

## CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY.

## INTRODUCTION.

In the heavens we daily see things, of which we cannot give any satisfactory account. We find these comets, whose path and course the astronomer cannot subject to any known law. These awful visitors come upon the world unexpected; they continue for some time to surprise the curious and inquisitive part of mankind, and to frighten the vulgar; and fly off again with rapidity to visit distant worlds. These mock all human calculations: we cannot tell whence they come, or whither they go. Now would it be consistent with reason and philosophy for us to refuse our assent to such phenomena, merely because we can give no satisfactory account of their motions and laws?

The common as well as the uncommon meteors, which are often seen in the heavens, are equally wonderful and inexplicable. They burst upon us all at once, always unexpectedly; they fill us with wonder and surprise, and, in a moment, they break, they vanish, and leave not a track behind. These also baffle human reason, and defy the researches of the most acute philosopher to give a satisfactory account of their origin and laws.

Appearances much more familiar than these, and to which we are daily witnesses, are to us almost equally mysterious. We cannot tell how the rain is formed. "Hath the rain a father, or who hath begotten the drops of the dew?" How do the clouds support this collection of water in a region that must be much lighter than themselves? At what height are these collections placed? What must be that powerful cause, that so suddenly collects the water dispersed and dissolved in the atmosphere, and in a moment precipitates it in a deluge upon this earth? We are equally at a loss to explain how the snow is formed, and to account for the severe cold in these higher regions, that instantaneously congeals the moisture into hail, as it descends on the surface of this earth.

We are strangers also to those laws, by which vapours ascend and descend. We know not how the clouds are collected and balanced, and what is that principle that gives to them various fantastic appearances, for the amusement of the imaginations of men.

In these cases, the fact is evident, the cause lies in obscurity, deeply removed from all the knowledge and penetration of man.

At first sight, some appearances on this earth may seem inconsistent with the care and goodness of an infinitely wise and benevolent Being; and yet these appearances, further experience and more enlarged knowledge will satisfactorily explain. The vast barren mountains, the rugged and unfruitful rocks, the stagnant and putrid marsh, the extensive deserts of sand, the intolerable heats of the torrid zone, and the insupportable colds of the frozen regions, may all appear to us useless, and even hurtful. We may suppose, that they might have been laid out to more advantage in fruitful fields, and rich pastures. We cannot know, and never shall we be able to know, all the various purposes that these parts of nature are intended to answer. One thing we see: they contribute greatly to the variety, and perhaps to the beauty and utility of the whole. The high hills we know to be necessary for collecting vapours that float in the higher regions, for condensing these vapours, and for transmitting them through various channels in the bowels of the earth, properly filtered and prepared for feeding these immense streams and rivers of water, so necessary both to man and to beast. Descending from these great heights, they spread, not only in springs to every adjoining valley, but are capable of rising also to all inferior hills.

The most barren and extensive sands, also, we make no doubt, have their peculiar uses; the putrid and stagnant lakes have their inhabitants, and these likewise contribute some benefit to the whole.

But such appearances convey to us this important instruction, that whilst sufficient supplies are provided for every living creature in the fruitful and pleasant parts of this earth, they tell us the power that God has over us; they shew us what he could have done, and what he may do, by conveying the most fruitful parts into those dreary

and inhospitable regions: that he that created, can destroy; and that the same power, which furnishes us with so many bounties and blessings, can change all these for the correction and punishment of a guilty world. The unfruitful parts of the earth furnish us, therefore, with a striking contrast to the riches of God's bounties.

It will be a sufficient answer to all these objections against God's goodness to recollect, that he has furnished us with sufficient means for the supply of all our wants, provided we employ the aid of our own industry, and partake of the bounties of his providence with a proper degree of management and frugality. Without labour, we ought to partake of no blessing—for labour is absolutely necessary for our happiness.

To say that the world was not created by God, merely because we cannot tell how almighty power could create this world from nothing, is that like men reasoning on fair principles, or like men acquainted with all the weaknesses and imperfections of our nature.

There is, then, we think, an infinite difference between admitting things without reason, and evidence, or things contrary to reason; and receiving some things, that we cannot perfectly understand and satisfactorily explain. We meet with great difficulties in the works of nature and providence; and can we expect to find religion entirely clear of difficulties?

