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and

rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little.”

It had been well for Jerusalem and for ancient Rome if they had heeded this warning. The speedy downfall of the Jewish and Pagan persecuting powers, shows how vain is the rage of earthly monarchs against Him who wields a rod of iron as well as a scepter of grace. It had been well for China, for India, for Madagascar, if they had welcomed Christianity and had thus conciliated the King in Zion, instead of provoking the rod of His strength. Again and again had the gospel knocked at the door of China; again and again had the ambassadors of Christian nations sued for admittance there. That haughty people, regarding themselves as of celestial origin, and worshiping their emperor as the son of heaven, despised the light and truth which God has sent into the world. But China belongs to Christ; He must not be deprived of it; and as milder agencies will not suffice, the rod of iron must humble her pride and break down her massive wall. China, as a political power, has been dashed in pieces, that Christ may have the ends of the earth for His inheritance.

So now, in all Europe, thrones are shaking, despotism is vanishing away; and those great thoughts and principles which have so long lain imbedded in the New Testament are starting up to the admiration of the nations, and clothing themselves with a power greater than that of kings and of armies.

How then can Christians with such illustrations of this prophecy before their eyes, seeing that wars and commotions among the nations do but break down the barriers that encompass the inheritance of Christ, and open the way for His triumph, how can they, seeing this, make this very prophecy the ground of doubt as to the intended subjugation of the world to Christ, and a plea for the relinquishment of missionary effort? Yet so it is. Such skepticism meets us at every turn, and clogs the wheels of missionary enterprise.

Skepticism upon this point is engendered, also, by a false philosophy respecting the decrees of God—a philosophy which overlooks the connection between the divine volition and human agency in such a work, and sinks into a stolid fatalism. Here, again, Mr. Foster furnishes us with the most recent, striking, and painful illustration of our meaning. In his letter to Dr. Harris, he speaks contemptuously of “the light

in which the Almighty is presented in much of what is spoken and written in the missionary service." He here alludes to the prevailing idea, that Christians must *co-operate* with God in the evangelization of the world, and that while God Himself is "earnestly intent on human salvation," the work may be delayed by their inaction: the very doctrine which we are aiming to establish. This view Mr. Foster denounces as bordering on impiety; for, says he, "a single volition of the Almighty could transform the whole race in a moment;" and again, he adds, "how self-evident the proposition, that if the Sovereign Arbiter had *intended* the salvation of the race, it must have been accomplished." This argument is briefly as follows. God is an absolute sovereign. He can accomplish therefore whatever He wills to do. Accordingly, He could transform the race by His almighty power, if He should will so to do. But the race has not been transformed, the world has not been converted; therefore God has not willed that it should be. In fact, for some wise though hidden reason, He has willed exactly the reverse; therefore it is idle, presumptuous, and even impious, for us to attempt to convert the world. It is a pity that the sanction of so great a

name should have been given to such pious fatalism. Happily Mr. Foster himself, in the discourse which follows, refutes this very fatalism in a manner which completely neutralizes his own subsequent authority, and annihilates his sophistical philosophy. He there gives it as his opinion, that the chief hindrance to a more vigorous system of missionary effort on the part of Christians, “ consists in a kind of *religious fatalism*, which would make the objection in some such terms as these : if that Being whose power is almighty, has willed to permit on earth the protracted existence, in opposition to Him, of this enormous evil, why are *we* called upon to vex and exhaust ourselves in a petty warfare against it ? Why any more than to attempt the extinction of a volcano ? If it were His will that it should be overthrown, we should soon, without having quitted our places and our quiet in any offensive movement toward it, feel the earthquake of its mighty catastrophe ; and if such is *not* His will, then we should be plainly putting ourselves in the predicament of willing something which He does not will, and making exertions which must infallibly prove abortive.” This, it will be observed, was Mr. Foster’s own reasoning later in life, and it is the common rea-

soning of fatalists upon the subject. But mark how thoroughly he meets it. He inquires whether the reasoner supposes that this permitted evil is not in its nature hostile and offensive to God, or that God is at peace with it? If it is hostile to Him, how can you be at peace with it without forming an alliance with His enemy? Are *you* authorized to permit a great moral evil because *God* does so? “For *you* to maintain a calm tolerance toward it because *He* does not destroy it, is no less than to yield it an amicable acquiescence, no less therefore than an alliance with His enemy, unless this tolerance is maintained for precisely those reasons, clearly understood, which are His reasons, for permitting it.” Besides, what right have you to assume “the *continuance* of this permission indefinitely into futurity? When, for any thing that can be known to you, hostile means put in action at this period may coincide with a divine decree to terminate that mysterious sufferance; and then, whatever were the natural inadequacy of those means, they would seem to have caught the fire of Gideon’s lamps, and be made to flame out with supernatural power of rout and confusion to the host of pagan gods. * * Though it has been the mysterious will of the Supreme

Governor to permit great systems of wickedness in the earth, it has as evidently been His will to maintain a continual war against them." This His subjects are required to do—to war against sin in their own souls, and in the world, wherever it exists.

The conquest of evil forms a part of our moral discipline in this world. It serves as a test of character. And where that evil is concentrated in systems and institutions, venerable with age and clothed with power, the contest with it demands much patience, courage, faith, and zeal, and serves to develop the higher virtues of the Christian character.

Since accountableness for the limited spread of Christianity must rest somewhere, it were well to inquire what proportion of it may belong to those whose doubts, whether derived from philosophy or from prophecy, respecting the *intention* of God that the world shall be Christianized, have restrained them from the use of means and influence given them for—they know not what.

3. *Skepticism, in respect to the missionary work, is further developed in doubts and queries as to the proper time for attempting to evangelize the world.* Admitting that the spread of Christianity is to be

universal, there are those who question the expediency of present missionary operations. They regard them as premature and wasteful. Some maintain that the world must be civilized before we attempt to spread the gospel; others, that Christ's second advent must precede such an attempt; and others still, that every such attempt must prove abortive until God's appointed time arrives. The first view has been set forth in these words: "We know the showiness of heathen missions; nay, we appreciate the zeal and disinterestedness of those who go forth upon this forlorn hope; but we must have leave to doubt whether the results are so proportioned to the means as to make those accountable for their stewardship able to reckon with their Lord for the moral capital invested in this enterprise. The rescue of Jerusalem from the infidel is a parallel case of Christian activity. If the Christian world would unite in some sensible efforts to *civilize* the heathen, we should think them in the line of their Christian duty. We have very little faith in the success of any endeavors to Christianize in advance of civilization."*

* Christian Inquirer, 1848.

no sympathy with the evangelical system which we are seeking to extend. But this notion that civilization must precede all efforts for the conversion of the heathen, possesses the minds of many in the Church, who have most conscientious scruples about throwing away money—upon an experiment to do good.

Those who entertain this opinion must be exceedingly blind to history and to facts occurring before their eyes. How much of the civilization of modern Europe is to be traced to the influence of Christianity, which, notwithstanding its own degeneracy, survived the decay of the ancient civilization, and was the vital element of the new. Civilization, without this religious element, has commonly been extended, not by reclaiming barbarous nations but by exterminating them. It is the testimony of Niebuhr, that “an uncivilized people has never derived benefit from contact with a civilized race.” The assertion may be too unqualified, but it is so far true that many students of history and ethnography have formed the conclusion that the uncivilized world is irreclaimable and must be blotted out. But when has civilization prepared the way for the introduction of Christianity among a barbarous people whom it has even partially reclaim-

ed? Has it not left their religious and social institutions in the main unchanged, while it has transplanted the vices and the infidelity of civilized countries to heathen lands, as an additional barrier to the progress of the gospel? The usurpation of territory, oppression, licentiousness in new forms and as a system, fraud and injustice, have commonly marked the introduction of civilization among a people unattended by Christianity. Witness British India. Such civilization, perpetrated in the name of a Christian nation, has served only to bring Christianity into disrepute before its coming. Christianity in time may correct these monstrous evils, but, as we see in France, the highest state of civilization itself needs the reforming power of vital Christianity. But where Christianity goes among a people civilization invariably follows. The tribes of the wilderness are no longer wandering and untutored when they have received the gospel; the inhabitants of the islands are no longer savage and intractable when the Christian missionary has set foot upon their shores. Is it not passing strange, that a man who has heard the name of the Sandwich Island nation, should suffer any philosophical theory about the progress of civilization to awaken a doubt as to

the present utility of missionary operations? Yet so it is; such doubts exist, and the cause of missions languishes.

A single fact touching the Sandwich Islands should set this question forever at rest. When the first missionaries from this country visited those islands, there was no written language, and no community of interest among their inhabitants, notwithstanding their commercial relations to the civilized world. Now, as the direct result of missionary labor, a large annual appropriation is made by the Sandwich Island government for the support of common schools.

The idea that an attempt to convert the world before the coming of Christ would be premature and unavailing, is advanced by many as an objection to the work of missions as now conducted, and leads them to withhold their co-operation. Of course we can not enter here into any discussion of the doctrine of the second advent. The manner of Christ's appearing, the place and character of His reign, have nothing to do with the present question. That question is, whether His promised advent, in whatever form, warrants our remaining in a state of inglorious inactivity, or summons us to redoubled effort. This question is

already answered in what was said of the concurrence of God's providential visitations with the spread of the gospel. What is the setting up of Christ's kingdom among men, whether He be visible or invisible? What is the essential thing about it? The universal exercise of faith and love toward Him; the universal practice of His principles. But this state of things we have the means of promoting—the very best means—means appointed by Christ Himself. These means we are commanded to employ; and shall we hide our talent in a napkin because our Lord has gone into a far country, and we know not how soon He will return?

That hesitancy to engage in present missionary operations which arises from a fear of forestalling the divine purpose, is but another form of that fatalism which has already been exposed. In this instance, fatalism, instead of summarily disposing of all responsibility for the state of the heathen world by a decree of God, professes to anticipate with great delight the certain accomplishment of the prophecy of the ingathering of the Gentiles, when God's selected time shall come. Now there is but one instance in the history of the Church in which God's people have been

authorized to suspend their missionary activity until His selected time should arrive, and that was when the first disciples were commanded to tarry at Jerusalem until they should receive the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Ever since the day of Pentecost the work has been onward ; Christ has granted His servants no remission. No one who believes in the foreknowledge and the providential government of God can doubt that He has a selected time for the conversion of the world, although that time may yet be far distant. But it can not be viewed as a time fixed arbitrarily, without reference to the means by which the work should be accomplished. It is the time of *possibility* rather than of *desire* ; as early in the history of the race as the resistible nature of moral influences and the inefficiency of human instrumentality would admit, though not so early as a Being of supreme benevolence could wish. There can be no greater restraint therefore on divine influence than that imposed by a devout waiting for God to do His own work.

We are far from intimating that any plan of God, any purpose which He has formed as the providential Governor of the world, can be defeated, or, in the

common acception of the term, can even be delayed by men. "He worketh all things after the counsel of His own will." But the benevolent feelings and wishes of God toward men may be disregarded, and the influences by which as a moral Governor He would secure the moral perfection of men may be restrained and counteracted. The will of God expressed in the form of a purpose that an event shall take place, can never be resisted; the will of God in the form of a preference that an event should take place rather than its opposite, as for example that men should be holy rather than sinful, is not only capable of being resisted, but is resisted whenever the moral law is disobeyed. And it is matter of grave accusation in the Bible against men, that they resist those moral influences, not excepting a direct influence from God Himself, which are fitted to lead them to repentance and a new life. "Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost."

Startling as the sentiment may appear, it is yet true, that men can and do impose restraints upon that divine influence which would otherwise be put forth for their own good and the good of others; and the providential purposes of God, so far forth as they

may be supposed to have contemplated that fact, may be said to be influenced by it.

We would have those timid Christians, who are so fearful of being too forward in the service of Christ, picture to themselves the reception which some toil-worn missionary, a Brainerd, a Martyn, a Schwartz, would, on their principles, receive at the gates of glory. Instead of being welcomed by exulting heaven to the joy of his Lord, he would rather be chided by that Lord for his presumptuous zeal, and his waste of time and influence; while he who scarcely offered a prayer, or lent a dollar, or lifted a finger to save the world, lest God should be glorified before the time, would be received with the honors of the good and faithful servant. Nay, let there be a truce to such folly. Let us give place not for a moment to a skepticism so dishonorable to God, so disastrous to men. They who on such a plea withhold their co-operation from this enterprise, can find in Scripture but one example of alarm at premature activity; not in the martyred souls who cry from beneath the altar, "O Lord, how long;" not in the angels who pant to bear good-will to men; but in that infernal legion who

cried out at the approach of Christ, "Art thou come to torment us *before the time?*"

Were it possible for us in any way to anticipate God's selected time for the world's conversion, who can doubt that the Master would exclaim with joyful emphasis, "Well done, good and faithful servants."

4. There is another topic in connection with the missionary enterprise, respecting which there is not a little skepticism in the Church, and that is, *The practicability of evangelizing the world at all by any known instrumentalities.* Doubts on this point arise from a mere external view of the obstacles to be overcome, and of the means to be employed, and from an underestimate of what has actually been done with a very limited use of these same means. Looking upon the moral map of the world, we see much in the widespread gloom of heathenism to dishearten us. Reflecting upon the history of the race, upon the pertinacity with which superstition and idolatry have maintained their ground, upon the extent to which false systems of religion are not only allied but interlinked with the political institutions and the manners and customs of the people, the strong hold which they have upon the mass, and the various forms of self-

interest concerned in sustaining them, when we reflect upon all this, the work appears truly formidable. And when in opposition to all this array, we can bring into the field but a few hundred missionaries, with their presses and schools, and like simple arrangements, we do at times feel the force of the worldling's sneer, that we are engaged in a Quixotic warfare. But when we take a higher stand-point, and look upon these ancient and diversified systems of idolatry as but different combinations or developments of the great principle of moral evil, and on the other, upon missionary arrangements as but so many points of contact of the Spirit of God with that monster and antagonist evil, the doubts and fears suggested by the former comparison vanish, and hope resumes its sway.

Many, however, rest in the external view, with its attendant skepticism and fears. Some of these are persons of a sanguine temperament, who, having expected more than could be realized from present efforts, now underrate the success of those efforts, and abandon themselves to despondency. Mr. Foster gave vent to his feelings in this strain. "No one," he says, "who did not witness it, can have any ade-

quate conception of the commotion there was in susceptible and inflammable-spirits," when the missionary enterprise was commenced. "The proclamation went forth, 'overturn, overturn, overturn,' and there seemed to be a responsive earthquake in the nations. The vain, short-sighted seers of us had all our enthusiasm ready to receive the magnificent change, the downfall of *all* old and corrupt institutions, the explosion of prejudices; the demolition of the strongholds of ignorance, superstition, and spiritual with all other despotism; man, on the point of being set free for a noble career of knowledge, liberty, philanthropy, virtue, and all that, and all that. A most shallow judgment, a pitiable ignorance of the nature of man, was betrayed in these elated presumptions. But they so possessed themselves of the mind, as to prepare it to feel a bitterness of disappointment as time went on through so many lustrums, and accomplished so niggardly a portion of all the dream."*

Had Mr. Foster lived a few years longer, he would have seen that this judgment after all was not quite so shallow, nor the dream altogether a delusion.

But though the extravagant anticipations of some

* Letter to Dr. Harris.

have not been realized, it does not follow that nothing has been done. The missionary enterprise is very far from being a failure. Success in it has been fully proportioned to effort, and has exceeded the expectations of dispassionate observers. We can not here enumerate all the results of missionary labor—the localizing of various wandering tribes, the introduction of the useful arts and employments of civilized life, the formation of written languages, the general diffusion of knowledge, the improvement of civil institutions, the promotion of morality, the prevention of war, the extinction of slavery, the elevation of woman, the abolition of idolatry with its vices and crimes, the establishment of Christian churches, and the hopeful conversion of tens of thousands, many of whom have already departed in the faith, so that “death is becoming incomparably more tributary to Heaven, and the ancient barrier between the realms of Asia and the kingdom of eternal glory is beginning to break down.” All this on heathen ground, and mainly in half a century. And this has been, too, for the most part, only in the way of preparation. The timber has been hewn down, the stone has been cut out; but when the rude and scattered materials are brought together, the tem-

ple will rise without the sound of implements, and as if by some magic power.

But some, overlooking all this, are waiting for the ushering in of a new dispensation, as the signal for entering upon the work of converting the world ; consequently they disparage present efforts. Their notions as to what that dispensation is to be, and how it is to be ushered in, are sufficiently vague. The ministry of angels is not to be expected ; the age of miracles is gone ; there is to be no further revelation ; mere judgments or other providential visitations will not, of themselves, accomplish the work ; and we already possess all the means in kind, which are needful to accomplish it. That there will be, in some sense, a new era in this work, we do not doubt—an era of unexampled progress. But such an era is not to be *waited for* ; it is to be *brought about*. It will be characterized by more signal interpositions of Providence ; more rapid changes in the political world, conspiring to give success to the truth ; by the general diffusion of religious liberty ; by a more hearty cooperation of Christians in the work of saving men ; which unity, thus practically realized, will, of itself, act as a means of conversion ; by more of individual

consecration and zeal, as distinguished from associated effort; and most of all will it be characterized as an era of elevated piety. Skepticism will be rooted out of the Church; and faith, love, hope, joy, and a holy zeal will combine to usher in the latter-day glory. Happy will it be for us, if we can do aught to introduce that era, instead of moping in our cold-hearted skepticism.

II. We have now stated the principal grounds of skepticism relative to the missionary enterprise, and have endeavored to show their fallacy. It may seem strange, that in the present stage of this work, instead of making its progress and successes the theme of delightful and exulting contemplation, we should have occupied so large a portion of our essay in an attempt to expose and refute the objections to that work. It is not that we are unmindful of what has been done, or distrustful of the future. But is it not manifest that this cause needs a higher impulse; that the interest in the work of missions is not at all in proportion to the present resources of the Church, or to the present facilities for missionary operations abroad? Taking the annual income of the American Board as a measure of that interest, does an average contribution of a shil-

ling each, on the part of the members of the churches which it represents, betoken any very ardent, self-denying devotion to this work? Does the average attendance at the monthly concert, or the whole number of young men who offer themselves for this service, indicate any excess of zeal on account of it? Has not the work of missions as prosecuted by us been for years at a stand in the apparent interest of the churches? We have had various means of incitement to bring us out of this state of fixity, but in vain. We have felt the pressure of debt; we have aroused to shake that off, and now we are very cautious not to undertake so much as to run the risk of debt again. The providence of God has opened vast fields before us; nations hitherto inaccessible have been brought within our reach; and to this incitement of demand is added the incitement of glorious, unparalleled success; the shouts of the reapers are heard from the plains of India and of Persia, and from the shores of the Euxine. And still the work drags here at home; it is doubtful each year whether the churches will do as much as they did the last; it is a problem by what economy shall missionary societies keep out of debt, and that, when in a single day we might

bring together from the churches in New York or Boston a hundred men who could jointly defray the annual expenses of the foreign missionary work without feeling the cost. Is there not then a hindrance to this work which has not yet been reached? And where shall that hindrance be found, but in that very skepticism which has now been exposed?

Such skepticism paralyzes the arm of the Church. It indisposes those who indulge it for the use of the means necessary to carry on such a work. If one is in doubt whether the heathen would really be benefited by the gospel—if he does not feel that they are in perishing need of it—of course he will do little or nothing to send it to them. If one is in doubt whether God really intends to accomplish the conversion of the world to Himself, whether it is His will that the gospel should be everywhere propagated, of course he will scarcely make an attempt to evangelize the world. If one is in doubt whether this is the time for engaging in this work, he will not engage in it heartily, if at all. If one has little confidence in the present means, he will act with little energy, or keep aloof from such impracticable schemes. Thus the work is crippled on every hand by unbelief. Unbelief, besides

restraining the energies of the Church, incapacitates those who indulge it for appreciating the work of the Lord, and for rendering Him the glory which is His due. In this way it puts a restraint upon divine influence as well as upon human energy. God will not dishonor Himself by courting the confidence of those who, like Israel of old, are unbelieving, in spite of all His marvelous works. Viewed as a check upon Christian activity, and an obstacle to the operations of the Holy Spirit, unbelief must be confessed to be the great hindrance to the missionary work.

III. But if skepticism be the main hindrance to the missionary work—a work so approved of God in His Word and providence—how unreasonable and wicked is it for any to indulge such a state of mind.

Look at the course of Providence in relation to the missionary work; especially at events of recent origin, within the range of our own observation. In no period of the history of redemption, not even when preparing the fullness of time for the Messiah's advent, has the providence of God been more marked than of late years, in its bearing on the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. What facilities have we for communication with all parts of the world; with what se-

curity can missionaries now labor in almost any part of the globe. How has the British empire, like the Roman empire of old, made a highway among the nations and across the seas, for the advance of Christianity! How large a portion of the globe “appears to be placed by Providence at the disposal of Christendom!” Is it nothing in relation to our work, that India has fallen into the hands of Great Britain, rather than of Russia or of Rome, and that a more wise and liberal policy pervades the counsels of her rulers? Is it nothing that the pride of China has been broken by a rod of iron, that her ports are open to the commerce of Christian nations, and that tolerance is granted to their faith? Religious toleration we have, too, even in Turkey, guarded by the sovereign edict, though sometimes evaded by the shifts of private malice. No system of religion but Christianity in some form, is now gaining ground in the world. The most ancient, extensive, and powerful systems, Brahmanism, Buddhism, and Mahometanism, are evidently waning. Christianity alone is vital, is aggressive, is advancing. The providence of God in respect to this work would form one of the most interesting chapters in the history of His government. Never has He stamped any

work as more peculiarly His own. It has the seal of His spirit. Against such evidence that this is the Lord's work, as is furnished by the whole current of His providence, is it not unreasonable, and even presumptuous, to doubt it? In view of the recorded prayers of holy men for the coming of Christ's kingdom, prayers indicted by the Holy Spirit, or taught by Christ Himself; in view of the predicted triumphs of the gospel, yet unaccomplished; in view of the unrevoked, unlimited command of Christ, "Go, teach all nations," is it not wicked to give place to unbelief?

