

damned on such grounds. There are tastes, there are habits, there are prevailing notions taken up without much or any consideration, which often prevent a man of principle from doing what his principle should dictate to him, and many do not think how much they can do if they please, or consider the evil there is in not doing it. There may be good in a man, and yet that good not productive of all the benefit it might be in the body to which he belongs.

But surely, if there is good in a man, he should show it by doing good, and countenancing good—if he cannot “prophesy, so that all may learn and all be comforted;” he can at least wait on prophesying, and encourage others to do so; if he cannot do one thing, he may do another for the general advantage. There should both be, and appear to be, an interest in each for the good of all. If a man might be a good Christian, which he cannot, without caring for others, whether they be Christians also, and using the means in his power to make them such; would not this be a very low and selfish kind of religion? Is it the religion which the true faith of the Gospel produces—the faith of which it is said, that it worketh by love?

There is a nervous shrinking dislike of making oneself peculiar or conspicuous, which holds back many a one from doing the good he might do, and giving the countenance which he should give, to exercises of piety and enterprises of Christian benevolence. But true principle should overcome this feeling; and it would pass away under any strong and lively sense of the love of Christ.

And moreover, it is monstrous that in any professedly Christian congregation it should make any one of any class conspicuous, that by his personal presence or personal efforts, he countenances the means used for the spiritual good of the whole body. In a Church, at least among its professed members, this should rarely be so common as to leave room for making any one conspicuous. But such means are often most attended to, it is said, by people in whose character and principle there is no great reason for reposing confidence. Say it were so; then let those, who have principle and character, take them into their own hands, and give to Religion the whole weight of the influence which in the Providence of God they possess, and for which God will no doubt hold them accountable. Then would True Religion thrive more in their own souls, and there would be brighter and better days for the congregation to which they belong, and the community of which they are members.

HOW DID GOD CREATE MAN ?

In answer to this question the Scriptures teach us that God made man after His own image by the Word of His power. Many not contented to receive instruction by faith, even on points which cannot be otherwise ascertained, have sought to find out an answer to the question by other means, with what success may be learned from their speculations. To review these speculations is here not to be thought of, and were indeed to engage in a task little less idle or likely to be profitable than the original investigations themselves. They all come at last to the same conclusion that man was not made at all, and has no Creator, but grew up in some inexplicable manner out of the things which are seen. In fleeing from the mysteries of Faith our philosophers never fail to run into still greater mysteries.

Existence, view it as we may, is a great unfathomable mystery. Looked at even under the light of God's countenance

shining upon it, it passeth all understanding. But to contemplate existence apart from God, and endeavour to explain its phenomena without reference to Almighty Power guided by infinite wisdom, is to evoke from the depths of our ignorance a mystery of mysteries in the shape of a vain imagination, and appoint for ourselves in the attempt to solve it, if we may say so, a harder task than Creation itself.

To say that the existence of all things may be accounted for in a rational manner, by the working of that which is nothing, seems a far harder saying than that all things were made out of nothing by Almighty Power. The latter saying indeed passes all understanding, such knowledge is too high for us, we cannot attain unto it; and, had it been said it is easy to comprehend how this should have been done, we must either have questioned the speaker's truth, or admitted that we fell far short of the ordinary measure of understanding in men, for the matter is far above us and completely out of our reach. We can no more conceive how the Work of Creation was accomplished, than if we had never heard of such a thing with the hearing of our ears. We have often reflected on the subject, but ever with the same result, that nothing could here be known. The hand of God, we felt, cannot be seen; but this left no doubt as to the fact of its Presence, and its Power; the handy-work was sufficiently visible.

We cannot understand how God made the world out of nothing; but we can very easily believe that He did. It surpasses reason, but does not shock faith. But the assertion that the world framed itself out of nothing, or from atoms, which philosophers attenuate till they be reduced to what may be most fitly denominated an impalpable powder of nothing, this is something, which reason, sense, and faith, alike disown. We can no more believe this than we can comprehend it. No man ever saw such a process taking place, no man can conceive how it should have taken place, no man ever seriously believed that it has taken place.

It is a dictate of the ungodly pride of our fallen nature to spurn at admitting the inferiority to God, implied in our receiving anything concerning Him by faith. That there are things concerning Him, which can be received by faith alone, implies inferiority on our part, for, if we could enter into and comprehend all His ways, we should not only be like unto Him, but equal with Him. That we can learn of His ways and be taught something of His doings through faith, and only through faith, if it implies inferiority to Himself, implies also a spiritual nature of no mean order, high raised above all the creatures below us, whose fellowship with us, their fellow creature is far removed from our fellowship with God the Creator of all things.

They cannot comprehend our ways by reason, not even the least of our ways, and can receive no instruction concerning them through faith. A little reflection may satisfy us, that, when we are told, God made us by the Word of His power, we have received all the information on the subject we are capable of receiving, and that it has been open to such communications, and further that the existence of such a channel of communication between us and God is one of the very highest privileges and noblest distinctions of our nature. We cannot sit down in council with God, when He forms His purposes and issues His decrees, we cannot walk side by side with Him, when He comes forth to carry them into execution, nor, when His work is done, can we tell how His fingers fashioned it, or His wisdom guided them in their operations, for His thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor the forth putting of His power like the work of man's hands. Yet we can hear and talk of His great and marvellous doings, and behold His mighty wonders, and see and admire, and tell also to others what the Lord hath wrought, that we, who tell, and they who hear, may rejoice together, yea rejoice with the Great Workman who rejoiceth in all His works, who, though sufficient unto Himself, desireth not to be alone. We seek to rise above Him by reason, and we soar or sink into regions of emptiness; He lets Himself down to us through faith, and our souls are filled with His fulness.

Suppose we were contemplating a statue, the work of the sculptor, a product of human art and skill. Do we comprehend this work of man's hands, and how it has been wrought? Possibly we may. There is no reason why we should not. But what do we comprehend, and how do we attain to the comprehension of it? We know something of what human hands can do, for we have often employed them, and seen them employed. We know something also of the properties of the tools of the workman, and to what uses they may be put by those skilled in their use. We have no difficulty therefore in comprehending how the mechanical part of the work was done, and the block of marble made to assume its new and wondrous shape. But there must have been something else at work than hands and graving tools to make the dead stone look at us in such strange fashion as almost to make us expect to hear it speak. There is something more mirrored in its expressive features than the work of hands, there is a reflection from the artist's soul. There is here indeed a work of the hands formed out of stone, we see the material out of which it was formed, we understand the succession of blows by which the hand fashioned it; but is there not something here also, not of stone; something which the hands did not do? Is there not a Creation? A dead creature