It is unbecoming a philosopher to argue in this manner. He must certainly be a great stranger to real study, and the powers of his own mind, or he must be unaccountably prejudiced.

## The Christian Mirror.

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THE importance and necessity of CHRISTIAN EXPERIENCE will, we have no doubt, render a few remarks on the subject acceptable to our readers. It is (as an eminent writer has observed), that religious knowledge which is acquired by any exercises, enjoyments, or sufferings, either of body or mind. Nothing is more common than to ridicule and despise what is called religious experience, as mere enthusiasm. But if religion, as is generally allowed, consist in feeling, we would ask, how it can possibly exist without experience? Religion, without experience, is a mere dead letter; and we hesitate not to say, that the man whose religion consists in outward ceremonies and observances only, without experiencing any of those delightful sensations arising from a consciousness of loving God, and the assurance of his favour, is not only living beneath his privilege, but is dishonouring his Redeemer, who hath said, "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." The experience of good men, in all ages, and the united testimony of Scripture, fully support us in this position.

All admit the propriety of the term experience, when applied to those branches of science which are not founded on speculation or conjecture, but on sensible trial; why then, should it be rejected when applied to religion? An earthly parent will not be satisfied with a mere profession of love on the part of his child, without those corresponding evidences which invariably accompany the possession of love and veneration; how, then, can we suppose that a cold and heartless profession will be acceptable to our heavenly Father? If we deny the necessity of experimental religion, we must confess we are at a loss to understand the design of those numerous precious promises and invitations which are scattered in such rich profusion throughout the Sacred Scriptures.

It is evident, that however beautiful religion may be in name, its excellency and energy are only truly known as experienced. A system be-

lieved, and a mind merely informed, will produce little good except the heart be affected, and we feel its influence. To experience, then, the religion of Christ, we must not only be acquainted with its theory, but enjoy its power: subduing our corruptions, animating and regulating our affections, and exciting us to the faithful and cheerful performance of those duties enjoined upon us by our Divine Redeemer.

"Christian experience," says a good writer, "may be considered as genuine—1. When it accords with the revelation of God's mind and will, or what he has revealed in his word. Any thing contrary to this, however pleasing, cannot be sound, or produced by divine agency. 2. When its tendency is to promote humility in us: that experience by which we learn our own weakness, and subdues pride, must be good. 3. When it teaches us to bear with others, and to do them good. 4. When it operates so as to excite us to be ardent in our devotion, and sincere in our regard to God. A powerful experience of the Divine favour will lead us to acknowledge the Lord, and to manifest our gratitude both by praise and genuine piety."

In short, Religion, to be duly appreciated, must be experienced; and those only who enjoy its sacred and hallowing influence here, can have any scriptural ground for expecting the possession of that inheritance hereafter, "which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

As conductors of a religious journal, it becomes our duty to notice from time to time the labours and exertions of the different sections of the Christian Church in the great cause of benevolence and virtue; as well as the achievements of the various benevolent Societies which characterize the present age: for we rejoice to know that numerous are the means now in operation for the improvement, temporally and spiritually, of our fellow-men.

Unless we obstinately close our eyes against conviction, we must acknowledge that the exertions now making by the friends of Temperance, throughout the world, are being crowned with extraordinary success,—drunkards have been reclaimed, and families have been restored from the most abject poverty to the enjoyment of comfort and domestic happiness—and the blessings of those who were ready to perish have been heard on every hand. Temperance Societies occupy a very prominent position amongst the benevolent institutions of our day, and are producing a happy change in the condition of society, wherever their influence is felt. In proof of this, we need only remark, that, in our own city, a few years ago, scarcely any thing was more common than to behold the drunkard shamelessly staggering through our streets in the broad face of day; but now, thanks to the exertions and influence of the friends of temperance, under Providence, such distressing sights are of rare occurrence; and we hope the time is not far distant when intemperance of every kind will give place to works of piety and love.

It is our intention, therefore, to devote a small portion of our space to this important subject, and we refer the reader to the head "Temperance-Record," in another column. Communications, in order to secure insertion, must be brief.

Our readers will be gratified to learn, that the bill praying that all copies of the Holy Scriptures imported by sea, might be exempted from duty, and which lately passed both houses of the Legislature, has received the Royal assent.