No Christian can be skeptical in this matter innocently. While he is doubting whether the heathen are in danger, they are perishing by thousands; while he is doubting whether God intends the salvation of the world, His providence pauses, as it were, reluctantly, in the mighty work; while he is doubting whether this is the time for action, the seed-time of the millennium is wearing away; while he is doubting whether the work can be done at all, he is making it sure that it will not be accomplished by this generation. How cruel to the heathen are such doubts as these. Wo to the world, because of the unbelief of the Church.

This unbelief is disastrous in proportion to the interests at stake. The salvation of millions from eternal death is at stake here. To accomplish a work so vast, there is needed a faith which shall grasp the principles on which that work proceeds; which shall firmly ally the soul with Christ and His cause; which will scarcely brook a doubt or fear. A faith that falls short of this, falls short of the work, falls short of the demands of God in His providence. God is indicating to His people His readiness to do mighty works by their instrumentality. We see signs of His coming no less portentous than if huge meteors blazed along the sky, and the flaming host were marshaled there for battle. The stars in their courses fight against the enemies of God. Christ is abroad among the nations, dashing them together like vessels of clay, or stilling the noise of war and the tumult of the people. There is no mistaking the signs of these times. Great changes are at hand. All things are tending toward the higher development of man. The world is full of revolutions; revolutions not merely of blood, but in the thoughts and habits of men, in the policy of nations, in systems of education, of religion, of government, in every thing affecting the welfare of the

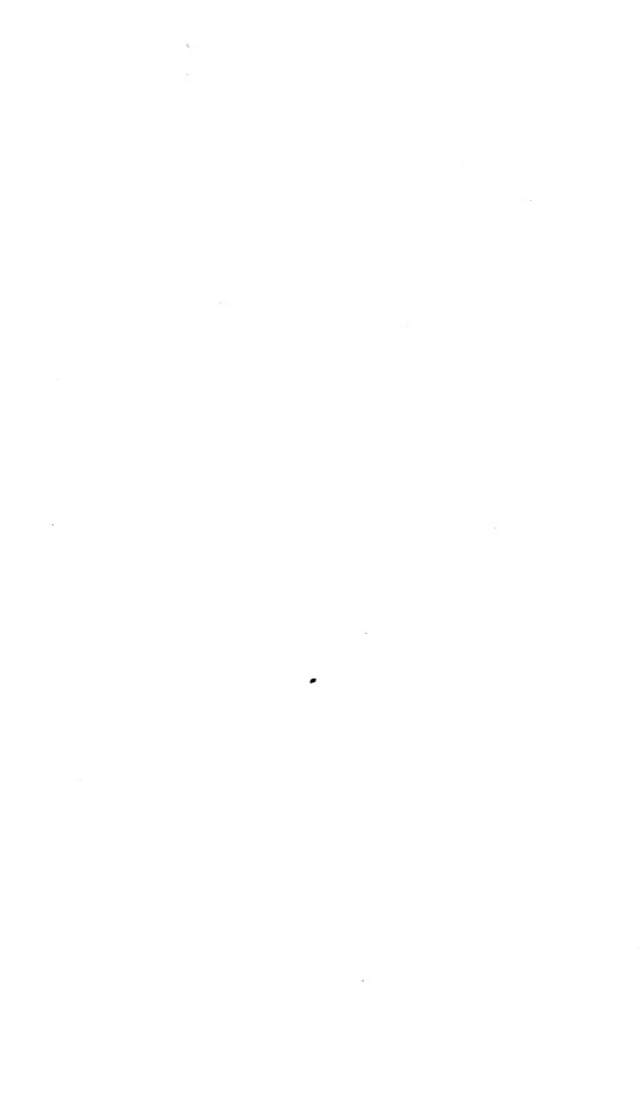
race. We are nearing the moral crisis of the world, when after so long a struggle, the social, intellectual, political and moral elevation of mankind may be finally secured. Satan is driven from one hold to another, and foiled at every turn. Expedients are failing him. He stirs up war, and it becomes the occasion of spreading the kingdom of peace. He excites persecution, but instead of exterminating the saints of God, it brings about full liberty of conscience, and favors the organization of independent Christian churches. He panders to superstition by devices so successful in the dark ages, but only provokes another reformation in the land of Luther. His old arts will not serve him now. He rages up and down in the earth like a wild beast driven from his lair. He lashes himself into fury, knowing that his rage is impotent. He calls upon his ancient allies, but they are gone. The four great monarchies are fallen. The Babylonian empire, the Persian, the Macedonian, the Roman, all are gone. There is no great power of the earth by which he can now hope to strengthen his cause. The gods of ancient Greece and Rome are gone; Jupiter no longer thunders; the sounding chariot of Mars no longer shakes the sky. Thor, too, and Odin, have departed.

The Scandinavian deities are buried in the oblivion of their worshipers. He turns to the thirty million gods of India; but they are filled with consternation at wats and temples deserted, at Christian schools and churches springing up around them. He looks to the shrine of Buddh; but the high-priest of that widespread system is mourning over its weakness and decay. He turns to the region of the false prophet; but Islamism is under bonds to the Christian powers of Europe. He comes at length to his long-tryed and faithful ally at Rome; but even he affects the new order of things, and feels the spirit of the age. Nay, the triple crown itself is endangered by repeated throes of revolution. Thus the great adversary is made to feel that his hour is well nigh come. The last links of the chain that is to bind him in the pit are forging. Hell stands aghast at the impending ruin of her chief. The interest of heaven becomes intense as a new seal is opened and another trumpet is about to sound. Shall this be the blast of victory? Shall the shout come up, "The kingdoms of this world are the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ?" What can hinder it? Satan, with all his forces crippled, his allies beaten and deserting, his in-

genuity exhausted, his malice spent, must now be crushed. Ah, he has one hope left! He knows man too well to fear. Again and again has God led His people to the verge of victory, and they have turned back like Israel from the border of Canaan. Again and again have powerful and well-directed assaults on the kingdom of darkness failed in the midst of success, because the men were wanting, and the spirit was wanting, to improve the advantage. The last hope of Satan is in the timidity and doubtfulness of the Church. He scatters distrust and fear among God's people. They hesitate, they fall back. Their skepticism checks the auspicious onset, prolongs the reign of darkness, abandons the world to guilt and wretchedness; and while God would give a triumph to heaven and a millennium to earth, this gives a jubilee to hell!

J. P. T.

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THE
GLORY OF THE AGE.

THEY CAME NOT TO THE HELP OF THE LORD, TO THE
HELP OF THE LORD AGAINST THE MIGHTY.—
JUDGES, V. 23.

THE practice may be too frequent, of accommoda-
ting objects and effects in the world of nature, the re-
lations and transactions in that of human society, and
the merely secular facts of the Scripture history to
the purpose of representing, in the way of formal and
protracted similitude, the truths and interests of relig-
ion. We may observe, however, that it seems to the
honor of religion that so many things *can* be accom-
modated to its illustration, without any recourse to
that perverted ingenuity which fancifully descries or
invents resemblances. It is an evident and remark-
able fact, that there is a certain principle of corre-
spondence to religion throughout the economy of the
world. Things bearing an apparent analogy to its
truths, sometimes more prominently, sometimes more
abstrusely, present themselves on all sides to a thought-
ful mind. He that made all things for Himself ap-

appears to have willed that they should be a great system of emblems, reflecting or shadowing that system of principles, which is the true theory concerning Him, and our relations to Him. So that religion, standing up in grand parallel to an infinity of things, receives their testimony and homage, and speaks with a voice which is echoed by the creation.

It may, therefore, be permitted us to fix upon a circumstance in the political conduct of an ancient people, as adapted to suggest more than it essentially contains, and to carry our thoughts, by analogy, to a kind of duty and of delinquency more directly related to religion. Under this license our subject is introduced by a sentence pronounced, we may presume at the divine dictation, in reproach of a refusal to co-operate in a very different kind of service from that which we have, on the present occasion, to recommend.

The negative form of the charge—They came *not* to the help of the Lord—may remind us of the grievous fact, that by far the greater number of the judicial negative statements in the Bible, respecting the conduct of men, are accusations. The mention that they did *not* do the thing in question, is very generally the implied assertion that they ought to have done it. And the consideration becomes still more awful upon recollection that we are told, that the last negative statement to be uttered on earth, and uttered by the greatest voice, will be with an emphasis of condemnation—“Inasmuch as ye did it *not*—!”

Observe how much guilt there may be in mere omission, and that, even though we should suppose the persons who decline the one specific duty to be occupied while neglecting it in employments in themselves innocent and laudable. It is very possible that the people of whose absence from the appointed scene of action we have just read the accusing record, might have brought a plea on this ground against the justice of the consequent malediction. They might perhaps have had to say, that they were diligently prosecuting the labors of their rural economy, which there might be, at the time, particular reasons why they should not suspend; or that they were intent on certain plans for rectifying disorders in their society; or that they were employing the time in some peculiarly solemn forms of worship, perhaps imploring the intervention of Heaven in the alarming crisis, under a persuasion of the perfect sufficiency of the divine power independently of human means. But no such pleas would have availed to avert the vindictive sentence which the prophetess was instructed to pronounce on their refusal to do *that one thing*, which the summons of unquestionable authority had signified to be, in that juncture, their precise duty. Such allegations might indeed have been dishonestly made, as an attempt to veil selfishness and cowardice, the real causes probably for withholding the required service; and then the hypocrisy would have incurred a prompt exposure and a severity of rebuke; but even

had they been made sincerely, and proved to be true, they would not have arrested nor revoked the condemnation. The appeal of the defaulters would have been silenced by the decision, that it is of the essence of disobedience and rebellion to assume to make commutations and substitutions of duty, to transfer obligation to where it would be less inconvenient that it should be enforced, and to affect to render, in the form of preferred and easier services, an equivalent for the obedience which the righteous and supreme authority has distinctly required to be rendered in that harder service which is evaded.

Suppose these people to have really been of a quiet and harmless disposition, and assiduous in the useful vocations of ordinary life, there may appear, notwithstanding the urgency of the occasion, something hard in the alternative they were placed in, of suddenly abandoning their homes to rush into the perils of battle, or suffering all that was denounced in so heavy an execration. And, in the retrospect of the many forms into which human duty has been diversified by occasions, as displayed in the Bible and other records, we see many situations of exceeding hardship—not meaning, by such a term, an imputation on that Authority which prescribed their arduous exercises. The great contest against evil, in all its modes of invasion of this world (but our reference is chiefly to those requiring men's resistance in the religious capacity), has been a service assigned in every possible differ-

ence of circumstance and proportion ; and some men's shares have involved a violence of exertion, or a weight of suffering, which we look upon with wonder and almost with terror. We shudder to think of mortals like ourselves having been brought into such fearful dilemmas between obedience and guilt. We shrink from placing ourselves but in imagination under such tests of fidelity to God and a good cause. The painful sympathy with those agents and sufferers terminates in self-congratulation, that their allotment of duty has not been ours. The tacit sentiment is, I am very glad I can be a good man on less severe conditions.

And the sentiment is justified by the necessary and eternal laws of our nature. It may become an emotion of piety, and rise in gratitude to God for having appointed us to a less formidable service. But it may also be indulged in such a manner as to betray us into dangerous delusion. In pleasing ourselves with the thought of our exemption from an order of duties involving the sacrifice of every thing gratifying in mortal existence but a good conscience—duties to be performed at the cost of suffering oppressive and unmitigated toil, pain, want, reproach, loss of liberty, and even of life itself—duties imposing such a trial of fidelity as confessors and martyrs have sustained—we may be led into a wrong estimate of the difference between their situation and ours, as if our obligations were constituted under an *essentially* different econ-

omy. With an unthinking self-assurance that the satisfaction we feel is gratitude to God for a less rigorous appointment, we may be making exemptions for ourselves which He has never made. Delighted that at the easy price of only being thankful to Him, we are allowed to take so much indulgence, we may with a deluded confidence widen out the sphere of privilege beyond one point, and beyond another, where He has marked the boundary, with always the strongest propensity to this enlargement on that side where the hardest duties are placed ; till the mind at length reposes in a scheme of duty adjusted on its own authority, and far from coincident with that which has been dictated by the divine will.

There *is* delusion in our self-congratulation at the contrast between what is enjoined on us and the severer duties imposed on some of our great Master's subjects, if we do not perceive that, nevertheless, the matter of our required service is of the very same substance (with only a favorable difference of mode and proportion) as that which appears to us of such rigor in theirs. There *is* delusion, if we are permitted to escape from the habitual sense of being, in the character of the servants of God, placed under the duty and necessity of an intense moral warfare, against powers of evil as real and palpable as ever were encountered in the field of battle. Not to feel ourselves pressed upon by resistless evidence and admonition of this, is an utter ignorance or oblivion

of our commission on earth. And the natural consequence is a fate like that of strangers thoughtlessly straying and surrendering themselves to sleep in a place where it is a law of the barbarian inhabitants to sacrifice all strangers to their infernal gods.

Yet there is in general so faint an impression of this fact, of an urgent necessity of war till death, as the grand business and obligation of life, that, to the greater number of the persons to whom we offer illustrations of Christian topics, no language sounds so idly, no figures appear so insignificant, no forms of commonplace so "flat and unprofitable," as those which represent, in a military character, the exertions by which men are to evince themselves the servants of God. An appeal might safely be made to the consciousness of many hearers and readers whether, at the recurrence of these images in any religious reference, they have not a marked sense of insipidity strongly tending to disgust, caused in some degree, we may allow, by a too frequent iteration, but still more by the impression of unmeaningness and futility in employing such terms for such a subject.

It is striking to observe, at the same time, how some of the persons who are thus tired to loathing of these images in their moral and spiritual application, will disclose their latent energy at similar language and figures coming before them in literal representation of war. Most of the excitable class of spirits, whether in youth or much more advanced in life, can

be kindled to enthusiasm by the grand imagery of battles and heroic achievements. Those very terms of martial metaphor, under the spiritual import of which they are beginning, perhaps amid some religious service, to sink in dullness and disgust, may give them sudden relief by diverting the mind away to an imagined scene of conflict; and it shall feel a proud elation in passing from the stale and sleepy notion of a spiritual warfare, to the magnificence of the combats which are displayed in fire and blood to the eyes, and in thunder to the ears. The attention being wholly withdrawn from the strain which is perhaps still proceeding, in words no longer sensibly heard, to figure out the Christian soldier, the imagination shall follow the track of some brilliant mortal, of history or fiction, through scenes of tumult, and terror, and noble daring, and shall adore him as beheld exulting unhurt in victory, or as expiring in the manner in which it is by general consent accounted graceful for a hero to fall. The enthusiast, while sitting still and abstracted, may be at moments enchanted into a kind of personation of the character, and glow with emotion in the mimic fancy of acting himself a part so splendid. And these scenes of fury and destruction, thus fervidly imagined, shall really be deemed the sublimest exhibitions of man, in which human energy approaches nearest to a rivalry with the "immortals"—for the epic diction of paganism may naturally be the expression of sentiments fired by its spirit. "Immortal,"

may be also the word which he is silently pronouncing in his adoration of the personage whose career he is pursuing in reverie, conformably to that caprice of human madness which has determined the special selection of such an epithet for bedecking the most active dealers in death, whose exposure to be smitten by it is an inevitable condition of their inflicting it.

If, in this inflamed state of the mind, the idea were again presented of the Christian warfare, of a contest against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness, it would be repelled with disdain of the impertinence or arrogance which could assume for *such* matters any of the lofty terms belonging, and (it would be proudly said) *deservedly* applied, to the transactions of Trafalgar and Waterloo. This contempt may be felt by persons to whom the glories of war are only a pageant of the imagination; but it would be a still stronger sentiment in most of the men who have actually witnessed and shared the terrors and triumphs of martial exploit, if it could happen that they should hear the figurative language in question, and lend for a moment attention enough to understand what it should mean. In short, between distaste for its insipidity and almost resentful scorn of its impertinence of pretension, the metaphor would be, by most men of high-toned spirit, flung back on the imbecile religionists as an inane fancy, in which they are seeking to make for themselves a compensation for their incapacity of any thing truly great. Let these

wars, enemies, and heroes of vapor, they would say, busy the feeble souls to which they can have the effect of realities.

But while this is their feeling, what shall we think of the sanity of their perception? Alas for the state of the senses, of the faculties of apprehension, in those minds that have so little cognizance of a most fearful reality which exists on every side, and presses upon them! How strange it is to see men in possession of a quick and vigilant faculty for perceiving every thing that can approach them in hostility, except that nearest, deadliest, and mightiest enemy of all, moral evil. And how deplorable to see them prompt in indignation, instantly in the attitude of defense or attack, burning with martial spirit, inspired with notions of glory and victory, and at the same time turning away with slight or scorn at the representations by which divine or human admonition is attempting to alarm them to a sense of their danger from that foe, compared with which all the rest are but shapes of air! That creatures should be thus maddened with fancies of the glory of destructive combats with one another, and insensible of the presence and quality of that destroyer which is invading them all, is truly a sight for the most malignant beings in the creation to exult over. It is a spectacle of still darker character than that which would have been presented by opposed armed parties or legions gallantly maintaining battle on the yet uncovered spaces of ground while the universal flood was rising.

Alas! we must repeat, for the stupefied intelligence of those minds which can regard as idle extravagance this language which would arouse their attention to what is as certainly a reality as their own existence, and will infallibly make the most fatal proof of its power on the spirits the least aware that the destroyer is at hand. What a renovation of perceptive faculty is necessary to that being who would ask, either in levity or ignorant surprise, What and where is that foe so malignant and powerful? while there is exposed in full view the mighty mass, and force, and operation of all that depraves and ruins the souls of men. The insensibility to this fact as existing, and as being incomparably the most awful phenomenon on earth, would itself betray, in such a negation of moral intuition, the intervention of the very enemy described. Let a thoughtful man survey the world of mankind, and see what there is universally among them to excite the sad exclamation, "Wo to the inhabitants of the earth!" Let him deeply consider *what it is* that he is beholding, while he observes this power of evil assailing, and committing grievous mischief upon, every human being, his experience testifying that himself is not exempted. Let him reflect that what he sees is an operation reducing unnumbered myriads of rational and immortal creatures to a state so much worse than that which would be the right and happy condition of their being, that there is nothing in all merely terrestrial things adequate to furnish, by a con-

trast between extremes, a measure for the difference. He is to form his judgment of the gloomy fact under his view on an estimate of the injury done to each one, and of the number so injured, including in the account the generations of all past time. And let him try whether an earnest and protracted attention to the dire exhibition will detect a fallacy in its dreadful aspect, so that his last sober judgment shall be like the relief of recovering, by the aid of reason, from a superstitious terror. No; he will find, uniformly, that the evil reveals itself to him in still more substantial and deadly character, the longer his mind fixes with close and solemn inspection on any of its innumerable forms. The impression thus reinforced by stronger demonstration might become too aggravated to be borne, if there were to be suddenly imparted to him a great addition of religious light and sensibility through which he should receive, while contemplating this vision of evil, a brighter manifestation of the holiness of God and the perfection of His law. And even such a view as would overpower the firmest mind might still be but a faint apprehension compared with the perception of some superior pure intelligence looking on this world; and how much more so in comparison with the thought and feeling with which the Redeemer beheld the error and depravity of our race. No language nor images for communicating information in any world can ever represent *His* estimate of the scene. But *that* was the only adequate appre-

hension of it. In whatever degree, therefore, its portentous quality is manifested to the view of a religious observer, he will always be certain that there is in it a depth of evil still beyond the capacity of his thought; while in that which he does apprehend, he perceives a magnitude and atrocity which can be but feebly expressed by borrowing terms from circumstances the most odious and dreadful in material existence, and saying, that the multitude of human souls are invaded, robbed, polluted, chained, tormented, or murdered.

Sometimes we contemplate, perhaps, the mighty progress of destruction, as carried over a large tract of the earth by some of the memorable instruments of the divine wrath, such as Attila, Zingis Khan, or Timour. We behold a wide-spreading terror preceding, to be soon followed by the realization of every alarming presage, in resistless ravage and extermination. Numberless crowds come tumultuously to our view, in all the varieties of dismay, and vain effort, and suffering, and death; a world of ghastly countenances, desperate struggles, lamentable cries, streaming blood, and expiring agonies, with the corresponding circumstances of fury and triumph, and the appropriate scenery of habitations burning and the land made a desert. And while one general character of horror is spread over the immensity of the scene, the imagined forms and aspects of individual victims, frequently marked forth from the confused aggregate, and presented to the

mind in momentary glimpses, as vivid points of impression, give an effect of reality to the visionary spectacle of misery and destruction.

When a man of ardent imagination has dwelt upon such a scene till it almost glows into actual existence in his view, let him be assured it is the language of truth and soberness that affirms this spectacle to form but a faint and inadequate image for representing that other invasion which is made upon the spirits of all mankind, that invasion of which, indeed, all these horrors are themselves but a few of the exterior circumstances and results. And yet creatures assailed and in danger of destruction by this more awful calamity, surveying in fancy, and shuddering while they survey, these furies and miseries of remote times or regions, shall bless their good fortune that *they* are not exposed to any persecution of evil a thousandth part so formidable!

When following in thought those perpetrators of devastation and carnage we have the consolation of foreseeing its end. The Cæsars and Attilas were as mortal as the millions who expired to give them fame. Of Timour, the language of the historian, kindling into poetry, relates that "he pitched his last camp at Otrar, where he was expected by the Angel of Death."* But the power that wages war immediately on the souls of men, the power of depravity and delusion combined, has continued to live or de-

* Gibbon.

stroy while all these renowned exterminators have yielded to the decree that sent them after their victims. It is perpetually invigorated by the very destruction which it works; as if it fed upon the slain to strengthen itself for new slaughter, and absorbed into its own every life which it takes away. For it is in the nature of moral evil, as acting on human beings, to create to itself new facilities, means, and force for prolonging that action. From the effects there is continually reflected back an augmentation of power to the cause; a circumstance explained by the fatal aptitude of the subject operated upon to give its own strength to aid the pernicious agency. The injured subject—the corrupted nature—still less and less, at each return of the injurer, thinks of suspecting or resisting; still more and more effectually contributes that the malignity may not be frustrated. So that the power of sin acquires over those who are surrendered to it a more decided predominance in each stage of their progress, and makes confirmed assurance of what they will be in the next, unless prevented by something foreign to their own moral nature. And since the majority of human beings have always been under this power, what a security it has possessed for prolonging its empire of destruction! What a security, in the principle by which, in every period, the greater number of all mankind were, as individuals, incessantly growing worse! And to what a dreadful perfection of evil might such a race attain but for

death, that cuts the term of individuals so short, and but for the Spirit of God, that converts some, and puts a degree of restraint on the rest.

