

as if we looked on a house fair enough it, may be, but founded on a quicksand, and concerning which fall and trial are inseparably associated in our thoughts. Or to illustrate by another scripture allusion; the seeming virtues of a man careless of christianity, are like vegetation upon the rock—the rain washes it away, or the sun withers it, and at best it spreads its short lived verdure over a surface that cannot nourish it to perfection. It is not so with the real christian. His virtuous qualities spring naturally out of his principles; and his principles are the same in every condition—in public life, and in private. In his actions he has only a subordinate reference to man's judgment; for he bears about with him a habitual consciousness of the omniscient inspection of Deity, and a habitual desire to please him—sentiments than which none can be more powerful in counteracting all temptations to sin. We have only to be assured, therefore, that a man is a christian, to enable us to predict what his conduct shall be when the line of duty is plain; for of him who loves Christ, it may ever be said, that in the habitual tenor of his conduct he will keep his commandments.

On this point too we might appeal not merely to every individual's observation, but to his own personal experience. At what period, and in what circumstances of your life, has your love of goodness been most ardent? Was it not when you applied most humbly and devoutly to the book of God, that you might imbibe its pure and heavenly spirit? Did you ever feel more inclined to abstain from all sinful indulgences, more disposed to fulfil all righteousness than in those periods of your life when the private and public exercises of religion were most solemnly regarded, and when your mind in this spiritual communion, lived as it were in the presence of Deity, and enjoyed a fellowship with his pure worshippers both in heaven and earth? Ah! who is there that knows not well the spiritual insensibility that steals over the heart, when the truth and the ordinances of religion are neglected, and how ineffectual all other means are to kindle and preserve alive in the bosom that love of moral excellence which can alone guide to its attainment. And I am sure that I carry with me the assent of every heart when I affirm on the other hand, that we know no other or more effectual means for producing in the soul, that moral perfection of which it is naturally destitute, than those pointed out in the gospel—the belief of its doctrines, the observance of its duties, the cultivation of its spirit, the anticipations of that pure and blessed world which it discovers to the view of faith—these have pro-

duced upon the character of myriads of our fellow-men, such a moral transformation as evidently demonstrates the divine origin of a system possessing such moral power. Hence it is that we consider the effects of the christian religion upon the individual as a manifest proof that it comes from God.

Consider next the effects of the christian religion on society as a corroborative proof of its divine excellence.

When we look at the means that are at present employed in christian communities to promote their improvement, we discover a number of agencies at work, which are not strictly speaking religious. There are seminaries of education, and schools of science—there is the diffusion of knowledge by that mighty engine, the press, by which the labours of those who have leisure and talent, are rendered serviceable to those who have less; and through their agencies, an impulse is given to men's intellectual and moral improvement. These agencies, we say, are not strictly speaking religious, but we ask what has chiefly brought them into play? We can have no hesitation in answering—the christian religion has called them into existence. To the demand for Bibles in the 15th century, we are mainly indebted for the art of printing. The more the scriptures are known in any country, the more is education desired. It is the consequence of the dissemination of sacred truth, that christian nations have so far surpassed others in the march of civilization and intellectual refinement. Christianity alone has planted a school in every village and hamlet of most protestant countries, and rendered their population superior to others in intelligence and morality. Christianity alone, of all forms of religion, enjoins upon its followers to devote the seventh day to intellectual and spiritual improvement, to meditation on the works, ways, and word of God, to the worship of the Deity, and preparation for a world that is purely spiritual. The influence which such institutions must exert upon a community can only be estimated by comparing it with another community where these are not enjoyed. And were we to bring a village of our native land into juxtaposition with one in a heathen country, the contrast as to intelligence and moral feeling alone, would strikingly impress us with a sense of our infinite obligations to the gospel.

Besides promoting intellectual and moral improvement in communities, the gospel serves as a bond of union between independent nations—it has moderated the ferocity of war—it has checked pride and revenge, and promoted humility