

and forgiveness. It has descended into families, and carried with it peace and happiness. It has banished polygamy, and guarded the nuptial contract from the effects of levity, caprice, or profligacy. It has raised the female sex from a state of degradation and oppression to a rank and influence in society, which they possess only in christian countries; where their interest and happiness are consulted in every important concern of life. Its just and gentle spirit has banished in a great measure the infamous traffic in human beings, and will ultimately triumph by the abrogation of slavery in every form. It has raised and maintained hospitals for the sick and the infirm—has erected asylums for almost every form of human misery—for the poor, the widow, the orphan, the sick, and the insane. Its beneficence has extended itself even to the abodes of guilt and crime—to prisons and penitentiaries, to ameliorate and reclaim their miserable victims. Christianity alone has produced in the most refined nations of the world, all that honourably distinguish them; and what contributes so nobly to the improvement of human society, to its moral regeneration, to its felicity, is surely a gift worthy of God who bestowed it.

If we take a more extended view of the effects of the gospel on the political governments of nations, its claim to a divine excellence and origin will be still farther strengthened. Wherever it prevails, polytheism and idolatry and all their attendant cruelties and profligate immoralities, have been abolished. As soon as nations and governments became christian, they were actuated by its mild, benevolent and generous spirit. Rulers blended the christian morality with their civil institutes, and transcribed into their political codes the humanity and benevolence inspired by religion; they learned from it that the proper object of their appointment was to promote the welfare of society, and preserve the moral interests of the community over which they presided. It has not yet indeed always been successful in blotting out every unjust law from the civil code of christian nations, but in proportion as its influence is extended, this reformation shall be perfect. Nor has it always been successful in repressing unjust wars. How could it? It has never yet been cordially embraced by the majority, nor perhaps by the preponderating part of any nation. Nevertheless it has had great influence, and that influence has been of the most beneficial kind for the happiness of man. For it has banished in a great degree the cold inhumanity which considered war, not as the greatest scourge of the human race, but as the prime business and most exquisite gratification of life;

it has checked the restless ambition, the passion for martial achievements, and the ferocious rapacity which produced aggressions the most unprovoked; it has restrained the implacable and vindictive spirit with which wars were carried on, and which for many ages overwhelmed the world with bloodshed, ruin, and desolation; it has restrained that relentless cruelty which condemned the unhappy captive to perpetual slavery, to torture, to an ignominious death by the hand of the executioner; it has banished from the practice of war the desolation of whole countries, and that relentless cruelty which spared not from massacre and extermination the unoffending female, the helpless infant, and the decrepitude of age. These outrages are seldom heard of in wars carried on by nations professing christianity, though nothing was more frequent among the most polished and humane of the nations of antiquity. Thus has christianity restrained evils which, from its as yet partial influence; it has not finally extirpated, and it has communicated so much good to the political governments of nations as warrants us to call it the best blessing ever conferred on the world, and evidently in a special sense the gift of God.—Thus have I stated briefly and generally some of the blessed effects which the christian religion has produced on individuals, communities, and political institutions.

II. But let us inquire what the christian scheme is, from its very nature, calculated to do when its influence shall be universal and supreme. It must prompt to the most vigorous exertion for the improvement of mankind.—There are some kinds of improvement which it will continue to promote indirectly. Science and literature are of this class. It is not the professed design of religion to promote these; but they owe their present advancement mainly to its influence. It has been so, and it must be so in future. Christianity discovers to man how high he stands in the scale of intelligence, and that an endless career of existence and improvement is before him. This discovery must direct him to the cultivation of his mind as his noblest part. Besides the christian religion unfolds more clearly to him his obligations to love and worship the Deity, and consequently it must create the desire to know more of his nature and his works. Now science is just another name for the knowledge of these, and therefore it will be cultivated by all christians to whom leisure and ability are given, with such a zealous and affectionate disposition as shall be most likely to ensure success. Every new discovery will in the christian's eye appear as a new ray of glory from the Creator's attributes. He will cast a look over the wide field of nature to examine