And now, if there is really thus in action, against the souls of our race, such an enemy as all these epithets and images can but faintly represent, can a professed servant of God look round and felicitate himself on having an extremely easy test of his fidelity. Where does he find his privileged ground of immunity and indulgence, while this mighty force of evil drives and sweeps and rages against God and truth, against goodness and happiness, his own spirit and all men's spirits, as really as ever he that was named the scourge of God ravaged the countries of Asia and Europe? In seeking such exemption he must abandon all the objects and interests against which this hostility is directed; must therefore compromise and, in effect, co-operate with the enemy. Let him consider what scheme it is possible to conceive of true service to the King of Heaven in this bad world, which should not commit him in conflict at every point of its execution. Against *every* good he can think of he will find an appropriate antagonist evil already in full action, an action that will not remit and sink into quiet when he approaches to effect the intended good. Nay, indeed, in what way is it that the servant of God the most readily apprehends the nature of his vocation but in that of seeing what it is *against*. And when he puts the matter to experi-

mental proof, does he ever find that those apprehended adversaries are nothing but menacing shadows? Let him that has made the most determined, protracted, and extensive trial, tell whether it is idle commonplace and extravagance when we say that all Christian exhortation is in truth a summons to war.

There are many modes of the action of this grand enemy—moral evil—which press so immediately on a man's own personal concern, that an habitual conflict with them is an essential condition of the Christian character: a practical question of hostility or acquiescence is implicated with the ordinary course of his self-government. There are other forms, of great magnitude and hatefulness, existing in the world, which do not so directly force themselves into the question of his being a Christian or not. In judgment and feeling he must be, of course, their implacable enemy. But since they throw no temptation in his way, have the sphere of their malignant operation at a great distance, leave a very wide space clear for Christian exercise, and may seem, also, by their vastness and consolidated establishment, to be placed the very last of all things that individuals can account themselves competent to attack—to be as enormous mountains limiting their field—it may be acknowledged a matter of somewhat less definable obligation in what degree he shall actively expend his animosity upon them. The exhortation to apply a share of his

efforts in that direction may be considered as partly an appeal to those higher sentiments of the religious spirit which aspire to the full magnanimity and zeal of the Christian character. It is an admonition to the professed adherents of Him who came on earth with a design extending in hostility, without limit or exception, to *every* thing adverse to goodness and pernicious to the human soul, that if all the moral evil in the world is not acting immediately against *them*, it is against *Him* ; and that it is most reasonable that one of the laws of their devotion to Him should be, to identify themselves with Him in the practical warfare to the *widest scope* which is really open to their enterprise. It is an incitement to their ambition, not to leave it to be ever said again, with respect to any part of His operations against evil among men, that He trod the wine-press alone, and that of the people there was none with Him.

When animated to this high and adventurous spirit, a good man may wonder that the heathenism prevailing over large tracts of the world should so little have been, in this country, or other Protestant nations, till a comparatively recent time, accounted as comprehended within the sphere of required Christian exertion.*

* The indifference of Protestants was not for want of examples, such as they were, of activity in this department. It was very well known that there had been various missionary enterprises under the appointment of the Romish Church. And certain individuals employed in those missions were held worthy of perpetual remembrance for their invincible perseverance, and for a share, it was fair to believe, of a truly Christian principle in the motives which actuated them. But when

One most amiable fraternity, indeed, whose gentleness at home involves a principle by which it glows into energy and heroism in proportion to the remoteness of the distance, and the barbarousness and ruggedness of the field of action, to which it is voluntarily exiled, have made missions to the heathens an essential part of their institution. But, in general, the friends of religion seem to have regarded those great maladies of the moral world, the delusions and abominations of paganism, with a sort of submissive awe, as if, almost, they had established a prescriptive right to the place they have held so long, or as if they were part of an unchangeable, uncontrollable order of nature, like the noxious climates of certain portions of the globe, and the liableness in others to the terrors of earthquake. Or, at least, when these religious men have looked on these mighty forms of darkness and iniquity, as destined to vanish at some time from the scenes of which they have been so long the curse, and have prayed for that time to be hastened on, they have found themselves anticipating and invoking, with undefined conception, some entirely unwonted and even properly

these undertakings were viewed in their general character, it was so notorious that they were, as to the prevailing motive, projects of hierarchical ambition, and that, in their mode of prosecution, they accommodated, with the corruptest policy, to the paganism they professed to convert, and introduced a great deal of what was no better than paganism of their own, that Protestants could hardly regard them as *Christian* projects, and therefore felt no stimulus at the view of their activity, and derived nothing to excite hope from the boasts, or the facts, of their success.

miraculous mode of divine interposition, and have felt as if it would be for men to stand off and see what God can do, in this very feeling perhaps admitting on their minds, in a degree, the imposition through which a defect of faith and zeal may be mistaken for humility and devotion.

Within a later period, however (within that, chiefly, which has shown, on so vast a scale, the availableness of human agency for overturning things of ancient, and wide, and commanding establishment in the world), many good men have begun to regard with much less prostration of feeling those gigantic "dominations" which have for so many ages held so many nations in the debasement of superstition. It came to be questioned why a servant of Christ should shrink from looking any of the powers of darkness in the face, from defying them in his Master's name, or from making the experiment of an application of Heaven's own fire to their abhorred establishments of deceit and wickedness, in which the souls of men are destroyed. In proportion as the imaginary defense around these tyrannies over the mind was falling, in proportion as the reputed guardianship of fate or infernal power which had seemed to render them inviolable was breaking up, the idea of such an experiment on them assumed a less visionary appearance. It took a distinct character of evident practicability; and then it grew to a conviction of duty in some of those

to whom the cause of Heaven was the object of highest concern on earth.

This impression was strongly felt by the first movers of the project of that mission to India, which we can not hesitate to represent as one of the most rational and efficient enterprises of the enlarging Christian ambition to make war on the greatest and most inveterate evils of the moral world. When awaked, as it were, to behold an ampler view of the world as a field of activity for the zealots for the best cause, they were struck with surprise at seeing so few adventuring into the distance against the most ancient and vast dominion of paganism; and they thought it high time that an end should be put to the quietude of sentiment, the antichristian tolerance, toward what was so proudly and with impunity standing in defiance of that cause.

The odious quality and the strength of this possessor of so wide a realm and so many slaves were evident enough under a very imperfect exposure, to place the meditated experiment of hostility greatly out of the common calculations of Christian daring. It could not but appear so far beyond those ordinary presumptions as to provoke the contempt of those who have no notion of the interference of the divine power in aid of such a project; so far beyond them, indeed, as to insure an entire defeat if it were undertaken in dependence on any other than that superior strength. Yet the information possessed at that time,

by even the cultivated part of the nation, had not sufficed to give any thing approaching to an adequate idea of the superstition and depravity of the people of Hindoostan. It has been chiefly during the period since this mission was commenced, and in a considerable degree in consequence of the discussions and the exposition of evidence occasioned by animosity against it, that a rapidly increasing knowledge has brought the general opinion to that judgment of the character and condition of the Hindoos, which the translations made from their sacred books by the missionaries and other Eastern scholars, and the reports of travelers reduced at last to the necessity of being honest, are fast contributing to place beyond all controversy. If there was in so old and well examined a thing as human nature no undetected perversity for these disclosures to bring to light as a new principle of evil, they have, however, shown some of its known evil principles inhering and operating in it with such an absoluteness of possessive power, and displaying this despotism in such wantonly versatile, extravagant, and monstrous effects, as to surpass all our previous imaginations and measures of possibility. The enlarged information has placed before us, as constituting the actual state of a prodigious mass of human existence, an exhibition of such things as it would have seemed to require a superhuman genius for inventing shapes of degradation and absurdity to have figured as dreams of fancy.

There is much in the Hindoo system that is strik-

ingly peculiar ; but as it is the substantial greatness of the evil, rather than its specific discrimination, that requires to be presented to the view of Christian zeal, much of the stress of our brief observations will be laid on properties which are common to this with the other principal modes of paganism. The object is rather to display the system in its strength of pernicious operation, than to attempt any explanatory statement of its precise materials or construction. There needs no great length of description, since the communications of missionaries, and various other works published within the last few years, have made all who take any interest in the subject familiarly acquainted with the prominent features of the heathenism of central Asia. As for the possible attainment of any thing like a complete knowledge, it may defy all human faculty ; which faculty besides, if it might search the universe for choice of subjects, could find nothing less worth its efforts for knowledge. The system, if so it is to be called, appears, to a cursory inquirer at least, an utter chaos, without top, or bottom, or center, or any dimension or proportion, belonging either to matter or mind, and consisting of materials which certainly deserve no better order. It gives one the idea of immensity filled with what is not of the value of an atom. It is the most remarkable exemplification of the possibility of making the grandest ideas contemptible by conjunction ; for that of infinity is here combined with the very abstract of worthlessness.

But, deserving of all contempt as it is, regarded merely as a farrago of notions and fantasies, it becomes a thing for detestation and earnest hostility when viewed in its practical light, as the governing scheme of principles and rites to a large portion of our race. Consider that there is thus acting upon them, as religion, a system which is in nearly all its properties that which the true religion *is not*, and in many of them the exact reverse. Look at your religion, presented in its bright attributes before you, reflecting those of its Author, and then realize to your minds, as far as you can, the condition of so many millions of human spirits receiving without intermission, from infancy to the hour of death, the full influence of the direct opposites to these divine principles—a contrast of condition but faintly typified by that between the Israelites and the Egyptians in beholding, on the different sides, the pillar in its appearance over the Red Sea. Consider in comparison the intellectual and moral systems under which we and they are passing forward to another world. While ours has, as its solar light and glory, the doctrine of One Being in whom all perfections are united and infinite, theirs scatters that which is the most precious and vital sentiment of the human soul and of any created intelligence, that is, the affection which regards Deity, to an indefinite multitude and diversity of adored objects; the one system carrying the spirit downward to utter debasement through that very element

of feeling in which it should be exalted, while the other, when in full influence, bears it upward through all things that combine to degrade it.* The relation subsisting between man and the divinity, as unfolded to view in the true religion, is of a simple and solemn character, whereas the Brahminical theory exhibits this relation in an infinitely confounded, fantastic, vexatious, and ludicrous complexity. While in the Christian system the future state of man is declared with the same dignified simplicity, the opposed paganism, between some inane dream of an aspiring mysticism on the one hand, and the paltriest conceits of a reptile invention on the other, presents, we might say sports, this sublime doctrine and fact in the shapes of whimsey and riddle. Ours is an economy according to which religion, considered as in its human subjects, consists in a state of mind instead of exterior formalities; the institutes of the Hindoos make it chiefly consist in a miraculously multiplied and ramified set of ritual fooleries. It is almost superfluous to notice in the comparison that while the one enjoins and promotes a perfect morality, the other essentially favors, and even formally sanctions, the worst vices. It may

* A faded trace of primeval truth remains in their theology, in a certain inane notion of a Supreme Spirit, distinguished from the infinity of personifications on which the religious sentiment is wasted, and from those few transcendent demon figures which proudly stand out from the insignificance of the swarm. But it is unnecessary to say, that this notion, a thin remote abstraction, as a mere *nebula* in the Hindoo heaven, is quite inefficient for shedding one salutary ray on the spirits infatuated with all that is trivial and gross in superstition.

suffice to add, that while the true religion knows nothing of any precedence in the divine estimate and regard of one class of human creatures before another, in virtue of nativity or any mere natural distinction, the superstition we are describing has rested very much of its power upon a classification, according to which one considerable proportion of the people are, by the very circumstance of their birth, morally distinguished as holy and venerable, and another more numerous proportion, as base and contemptible, sprung from the feet of the creating god, that they might be slaves to the tribe which had the luck and honor to spring from his head.

Such is this aggregate of perversions of all thought, and feeling, and practice. And yet the system, *being religion*, acts on its subjects with that kind of power which is appropriate and peculiar to religion. The sense which man, by the very constitution of his nature, has of the existence of some superhuman power, is one of the strongest principles of that nature ; whatever, therefore, takes effectual hold of this sense will go far toward acquiring the regency of his moral being. This conjunction of so many delusions does take possession of this sense in the minds of the Hindoos with a mightier force than probably we see in any other exhibition of the occupancy of religion, on a wide scale, in the world. But to the power which the superstition has in thus taking hold of the religious sense is to be added that which it acquires by

another and a dreadful adaptation; for it takes hold also, as with more numerous hands than those given to some of the deities, of all the corrupt principles of the heart. What an awful consideration, that among a race of rational creatures a religion should be mighty almost to omnipotence by means, in a great measure, of its favorableness to evil! What a melancholy display of man, that the two contrasted visitants to the world, the one from heaven, the other deserving by its qualities to have its origin referred, to hell—that these two coming to make trial of their respective adaptations and affinities upon human spirits, the infernal one should find free admission, through congeniality, to the possession of the whole souls of immense multitudes, while the one from heaven should but obtain in individuals, here and there, a possession which is partial at the best, and to be maintained by a conflict, to the end of life, against implacably repugnant principles in the mind. Well may a Christian be affected with the most humiliating emotion, both for his race and himself, while he reflects, I have a nature which might have yielded itself *entire* to a false religion, but so reluctantly and partially surrenders itself to the true one, as to retain me in the condition of having it for the chief concern of my life and prayers that the still opposing dispositions may be subdued.

We may assume it as a fact, too obvious to need illustration in particulars, that this superstition, while

it commands the faith of its subjects, completes its power over them by its accordance to their pride, malevolence, sensuality, and deceitfulness; to that natural concomitant of pride, the baseness which is ready to prostrate itself in homage to any thing that shall put itself in place of God; and to that interest which criminals feel to transfer their own accountability upon the powers above them. But then think what a condition for human creatures! that believe in a religion which invigorates, by coincidence and sanction, those principles in their nature which the true religion is intended to destroy; and in return, those principles thus strengthened contribute to confirm their faith in the religion. The mischief inflicted becomes the most effectual persuasion to confidence in the inflicter.

Observe, again, the power possessed by this stupendous delusion in having direct hold on the senses, in so many ways, even exclusively of the grosser means (the grossest possible, as you are apprised), of which it avails itself to please them. It has infused itself, as it were, into numberless visible objects, whence it emanates in a continual influence on the mind through the senses, having made these objects expressive and representative of religious ideas. All the vain notions of the superstition thus stand embodied before its devotees in material phenomena, which are informed with a significance that seems to look at them and speak to them. Presented to them

in these sensible types, those delusive ideas occupy their faculties sooner, almost, than they can think, more constantly than they think, and in a mode of possession stronger than mere thought. Indeed, it is a mode of possession which (after faith has grown into the habit of the mind) may be effectual on the feelings though thought be wanting; for we may presume that in India, as in other places, when external forms and shows have been admitted as symbols of subjects of belief, they may preserve in the people much of the moral habitude appropriate to that belief, even at times when there is no strictly intellectual apprehension. The Hindoo is under the influence of this enchantment upon his senses almost wherever the Christian remonstrance against the dogmas and rites of his superstition can approach him, seeking access to his reason and conscience. The man thus attempting may have read idle fictions of magical spells, which obstruct the passing of some line, or preclude entrance at a gate; but here he may perceive a *real* intervening magic between the truth he brings and the intellectual and moral faculties into which he wishes to introduce it. In his missionary progress among the people, perhaps he shall address them where there is in sight some votive object, some consecrated relic, or the tomb of some revered impostor; things which being connected, in their apprehension, as closely with religion as their garments are with their persons, will impress the assurance that the religion of which the

emblems are present, is present itself ; that is to say, that it is a reality, of which every thing adorable or fearful is at that instant impending in menacing authority over them. A thing inconsiderable in itself, firmly associated with an invisible greater thing as its sign, may have the effect not only of reminding of that greater, but of aggravating the sense of both its reality and importance.

His next address may be uttered in the vicinity of a temple which, if in ruins, seems to tell but so much the more impressively, by that image and sign of antiquity, at what a remote and solemn distance of time that *was* the religion which they feel to be the religion still ; if undilapidated and continuing in its sacred use, overawes their minds with the mysterious solemnities of its unviolated sanctuary ; while the sculptured shapes and actions of divinities, overspreading the exterior of the structure, have nothing in their impotent and monstrous device and clumsy execution to abate the reverence of Hindoo devotion toward the objects expressed in this visible language. The missionary, if an acute observer, might perceive how rays of malignant influence strike from such objects upon the faculties of his auditors, to be as it were reflected in their looks of disbelief and disdain upon the preacher of the new doctrine. What a strength of guardianship is thus arrayed in the very senses of the pagan for the fables, lying doctrines, and immoral principles established in his faith !

Or we may suppose the protester in the name of the true God to be led to the scene of one of the grand periodical celebrations of the extraordinary rites of idolatry. There, as at the temple of Juggernaut, contemplating the effect of an intense fanaticism, growing through an almost infinite crowd, he may perceive that each individual mind is the more fitted, by being heated in this infernal furnace, to harden in a more decided form and stamp of idolatry as it cools.

The very riches of nature, the conformations and productions of the elements, co-operate in this mighty tyranny over the mind by occupancy of the senses. Divinity, while degraded in human conception of it, in being diffused through these objects, comes, at the same time, with a more immediate impression of presence, when flowers, trees, animals, rivers, present themselves, not as effects and illustrations, but often as substantial participants, or at least sacred vehicles, of that sublimest existence, and the whole surrounding physical world is one vast mythology, an omnipresent fallacy. In praying that the region may be cleared of idol gods, the missionary might feel the question suggested whether he is not repeating Elijah's prayer for the withholding of rain, which would certainly do much toward vacating the pantheon, by the destruction of the flowers, trees, animals, and streams.

This great enemy, against which we are wishing to excite Christian zeal, is "mighty" in the strength of venerable antiquity. Antiquity is, all over the world,

the favorite resource of that which is without rational evidence ; especially so, therefore, of superstition ; and the Brahminical superstition rises imperially above all others in assumption of dignity from the past, which it arrogates as all its own, but emphatically that which appears the most solemn by remoteness. Other dominations over human opinion are under the necessity of acknowledging an origin ; at a particular period, and in comparative insignificance, and have had to attain their due honors by a slowly enlarging progress downward through time. But this proud imposture, disowning every thing like an infancy, disdaining all idea of having ever been less and afterward greater, and defying all computation of time, makes the past, back to an inconceivable distance, the peculiar scene of its magnificence. And it teaches its devotees to regard its continued presence on earth not as the progress of a cause advancing and brightening into greatness and triumph, but merely as something of the radiance reaching thus far, and with fainter splendor, from that glory so divine in the remote past. Its primeval manifestation was of such power as to prolong the effect even to this late period, in which the faithful worshipers have to look back so far to behold the glory of that vision it once condescended to unfold on this world. The grand point of attraction being thus placed in a past so stupendous as to assume almost a character of eternity, the contemplations, the devotional feelings, and the self-complacence

cy are drawn away in a retrospective direction, and leave behind in contempt all modern inventions of faith or institution, as the insignificant follies sprung from the corruption of a Heaven-abandoned period of time. The sentiments excited in them by the many signs of decay in the exterior apparatus of their system, such as the ruined state of innumerable temples, will rather coincide with this attraction in carrying the homage and the pride to the glory that was once, than lead to any suspicion of a futility for which the system deserves to grow out of use. This retrospective magnitude, this absorption of all past duration in their religion, this reduction to insignificance of whatever else has existed (if, indeed, all that has existed has not been comprehended in it), can not fail to produce a degree of elation in the minds of the Hindoos, notwithstanding their incapability of genuine sublimity of conception and emotion.

And again, however slight their affections toward their cotemporary relatives, the idea of an ancestry extending back through unnumbered generations, all having had their whole intellectual and moral existence involved inseparably in their religion, and surrendering in succession their souls to become a kind of guardians or portions of it, must add a more vital principle of attraction to the majestic authority and sanction of such an antiquity. Generations of little account in their own times may acquire, when passed away to be contemplated as ancestry, a certain power

over the imagination by becoming invested with something of the character of another world—a venerableness which combines with and augments the interest which they hold in our thoughts as having once belonged to our mortal fraternity. This combined interest going wholly into the sentiments of religion, in the pagans of whom we speak, they will feel as if a violation of that would be an insult to each of the innumerable souls of the great religious family departed, all worthier of respect than any that are now living in the world from which they have vanished. This habitual reference to their ancestors, with a certain sense of responsibility, is maintained by various notions and rites of their superstition, expressly contrived for the purpose, as well as by the pride which they can all feel, though they be but little sensible to the kind of poetical charm which might be felt, in thus standing connected, through identity of religious character and economy, with the remotest antiquity.

Nor can the influence be small, in the way of confirmed sanction and cherished pride, of beholding that which has been the element of the moral existence of an almost infinite train of predecessors, attested still, as to its most material parts, by a world of beings at this hour coinciding with the devotee in regarding it as their honor, their sanctity, and their supreme law. Let the Hindoo direct his attention or his travels whichever way he will, within the circuit of a thousand leagues, he meets with a crowding suc-

cession, without end, of living, thinking creatures, who, notwithstanding many capricious diversifications of their general faith, live but to believe and act as he does with regard to the most revered of its impositions. And what, in effect, do they all think and act so for, but as evidence that he is right? The mind can rest its assurance of its own rectitude of persuasion on this wide concurrence of belief without therefore acknowledging to itself a degraded dependence. Its mode of seeing the matter is, not that the faith of a large assemblage of other minds is *its* faith, but that its faith is *theirs*; not—I think and act as they do; but, They think and act as I do. This sort of ambitious expansion outward, from the individual as a center, saves his pride of reason from being humiliated by the consideration of the sameness of his notions with those of the great mass. The sense of community in human nature is strongly and delightfully admitted, when agreeing multitudes corroborate a man's opinions without depriving him of the self-complacency of believing that he holds them in the strength of his own wisdom.

