

of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

But it may be said that impressions are vague undefinable grounds of judgment, and that, though there should be no felt incongruity on a first survey, yet express contradictions, manifest on closer examination, would be sufficiently decisive of the question at issue.

What then are the alleged disagreements between the statements of scripture and the structure of the heavens? The Bible speaks of the heavens and the earth: calls the moon a great light: ascribes ends to the earth: declares it fixed so that it cannot be moved: and represents the sun as rising and setting. There may be other passages of like character cited, with like intent, but these are a fair sample of the texts by which scripture is to be convicted of teaching a false astronomy. They are not at first sight very formidable: they almost tempt to reply,—"if it were a matter of wrong, reason would that I should be at war with you; but if it be a question of words and names, see ye to it. Instead, however, of so far imitating Galileo as to drive the complainants summarily from the judgment seat, let us look at their complaints, and endeavour to form a just estimate of their magnitude and foundation.

The first objection in the preceding series is, that the Bible speaks of the "heavens and the earth," and the argument founded on it is thus expressed by Voltaire: "What did the ancients mean by the heavens? They knew nothing of the matter: they were perpetually bawling heaven and earth, which is just as much as to cry infinitude and an atom." Voltaire here inculcates the ancients generally, but the blow is aimed at the Old Testament writers for whom inspiration is claimed. The amount of the charge is, that no person informed on what he spoke would conjoin things so disproportionate as the heavens and the earth. But though the earth, speaking absolutely, is an atom to the universe; yet, viewed relatively to us, and in this light only is it noticed in the passages animadverted on, it rivals all space besides in importance. Analogous language is often used in kindred cases. A man of uprightness expresses his determination to act justly by his family and the world: do we feel it necessary to correct his language, and tell him that he might as well speak of units and millions? Even philosophically viewed, the earth is to us of principal consequence. "Besides the stars," (says Sir J. Herschel) "and other celestial bodies, the earth itself, regarded as an individual body, is one principal object of the astronomer's consideration, and indeed the chief of all."

Scripture is further blamed for calling the moon a great light, and the "stars lesser lights," when the moon is probably less than the least of the stars. The answer is the same as before, that the moon is a great light to us, and in this relation only is greatness predicated of it in the scriptures. Similar language is in common use. Remark to a nocturnal traveller that he has clear star light for his journey, and he may probably reply, "yes, but they give little light compared with the moon, and the moon will be late in rising." Were he to say so, would we adjudge him all wrong upon astronomy: and tell him that each star outshines a hundred moons?

Farther, the Bible ascribes "ends" to the earth, whereas a round body has no ends: it is all ends or side together. Of this Paine makes exulting use. "The idea," he says, "that God sent Jesus Christ to publish the glad tidings to all nations from one end of the earth to the other, is consistent only with the ignorance of those who knew nothing of the extent of the world, and who believed as those world savours believed, that the earth was flat like a trencher, and that a man might walk to the end of it." Scripture no where declares that the earth is flat; and if this be one of its leading doctrines, why has it been left to dubious inference? Nor does scripture anywhere say that the earth is "like a trencher." Paine is so pleased with the figure that he uses it repeatedly; but such vulgarisms as crowd his pages are foreign to the pure taste of the sacred penmen, and this difference is not void of significance, or proof, when it is considered that he was a clever writer of an enlightened age, and that they were such characters in general as herdsmen, fishermen, and publicans in earlier and ruder periods. As to the earth's form, what language

shall we use if we may not speak of its ends? Shall we talk of its poles? That dictum, according to the rigid criticism applied to the scriptures, is greatly more objectionable. It supposes apparently that poles are stuck into the earth to hang it on, and proves, or the objections now considered prove nothing, that all using it are in gross delusion about astronomy. Nothing is more common than to speak of the ends of the earth still, in the same incidental manner as the sacred writers. Suppose, then, some sceptic of the twenty-first century shall find some work of the present day in which the phrase occurs: he will be authorized by Paine to conclude that, up to the year 1833, the people of Britain, not excepting its ablest authors, were ignorant of the earth's rotundity, and supposed it a flat field, terminating in ends!

Again, scripture speaks of the earth as "fixed," which seems to suppose ignorance of its motion. God is said to have built his sanctuary like "high palaces, like the earth, which he hath established for ever." This language is evidently expressive of strength and duration, not of restriction to one position or place. But it is said "the world also is established that it cannot be moved." The plain meaning is, the world is established by God so that it cannot be moved by man. What the psalmist means to commend is, not the inaction of matter, but the stability of the divine laws by which it is upheld and governed. And so far are these laws from fluctuating, that men are only now appreciating the marvellous precision and uniformity characterising them. Even astronomers and geologists, up to a late epoch, obviated difficulties by imagining changes in the inclination of the earth's axis, and other catastrophes of the same kind. But what saith the scripture? "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth: they continue this day according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants." This truth was so present, and so important to the psalmist's mind, that he converts it into prosopoeia and adoration: "Praise ye him, sun and moon; praise him, all ye stars of light: let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass."

(To be continued.)

Agriculture.

THOUGHTS ON AGRICULTURE.

The nature of this employment is such as tends to check the avarice and restrain the unlawful passions of men. Precluding the possibility of sudden wealth and the expectation of extensive power, it gives no place for that mad ambition which so often hurries men onward, in other pursuits, to the attainments of their object, whether right or wrong. Far removed from the society of the vile, and temptations of a public life, it fosters principles of peace and good order, and inspires sentiments the most noble and generous. Inuring its subjects to hardships and toil, it furnishes a nation with its noblest and bravest defenders: and opening the inexhaustible resources of nature, fills it with wealth and plenty, and distributes the means of happiness to all. It not only supplies the wants of the husbandman, but loads the rich with luxuries, and decks the fashionable in robes of beauty, converts the savage dreariness of the wilderness into beautiful fields and flourishing towns, unites men in civil society, blends their interest in one, supports their manufactures, bridges their seas with ships, and urges forward the work of improvement in every art.

In the days of Cæsar, Helvetia, and Caledonia were mere abodes of wretchedness. But as we learn from history, attention to Agriculture first raised them from their degradation, and has finally resulted in making them the now populous and happy homes of the Swiss and the Scotch.

In the civil wars that embroiled the Roman State, the neglect of agriculture involved its inhabitants in the deepest distress. Murmuring at their condition, they charged the blame upon the administration of Augustus. The evils increased—no remedy was found—and every thing seemed to indicate the ruin of the Empire. In this critical state of affairs, the wise Mæcenæ saw that the safety of Italy depended upon a revival of its agricultural interest. To effect this, he applied to the Lord of Mantua, who after seven years of patient toil, sung in melodious numbers, that had scarcely if ever been equalled.