

The Wesleyan.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF A COMMITTEE OF WESLEYAN MINISTERS, IN CONNEXION WITH THE BRITISH CONFERENCE.

"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

VOL. II.

TORONTO, CANADA, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20, 1842.

No 16

Theology.

POPERY.

In the history of the world, nothing is more wonderful than the change of Christianity into Popery. Nothing can be more dissimilar to the mild religion of heaven than the intolerant and absurd superstition which has assumed the name and place of Christianity, in countries where true religion once flourished. Each departure from the truth was gradual; those who were removing from the doctrines of the Bible and adhering to the traditions of men had little conception how far the stream of corruption, to which they were yielding, would, at length, carry them away.

No doubt the doctrines of Christianity are retained by the Romish church, as the Bible itself is retained, but both are considered too spiritual and elevated for daily and general use, and the saints take the place of the Saviour, and vain legends usurp the authority of the Scriptures, and idolatrous and absurd sacrifices conceal from the view the one great sacrifice which has abolished sin and death to all believers. Of all the artifices of the father of lies for the destruction of the human race, Popery is the most dangerous and successful, which effectually destroys the essence of Christianity, while it preserves the name, and deludes its votaries with a pretence of trusting in the Saviour, while it is causing them to bow down to dumb idols which can neither profit nor save.

Popery is Paganism, under a thin disguise of Christianity, and, accordingly, in all things it is but a gross and material counterfeit of true and spiritual religion. The Church of Christ is ever one and the same, and Popery aims at the same identity and universality; but, instead of the true church, which is a spiritual body with Christ for its head, Popery is but a putrifying and noisome carcass—a collection of unregenerate men, the doers of every evil work with those who love and those who make a lie, with the Pope, not the Saviour, for their head. Whoever believes in the Saviour is infallible, in the best sense; all things are working together for good to him; he shall be led by the Spirit, in due time, into all useful truth, and delivered from every hurtful error. Popery has its infallibility, but this infallibility consists in being infallibly wrong; even, when convinced of its errors, it cannot change them, having made a wrong step it cannot recede. Thus, while religion is the guide of the believer into all truth, Popery, by its assumption of infallibility, is the leader of the credulous into inextricable error.—James Douglas, Esq.

TESTIMONY OF NATURAL THEOLOGY TO CHRISTIANITY.

NO. III.

From Geology, Geography, Tradition and Mineralogy, in the first four chapters, Mr. Gisborne passes, in the fifth, to the consideration of "certain other circumstances connected with the surface of the earth." The nature and bearing of these circumstances are thus explained:—

"When, in the discussion of any large topic of enquiry, some leading truths have been established by adequate and direct arguments; it frequently happens, that collateral facts and observations, which present themselves, so harmonize with those truths, that to disregard the indirect and analogical support thus offered would not only be unwise, but would be grossly to fail in doing justice to the subject. On this principle, I proceed to the consideration of some additional phenomena in the material world, which correspond with the conclusions already shown to be attainable by Natural Theology, and strengthen them by that correspondence.

I believe, that, on the largest computation

the globe does not greatly exceed one-third part of the whole superficies. The habitable space is much less than this quantity. Immeasurable deductions are requisite for regions buried in polar snow, and for burning deserts consigned to desolation by naked rock, by moving sands, by irremediable drought, or by saline impregnations. Let it not be imagined, that I would imply that the interminable tracts, thus condemned to lonely barrenness, have not their appropriate office of usefulness in the Divine economy of nature. On a globe designed for the dwelling-place of man, such in character and condition as he now is, they are assuredly wise, benignant, and immediately or ultimately beneficial appointments. But I think that they are not appointments which we should anticipate, in representing to ourselves the probable state of the world, the inhabitants of which were continuing in the complete enjoyment of the favour of a Gracious God. Had we been at liberty to suppose a Garden of Eden expanded into an abode for the united millions and hundreds of millions of such a race; had we been desired to picture to ourselves an earth prepared for their residence, according to the model of a golden age; an age of which Virgil, alluding to its hypothetical revival, thus expresses the prevalent idea—

"Omnia feret omnia tellus!"

our imagination would not have interspersed immense and insupportable vacuities of torrid wastes and perpetual frost."

The first of these collateral arguments is drawn from volcanoes, of which the author enumerates several, adverting to the immense destruction caused by those still in existence or occasional operation, and by those whose craters have ceased to burn. "In Europe are found Etna, Vesuvius, Hecla, Stromboli, Vulcano, Lipari; and Calvo, in the Egean Sea, with many other volcanic islands." In Asia, one "in the Uralic chain, between the Volga and the Ob;" twenty in Kamtschatka; one insular; some in Japan, the Ladrone islands, the Philippino islands, and the Moluccas; in Java, a range of volcanic mountains, stretching through the whole length of the islands; with several besides. In Africa, at the mouth of the Red Sea, Bruce saw two volcanic islands; there is, also, a volcanic mountain in the isle of Bourbon; others have been observed in the isle of Amsterdam, in the Cape de Verd islands, the Azores and Canaries; "and pre-eminently Tenerife, by whose violence, in 1704, whole towns were destroyed." In America, several, both in the northern and southern divisions. The application of these facts and their attendant circumstances is thus made by the Author:—

"From different parts of the world examples might be accumulated almost without limit. In the materials of which such regions are composed, we read the records of sorrow and destruction: records not obliterated by the verdure, and the flowers, and the fruits, and the flocks and the herds, with which the now quiescent vaults may be overspread. Though Etna and Tomboro should rage no more, the aggregate of their former havoc will be unchanged. The fields of Austerlitz and of Waterloo may be smiling with grain, but the carnage with which they were reddened is not diminished.