This corroborating influence of the consent of contemporary multitudes in the most essential points of the system, has, as we have already hinted, its effect among the Hindoos, even without the intervention of social affection. Never did any where a great number of human creatures exist together with so little of the attachments of kindred and friendship. It is a

striking illustration of the tendency of their superstition, that it nearly abolishes these interests, keeping the whole population in the state of detached and most selfish particles. This seems indeed to be foregoing one of the strongest means of power, since a system of notions and moral principles might find the greatest account in so combining itself with the affections of nature as to engage them for auxiliaries. But then what a triumph of this bad cause, that while, instead of enticing these charities into its service, it tramples on and destroys them, it can, notwithstanding, make this assemblage of dissocial, selfish beings act upon one another in confirmation of their common delusion with an effect even greater than that which might have arisen from friendly sympathy. Of little worth in one another's esteem as relatives and friends, it is as things which the gods have set their stamp upon that they have their grand value. The religion is accounted to inhabit, in so very formal a mode of existence, the persons of all its subjects, that they have the effect of figures sculptured on their temples, or of leaves of their sacred books of mythology. The seal or brand of the deities set upon them does not indeed *dignify* them all, but it makes them all vouchers to the religion. They all in conjunction personify, as it were, that system, which as much requires the existence of Soodras to verify it as of Brahmins. The "miry clay" of the feet is as essential a part as the royal material of the head.

Thus the vast multitude are made to serve just as surety to one another, and all to each, for the verity of the superstition. And as the existence of any of them on any other account had been impertinent, their existence in such prodigious numbers must needs seem to demonstrate a mighty importance in that for evidence and exemplification of which it was worth while for them to be so many.

With so despotic a command over the people's minds, it would have been strange if this empire of delusion had forborne to assume the advantage and security of those temporalities which no other spiritual tyranny was ever abstracted enough to forget, and which, indeed, it would have been a foolish impolicy to forego. Indirectly, it possesses this mode of strength in having for its subjects the princely and opulent persons of the community. Their secular rank renders service, not only by its natural influence on the people of lower condition, but by the homage of an acknowledged intrinsic inferiority of that rank to the highest of the distinctions founded in religion. Their mansions, gardens, and groves are made to testify, by all the permanent signs of dedication, that their property and state are held under the paramount rights of the divinities. But these divinities have also their direct revenues, in the shape of fixed, and many of them ancient, appropriations; with the addition of an undefined right of exaction, enforced by priests and consecrated mendicants upon the religious charity of

the people. This charity is in one sense voluntary ; but when it is considered with what lofty pretensions these applicants make their demands (not unfrequently even assuming some mode of identity with the gods themselves), and what benefits or curses are declared, and by the people believed, to depend infallibly on their surrendering or withholding the tribute required, it is easy to judge how much these offerings, and their quantity, are left to free will.

Their own rights and those of their idols might be trusted, for the power of maintaining them, to men whose demands of a share of the superstitious cultivator's produce are to be resisted at the believed hazard of a blast on the whole. As if, however, both such endowments, and such force of requisition, had left cause to fear that this infernal hierarchy should become deficient in the substantial resources for preserving its dominion of delusion and iniquity, the Christian government over India has sought the honor of being its auxiliary ; in which capacity it is at once accepted and despised by the descendants of Brahma. The aid has been afforded, not simply in the way of securing, in observance of the principle of toleration, the pagan worship and means of worship from violent interference, but in the form of a positive active patronage. The administration of the funds for the ceremonial and abominations of idolatry has been, to a very great extent, taken under the authority and care of the reigning power, composed of persons zealous on

this nearer side of a certain extent of water for the established Christian religion, which establishment has also been extended to that farther side—with what effect toward exploding, or even modifying, this very marvelous policy, or whether deemed to be perfectly harmonious with it, we must wait to be informed.* In the mean time, the religious public are amply informed of a course of measures having been deliberately pursued, tending to support and prolong the ascendancy of paganism. It has been disclosed to their view that the highest authority has taken upon itself the regulation of the economy of idols' temples, had restored endowments which had been alienated, and has made additional allowances from the public revenue, where the existing appropriations have been

* The writer has been told, that certain readers have taken offense at something in this passage. He can not well understand why; and perhaps those readers would not be much disposed to explain. The two facts are, that the government, that is, the government of England, has adopted a policy of superintending and patronizing the idolatrous establishments in India; and that, while systematically pursuing this policy, they have also appointed and endowed a Christian ecclesiastical establishment there. Now, they do, or they do not, consider this measure of establishing a Christian national Church there as compatible, consistent, harmonious with that policy of sanctioning idolatry. Do they, or do they not? Which part of the alternative to assume it may not be very easy for candor to decide. As to the fact of the systematic policy in question, it has been formally stated, or incidentally mentioned, in several publications relating to India. But whoever may wish to see it exposed in its full extent and evidence, may find it (but indeed many of our readers must well remember it) in a long and very able and important article in the twelfth volume of the Christian Observer (the numbers for October and November, 1813). We do not hear of any change having taken place in the system.

judged inadequate to preserve to those establishments the requisite dignity—requisite for what, but to prevent any relaxation of the hold which the imposture has on the people? And, be it remembered, the revenue which is to afford this aid is constantly pressing heavily for its means of competence on the distressed resources of this Christian country.

We can not presume to conjecture how much sooner this accessional means of power will begin to fail than those ancient ones with which the system was invested when none of its gods or sages could have foreseen a reserve of assistance in such a quarter. Perhaps a confidence—entertained upon the assurance of that “lying spirit” whose prophets were once before trusted in by a government—a confidence that this pagan system will be permanent—contributes to prevent any alarm respecting the judicial notice which the Governor of the world might take of its Christian supporters, in the event of His striking it down.

AGENCY OF INFERNAL SPIRITS.

IF we add to all these modes and causes of the mightiness of this superstition the indefatigable activity of the powers of darkness, meaning, literally, infernal intelligences, which we believe to be busy in this world, it might be readily admitted, we should imagine, that there is nothing in it worthier to have sprung from the inspiration, or to be kept in force by the

energy, of such malignity and agency. If there are theologians who deny the intervention of such a cause in this enormity of evil, is it, perhaps, that they feel some need and use of its being laid to the sole account of man, for supporting that other favorite opinion of theirs, which denies the radical corruption of his nature? What new hopes, or consistencies, or facilities, for the prosecution of this warfare, might be afforded by their view of the matter, which makes the human nature to be so excellent, and makes all this to be its spontaneous product, it would be of no use for us to stay to inquire, since it is our destiny to proceed in the contest under the notion that such magnitude of evil can be no less than the leagued depravity of *two* bad natures. Those who can ascribe it all to one, and at the same time entertain a high veneration for that one, would seem to make no very contemptible approximation, in point of rationality, toward the idolatry of which we have been speaking.

Now, can a system of intellectual and moral perversion, of which the demoniac strength is but slightly developed in this brief description of some of its characteristics, show itself in the view of the adherents of the true religion, without conveying a provocation to their conscience and zeal to come forth, in aid of any reasonable project for carrying a new power into attack on what has, through so many ages, maintained its character of a defier of the living God, in spite of all that might have been supposed to operate toward

its destruction from time, and nature, and the vaunted reason of man? Those who partake of the spirit of Elijah, and are "very jealous for the Lord of Hosts," will wish that good men might be moved to conspire in a unanimous hostility, which shall be carried into effect through being sent up as a devout service and appeal to Heaven, to be thence returned (for it is in this reflected power that Christian zeal has its efficacy), to be thence returned, as in burning rays, to scorch and blast, here and there, the extended array of idolatry, and at length to annihilate it. But, in thinking of such a conspiring zeal, thus reflected with an intensity not its own, to consume the mass of abomination, it is for each one to ask within himself, Is there not in that system, made up of so many depravities, some small part, some poisonous atom, some serpent vehicle of an evil principle, which *I* may be, through the same divine force imparted in its measure to the humblest individual's effort, the means of destroying? And that minute portion of active principle which noxiously works on in consequence of my not crushing it—may it not be accounted to work in my name, making my contribution, real however diminutive, to the deadly effect of that system which I *might* contribute just so much to abolish? But even though the state of the matter were, that no actual effect at all should result, none discernible by Him who discriminates every thing included in all things, still might I not be required, in mere proof of my fidelity

to Him, to give some demonstration of hatred, to fling some practical salutation of war, against an infernal monster that, in character of a constellation of gods, arrogates the worship of a large portion of the human race, and repays it with perdition? Can I hope to go, without some haunting sense of dishonor, to that superior empire of the Almighty, where every *possible* sentiment of devotion is in actual excitement, from a region where I have been nearly at peace with such an odious usurpation?

But even this state of peace with it has not been enough for some of our countrymen to maintain; and we think the partiality, arising in some instances almost to fanaticism, which, both at home and abroad, they have manifested without reserve for this grossest paganism, may serve to enforce our demand on Christian zeal. It may do so, partly, by the illustration thus afforded of the quality of the design, since that may be presumed to be greatly excellent which has had the exact effect of irritating out by contrariety the worst vice lurking in profane minds; and it may additionally do so by the consideration, that if a peculiarly odious kind of depravity, of the existence of which there was perhaps no previous suspicion, suddenly discloses itself in a nation, there should be an extraordinary effort to promote a counterbalancing good. Such an effort, besides that it is due to the honor of God, would seem to be called for in behalf of the *character* of a Christian people. It may also involve

somewhat of that policy, in reference to their welfare, which sober men would not easily pronounce superstitious as exemplified in the parallel case of a ship, in which, if several of the passengers were expressly and ravingly insulting Omnipotence, any others, fearing the "God of the sea and the dry land," would consider an extraordinary degree of homage rendered to Him on their part, in direct contravention, a matter not altogether foreign to the safety of the vessel. If their devotion had been, in the first instance, the cause of bringing out this malignant impiety, they would be certain, upon the exhibition of it, rather to double than remit the earnestness and frequency of their prayers.

The promoters and immediate experimenters of a Christian attempt on the pagans of the East naturally expected, in spite of the pretended miraculous mildness of the Hindoo character, to encounter a strenuous and perhaps a malicious opposition from the idolaters. But it was hardly within their calculation, that a very considerable number of persons of some note in England—men enjoying the advantages of education; of weight in the legislation, the mercantile system, and the literature, of the country; belonging to its respected ranks, classes, and professions; and avowing for the most part, a veneration for the religious establishment—would be provoked to join in a violent outcry against a scheme for imparting the gospel to the people of India. Still less was it an-

anticipated of what strain the only music in this clamor was to be; that the virulent invective against the "pernicious fanaticism" of missionary enterprise would ever and anon be heard modulating itself to an expression of indulgent partiality toward the execrable superstition threatened by that enterprise. There had not been in this country so free a display of every infidel propensity as to render it a matter of familiar observation, that men who hate the intrusion of a divine jurisdiction are much inclined to regard with favor a mode of pretended religion, which they can make light of as devoid of all real authority. They are so inclined because, through its generic quality (of religion), it somewhat assists them to make light also of a more formidable thing of that quality and name. It comes, probably, with a great show of claims—antiquity, pretended miracles, and an immense number of believers; it may, nevertheless, be disbelieved with most certain impunity. Under the encouragement of this disbelief with impunity, the mind ventures to look toward other religions, and at last toward the Christian. *That* also has its antiquity, its recorded miracles, and its multitude of believers. Though there may not, perhaps, be impious assurance enough to assume formally the equality of the pretensions in the two cases, there is a successful eagerness to escape from the evidence that the apparent similarity is superficial, and the real difference infinite; and the irreligious spirit springs rapidly

and gladly, in its disbelief, from the one, as a stepping-place to the other. But that which affords such an important convenience for surmounting the awe of the true religion will naturally be a great favorite, even at the very moment it is seen to be contemptible, and, indeed, in a sense, *in consequence* of its being so. Complacency mingles with the very contempt for that from which contempt may rebound on Christianity.

These fierce advocates of paganism it were in vain to warn of a time when the summons to them will be, in effect, to “come forth *against* the Lord,” if they dare then repeat their well-remembered words of reverence for idolatry ;* a time when their impious affectation of liberal homage to all “religions,” as proper and useful for their respective parts of the world, will give place to the insufferable conviction of having insultingly rejected that infinite good, which only one had to offer ; and when their contemptuous disallowance of any higher rule of judging and proceeding with respect to a people’s religion, than the consideration of how it may affect government and commerce, will come to be estimated and pronounced upon, in a scene where all worldly policy will be at an end—excepting in its retribution, and where so many mil-

* The most furious of them, a person under a military designation is dead since this was written. The most jocular, vulgar, and far enough from least malicious of the revilers of the design for converting the idolaters, a person with the ecclesiastical prefix to his name, still lives.

lions will be awaiting the consignment, whatever it may be, for which they will have grown to a fitness as subjects of a false and depraving religion. Then will such men meet their account with the fabricators and imposers of false religions to serve their ambition, with apostates, and whatever other enemies of Christ will hear with despair the sentence, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." It can be of no use, we repeat, to admonish *them*; but we may urge it on the friends of true religion and the illumination of the world, that to this phenomenon of a zealous avowal and effort in favor of paganism, in this Christian country, in this stage of its knowledge, their contrary zeal and exertion should be what the living rod of Moses was to the serpent of the magicians.

It is at the same time to be acknowledged that there is a great abatement of the public manifestation of this disposition to vindicate idolatry, and this animosity against all attempts to reduce its dominion. However unallayed the rancorous sentiment may remain, it has been found that its unqualified exposure is a little incommodious on the score of character. Indeed, in the season of its most virulent eruption, some of the persons in whom it raged thought it worth while (others were more bold or honest) to endeavor to give it a disguised appearance. It was made to inspire some argument of pretended political expediency. It was vented under the form of a representation, urged with every seeming of a most sincere and

wrathful earnestness, that missionary proceedings, permitted but a very little while longer, would infallibly work the destruction of the British empire in Asia; although it is probable that some of these malignants laughed in private at such as might be simple enough to let themselves become, upon this representation, affected with this panic. Such assertions were hazarded in a sanguine confidence, for which it is a lamentable reflection on our country that there should have been no slight grounds, that the matter would not be suffered to proceed to the trial. But a power from Heaven interposed, acting partly by the instrumentality of the zeal of the religious part of the community; the government were decided to prolong the impunity of the reviled missionaries, which authority in their favor has silenced many that were incapable of feeling any restraint from the fear of God; and time and experience have brought contempt on all their rant of prognostication.

We have alluded to such men only to gain from them a service, for which we shall owe them no thanks. Religion should keep pace with physical science in the art of making noxious things contribute to salutary operations. No bad moral force, if it can not be annihilated, should be left free from attempts to cheat it into a contrary action to what it naturally intends; and we wish to make the force of evil, emitted from these men's minds, act in coincident impulse with the motives which should carry the

servants of God into a closer and still more animated conflict with the powers of heathen darkness.

THE PROGRESS OF MISSIONS ENCOURAGING.

THIS good cause has prevailed on the judgment, and obtained the practical aid, of the religious public, to an extent which we are willing to regard as an omen from Heaven of great effects to be accomplished in its progress. But it is not improbable there may still remain, among a minority of good men, some feelings not quite reconciled to schemes of such wide scope, such interminable demands of assistance, and such a distant field of execution; schemes, too, which can not be named but as amidst the echo of ten thousand voices, of men in repute for sense, hardly yet ceasing to pronounce them chimerical and fanatical; schemes but partially emerging from that general ridicule which leaves, though abated, such marks upon an object, that most men are long ashamed to entertain it.

There is much difference of mental constitution for receiving the impression of such projects. There is a class of good men naturally formed to be exceedingly sober, and cautious, and deliberate, and anxious for all things to be kept in right proportions and manageable compass. Excellent qualities—adapted specifically to some departments of duty, and of great use in a certain measure of interference in all.

But let it be suggested to their possessors, that there is, perhaps, no class of men so apt to overvalue their peculiar endowments, in contradistinction to those of a different order; and no class more needing to be warned of the faults akin to their virtues, and into which those virtues are liable to be insensibly transmuted. Nor, while they are in an especial manner ready to take credit to themselves for independence of judgment, are there any good men whose feelings and opinions are more at the mercy of those from whom they differ; no class being liable to be driven farther on one side the middle line, in a concern of duty, by what appears to them an extreme on the other. And in their own extreme, when they have once taken their position there, they will maintain themselves with all that stiffness of temper, which, to deserve the name of firmness or independence, ought to have kept them out of it.

It may be conceded to these worthy men, that the advocates of missions have not always avoided extravagance. Especially when under the influence of a large assembly, supposed to be animated by interests which extend to the happiness of a world, they may have been excited to use a language which seemed to magnify these interests, and the projects in which they were embodied, at the expense of all other duties and concerns; insomuch that some of those extra prudent friends of ours in the auditory have been wondering what, at that rate of devote-

ment of time, exertion, and money, we are to do, not only with the other claims of religious duty, but with the whole ordinary economy of life, pressing upon us as it does with so many peremptory demands. But allowance must be made for a little excess in the pleader of such a cause. Its great importance, of which he is at all times soberly certain, expands into a kind of dazzling magnificence before him when a multitude of minds seem to be contemplating it in sympathy with him. It appears to him as bright with a reflection of all the complacent regards which those minds are fixing upon it. Under such a temporary animating influence, all the topics and arguments which he has previously accumulated in favor of the selected subject become, as it were, dilated and on fire, without any intentional exaggeration; and unless he had a capacity, like Bacon, of keeping all subjects within his view almost at once, in their relative proportions as in a map, he will naturally represent the claims of the selected one in terms partaking a little too much of ambition and monopoly. We can not wonder that our calculating friends should be making in their minds a strong protest against this excess; but they are aware how little they need entertain any apprehension for its consequences, as well knowing that the persons addressed are never betrayed into such enthusiasm as to forget to take the practical standard of their duty at a sufficient reduc-

tion of the requirement made or implied in the hyperbolical language of the advocate.

While, however, some concession is thus made to the cautious, good men, who are more afraid of extravagance than of all other errors in designs for promoting religion, they must be told that it would have been an ill fate for Christianity in the world if Christians of their temperament could always have held the ascendancy in projecting its operations. If they would for a moment put themselves, in imagination, in the case of being cotemporary with Wicliff, or with Luther, and of being applied to by one of these daring spirits for advice, we may ask what counsel they can suppose themselves to have given? They can not but be instantly conscious that, though they had been Protestants at heart, their disposition would have been to array and magnify the objections and dangers—to dwell in emphatic terms on the inveterate, all-comprehensive, and resistless dominion of the papal church, established in every soul and body of the people—on the vigilance and prompt malignity of the priests, and on the insignificance, as to any probable effect, of an obscure individual's efforts against an immense and marvelously well-organized system of imposture and iniquity—even were it not the extreme of folly not to foresee that his protestation would soon bring him to encounter the *ultima ratio* of his provoked enemy, in the form of tribunals, dungeons, and death. In short, if in those in-

stances such counsel had been acted upon as they would have given, that zeal which was kindling and destined to lay a great part of the mightier Babylon in ashes would have smouldered and expired in a languid, listless hope that the Almighty would *some time* create such a juncture of circumstances as should admit an attempt at reformation without a culpable and useless temerity. And so we might [but], for Wicliff and Luther, have been worshiping waxen toys, and trusting our most momentous interests on the strength of penances, absolutions, and ceremonial antics, at this very day.

And to descend to the undertaking now under consideration—all that has been accomplished by it in India, and is now accomplishing, as introductory, we trust, to a religious change not less glorious or extensive than the Reformation, may be regarded by its active friends as, in some sense, a reward for having refused to be controlled by the dissuasive arguments and desponding predictions of many very worthy deprecators of rashness and enthusiasm.

It is from such a quarter that we may hear disapprobation conveyed in the question, What can *we* do against an evil of such enormous magnitude, and so consolidated? It may be answered (as it has been already suggested), What you can do, if the expression mean what precise quantity of effect a severe calculation may promise from a given effort, is not always to be the rule of conduct; for this would be

to deny the absolute authority of the divine Master. We refuse to obey Him for His own sake, if we assume to place the governing reason for all the services we are to render in a judgment which we think we can ourselves form, whether they will accomplish an end worth the labor, and therefore to fix their limit at the point beyond which we can not with confidence extend our calculations. Such an arrogant impiety, carried to its full length, would at last demand of Him that He should require *no* service without placing clearly within our view all those consequences of it on which His own just reasons for exacting it are founded. That is, it would become a demand to be exempted from all services whatever.

It is the very contrary spirit to this of restrictive parsimonious calculation that has been the most signally honored, inasmuch as some of the most effectual and of the noblest services rendered to God in all time, have begun much more in the prompting of zeal to attempt something for Him as it were at all hazards, than in rigorous estimates of the probable measure of effect.

Let it be observed, also, how all history abounds with great ultimate consequences from little causes, in which fact it only declares and exemplifies a prevailing law in the constitution of the world ; a law by which the diminutive grows to the large, sparks flame into conflagrations, fountains originate mighty streams, and most inconsiderable moral agents and actions are

made the incipient points whence trains of agencies and effects, proceeding on with continual accession, enlarge into effects of immense magnitude. Some of these great results, now forming most important circumstances and modifications in the state of the human race, bear on them a peculiarity of character which will hardly allow us to look at them without a reference in thought to the points whence the progression began. They appear, notwithstanding their extension, with a certain prominence and distinctness by which we are reminded of their history, while others are become so diffused and blended into the general conformation of things, that their own distinguishable color, so to speak, does not remain obvious enough to excite readily or necessarily any thought of them as effects which may be retrospectively traced to precise points, where their causes first sprung into action. Much of the actual condition of our part of the world consists of a number of these grand results of enlarging trains of effects, progressive from the smallest beginnings at various distances back in the past. And were not these now wide-spread results so combined into one order of things and familiarized around us, and were not, besides, the history of them so deficient and confused, it might very often be a pleasing employment for both the philosophic and the devout mind to trace them backward to the diminitiveness in which they began. A mysterious hand threw a particle of a cause, if we may express it

so, among the elements ; it had the principle of attraction in it ; it found something akin to it to combine with, obtaining so an augmentation to be instantly again augmented of the attracting and assimilating power, which grew in a ratio that became at length stupendous, and it exhibits the final result (if any result yet attained could be called final), in something, perhaps, which now forms the most important distinction and advantage of a nation, or of a still larger section of the world. What was the commencement of the true religion in this land, and of those several reformations which have partly restored it from its corruptions ? And what would be the term of proportion, according to our principles of judging, between the object as seen in the diminutiveness of the incipient cause and in its present extent of prevalence—between (if we may be allowed the figure) the germ in the acorn and the majestic oak ?

A result thus growing to an immense magnitude from an original cause apparently so insignificant, is the collective consequence of a great number of causes progressively starting and multiplying into consentaneous operation, each of them having in the same manner its appropriate enlarging series of consequences, still uniting with the one great process. And in looking to the future progress of an undertaking for diffusing Christianity in India, is it not perfectly rational to presume that many small means

and little events will be, in their respective times and places, the commencements, and in a sense the causes, of trains of consequences interminably advancing and enlarging?

For example, we may imagine the destiny of some particular copy of the Bible or New Testament, in one of the native languages; and a strange interest would attach to such a volume, could there be any sign to indicate this destiny, at the moment of its issuing from the repository. It may be supposed to come into the hands, in a way much like casualty, of a heathen somewhat more thoughtful than his companions. Disgust or indignation at the first aspect of what he finds there may prompt him to throw away the book, which he may perceive to be virtually an impeachment of his religion, his gods, his priests, and himself; but a certain disquiet, of curiosity mingled with a deeper sentiment, shall have seized him, and shall impel him irresistibly to that book again; he shall feel as if the eye of a specter had glanced upon him, and stricken him with a fascination that compels him to follow whether he will or not. A rising suspicion that all within him and around him may have been wrong, shall be aggravated by repeated perusal to full conviction, while the dawn of the true light and of a happier state is breaking on the night of his soul. Communications and discussions with his relatives and neighbors may accompany the latter part of this process, and his finally complete persuasion will

be followed by zealous exertions to impart what he will deem the greatest good on earth. The vast majority will obdurately resist ; but within a year he shall find one or two, and in the next several more, surrendering to the same convictions, and then, as it were instinctively, unfolding their new faith as a net for proselytes. Who shall presume to say what the consequence may not be in fifty or in thirty years ? Which of our *Christian* deriders of the madness of missionary hopes would venture to pledge his fortune for the inviolateness, half a century hence, of those shrines and idols, at present frequented and adored in the district where such a man is perhaps at this hour beginning, by the intrusion of the supposed Bible, to be disturbed in his “unchangeable” notions and rites, as these Christians have so often pronounced them ?

We may without extravagance suppose these events to happen in a great number of instances here and there in that realm of darkness, and we might add many other diminutive incidents and agents. The possible effects of a few tracts, conveyed in a manner appearing at first unaccountable, to a great distance from the place where they may have been put into pagan hands, by good men little apprised of the dignified appointment with which those humble gifts left their own, has been delightfully exemplified in some of the rather recent accounts of this mission. Among the little causes thus presented to the imagin-

ation as destined to produce great effects, will appear some images of the infantine countenances of the pupils now taught, and hereafter to be taught, in those numerous schools brought into existence by the mission, not indeed contrived for proselytizing, as the immediate purpose, but certain to contribute to it indirectly in the course of years.

You are glad to admit how reasonable, how sober it is to expect that many such apparently inconsiderable things will thus grow to magnitude in the progress of their effects contributory to the success of the good cause. But it will occur to you that, in imagining these diminutive causes, we have not begun quite at their beginning. It is a pleasing thing to see, in the hands of the supposed pagan, the book or tract which may thus explode his superstition, and perhaps be the cause of ultimately setting his temple and idols on fire; but how is that formidable substance to come, gratuitously, into his hands? Think what must have preceded. Think of the complicated process of its preparation, involving so many kinds of workmanship. And this brings the train of the operation up to its originating matter in your own hands, a commencement so long antecedent to the pagan's receiving the supposed book, the event from which we have dated such pleasing consequences, but on which consequences we are not to be indulging our anticipative gratulations, as if the book were to fall from the sky. The little cause, then, which

we may follow onward in thought to such noble effects—see it deriving itself from a still less—a piece of money, which may have carried its image and superscription, in the insignificance of ordinary service, through a thousand hands, at each movement very harmless to the cause of evil, till it has come into that hand which has devoted it to produce a Bible, which may have the effect at length of a thunderbolt on an idol's temple. Here is a direct answer to the question, perhaps querulously asked, What can *we* do ?

Should it be said that such fanciful fictions, even supposing a certainty that they will be realized, bring no lively incitement, because, the contributions being thrown into a collective sum of means, no one's quota can have any *distinct* operation, no individual can please himself with the idea that *his* particular contribution may be made the point of origination of one of these happy trains—we would ask whether it may not be honor enough for the individual to have his *share* in originating whatever such trains of progressive good shall take their rise from the collective contributions of *all*. While this union of the means so contributed makes those who supply them sharers of the loss in all those Bibles, those little books, and those cases of the tuition given to juvenile heathens, which shall fail of producing any good, it makes them participators also in all those happy and noble consequences, of which it may be assumed as quite certain that here and there *one* of the Bibles, *one* of the

tracts, *one* of the instructed heathen children, will be the cause.

This confident belief that in the prosecution of the enterprise now under consideration there can not fail to be some striking instances of particular and apparently inconsiderable means thus rendered productive of distinguished effects, and those effects producing new and greater ones, in a continued succession enlarging as it advances—this confidence is authorized (independently of all other reasons) by the fact, that such instances *have* occurred in every recorded scheme of Christian enterprise which has been prosecuted on a wide scale, from right motives, and with indefatigable perseverance. Not that in all of them there have been such magnificent and prodigious ultimate effects from little causes as we have been describing; not that in every province of benevolent activity a rill from some little obscure source has swelled into a Nile, and fertilized a whole region; but in all of them it may be safely asserted, that there have been instances, of a magnitude to throw contempt on frigid, indolent, and irreligious calculation.

FATALISM MUST BE ABANDONED.

It is not improbable the chief strength of whatever reluctance may still remain, among the friends of Christianity, to yield their full co-operation in projects for sending that religion to supplant the delusion and idolatry of the heathen world, consists in a

kind of religious fatalism, which would make the objection in some such terms as these: If that Being whose power is almighty has willed to permit on earth the protracted existence in opposition to Him of this enormous evil, why are *we* called upon to vex and exhaust ourselves in a petty warfare against it—why any more than to attempt the extinction of a volcano? If it were His will that it should be overthrown, we should soon, without having quitted our places and our quiet, in any offensive movement toward it, feel the earthquake of its mighty catastrophe; and if such is *not* His will, then we should plainly be putting ourselves in the predicament of willing something which He does not will, and making exertions which must infallibly prove abortive.

We may question such an objector as to the real length to which his opinion or feeling goes. May it approach to a sentiment like this, that, the thing contemplated being permitted by Him that is infinitely good and powerful, it is therefore *not* of a nature hostile to Him, *not* of a tendency directly the reverse of that of His attributes, *not* of deadly malignity to His creatures; that, in short, the brand of divine reprobation stamped by both revelation and reason upon idolatry, and on each of its deceits and depravities severally, is itself, in truth, but a deceit of another kind, a mere accommodation to a certain superficial and conventional theory, the real fact being, after all, that God is at peace with the thing thus reprobated?

We may presume he will instantly reply in the negative, and say, that he holds this mass of error and turpitude to be intrinsically and immutably opposite to the divine goodness and holiness, and pernicious to man, any other judgment of the matter being, according to all fact and all Scripture, utterly and impiously absurd, and that therefore the divine permission of this great evil appears at every step of thought but the more mysterious.

Well, then, we may immediately say to him, there are two views, according to one of which you are to form your scheme of conduct: on the one hand, a mystery in the divine government, a permission infinitely inexplicable to you; and on the other, the most glaring manifestation of the quality of the thing so permitted, as hateful in itself and in the sight of God. Consider from which of these two it is the most rational for you to take your rule of action—from that where your understanding is utterly lost, or from that where all is demonstration or self-evidence. You have light given you on the nether tract where you are placed, beneath the awful mystery in the heaven above, which interposes darkness between you and the reasons and counsels of the Almighty. By this light you have an infallible manifestation of the infinitely odious nature of an object that stands before you. What can this light and this manifestation be for, but that you might not have need to look up into the darkness for an authority, from reasons unknown, to de-

termine your sentiments and action? And is it rational, and can it be safe, that the clear evidence which has thus been given, in order to define for you a scheme of duty with the advantage of being independent of the mystery, should be rejected that you may revert to that very mystery for a determination of your duty—or rather for an authority to conclude that you have none? Or would you, both despising this light and defying that darkness, aspire to surmount the region of mystery itself, ascend into the light around the throne of Heaven, and, sharer of Sovereign Intelligence, enter into God's own reasons for permitting the evil? For this indeed, even *this* exaltation of intellect, must be attained to authorize it as a principle of action that *you* will permit a great moral evil because *God* does so. For *you* to maintain a calm tolerance toward it because *He* does not destroy it, is no less than to yield it an amicable acquiescence, no less, therefore, than an alliance with His enemy, unless this tolerance is maintained for precisely those reasons, clearly understood, which are His reasons for permitting it.

But perhaps you will say, that, far from any tendency to such an alliance, you are, as an indispensable part and proof of your fidelity to God, a mortal foe of this foe to Him, in every estimate of your judgment and every sentiment of your heart; and that the only exemption sought, upon the plea of the divine permission of the evil, is, that you may be ex-

cused, at least for the present, from active measures, and not be summoned to expend and waste your feeble strength on that which the Almighty strength spares.

Now, in the first place, there seems to be a groundless assumption implied here, namely, the *continuance* of this permission indefinitely into futurity; whereas, for any thing that can be known to you, hostile means put in action at this period may coincide with a divine decree to terminate that mysterious sufferance; and then, whatever were the natural inadequacy of those means, they would seem to have caught the fire of Gideon's lamps, and be made to flame out with supernatural power of rout and confusion to the host of pagan gods.

But, in the next place, you can not consistently acknowledge that the circumstance of the divine permission of this dreadful system of delusion affords no particle of ground for conciliation to it, but leaves you under the full obligation of a mortal enmity—and at the same time claim from that circumstance an exemption from practical efforts against it. What, indeed, is its permission but simply its existence? in virtue of which there can be no exemption from the duty of attacking it, which would not be equally an exemption from all duty whatever in the form of opposition and conflict, which would not confer a universal inviolability on evil, and end practically in the maxim, that the more evil there is in the world, the

less there is for the servants of God to do. And yet, you are saying, their *feeling*, in this state of exemption, should be the same as if they had a great deal to do, and a mighty host to fight. With respect at least to the giant evil at present in view, they may remain in inaction, and yet, you admit, ought to glow with the actuating principle. But then of what use is that principle except to disturb their repose? That they should be inflamed, as you acknowledge they ought, against what is working infinite mischief and misery to a large portion of the human race, and yet should in point of action remain at peace with it, would not only be an inconsistency and absurdity, but would also, if a possible case, be an uneasy and mortifying one. Vain passion of Christian zeal! illusory and almost penal fire from heaven! animating the heart but to consume it, if there should be no practical mode and machinery for conveying outward its energy to strike against the hated object. To have the mind beset and filled, as by main force, with the revolting images of pagan abominations, and to know that this infernal usurpation triumphs in the slavery of millions of our common family, and yet, the while, to submit to be unfurnished with expedients of devout revenge; to have no arrows, no power of throwing reflected convergent sunbeams, no missiles charged with the elements most noxious to a malignant nature, would be felt as a hard *imposition* by a man of zeal, who would dread to have his soul, in reference to the

service of God, in the condition of a hero in chains. What shall we think, then, of a servant of God desiring as an *exemption* and a *privilege* to be allowed thus to expend away the vital force of his spirit without action? We can not believe that he *has* any of that zealous emotion which he pretends. No, you must not profess to feel and fulfill a duty of enmity in spirit against the permitted evil, and at the same time acknowledge no duty of offensive exertion. The true animosity would be so intent on some means of action, that it is quite certain the state of feeling which persuades to decline such means is far too pacific toward what is insulting God and destroying man.

But it is still more plainly to our purpose, as against this religious fatalism, to allege the matter of fact, that though it has been the mysterious will of the Supreme Governor to permit such great evils in the earth, it has as evidently been His will to maintain a continual war against them. Why have there been any vindictive interpositions of His among the inhabitants of the world? Let the memorials of cities, and tribes, and nations, and in one instance a world, destroyed, testify whether He has set men the example of peace with irreligion and iniquity. What is the inscription on the monuments of beings that His vengeance has smitten? What has been the interpretation required to be put on all the formidable signs held out to deter, and all the plagues that have followed when those signs warned in vain? The victims of those plagues, and

the witnesses of their infliction, could not say that the warnings had been lying signs and wonders, as pretending to express Heaven's protest against the evils to which the will of man had been permitted to abandon him.

And if we contemplate the Divine Being as a revealer of truth and a lawgiver, the same hostile character and design are conspicuous. Every thing He declared or dictated is instantly seen to be adverse to something of which it had not been His will to prevent the existence in human notions or conduct. He had suffered these things to come into the world, and yet all who would believe and obey Him must oppose them. Well indeed might the thoughtful listeners to His voice feel an alarming sentiment at hearing so very many things recounted for them to be committed in deadly strife against, but what would have been the piety, or the prudence, or the consequence of a remonstrance to Him against so severe a vocation, on the plea that Himself had permitted, and could have prevented, every thing that He was thus imperatively involving them in painful conflict with, over every step of ground till they should fall into the grave ?

We repeat, that the whole course of the extraordinary divine interference among men has been in the direction, and has commanded human spirits, on their allegiance, to concur in the direction, which we are endeavoring to give to your zeal. In visions and oracles sent to patriarchs, in deliverances and avenging

judgments, in the miraculous suspensions of the laws of nature, in institutions of religion, in the illuminations of prophets and apostles, in the excitement of the best men to the most invincible pertinacity of warfare, in the mission of angels, and, transcendently above all, in the “manifestation of the Son of God to destroy the works of the devil ;” in all these forms of the divine dispensation, and in all the operation that has been in enlarging progress from them to this hour, one spirit breathes one perpetual emanation of divine will and agency against that which will, nevertheless, be permitted to retain an existence, but with lessening power, on the earth till a very late period, when the “Lord shall consume it with the breath of His mouth, and destroy it with the brightness of His coming.” Such has been the spirit of all the divine intervention. The sun is not more conspicuous by his own light, than this character of the religious economy.

Now, then, for a professed servant of God to refuse acting in conformity to this entire tendency of His cause, and to justify himself on the ground of the divine permission of that which the cause is directed against, what is it but, in effect, to say to the Supreme Governor, I behold two views of Thy government : there is Thy permission of an awful array and amount of evils, and there is a system of Thy dispensations framed to work in most direct and absolute opposition to them. The impossibility of apprehending the unity of principle of these opposed parts of Thy government

throws a dark mystery on the one of them. But with me, unlike my fellow-mortals, the mystery rests on the latter view, on the economy constituted for resistance to the evil ; whereas the reason for its permission is so plain to me, that I can, in dissent from all Thy faithful servants since the world began, adopt it as my rule of conduct. In pursuance of this adoption, I dare to believe Thou art, in truth, *not* so much the enemy of this same evil as is pretended, even in Thy own revelation ; and that I shall, upon a certain secret understanding, please Thee fully as well by declining to join in an attack upon it, as by devoting to the utmost my active forces to co-operate against it, in a war which I do at the same time perceive clearly that Thou thyself, for what reason of state I can not conjecture, hast raised and maintained with a palpable and continual interference.

Let us suppose him to act in this spirit toward his own soul. When he looks there he sees there is a proportion, a lamentable one, of “that abominable thing” which has rendered the world so horrid a scene. But the Almighty power has *permitted* its existence there. What then ? Can he on that account remain quiet, while it is poisoning the essence of his being, and feel as if it were an homage to God to second, if we may so express it, that permission ? With plain, sad proof of the very active quality of the malignant infester, which seems also to become, even while he is looking at it (if under a suspension of re-

sistance), sensibly stronger, by the force of a principle of augmentation altogether indefinite if left to its own progress, and which tells him, as in a demon's accents, that his soul is the intended victim, can he calmly contemplate this permitted state and operation, just as one of the inexplicable phenomena of the divine government? And if he pretended reverential submission, what manner of god could he deem himself adoring, that would be pleased with such a sacrifice? My brethren, unless his pretensions to religion are false, and his soul is actually surrendering to perdition, he will, at the sight of this mournful predicament of his own spirit, be ardently intent on an application of the means of resisting the destroyer. And he will be at once alarmed and indignant if he should perceive his mind admitting, under some influence of the consideration that God has not prevented the awful fact of sin within him, any slighter estimate of the required energy and promptitude of the resistance, than that which should be commensurate to the evil itself, viewed absolutely in all its atrocity and activity.

But now let him revert to the heathen slaves of darkness and sin. If it would be cruelty to his own soul to make the lighter of the invasion, or the means of expulsion, of its deadly enemy, because God has not precluded nor exterminated it, he may be reminded, and all the friends of Christianity may be reminded, of the obligation implied in the second great

commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Try once more how strongly you can bring upon your minds the reality of an immense multitude of spirits, of your own nature, existing on a remote continent. You can by thought place yourselves as sensibly amidst the countenances, the vital warmth, the talk, the worship, the infelicities of people at the distance of some thousands of leagues, reckoned through the air, as of the inhabitants of an adjacent part of your own country. With as absolute a sense of fact as if you were at this hour in India, and were just now desecrating a tiger crouching to spring on one ill-fated person, or a serpent throwing its folds round another, you can behold the prodigiously numerous tribe of souls, actual living, immortal essences, images and counterparts of your own, as it were watched for, fascinated, sprung upon, grappled, by things arisen in fearful eruption from the bottomless pit. Look at them involved in the power of the Old Serpent. If we might enforce the representation by a simile, suppose the case, that a professedly benevolent man, sojourning in that country, happened to be in a spot where he saw a tiger, eyeing with deadly glare the intended but unapprehensive victim, or a serpent in the very act of contracting itself to dart on an unwarned human object; and suppose, too, that this spectator had an advantage of position which exempted him from danger, and also that he had in his

hands the most efficient means for striking the monster with death or sudden fright, or that at the very least he could alarm the person in peril. Now, what sort of philanthropist shall we represent if we next suppose that while looking at this creature of living flesh and blood, who is, perhaps, approaching every instant nearer the spot where death is lurking, he coolly thinks what a hopeless and fearful plight; wonders that the God of nature should suffer, or theologically accounts for His suffering, beasts of prey and serpents in a world made for man; considers that, at any rate, as God *does* suffer them, men must, of course, be devoured by them; and so quietly awaits and witnesses the catastrophe, highly self-complacent, perhaps, in the sort of selfish piety with which he goes away blessing the Providence which has not doomed *him* to be the victim.

We need not make the application. We will only suggest whether, since the whole accountableness for all the error and wickedness of paganism must rest somewhere, the alleviation obtained before the Supreme Judge by the heathens who have been denied the means of deliverance from so wretched a condition, may not be at the expense of those who shall have refused to try those means upon them; and then whether, in the solemn time of adjudgment, these latter will dare to reflect off this accountableness for omission on the Judge himself, in the allegation that the evil was of His own permission, when

they will have the consciousness that He gave them means of at least attempting its destruction.

This religious fatalism, from the dominion of which we should be glad to see the active powers of all good men rescued, may somewhat change its tone; still, however, aiming to elude the requisition to come forth in the activity of the cause. It may affect to recover from the kind of hopeless dead prostration of feeling at the awful fact of God's permission of so dreadful an evil, into adoration of His power as almighty to destroy it. And how loftily God shall be extolled, and how emphatically man shall be degraded, when it is hoped that some absolution from duty may be suborned from the contrast! Feelings of indolence, combined with ideas of the sovereignty of God, will form a state of mind prolific of such reflections as these: "Of what consequence can be the trivial efforts of such insignificant creatures, as co-operating or not with the energy of an Almighty power? What signify, in a great process of nature, some few rain-drops or dew-drops the more or the less? What are we, to be talking, in strains of idle pomp, of converting the people of half a world? How reduced to contempt, how vanishing from perception, will be the effects of all our petty toils, when mightier powers shall come into action, as the footsteps of insects and birds are effaced and lost under the trample of elephants. Were it not even temerity to affect to take the course where the chariot of Om-

nipotence is to drive, as if we would intrude to share the achievements proper to a God, or fancy that something magnificent which He has to do, will not be done unless we are there? No, let our text be, as best becomes the humility of mortals and sinners, 'Be still, and know that I am God.' If He wills the conversion of the heathen nations, He has such powers and means for accomplishing His purpose as may well allow a sabbath to the hands of all His servants, while their souls may adore Him in His triumphs." Very true; and so, in the literal warfare referred to in our text, there were means of overthrowing the heathen invaders without the assistance of the people of Meroz, or any other people; for the stars in their courses were to fight against Sisera. It was not because He *needed* them for combatants that the God of armies had required their presence in the battle. After what has been already said of the employment of feeble means to produce a triumphantly disproportionate effect, it is superfluous to make any other answer to this indolence, or indifference, or pride, or all of them together, pleading under the semblance of piety, than an admonitory suggestion, that, as it has been hitherto God's usual method to employ human instrumentality in His great works of beneficence, His now declining to do so would but be the alarming expression of His judgment that the human agents now are not worth being employed on earth, nor being translated to heaven. One should

think that a dread of the fatal privilege of exemption under such a judgment would suppress the disposition to seek, and the willingness to accept, an exemption on any ground whatever.

The religious fatalism, in a still further modification, will make professions of anticipating with great delight the certain accomplishment of the glorious revolution in question, *when God's selected time shall arrive*. Then, too, as in former great changes, there will be noble work, and enough of it, for such humble instruments as men to perform ; meanwhile, beware of premature attempts, and wait for the signs that the time is come. Language like this has, within the memory of many of you, been among the commonplaces of our Christian communities. If there be still some cautious Christians who are reluctant to let it grow obsolete, we might ask them whether they have exactly figured in their minds in what manner the expected grand process is to begin, or what appearances they could accept as signs that the period is come when their efforts would not be like a vain attempt to constrain the fulfillment of a divine purpose before its appointed time. Are there to be extraordinary meteors, significantly passing eastward as they vanish ? Are they to hear that the temples of Seeva are sunk suddenly in ruins at the stroke of thunder ? Or, still more of prodigy, are all the chief statesmen, and mercantile men, and military men, especially concerned in the affairs of the

East, to become with one accord inspired with a fervent zeal for the Christianizing of Asia, perhaps impelled literally to a spiritual crusade against Hindoo idolatry?