"Earthquakes, which on some occasions are manifestly connected with volcanic fires, may originate, on others, from independent causes. From whatever source they originate, they are visitations which, though fully accordant with the condition of a world lying under the penalty of transgression, would not be, we might presume, let loose upon a race of beings innocent and completely retaining the favour of their God.

whom it attaches have offended their Creator. Existence bestowed might be intended by the donor to be but temporary. And happy existence, even for a limited duration, would be a gratuitous gift, to be enjoyed and acknowledged with thankfulness by percipient intelligences. Moreover, existence might be prolonged after death, and the stroke which seemed to involve the annihilation of the individual, might be the instrument of his removal into another scene, and a more exalted modification of life. But death, sudden, widely-spread, supervening in an unknown and a horrid form, bears the aspect, not of a placid dismission from existence; not of a gracious transposition into another and a nobler province of the universal empire of the Almighty; but of the execution of judicial sentence upon a race of transgressors. When the disciples of our Saviour showed themselves disposed to infer that the eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell, and the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifice, must have been sinners above the rest of their countrymen; the feeling, though in its application unauthorised and erroneous, was in its principle natural and reasonable. It did not become the disciples to impute needless and fruitless comparisons between the supposed guilt of the dead and of the living. The catastrophe which had taken place did not of necessity imply that the dead had been more sinful than their countrymen in general, or than the very disciples. But it did at least imply that the dead belonged to a race lying under the penalty of sin. If men had not forfeited by departure from holiness the primal favour of a God of Love, the eighteen would not have been overwhelmed by the falling tower, nor would the blood of the sacrificing Galileans have flowed in a blended stream with that of the victims."

For a volcano, the author passes to earthquakes, which have so often and extensively occurred, and caused the most awful destruction of cities, towns, and villages, and, above all, of human life:—

"Think of the tremendous destruction which has been so frequently wrought by earthquakes; and apply the considerations which have been stated. To permit our imaginations to suppose that the thousands and the tens of thousands who have been engulfed by earthquakes were sinners, collectively or individually, above others, or at ourselves, would be impious presumption. But to behold in such fearful visitations evidences of the anger of God, and of the penal inflictions of His hand upon a world of transgressors; to behold in these visitations auxiliary testimony that the existing world is a world of transgressors; is natural, is consistent with reason, is a just conclusion of Natural Theology. Nay, so plainly is the conclusion rational, that in the volume of Revelation itself, and when earthquakes formed, as now, a part of the ordinary dispensations of Providence, the argument, as addressed to natural reason, is most awfully applied and illustrated in the marvellous judgment upon Korah and his associates in rebellion. "If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men: then the Lord hath not rent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth and swallow them up, with all that appertain to them, and they go down quick into the pit: then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord." The voice of the earthquake proclaims to the pupil of Natural Theology, "Man has provoked the Lord."

The reasoning, founded upon and following the statement of facts, is as follows:—

"I am aware of only one objection, which might seem to furnish grounds for escaping the conclusion, that the appointed or pec-

indications that man is in a state of transgression, and has lost the original favour of his Creator. It may be alleged, that the reasoning, if valid, would equally apply to the animal world, that if the destruction of men by the flames of the volcano, or by the jaws of the earthquake, proves the human race to be transgressors, and under a penal dispensation, the accompanying destruction of animals by the same catastrophe must establish the same inference respecting them also; and that the absurdity and the impossibility of the latter inference evince the futility of the former. In no degree. For animals are incapable of moral agency; and, consequently, are not placed under moral responsibility. There is an end, therefore, to all pleas of analogy between the two cases. Why, then, resumes the objector, were the animals consumed or engulfed? They suffered as belonging to a world in the present system of whose administration suffering is an ingredient; and under the general effect of the laws which produced the particular eruption or the particular earthquake. They suffered, as under human governments individuals are frequently involved in the participation of a national calamity, to the introduction of which they had not knowingly contributed; or lose their lives and their property by a conflagration, which broke forth without their fault or their consciousness in the house of a neighbour. Human governments, it may perhaps be replied, have not the power, neither in public troubles, nor in local distresses, of effecting discriminations and exemptions, but the Deity has the power. Do you then contend, that a system comprehending a frequency of marvellous interpositions on the part of the Deity should take place on behalf of the brute creation, should take place too, while no such interposition is employed on behalf of the human race to discriminate between the more and the less guilty of men? With equal reason might you require that the brute creation shall in no instance suffer in connection with man; that a miracle should always preserve a horse from being wounded in battle, and an ox from being lamed at the plough. Your reasoning, however, the objector answers, leaves the Deity open to the imputation of unkindness, and even of injustice, towards the animals, his creatures. No. God can compensate for any suffering. "Then animals are to live in a future state of existence." An inference altogether unnecessary. God can in any case give compensation, superabundant compensation, antecedently to the suffering which it is to counterbalance. Will you take upon yourself to affirm that an animal whose sufferings you are contemplating, may not already have enjoyed in the course of its existence a mass of satisfaction more than equivalent to the aggregate of its pain which it has hitherto endured, and of that which may yet await it? A post-horse is a familiar instance of animal wretchedness. You survey, in its seasons of pressure, its toils and its stripes under the impatience of a cruel driver, and the, perhaps, equally or more cruel traveller. But forget not, that it does not find the whole year a general election. Forget not that, in its most distressing periods, it has necessarily some alleviating gratifications in ordinary food and repose. Forget not that it has at less busy seasons, its longer intervals of gentle employment, or of positive freedom from labour. Forget not that during several continued years from its birth it knew not the lash or the burden; and enjoyed, nearly without interruption, the comforts and the happiness allotted to its sphere and mode of existence. To vindicate the justice and the benignity of God towards any one of His creatures, this fact alone can be requisite; that the being of that creature, whenever or in whatever manner termi-