Perhaps they will, after all, disclaim the expectation of any extraordinary signals from Heaven, when it occurs to them that they are in danger of the impiety of demanding a *specific* change in God's mode of declaring His mind to men. And probably they will profess that they wait for no other tokens than such as might afford a rational presumption, according to the rules of judgment commonly admitted among wise men. Then we may confidently ask why they should not accept, as the required signs, the circumstances that have attended, thus far, this Christian enterprise in India. Is it to be taken as a rebuke from Heaven, on a rash anticipation of Heaven's designs, that our missionaries have been kept in their positions and their work with a general impunity and freedom, notwithstanding that during many years of the time there prevailed against them a systematic, unrelenting hostility of spirit, in authorities which in all human appearance might have crushed them in a moment, and were subject to no visible cause of restraint on their will—a preservation somewhat resembling that of Daniel in the lions' den? Or, that the comparatively little rancor, and the very considerable favor experienced among the natives, have seemed to betray some divine coercion put upon the

lions and the furies of direct paganism itself? Or, that they have been uniformly preserved in the excellence of the Christian character in a scene presenting many temptations to forfeit the distinction, and while bearing the moral responsibility of an undertaking in which that forfeiture would have been fatal? Or, that by the multiplicity and extent of their labors and attainments they are constantly recalling to our imagination the hundred-handed giant of fable? Or, that between the produce of their own exertions and the increasing supplies from the religious public, pecuniary means have never failed for the constantly enlarging prosecution of the design, even a very great disaster having operated as if the fall of an edifice should bring a large treasure of gold to light?*

Or, that while the sacred Scriptures have been spreading with astonishing rapidity among the nations of the East, the undertaking which has given them this range of mischief to the gods, has produced several marked good effects in our religious societies at home, especially in the point of helping to break up, by the introduction of so many new subjects connected with religion, the *monotony* which too much prevailed in their religious services, topics, and feelings?

What is the interpretation which our soothsayers of the colder climate of religious feeling put upon

* Alluding to the fire which, some years since, reduced to ashes the printing-office at Serampore, with its immense literary stores and other materials for the service of the mission.

these signs, conjoined, as we are gratified to view them conjoined, with the enlarging missionary exertions and successes of our brethren of other religious denominations? Or will they pronounce that circumstances like these are *no* signs, and sagely observe to us that in the great concourse of casualties it is at all times possible enough for a sanguine spirit to find a number that may be converted into intimations that a favorite project of its own is also the intention of Heaven. When they have said this, they may consider whether they should not, in their solicitous and alarmed veneration for Heaven's appointment of times and seasons, abet the gods and their priests in an appeal to the Lord of the world against these missionary intruders, as committing impiety against *Him* in having "come to torment *them* before the time."

It has been the lot of a number of the persons who have believed themselves to be obeying the will of the Supreme Authority by leaving this country in prosecution of our Society's undertaking in Hindoostan, to die in the service. They had devoted themselves so to die, and rejoiced in the confidence that they were also devoted by a superior decree. In what manner may we believe that their departing spirits have been received by their great Master? Has it been a *qualified* "Well done, good and faithful servant," that they have heard? as if He should say, Feeble in judgment, rash in temperament, but honest in intention, you are pardoned through a pe-

cular extension of mercy, and are admitted now to a state of illumination, in which you may cultivate the humility that was so defective on earth, and see in the future progress of your Lord's administration, how long His servants ought to have repressed the presumptuous forwardness of their zeal.

No, this could not be their reception in a world where they were soon to be joined by the first-fruits of that very zeal, those converts from idolatry who, subsequently to some of their teachers, have died in the faith of Christ, and carried demonstrative living proof to heaven, that the true religion had not in a premature and officious zeal been conveyed sooner than the divine appointment had commissioned it to go, sooner than the divine power was ready to accompany it, to a region whither some of its professed friends would not have contributed to send it. And if we may imagine the nature of the emotion in the great assembly at the arrival of these spirits from the dominions of idolatry, we shall not believe it to have been the melancholy felicitation which should welcome them as almost solitary exceptions to a destiny regarded as still permanently abiding on the immense division of the human race whence they came. We can not conceive of an unmingled delight in receiving them as translated thither chiefly to exemplify that sovereignty of God which He will manifest in every department of His government, by suspending in rare instances His most general appointments, as two

individuals have been exempted from the general law of mortality. The sentiment without which the joy would be languid, must have been that which should hail them as signs that a decreed change of dispensation, a new aspect of the divine sovereignty, is beginning to shine on a dark hemisphere of the world; that death is becoming incomparably more tributary to Heaven, and that the ancient barrier between the realms of Asia and the kingdom of eternal glory is beginning to break down.

This indulgence of thought in representing to ourselves the feelings experienced in an invisible and superior world, is quite within the just range of our contemplation of the subject. It is a noble distinction of religion, that (once admitted as true) it affords a rational substance to bear out the most imaginative exercise of thought. It is a ground on which our ideal excursions may with sober propriety go such a length as they can not attempt on other grounds without turning into poetry or into vanity. It verifies to us as a reality, a solemn relation between us and another economy of existence, and constitutes a vital intermedium through which we have the sense of a real interest in beings and a state beyond the sphere of this world. Thus religion, believed and felt, is the amplitude of our moral nature. And how wretched an object therefore is a mind, especially of thought, sensibility, and genius, condemned to that poverty and insulation which infidelity inflicts, by annihilating

around it the medium of a sensible interest in the existence, the emotions, the activities of a higher order of beings! Our Lord tells us of great and happy intelligences in the invisible world, who rejoice over a sinner when he repents. It is quite rational, then, to have indulged our imaginations for a moment in ideas of the reception, in that scene, of those first converts from paganism, in the course of our mission, who have been followed in death by some of the persons whose labors were crowned with this success. And we are especially warranted in the most vivid imagination which it is possible to form of the emotions of these proclaimers and these converts of the truth, in their mutual recognition, when thus reunited, and in communion with the preceding believers, apostles, and confessors. If but a comparatively faint apprehension of the emphasis of those congratulations could be brought, by some momentary illapse, upon the souls of the most neutral or even the most hostile spectators of the attempt which has had such an effect in the happiest society, it would instantly turn to grief at the thought that those heavenly felicities had owed none of that rapture to *them*.

And let us remind those professed Christians, whose coldness toward a great project of evangelization would justify itself under a plea of reverently awaiting the disclosure of the divine purposes, that by their profession they aspire to join ere long that

company to which departed missionaries and their converts have been added. It may be the destination of some of them to leave this world at nearly the time appointed for the removal by death of other of these indefatigable laborers, and of more of their proselytes. In the reflections which may be excited by such an idea, will there be no sentiment partaking of apprehension? No mortifying anticipation arises at the thought of entering the other world in company with an angelic being, the different rank, of his nature precluding all comparison, or precluding reproach for the difference, if comparison were made. But methinks there is something to cause great displacency, and even a degree of intimidation, in the thought of approaching the most illustrious society in the universe in the company of spirits of our own nature and our own times, trained under nearly similar privileges and instructions, or possibly the very same, but who through superior zeal shall have left us in an immense disparity. Think whether it be impossible that, even on the passage to heaven, there might be an unwelcome sense of the contrast between persons, who, in going thither, shall be finishing a course of ardent devotedness to their divine Lord, in exertions to extend His kingdom in destruction of the cruel reign of superstition, made with a degree of success attested by immortal spirits of redeemed heathens that shall have preceded them to the sky, and others that are to follow, and persons who, having been in

circumstances so similar to theirs in the introduction of life, and having professed the same devotedness to Christ, shall yet be conscious of having scarcely made an effort in aid of that service, of having scarcely perhaps given it their cordial good wishes ; conscious (may we not surmise in some instances ?) of having hardly been sorry that the comparatively small number, as yet, of conversions from heathenism, should seem to afford some advantage to the recusant or cavalier. May not the thought of the feelings possible to be excited at such a time by such a contrast, suggest to Christians whose faculties seem more readily applicable to the exercise of finding objections to animated schemes of Christian experiment, than to that of devising means for their success, a new topic for solicitude and perhaps for prayer, namely, that they may be permitted to enter the superior state in a way that shall not immediately bring them in communication or comparison with their brethren ascending from the war against idolatry ? At least, in order to be entirely free from the anticipation of any reflections, tending to throw a shade over the joy of passing into the great Master's presence at nearly the same time as those devoted spirits, there must be the testimony of conscience that *in some other manner* His service is zealously prosecuted. The man indifferent or opposed to the enterprise in which these men are to die, but who yet professes to take an interest in the advancement of religion and the general good, can

avoid the apprehensiveness of such a future comparison only by having evidence to himself that, though projects which seem to him to partake somewhat of enthusiasm are not exactly adapted to seize his mind, he is diligently intent on promoting the cause of God in plainer, less adventurous, and let him call them, if he will, soberer methods. But, in truth, experience is not in favor of our expecting a very active zeal for extending Christianity in *any* method, from those who recoil from missionary projects as premature and enthusiastic.

For ourselves, my brethren, when we think of those who are thus appointed to fall in the immediate conflict with the powers of paganism, shall we not earnestly desire and pray that we may be so animated to promote the Christian cause in *every* practicable way, that we may never have reason to wish these men had not been our cotemporaries, no more privileged than ourselves in early life; or that there would be an oblivion of this, to avert any pain of comparison when they and we shall go to the great account.

TRUE IDEA OF DIVINE SOVEREIGNTY.

To return, but for one moment, to the repressive influence on some good men's principles of action and hope, from the idea of the sovereignty of the divine appointments, we may observe that the most assured belief in the divine decrees, as comprehending all things, has not *necessarily* the effect of paralyzing the

active powers. There is no denying that such is its tendency in cold, inanimate, indolent spirits, that are really indifferent to the objects demanding their exertion. And so with respect to *any* doctrine of religious or moral truth, there is a possible state of mind which is apt to take from it an injurious impression. But let there be an earnest interest about the objects in question, and then the zeal and activity will be incited rather than repressed by the faith in all-comprehending and absolute decrees. Accordingly it has been, we think, for the greater proportion, by decided predestinarians, that the most ardent and efficient exertions of religious innovation have been made upon the inveterate evils of the world. That they were not checked and chilled by this article of their faith, is the least that their conduct testified of its effect. Not only were they not withheld from driving impetuously against the hated thing before them by any surmise whether it might not, for the present, be guarded invisibly by the shield of a decree. Not only did they dart their weapons, when the enemy appeared to be within their reach, without being stopped by any suspicion of an optical deception in this seeming nearness, this possibility of striking it. This is only supposing them not to be *the less* energetic in consequence of their predestinarian faith ; it is what they might be, supposing them the while to *forget* it. But it was not as forgetting their principle, and being actuated, for the time, solely by

the independent force of different ones, that they so nobly exerted themselves. No! they acted in the full recollection of it, as a source of invigoration no less indispensable than for Antæus to touch the earth. It was in the element of this doctrine of decrees, that they felt their impetus the mightier, their weapons the sharper, their aim the surer.

And while their opponents in belief might be wondering at the phenomenon of such a glow of life and play of strength in an element which they had been constantly pronouncing the most mephitic in the whole world of opinion, to moral energy, the persons on whom the faith had this influence could have shown how explicable and how far from absurd was such a practical effect, in the case of men in the prosecution of plans for the destruction of what was opposed to the kingdom of God. The first consideration in the matter was the trite and general one: they were certain that the Almighty will make very great use of human agents in what remains of the course of His dispensations in this world. Next, whatever concealment may rest on the precise nature of His more special determinations, which constitute, so to speak, the divisible portions of His one grand design, there can be no question, with believers in revelation, whether that grand design be a progressive demolition of the dreadful tyranny of evil over the human race. Now *that* was what *they* were intent upon, and they were putting themselves directly into His hands as

willing instruments to be applied to that use. And was it not (they thought) most reasonable to entertain a general assurance that willing agents, offered to Him for a purpose which He is determined to accomplish, would have their appointment for effective service? If so many would be required that even repugnant or undesigning ones would be made to contribute and co-operate, by His constraining and overruling Providence, the willing and zealous ones might in all reason be sure of being put to such a use. The disposition itself was inspired, they thought, for the very purpose of adapting them, and the adaptation given with the intention of employing them. Thus, upon the certainty of their coincidence with God's intention, considered generally, they founded and justified a confidence that they had a *general* appointment to do something in His great work—an appointment, that is to say, to promote it *in some way or other*.

But no man who is powerfully actuated can stop in generals. Those devout predestinarians, those *genuine* adorers of the God of decrees, were earnestly attentive to the manner in which his general and comprehensive design was seen, in His revelation, resolving itself into defined parts, and taking the form of several great purposes, distinguishable from one another, while all combined in the entire design. Of these several purposes, thus distinguished and announced, there was probably one which was of a na-

ture more specially to interest their feelings, and draw to this particular direction the zeal and co-operation which were in devoted readiness to coincide with the divine intentions as regarded generally. And when they felt their general coincidence of spirit thus determined to one marked division of the divine plan, they acquired a still more animated assurance of their appointment to a practicable and successful service, in proportion as they thus came more distinctly to see *how* they might co-operate in that design.

Nor was this all ; for when they thus saw one particular part of the scheme of the divine intention manifested with considerable definiteness, they felt an irresistible tendency to make it more definite still, by resolving this too into particulars. For example ; if revelation has declared the destruction of superstition to be one leading object comprehended in the great general intention, their zeal has impelled them to regard this declaration as bearing with special emphasis on those particular forms of superstition which they were most intent on destroying. Those particular forms, they have said, so eminently hateful, can not but be very marked objects of the exterminating intention of the Supreme Will. It has seemed to these men as if the whole force of the general decree were converging to strike just where *they* wished to strike. And as the principle of destruction is to be conveyed through the means of human agents, who so likely to

be employed, they said, as we that are already on fire to destroy? Beyond all doubt, it is exactly here that we have our decreed and unalterable allotment. Exactly here it is that our will and the supreme will coalesce to a purpose which defies all chance and all created power.

But their assurance that their intention, as fixed on a particular selected object, was decidedly identical with that of the Almighty, did not authorize itself solely by thus giving to those declarations, which express the divine purpose in comprehensive terms, a more determinate bearing on a special object for some inspired declarations were found which were themselves of special import. They evidently pointed out, by their own terms, with much definiteness, certain distinct parts and special processes in the general scheme which Providence will execute. These appeared as departments or sections (if we may so express it), within wider divisions of operation which are still themselves but parts of the grand scheme, as, for example, the foredoomed destruction of the popish superstition, though a thing of such magnitude, is only a portion of the divine plan for the destruction of superstition in general, which is yet but a part of the entire scheme announced for accomplishment. The devout men who have sought their incitement and their strength in the decrees of Heaven, have often believed that they saw, in some of these more defined and special portions, in these comparatively distinct repre-

sentations of movements which are to fulfill on earth the purposes of Heaven, the very image of such designs as they were zealous to prosecute. It was quite certain at least that those appointed operations must at any rate involve such as they were projecting or attempting, and the predicted success of the whole must be the success of the included parts.

But, they said again, there are predestinated *agents*; and who still so likely as men who shall be ready with their life and their death for precisely that service? The inference was not far off; these very plans and proceedings of ours are decreed as portions of the sovereign scheme; we and our work are a part of eternal destiny.

We are not here called upon to suggest the cautions against the possible excesses and dangers of this confident assurance, in good men, that their designs are *specifically* identical with the divine purposes. Our object was to show that the consideration of sovereign decrees, which cold, unwilling minds are so ready to allege for their inertness, and which is so commonly asserted to have necessarily that consequence, nay, on the contrary, become one of the mightiest forces for action. It is this that can make, but under a far nobler modification, the man that the poets have delighted to feign, who would maintain his purpose though the world fell in ruins around him. A missionary against the paganism of the Hindoos may feel an animation specially

appropriate to the service, in this assurance that his intention is the intention of God. Those people fortify themselves in the notion, or the pretense, that they are immediately actuated by some deity, and therefore fulfilling, under a law of necessity, his determinations ; the missionary will feel peculiar invigoration in advancing to the assault of a superstition with such a principle in its front, in the force of a principle analogous in form, but of heavenly essence. While they will have it, that he may as well spare the efforts on *them* which it were his more proper business to level at the gods, if he could reach them, the energy of his soul will reply, that he accepts the challenge so made for those enthroned abominations, for that he verily believes himself and his confraternity to be an *Avatar* for their destruction.

We have dwelt too long on this topic of religious fatalism, a term we have employed to signify a perverted application, in reasoning and feeling, of the doctrine which acknowledges God's sovereign and unalterable predestination of events. Our excuse must be, that these reasonings and feelings are peculiarly apt to suggest themselves in contravention to such claims as those we are at present wishing to exhibit. And besides their own direct force, they lend strength to other objections and repugnant feelings not arising from so speculative a source. The meanest of the passions, that can make an opposition to a worthy project, or withhold from it the necessary aid,

are very ready to find an excuse, a justification, or even a merit, in a pretended waiting submission to the decrees of Heaven.

OTHER OBSTRUCTIONS TO MISSIONS.

MANY causes of a nature not implicated with these obscure speculations, are operating to prevent or lessen the assistance to an enterprise like that for which we are pleading. We may briefly notice one or two.

If we just name party spirit, it is not in order to indulge in any accusatory complaints that our particular undertaking has materially suffered by it. Doubtless we may be somewhat the worse for it, but we have as little the inclination as the means for calculating how much. And even were a calculation made and verified of that proportion of pecuniary and other modes of aid which a perfect Christian liberality would have awarded to this project, and which party spirit may have withheld from it, we should still be gratified in the persuasion that the greater part of what may have been so averted has probably been devoted to other excellent designs to which we wish all possible success. The history of this portion of the general Christian operations of the age will have little to say of convoys intercepted by selfish allies. We are too confident of the prolonged favor of Providence on our work, and too much pleased at seeing that Providence favoring the exertions of the same

tendency made by other sects of the Christian community, to regret not having obtained any one particle of the means which have availed to good in their hands. And we think we have too systematically avoided giving any just cause of jealous reaction to our friends of the other denominations, to be debarred in modesty from denouncing, with unrestrained censure, the spirit which can not see the merit of a noble object when there is some point of controversy with its promoters, and which would almost rather wish it might be lost, than aid *them* to attain it ; a spirit which, in promoting an interest professedly as wide as the world, as liberal as the sun, would enviously account success, or the means of success, conferred on a different class of laborers in the same general cause, so much unjustly subtracted from our own connection and project, and would avenge on the grand, catholic object, the petty offenses of party, or affronts to individual vanity.

If the Christian communities, most liable to feelings of competition, were asked in what character they conceive themselves to stand the most prominently forward before the world, as practically verifying the exalted, beneficent, expansive spirit of their religion, it is not improbable they would say, it is as conspirers to extend heavenly light and liberty over the heathen world. But if so, how justly we may urge it upon them to beware of degrading this the most magnificent form in which their profession is displayed, by associ-

ating with its littlenesses, which may make it almost ridiculous. Surely, in thus going forth against the powers of darkness, they would not be found stickling and stipulating that the grand banner of the cause should be surmounted with some petty label of a particular denomination. Such mortals, had they been in the emigration from Egypt, would have been incessantly and jealously busy about the relative proximities of the tribes to the cloudy pillar. A shrewd, irreligious looker-on, who can divert himself at the expense of all our sects, and despises this their common object, might indulge his malicious gayety in saying, All this bustling activity of consultation, and oratory, and subscription, and traveling, is to go to the account, as you will have it, of a fervent zeal for Christianity: what a large share of this costly trouble I should nevertheless be sure to save you, if I could just apply a quenching substance to so much of this pious heat as consists of sectarian ambition and rivalry.

We can not too strongly insist again, that a sense of dignity should spurn these inglorious competitions from the sections of the advanced camp against the grand enemy. *Here*, at all events, the parties should acknowledge the Truce of God. If they have, and must have, jealousies too sacred to be extinguished, let their indulgence be reserved for occasions and scenes in which they are not assuming the lofty attitude of a war against the gods. But the great matter, after all, is to be solemnly intent on the object

itself, on the good to be done, compared with which the denomination of the instrument will appear a circumstance vastly trivial. Let all the promoters of these good works be in this state of mind, and then the modes in which the evil spirit in question might display itself will be things only to be figured in the imagination, or sought as facts in the history of former and worse times. For then we shall never actually see a disposition to discountenance a design on account of its originating with an alien sect, rather than to favor it for its intrinsic excellence; nor an eager insisting on points of precedence, nor a systematic practice of representing the operations of our own sect at their highest amount of ability and effect, and those of another at their lowest; nor the studied silence of vexed jealousy, which is thinking all the while of what it can not endure the name; nor that labored exaggeration of our magnitude and achievements, which most plainly tells *what* that jealousy is thinking of; nor that manner of hearing of marked and opportune advantages occurring to undertakings of another sect which betrays that a story of disasters would have been more welcome; nor underhand contrivances for assuming the envied merit of something which another sect has accomplished and never boasted of; nor excitements to exertion expressly on the ground of invidious rivalry, rather than Christian emulation; nor casual defects of courtesy interpreted willfully into intentional hostility, just

to give a color of justice to actual hostility on our part, for which we were prepared, and but watching for a pretext; nor management and misrepresentation to trepan to our party auxiliary means which might have been intended for theirs.

While we would earnestly admonish all the promoters of our object to display an example in every point the reverse of such tempers and expedients, we will assure ourselves of the favorable dispositions of Christians in general toward a design which has its own sphere of operations, in which it has both the happiness and the merit of interfering with no other. It has not, by either interference or ostentation, given any provocation to party jealousy; and we may add, that it is grown to a strength and an establishment beyond the power of that unfriendly spirit, were it excited, greatly to injure.

When we mention the love of money, as another chief prevention of the required assistance to our cause, we may seem to be naming a thing not more specifically adverse to this than to any and every other beneficent design. A second thought, however, may suggest to you a certain peculiarity of circumstance in the resistance of this bad passion to the claims of a scheme for converting heathens. By eminence among the vices which may prevail where the true God is not unknown, this of covetousness is denominated in the Word of that God, idolatry. Now as it is peculiarly against idolatry that the design in

question is aimed, the repugnance shown to it by covetousness may be considered as on the principle of an identity of nature with its enemy. One idolater seems to take up the interest of all idolaters, as if desirous to profit by the warning, that if Satan be divided against himself, his kingdom can not stand.

Or, rather, it is instinctively that this community of interest is maintained, and without being fully aware; for the unhappy mortal, while reading or hearing how millions of people adore shapes of clay, or wood, or stone, or metal, of silver or gold, shall express his wonder how rational creatures can be so besotted; shall raise his eyes to heaven in astonishment that the Almighty should permit such alienation of understanding, such dominion of the wicked spirit: and there is no voice to speak in alarm to his conscience, Thou art the man!

As this unhappy man may very possibly be a frequenter of our religious assemblies, and even a pretender to personal religion, he is solicited, in the name of Jesus Christ, to bring forth something from his store in aid of the good cause. He refuses, perhaps; or, much more probably, just saves the appearance and irksomeness of formally doing that, by contributing what is immeasurably below all fair proportion to his means; what is in such disproportion to them, that a general standard taken from it would reduce the contributions of very many other persons to a fraction of the smallest denomination of our money,

and would very shortly break up the mechanism of human operation for prosecuting a generous design, throwing it directly on Providence and miracle, with a benediction, perhaps, uttered by this man (for he will be as liberal of cant as parsimonious of gold), on the all-sufficiency of that last resource: Yes, God shall have the glory of the salvation of the heathens, while he is happy to have secured the more important point—the saving of his money.

How much it were to be wished that the fatuity which this vice inflicts on the faculty which should judge it (herein bearing one of the most striking characteristics of idolatry), did not disable the man to take an honest account of the manner in which it has its strong hold on his mind. If, when his eyes and thoughts are fixed upon this pelf, regarded as brought into the question of going to promote the worship of God in Asia, or staying to be itself worshiped, he could clearly feel that he detains it from fervent affection to it as an absolute good, he would be smitten with horror to find his soul making such an object its supreme good—for supreme it plainly is, when thus preferred to the cause of God, and therefore to God himself.

But perhaps he thinks his motive regards the prospects of his family. Perhaps he has a favorite or an only son, for whom he destines, with the rest of his treasure, that portion which God is demanding. In due time that son will be put in possession by his fa-

thers death, and will be so much the richer for that portion. That this wealth will remain long in his hands, a prosperous and undiminished possession, may not seem very probable, when we recollect what has been seen of the heirs of misers. But let us suppose that it will, and suppose, too, that this son will be a man of sensibility and deep reflection. Then, his property will often remind him of his departed father. And with what emotions? This, he will say to himself, was my father's god. He did, indeed, think much of me, and of securing for me an advantageous condition in life; and I am not ungrateful for his cares. He professed also not to be unconcerned for the interests of his own soul, and the cause of the Saviour of the world. But alas! it presses on me with irresistible evidence, that the love of money had a power in his heart predominant over all other interests. It can not be effaced from my memory that I have often observed the strong marks of repugnance and impatience, an ingenuity of evasion, an acuteness to discover or invent objections to the matter proposed to him, however high its claims, if those claims sought to touch his money, which he contemplated, and guarded, and augmented, with a devotedness of soul quite religious. But whither can a soul be gone that had such a religion? Would he that acquired, and guarded even against the demands of God, these possessions for me, and who is thinking of them now as certainly as I am thinking of them, O would he,

if he could speak to me while I am pleasing myself that they are mine, tell me that they are the price of my father's soul?

If the rich man in the parable (that parable being regarded for a moment as literal fact) *might* have been permitted to send a message to his relatives on earth, what might we imagine as the first thing which the anguish of his spirit would have uttered in such a message? Would it not have been an emphatic expression of the suffering which the wealth he had adored inflicted on him now, as if it ministered incessant fuel to those fires? Would he not have breathed out an earnest entreaty that it might not remain in that entireness in which it has been his idol; as if an alleviation might in some way arise from its being in any other state and use than that in which he had sacrificed his soul to it? Send away some of that accumulation; give some of it to the cause of God, if He will accept what has been made an abomination by being put in His stead. Send some of it away, if it be but in pity to him of whom you surely can not help sometimes thinking while you are enjoying it. Can you, in the pleasures and the pride which that wealth may impart, escape the bitter thought, that for every gratification which it administers to you, it inflicts an unutterable pang on him by whose death it has become yours, and by whose perdition it is so much.

How different the reflections of those inheritors,

who feel in what they do *not* possess a delightful recognition of the character of their departed relatives ; who feel that they possess so much the less than they *might* have done, because those relatives have alienated to them nothing of what was sacred to God, and to charity ; and who can comprehend and approve the principle of that calculation of their pious predecessors, which accounted it even one of the best provisions for their heirs to dedicate a portion of their property to God. How different, therefore, the feelings of a descendant of such a person as that late most excellent Christian and philanthropist of your city, whose name* the present topic has probably recalled to the minds of most in this assembly.

We can not be unaware how many well-wishers to our cause must feel a severe limitation put upon their means of aiding it by the pressure of the public burdens, those burdens which oppress the energy and resources of every scheme for doing good. How often does the thought of such designs present itself to a benevolent man, at the moment of his being accosted with the peremptory demands on the public account, and make him look wishfully and regretfully at the sums he is thus surrendering, to be speedily followed, he knows, by more sums surrendered from the profits of his laborious industry or the produce of his little property. How many implements for the holy war, he says to himself, how many bibles, or

* Reynolds.

tracts, or school manuals, in the languages of Asia, might have sprung from such sums ; but this all-consuming body politic seems to know instinctively whatever good men are devising of gratuitous service to the welfare of their fellow-creatures, and to take a pleasure in frustrating their designs, by coming upon their means as a spoil, as if in revenge that they should seem to reproach the nation, by presuming to apply their little individual means to worthier purposes than those on which the grand public resources have been expended without limit.

It is indeed a melancholy and awful view that is presented to our contemplation. A great, Christian state, with every conceivable mode of beneficence placed within its sight and within its powers, has, throughout half an age, been stimulated to almost miraculous exertions, to an expenditure surpassing all the dreams of the golden empires of romance, a consumption of forces and of materials which might seem to have been adequate, under some imaginable forms of application, to give a new character to the moral world ; and when, after all this, the Christian philanthropist looks on the scene for the results, he finds that, excepting some hopeful commencements made quite apart from the public system, and in spite of its insatiable requisitions, that which *was* to be done remains still to be done, with a frightful addition of evils to the account ; and to be done by the efforts of individuals, and those individuals suffering, from the

course of national affairs, a lamentable diminution and alienation of their means.

In any large assembly, nevertheless, there may be a considerable number of persons who have mainly approved that public course of things, of which they would plead the now oppressive consequences in excuse for contributing but slightly in aid of a concern like that under our contemplation. We are not taking upon us to arraign them for such approval, when we suggest that they should be discreet in using this plea. They should think again, before consequences which, as resulting naturally from a certain order of public measures, they were required in reason to foresee, at least to a considerable extent, when they deliberately gave their approbation to those measures, shall be alleged by them in exemption from assisting a work as evidently designed to promote the highest good as any undertaking in the history of the world. If they have been the professed servants of that Prince of Peace whose kingdom is not of this world, but nevertheless demands tribute from the worldly resources of its subjects, it must have been their acknowledged primary obligation to look to the advancement of that kingdom, as indeed they were admonished in the first petition of the prayer dictated to them in His own instructions. This sacred obligation they had to keep in memory, while considering what *other* expenditures of their property they should take the responsibility of approving: the responsibility,

we say ; for, to abet and sanction a proceeding, is to incur the accountableness as completely as if the manifestation of an opposite opinion would *prevent* that proceeding ; and it were an idle evasion to plead that the course of measures in question would have been pursued, all the same, though disapprobation instead of coincidence had been avowed by these individuals. With this obligation resting on memory and on conscience, they could not, one should think, without alarm for their Christian principles, give their sanction to what must inevitably create speedy and large demands on their property, unless they had very solid ground for assurance of being left still competent to meet the claims peculiarly authoritative on them as Christians. They had to consider then what, in sober calculation, it was probable or possible there should at length be spared to them, by the voracity of such an enormous gulf as they saw swallowing up, year after year, the means of the community. We will presume that they *did*, as a matter of conscience, solemnly consider this question, and that through the progressive stages of experience they were still satisfied, as remaining constant in the assurance that their approval of the policy which caused such a tremendous consumption, did not involve their consent to an alienation from the cause of Christ, of any thing honestly belonging to it. But then we must tell them, that they will now come with a very bad grace to say that they have been deceived, and that the cause of

Christ must pay the forfeit of their miscalculation. Surely against the claims of a service to which their best strength was put under the prior and paramount obligation acknowledged by their profession, they will hesitate to plead that they have been lamed in their willing adherence to another, of such widely different character.

To those who are not liable to this sort of *argumentum ad hominem*, while deploring the disability inflicted by the consequences of national conduct, it may be suggested as at once a consolation and incitement, that by far the most unequivocal omen of an amendment of the national condition, even in a temporal respect, is the very circumstance of this recently arisen zeal and activity for extending the prevalence of the true religion in the world. From what has been seen thus far, we may affirm, that the Almighty has clearly indicated this as the part of the world from which He is determined to draw the chief human means of accomplishing His most glorious designs relatively to it all ; that here He has His mines, and His assembling camp, that here is the part where lie the sinews of the holy war. But if so, and if that war is to be on so great a scale as appears to be prefigured in the visions of His prophets, may we not venture to say that He will, that He must, protect the stores applicable to His approaching campaigns, from the renewal of such dreadful depredations as we have witnessed, and from the unmitigated continuance of such as are suffered now ?

We may assure ourselves that He will in due time warn off the sacrilegious hands that would seek to plunder a property appointed to so sacred a service. And what a glorious change of the national condition, when God shall, as it were, place His angel between what shall remain after all the ravage of ambition, war, and corruption, and the re-approach of these spoilers. And how gratifying to behold, too, in the contrasted operations, the difference of the power of producing an effect; to see that, whereas an astonishing and unparalleled expenditure in the vulgar kind of war, has resulted in—leaving men, relatively to the objects of that war, nearly where they were—the grand spiritual power, which we behold entering into action, will require an incalculably less portion of material means for its consumption in an operation by which it is to transform the moral world.

You will not, my brethren, feel it a damp upon the pleasure of anticipating this rescue from the spoilers, that the temporal means so redeemed will still not be held in entire and absolute property by their possessors, but will still be in part under a foreign and authoritative claim. For, besides, that it is pleasing to devout minds to hold and regard all things as belonging to God, and as to subserve whatever purpose He pleases, they may be very confident that He will make it to be the better for the community itself, in a temporal respect, whenever there shall prevail in it a disposition to apply its means to promote His cause. In-

deed, this very spirit will involve a principle of counteraction to all such things as we have seen most miserably destroying the temporal welfare of the nation.

For the present, while many friends of religion are laboring under the grievous pressure, we may suggest it to them as a consideration not unfit to accompany that prudence with which their conduct is to be left in charge, that the offerings to God from what calamity has left have a peculiar value in His esteem, and in the feelings of the sufferer may contribute to exalt adversity into piety. Should we go back in thought to that period of the world when sacrifices, literally, were appointed for the expression of homage to Heaven, we might imagine the case of a devout man whose corn-fields, or plantations, or flocks, had for the greater part perished by some destructive visitation, as by tempests, or fire, or locusts, or disease. Let us suppose him, nevertheless, in looking pensively over the scene, to consider whether yet some small portion of the remainder might not be spared for God, as a token of humble resignation to Him that gave and had taken away. Would not that probably be the most acceptable sacrifice that had ever burned on his altar, and offered with the most affecting emotions of religion? Nor would it seem to him to lessen what was already so little, but rather to augment it in value by bringing a divine benediction upon it. Or suppose a pious man, in that ancient time, to have been cast, by shipwreck, alone, on a desert coast. If his religion, pre-

dominant in all scenes and over all feelings, inspired the wish to make a burnt-offering to his God, his only means might have been a little provision saved from the wreck, and fragments of his ship for fuel. But in the solemnity of bearing toward heaven the expression of a sublime devotion, this would surpass all other sacrificial flames he had ever kindled or beheld. It might appear to his faith, amidst the gloom of the solitary shore, as a symbol of that presence which was in the fire that Moses saw in the desert.

ENCOURAGEMENTS TO PERSEVERANCE.

PERHAPS it may be justly thought, that the notions, dispositions, and circumstances, above recounted as adverse to the spirit for Christianizing the heathens, and as causing a refusal of the desired assistance to an undertaking which is with that design in actual operation among them, did not require to be commented on at such length. We gladly leave them to lose their power of counteraction under the progressive ascendancy of unfettered thinking, experience, benevolent zeal, and that better aspect which we hope that a good Providence will ere long give to the times, if it were only for the purpose of replenishing the resources of schemes for extending the dominion of divine truth. We shall hasten toward a conclusion, by briefly suggesting a few ideas tending to animate the piety of persons already inclined in this way to "come to the help of the Lord."

And surely there is something very captivating in such an expression itself, combined with numerous sentences in the Bible, less bold and striking in phrase, but of the same spirit. It is strange that we are not oftener surprised and delighted at the condescension shown by the Almighty, in expressing the dictates of His will to His servants in terms and images which permit them to regard the performance of their duty, their mere duty, in the light of co-operation with Him. The thought of being authorized by Him to entertain so sublime an idea of their vocation, might bear them up in their deepest distresses and severest labors; might animate them, though a world were against them. So ennobled a character of their service, however, which it would have been profaneness for them to have arrogated without such a sanction, is fit to be dwelt upon in its full magnitude only when their minds are the most elevated in devotion, when consequently their humility is the most profound. In the usual tenor of their religious feelings, it should be honor enough to inspire complacency and activity in their work, that they can regard themselves in the humbler capacity of instruments; that the Supreme Agent chooses to effect by means of them, what He could accomplish with infinite facility without them.

Apply the consideration to the matter now before us. He could by a mere act of His will cause an instantaneous disappearance from the globe of that enormous system of mythological delusion, with all

its rites, iniquities, and guardian evil spirits. It might vanish like a vapor of the morning, and leave but its wreck and monument in fallen temples and shivered idols, thenceforth a harmless mass of matter, dispossessed of that property which had breathed poison into men's souls. And, indeed, if we were regarding the extermination of that monstrous superstition in no other view than that of the advantage of its being the soonest out of existence, we might almost be tempted to desire so illustrious a catastrophe. If such a thing might be, a servant of God would be willing to forego the honor of his share in the destruction. But when he finds it so evident that, in the divine plans, it is not the sole object to attain the one last effect, but that they are condescendingly formed in such a manner that their execution shall be an employment, a discipline, and an honor to human agents, he will feel (if his spirit is attempered to the great purposes of his Master) a generous impatience that these agents may be prompt to seize the honor thus brought within their reach. With firebrands and torches put into their hands, can they be content, he exclaims, to stand still and let them burn out, while the huge fabric inhabited by demon gods, and filled with pestilent abominations, spreads wide and towers aloft in pride and security before them? Let them advance and prove who has sent them, and whence the fire came that they bear. Let them go and demonstrate upon the proud assemblage of possessors

of a region not their own that the decree of expulsion coming upon them at last is not to be defied because He, whose own approach when on earth was always the imperative signal for infernal audacity to retire, seems now only to send His servants to execute His will. That His will should pass into effect through such an agency, may well excite the wonder of those who find such a commission offered to them. It must be the highest distinction which He has to confer on mortals, thus to summon them forth, in the sight of far nobler, mightier intelligences, to so great a work for the enlargement of His kingdom. It will also be a religious triumph as against the principalities and powers of evil, that it should please Him to accomplish His victory by the means of creatures who, in thus serving their God, should be avenging their race; that these powers should see, that when the irresistible might was at last to be put forth, it was to be through the instrumentality of beings of that order which they had so long despised, and tyrannized over, and tormented.

It is still further cause of delight, that this putting forth of strength under the external form of weakness, is analogous to the one greatest manifestation of vindicating and redeeming energy.

As incitement to Christians to throw a measure of their activity into enterprises aimed at such an object, they may be reminded that, while enjoined to preserve moderation in their own demands upon this

earth, they are entitled to be ambitious, shall we not say arrogant, on behalf of their Lord. In their view, the worst usurpation beyond all comparison, in the world, must be that which any where presumes to withhold an inhabited tract from His actual dominion. On whatever it is that does so presume, let them expend the animosity which might otherwise find its meaner exercise against the boundaries that obstruct their own projects of acquisition. And in this nobler direction it will not be the passion which frets itself against what is unalterable, and despairs. For they have reason to be assured that those limits, against which this more consecrated ambition is impelled in hostility, will at length be carried away. They can descry through the gross darkness that covers the pagan regions, a mystical signature by the finger of God, on every spot, to indicate its assignment by that covenant, which has given to the Messiah the heathen for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. That declared decree in heaven, that substance of the thing hoped for, is brought down to the earth in the confident anticipations of the faithful, and beheld as in the fact of a universal kingdom.

They see among leading mortals an ardent competition for dominion over spaces of territory, with angry controversy about titles and usurpations, and an incessant resort to the expedient which wastes the contenders and the subject of contention. They loathe

and abhor this spectacle of a world with its unnumbered myriads, continually made a sport and a prey of the bad passions of those predominant mortals, by their power of exasperating and directing the bad propensities of subservient multitudes. The contemplators of the scene, if they believed it must be always thus, might well be affected with passionate longings for omens of its approaching dissolution. An oracle that should tell them, in the plainest meaning of the words, that "the end of all things is at hand," might delight them more than ever a pagan mover of an ambitious enterprise was elated by voices or signs from the fane of his deity assuring him of conquest. But they have a better consolation in the faith, that amidst all these tumults of conflict, amidst all these destructive competitions of transitory potentates, there is gradually unfolding itself a cause destined to grow to a dominion which will leave no province nor tribe of the earth to be contested by the rivalries of an insane ambition.

In the mean time, if they observe any state making a great progress in power and occupancy on the face of the world, it will well become their character to show an animated concern that the kingdom which has their peculiar allegiance may be as evidently advancing, and that to this progress that enlargement of the temporal dominion may be made in some way to subserve. And here you will all be reminded of the wonderfully rapid extension of the British acquisitions

in Asia, where we can not help interpreting it in favor of a higher cause, that a lying spirit should have betrayed so many pagan and Mahommedan powers to provoke their own destruction. We can, in this view of such vast conquests, thank the contrivers and the heroes, whose contempt would at any stage of the career have been excited at the notion of its having been the real cause of their success, that they were preparing the way for Christianity.

It is of course for men of counsel and of war to scorn this fanatical mode of estimating splendid conquests. But we can see little on any other ground to console good men for the heavy addition made by conquests so splendid, to those public burdens which leave them such scanty means of doing good of their own choice and in their own manner. Should national glory be talked of, we could have no fear of making the appeal to every one within hearing, whether he, as an individual of the nation, and one of the owners therefore of the glory of these Eastern acquisitions, would not most willingly surrender his share of it on the terms of receiving back, were that possible, so much as it may fairly be calculated to have cost him, with the addition of so much as it is yet to cost. Especially this would be a safe appeal to a man who is thinking what a valuable contribution that sum would be to projects for diffusing Christianity through that part of the world. It has not been left him for any such disposal. But still, let him hope in Divine

Providence, that even to that object it has not been altogether lost. And here is a project which seeks to *redeem* to this very purpose what has been taken and expended in a spirit infinitely foreign to it, and what, unless so redeemed, may be justly accounted, for the greater portion of it, lost in the most absolute sense. But *this* enterprise too is a concern of serious expense. The advocates of this design have no way of avoiding the confession that it seeks to impose a little more cost for India on persons to whom that country has, independently of their will, cost too much already; but it is an addition somewhat of the nature of an insurance for Christianity on the ultimate effect of the large expenditure past and to come. It is like something to be thrown into the water, to cause that miraculously to float which were else irrecoverably sunk.

The object is, that the true religion may advance upon the track of our victorious armies, may plant stations on the fields of their encampments and battles, may demolish, in the moral sense, as many strongholds of superstition as our artillery has reduced fortresses; may, in short, carry on operations corresponding to the wars in all the points esteemed the most glorious. And what a delightful thing, if thus a power never thought of by either of the parties in the long conflict, shall come in and take the best of the spoils, and assume, in a better sense, the dominion which so many potentates have been compelled to

resign, showing the one people how they had, in truth, been beguiled through expenditure and exertion, for an object for which they would have scorned to make, knowingly, a thousandth part of such a sacrifice; and the other, that their political independence was lost but in order that a conquest over all their gods might be gained. But how is a design which looks to such consequences to be supported in the prosecution? It is evident there is no way but that in which the friends of religion may, if they will, decline to afford their aid.

Among the many reasons why we think they should not so decline, we may suggest the certainty that all contributions will be applied in a manner to produce the greatest possible effect. One of the most conspicuous and uncontested of the merits of the undertaking has been the economy of expenditure throughout the whole system. The statements of what has resulted, in a substantial form, besides an immensity of such exertions as can not be brought into formal account, give evidence that all who have been concerned in expending have had a conscientious regard to the object. As to the missionaries themselves, it is impossible to conceive a stronger pledge for the careful application of the whole resources, than the fact of their having many years generously devoted the produce of their own indefatigable labors. *This* warfare, therefore, in Hindoostan, is in no danger of incurring a charge which has been constantly

and heavily laid on the conduct of our other wars there. We may be assured that all the supplies afforded to *this* service will go into the effective apparatus, and will be felt in the enemy's camp. It is gratifying to a contributor to feel confident that what goes from his hand as a real and sensible diminution of what was his own, will not be as if annihilated or thrown into the sea, but will be really efficient, in its measure, in the distant service for which it is surrendered.

While we pay the tribute of our admiration and gratitude to the devotedness, the disinterestedness, and the astonishing performances of the fraternity at Serampore, we can not help being reminded that the chief of these laborers are advanced in life, and the leader of the whole band verging fast, in point of age, to the decline. We will not dwell on the irreparable loss which the cause sustained by them with so noble an energy is one day to suffer. But it does seem highly desirable that the remaining portion of the lives of these veterans should be turned to the utmost account. For one thing, a few spirits so long and severely disciplined, who have mastered so much difficulty, that nothing which can remain appears at all formidable to them, and who habitually, and now as it were mechanically, labor at the extreme pitch of their laboring power, and that power indefinitely increased by practice, a few such men, and those also acting in concert, are to be estimated at perhaps ten-

fold their numerical force, even considered in reference simply to the amount of work they can perform. But again, so long as these men are spared to remain in conjunction at the head of the system, they will do much to preserve in it a compactness, a judiciousness of distribution, a commensurateness of agents to their respective work and to one another, and a comprehensiveness of scheme greatly conducive both to rapidity of execution and to that uniformity and consistency of principle in the proceedings which is of great importance in a cause that, in provoking the conflict with so mighty a league of iniquities, has need to be in harmony within itself. Add to this, that the high example of these leaders is forming a standard for their younger coadjutors, who will be the better qualified to become their successors, the larger the scale is on which they behold their manner of operation.

Now, while there is no adding to the *length* of these invaluable lives, it is possible to make, if we may so express it, an addition to their breadth. That is, it is possible for these men's minds and their system to be brought into action on a larger amount of materials, and therefore over a space both morally and locally more extended. And great stress is to be laid on the consideration that more copious aid supplied during their life would be, not simply so much more of means put in action, to produce an addition of effect proportioned to the value of those means considered

absolutely, but means put in action according to a ratio of force peculiar to a transient conjuncture, the like of which can not exist again ; such enlarged aid would serve the cause in the magnified proportion of these men's pre-eminence of adaptedness to serve it.

Nor is it any disparagement, by anticipation, to the zeal and talent which we are confident the Supreme Head of the Church will appoint in long succession to this work, when we represent the special importance of aiding it in this particular stage, on the ground that a combination of men, uniting the advantage of a patriarchal priority in time, with individual endowments so distinguished, and with such complete conformity of agencies, constituting, as it were, a great intellectual machine, can hardly ever be equaled in the power of making the most efficient application of whatever means shall be supplied.

The right policy, in this case, is the same as that which would impel a state, engaged in some ambitious enterprise, to push its military operations most earnestly, and with every practicable reinforcement, during the last campaign in which those operations could probably have the advantage of being directed by an unbroken band of veterans trained in conjunction to victory in the service.

And even as regarding these men themselves, willing, like St. Paul, to forego, if it might be put at their option, a more speedy emancipation from their toils to the final rest, and to labor on to the last pe-

riod of exhausted nature, it seems due from our sympathy and gratitude to wish, that if death should not deny them the time, the Christian public should not refuse them the means for advancing the introductory process of the great work to a point where they would be perfectly willing to bid it adieu. That supposed limit of their Christian ambition is not altogether an imaginary one. Elijah's chariot, sent to bear them away, would not inspire in them such joy, in quitting the world, as to know that the most important parts of the revelation of God had been brought to speak in *every* considerable language of Asia.

But at all events, they will depart with the delight of knowing that their distinguished lot on earth has been to open the way, in an important sense, to the region whither they are going, for a countless multitude, many of whom they will be assured are to follow them, while they will rejoice to have staid long enough to see the evinced and completed efficacy of their appointment as evangelists in some that are gone before them. They will know that by the cause in which they have lived and labored, and are dying, a new mode of the divine attention, a greater measure of the divine interest, has been drawn and must remain fixed in benignant radiance upon a formerly estranged and desolate tract of the world; inasmuch as wherever there are faithful witnesses to the truth, repenting sinners, and pagans making sacrifices of the idols to which they had offered sacrifice, and com-

mencing in the name of Christ a new life, amidst prayers and praises in languages which never addressed the Almighty before, there is (speaking reverently) something to necessitate toward that spot a far more special emanation of favor and providence from Heaven than when that moral waste contained nothing related to God. If there were but one particle there of such new and sacred existence, Heaven *must* continue in communication with the spot where there is something so much its own, till it became extinct, or were resumed to the sky. How happy then if there shall be there an augmentation, every day, of what thus bears a special relation to God, to become a continually mightier attraction of the divine benignity thitherward, till at length the language of prophecy shall be fulfilled, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

In a confidence of a progressive prevalence of the gracious dispensation of which we think we see the commencement, it might be permitted to indulge for a moment in the contemplation of India as in a future age, in which distant period we can in a measure conceive what will be the reflections of a devout observer, regarding the scene in reference to the past. With the picture on his imagination of India as the missionaries will have recorded that they found it, and as many other preserved authentic descriptions

will agree with them in representing it, he may look over the ample region, to wonder what is become of that direful element which was once perceived pervading and corrupting the whole wide diffusion of mental and moral existence, bringing out to view, as it were in a darkness visible of depravity, the souls of men conspicuously through their less sable exterior. The dusky visages, the attire, the structure of habitations, and the grand features of nature will be seen the same; but a horrid something, composed of lies, and crimes, and curses, and woes, that did rest in deadly possession over all the land, will be broken up and gone. Where has a place been found for what occupied for ages after ages so many cities, and villages, and houses, and minds? What tempest has driven it away? What presence has been here which *that* presence could not abide? Was it that Spirit in awe of whom eternal night vanished at the creation of the world?

He may look from the southern shore toward the sublime mountain-boundary of the region on the north, and reflect what a scene it was to confront Heaven, in all this breadth, with deities, and doctrines, and devotions detestable to the true God; each individual of unnumbered millions being infatuated and busied by notions and practices, not one of which could have been in existence but by the fall of our nature. But how glorious for that reflecting observer to feel it verified to him that this is but a vision of

the past, and that, departing like a dream when one awakes, it leaves him in view of a bright and blessed reality. How he will exult in the palpable evidence that the Son of God has spread His dominion from those shores to those mountains ; that the oracles of truth have taken place of the most silly, and loathsome, and monstrous legends with which the father of lies ever made contemptuous sport of the folly of his dupes ; and that the new religion admitted in faith has crowned itself and its believers with all its appropriate virtues. When joining with them in exercises of worship to the true God, he may have short lapses of the mind into a view of the past, presented in vivid images of the fantastic fooleries and the orgies that once celebrated the infatuation which reigned as religion in the people, on the very same spot, as attested by some relic of the ruins of a temple, and he will recover from such brief alienation of thought to verify the fact that he actually *is* among persons reverently calling on God in the name of Christ. That disease of the soul will be gone that exhibits itself in alternate lethargy and raving. The charities of humanity, restored among them, will show why it was that their ancestors could look upon, or even cause, the death of relatives and friends with stockish indifference. And finally, he will see the effect of that which missionaries are seeking to promote among them, in the manner in which the death of Christianized Hindoos will differ from that sullen quiet, that stoicism with-

out magnanimity, with which the pagan Hindoo submits to fate.

And if we might, for a moment, entertain so improbable an idea, as that this observer and comparer should be uninformed of the general course of means and operation, through which the Almighty Spirit had accomplished this great change, we can suppose his conjectures on the subject to be much too magnificent. How came thousands of temples to be surrendered to the decay of time or the violence of dilapidation, an infinity of idols to be demolished, a mythology and ritual, involving the whole life and being of the human multitude, to be exploded, the powers of Brahmins and priests to be annihilated, a whole intellectual and moral system to be supplanted by its opposite? Might not such questions put his mind on the effort to imagine the most extraordinary modes of divine interposition? He might fancy, perhaps, that some great convulsion of nature had contributed to the overthrow of so many structures, forming the glory and the fortresses of superstition; that portentous phenomena, bearing a menacing aspect upon the pagan rites, had been displayed in the heavens; that cotemporary miracles, in the strict sense of the word, had attested the record of the ancient ones; or that some peculiarity of temporal good fortune, frequently attending the converts, had marked them out to the gross apprehension of the idolaters as favorites of the Power that governs the world. And might he sur-

mise in addition, that the foreign state, which had conquered Hindoostan, must have systematically lent, during the acquisition and possession, its whole influence arising from conquest and dominion, to promote Christianity by every expedient short of force ?

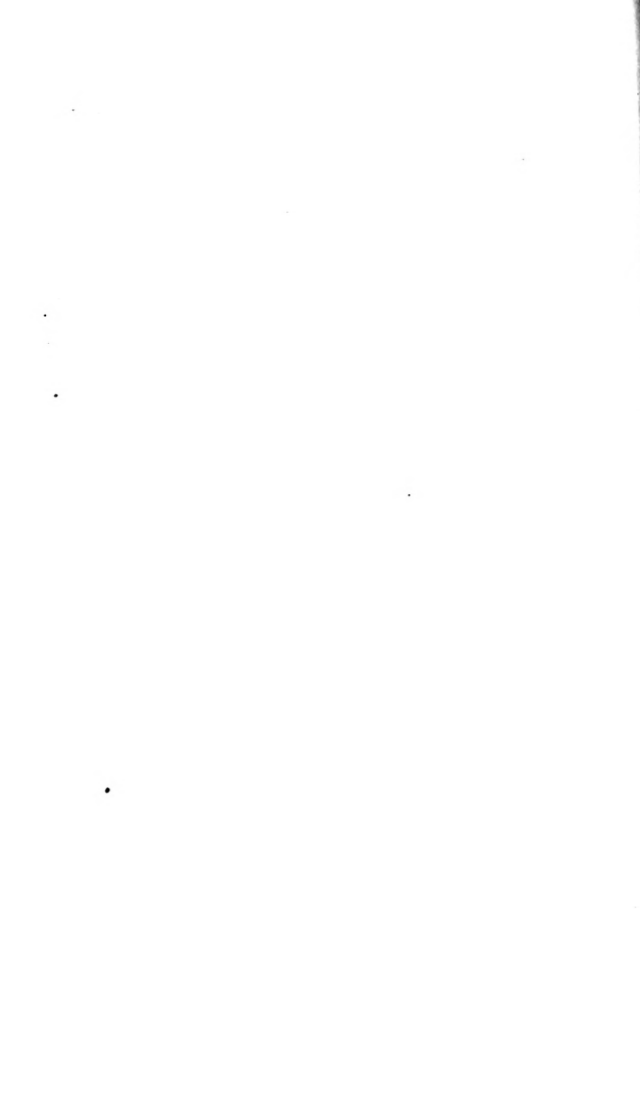
No, he might be told, you see, in all this glorious view, nothing which is to be referred to any such causes. The work began in some of the humblest movements that ever pointed to a great object, movements in which the actors, perhaps, owed their toleration to contempt. A train of ideas was excited in the minds of some individuals respecting the prophecies relative to the heathen nations. Their conversations about these with their religious friends, led to meetings, prayers, little arrangements of co-operation, and slender contributions of money. A gradual extension of these measures resulted in the sending of several zealous men, by means of conveyance marked with the disfavor of the governing authorities, to begin the experiment. It was commenced under appearances very far from resembling Constantine's pretended vision of a cross in the clouds, inscribed as the sign of victory ; or from recalling to mind the accounts of pagan priests of other ages having been affrighted by the trembling of their fanes accompanied by fearful voices from their recesses, announcing the abandonment of the solemn abode by the deities. Had these servants of Christ taken up their design on any condition of the intervention of preternatural omens and

instrumentality, the only dictate of their experience, through every stage, would have been to lay it down. But, wild as they were accounted, both the promoters in England and the agents in the East, they had entertained no presumptions which could lead to the conclusion of its not being worth while to persevere, and to enjoin on their successors an interminable perseverance, in the trial of what the Almighty should see fit to accomplish at length by means of the diffusion of the Bible, and a never-tired repetition of missionary journeys, addresses, and conferences, with the co-operating effect of schools, and writings on religion. This economy of plain expedients (it may be supposed to be said to the future admirer of the transformation), these operations, so little related to poetry or prodigy, or to the wild ardor of fanaticism, went on in augmenting vigor, while those who had commenced them sunk, one after another, in the dust. On their tombs their successors devoted themselves to prosecute the same labors of the holy war. Converts from heathenism, in still greater numbers every year, were brought in as captives, but to go out under the oath of hostility against that of which they and their ancestors had been the slaves. The succeeding generation of the Christians of the West were happy to continue from that quarter their alliance and aid in the mightier progress of a cause, which *their* ancestors had begun in so diminutive a form, committing in faith and hope its success

to God. The influence of that Sovereign Spirit has descended in a progressive increase of efficacy far more than proportioned to the enlargement of the system of means ; and so it has come to pass (it might be said to the future admirer), that you can exult in the disappearance from the world of one mighty form of evil, against which the Christians of a past age had to maintain a long hostility.

As to us, and our period of time, there is this grand form of moral evil standing boldly forward in possession of a large part of our world. But this is only *one* of the forms in which that worst enemy evinces a powerful and dreadful presence. We *must*, or we are ruined, be kept in an habitual and alarming sense of the fact, that the one thing in the creation which surpasses all others as an object for hatred, is here amidst us, and all around, in many diversities of malignant existence ; and with all of them it is our vocation to be at enmity and war. My brethren, it were in vain to seek to escape from the condition of our place in the dominions of God. A mind of wandering and melancholy thought, impatient of the grievous realities of our state, may at some moments almost breathe the wish that we had been a different order of beings, in another dwelling-place than this, and appointed on a different service to the Almighty. In vain ! Here still we are, to pass the first part of our existence in a world where it is impossible to be at peace, because there has come into it a mortal enemy

to all that live in it. Amidst the darkness that veils from us the state of the universe, we would willingly be persuaded that this our world may be the only region (except that of penal justice) where the cause of evil is permitted to maintain a contest. Here perhaps may be almost its last encampment, where its prolonged power of hostility may be suffered in order to give a protracted display of the manner of its appointed destruction. Here our lot is cast, on a ground so awfully pre-occupied; a calamitous distinction! but yet a sublime one, if thus we may render to the Eternal King a service of a more arduous kind than it is possible to the inhabitants of any other world than this to render Him; and if thus we may be trained, through devotion and conformity to the Celestial Chief in this warfare, to the final attainment of what He has promised, in so many illustrious forms, to him that overcometh. We shall soon leave the region where so much is in rebellion against our God. But we shall go where all that pass from our world must present themselves as from battle, or be denied to mingle in the eternal joys and triumphs of the conquerors.



G O D I N V I S I B L E .



G O D I N V I S I B L E .

[THIS ingenious sketch, on a subject in which the largest intellect is almost lost, is by the author of the foregoing Essay, and was first published in the London New Baptist Miscellany.]

MUCH is seeing, feeling man actuated by the objects around him. All his powers are roused, impelled, directed, by impressions made on his sensitive organs; yet objects of sense have only a definite force upon him. A hundred weight crushes a man's strength to a certain degree, and no more: he sustains and bears it away. On the edge of the ocean he may tremble at the vast expanse, but he tries the depth near the shore, and finds it but a few feet, and no longer fears to enter it. The waves can not overtop his head; or, is it deep? he can swim, and no longer regards it with fear. Nay, he builds a ship, and makes this tremendous ocean his servant, wields its vastness for his own use, dives to its deep bottom to rob it of its treasures, or makes its surface convey him to distant shores. A much smaller object shall affect him more,

when his senses are less distinctly acted upon, but his imagination is somewhat aroused. When he travels in the dark, he starts at a slight but indistinct noise; he knows not but it may be a wild beast lurking, or a robber ready to seize on him. Could he have distinctly seen what alarmed him, he had undauntedly passed on; it was only the moving of the leaves waved gently by the wind. He stops, he considers well, for he hears the sound of water falling; a gleam from its foaming surface sparkles in his eye, but he can not tell how near to it, or how distant; how exactly it might be in his path; how tremendously deep the abyss into which he may fall at the next step. Had it been daylight, could he have examined it thoroughly, he had then passed it without notice; it is only the rill of a small ditch in the roadside; his own foot could have stopped the trickling current.

This effect of indistinctness rousing the imagination is finely depicted in Job iv. 14. Eliphaz describes it thus: "Fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof." The senses in this description are but slightly affected: the eye could not discern any specific form, the touch could not examine the precise nature of the object; the imagination therefore had full scope, the mind was roused beyond the power of sensible objects to stimulate it, and the body felt an agitation greater than if

its senses had been more fully acted upon. "He trembled, the hairs of his flesh stood up. He could not discern the form," it might therefore be terrific in its shape or tremendous in its size. "It stood still," as if to do something to him; to speak; perhaps to smite or to destroy! And how could he guard against that which he could not see, could not tell whence or what it was; that which, from what he could discover, and still more from what he could not discover, seemed to be no mortal substance to which he was accustomed, and with which, with care and courage, he might deal safely; but a spirit utterly beyond his impression, having unknown power to impress even him, who can tell in what degree? The certainty of an object so near him, joined to the uncertainty of what might be his powers, intentions, and natural operations, impressed him deeply with awe, expectation, and anxiety. How absurd, then, how contrary to all their feelings in other cases, is the conduct of infidels who affect to despise God, to deny His existence because they can not see Him, or, without affecting this, do actually forget and do Him despite, by occasion of this circumstance! Men who can be appalled at some distant danger, and grow courageous at what is near at hand—who tremble at a fellow-man or crawling reptile, and only show hardihood when their foe is Almighty.

Without inquiring what Eliphaz saw, let us apply these ideas to the Supreme Being; let us meditate on

an object of infinitely greater, nearer importance—"the invisible God," the most impressively important because invisible. Let us, for a moment, suppose the contrary to be the case—suppose the Deity to be the object of our senses—He then loses much of His majesty—He becomes fixed to one spot, that in which *we* can see Him. He must be distant from many other places, and, when revealing Himself in other places, must be far distant from us, even at a time when we must need His presence. Nay, we should begin to compute Him; to philosophize upon and attempt experiments with Him. Were He vast as the starry heavens, we could measure Him; bright as yonder sun, we could contrive to gaze at Him; energetic as the vivid lightning, we could bring Him down to play around us. In no form can we conceive of His being an object of sense, but we sink Him to a creature, give Him some definable shape, reduce Him to a man or mere idol, and we have need to provide Him a temple made with hands for His accommodation.

If indeed there were any doubt of His existence (but that man is incapable of reasoning who reasons thus), there are proofs enough that He is at our right hand, though we do not see Him; that He works at our left hand, though we can not behold Him. Instead of asking, with a sneer of doubt, Where is He? or carelessly thinking thus: Shall God see? a much more rational method is with awe and reverence to say, "Whither shall I flee from Thy presence? Thou

hast beset me behind and before, and laid Thine hand upon me." Could any supposition take place even of His momentary absence—that He was far off, or on a journey, or asleep, and must needs be awakened—it might be alleged to sanction the careless, provided they were aware of His absence, or knew the time of His drowsiness or distance; but an omnipresent Almighty ought to fill us with seriousness, and the uncertainty of His operations, when, how, and where He will work, should fill us with deep, lasting, and constant awe.

He exists—the thought makes a temple in every place I may be in; to realize it, is to begin actual worship; whatever I may be about, to indulge it is to make all other existence fade away. Amid the roar of mirth I hear only His voice; in the glitter of dissipation I see only His brightness; in the midst of business I can do nothing but pray. He is present! what may He not see? The actions of my hands He beholds! the voice of my words He hears! the thoughts of my heart He discerns! Could I see Him, I might on this side guard against His penetrating eye, or on the other side act something in secret, safe from His inspection; but present, without my being able to discern Him, I ought to be watchful every way; the slightest error may fill us with awful apprehensions. Even now, says conscience, He may be preparing His vengeance, whetting His glittering sword, or drawing to a head the arrows of destruction.

Could my eye see His movements, I might be upon my guard ; might flee to some shelter, or shrink away from the blow ; but, a foe so near, and yet so indiscernible, may well alarm me, lest the act of iniquity meet with an immediate reward ; the blasphemous prayer for damnation receive too ready an answer from His hot thunderbolt !

He is a Spirit ! what can He not do ? Vast are His powers, quick His discernments, invisible His operations ! No sword can reach Him, no shield of brass can protect against Him, no placid countenance deceive Him, no hypocritical supplications impose upon Him. He is in my inmost thoughts—in every volition ; He supports the negotiating principle while it determines on its rebellions, or plans some mode by which to elude His all-penetrating perception. Vain is every attempt at evasion or resistance. “God is a Spirit ;” is present every moment, surrounds every object, watches my steps and waits upon me, though I can not discern His form, His measure, His power, or direct His movements. I see Him before my face in the bright walks of nature, but I can not discern His form. The rich landscape shows Him good, wise, and bounteous : but how bounteous, good, or wise, who, from the richest landscape, can be able to guess ? The brilliant sun gives a glimpse of His brightness ; the vast starry concave shows His immensity ; but how bright, how immense, it were impossible to say. Hark ! He speaks in that bursting thunder, or He

moves in that crushing earthquake, He shines in that blazing comet. So much I can easily discern, but God is still far beyond my comprehension. I see nothing but the hidings of His power; Himself is still unknown.

He guides the affairs of providence. I see Him before my face, but I can not behold His form. Who but He could have raised Pharaoh—the Nebuchadnezzar of ancient or modern times? Who but He could have rooted up a firmly-fixed throne, and poised a mighty nation upon the slender point of a stripling's energies? I have seen Him pass before me in my own concerns, leading me in a path I did not know, stopping me when on the verge of some destruction, filling my exhausted stores, and soothing my wearied mind to sweet serenity. I could not but say, "This is the Lord's doing, it is marvelous in my eyes:" but I can not discern the form; I know not what He will next do, nor dare I walk with presumptuous steps, or repose with self-complacent gratulation, and say, "My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved." He hides His face for a moment, and I am troubled; He withdraws His hand, and I die.

I see a spirit passing before me, I hear His voice in the secret recesses; I find that there is a God, that He is near, that He stands full in view, with appalling indistinctness, so that I tremble, and the hairs of my flesh stand up; yet I can not discern the form. I know not what affrights, stops, impresses, crushes me. Com-

pany I hate, for it neither dispels my sensations nor harmonizes with them. Solitude I dread ; for the invisible presence is there seen, and the unknown God is there felt in all His terrifying influence. To deny that some one is acting upon me, must be to deny that I see, feel, am anxious. Could I tell what, or who, I might call the wisdom of man to my assistance ; but it is the unknowable, yet well known ; the indiscernible, yet surely seen ; the incomprehensible, intangible, yet fully understood and ever-present God, that supports my trembling frame, and meets the warmest wishes of my too daring mind ; the resolute determinations, inefficacious exertions, and the stubborn submission of an unwilling soul.

Ah ! let this present Invisible encircle me with His mercy, defend me with His power, fill me with His fear, and save me by His almighty grace. Then, though I discern not His form, I shall be conscious of His presence, and the delightful consciousness shall fill me with reverence indeed, but not make my flesh to tremble. He shall soothe my sorrows, inspire my hopes, give me confidence in danger, and supplies in every necessity. The consciousness of His nearness, approbation, and mercy, shall enable me to endure like Moses, as seeing Him who is INVISIBLE.

THE END.









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