

thing but infinite wisdom, appeared to me, in all my solitary meditations, a *selfevident absurdity*. I, therefore, believed in an all-wise, uncreated Being, that planned the universe and gave laws to planets, systems of planets, and systems of systems, in infinite progression, that chime with the eternal praises of their Creator. I loved philosophy ever since I knew what it meant, particularly those branches of it which inspect the elements and laws of material nature. The organization of the solar system, the planets in their various inclinations to each other in the planes of their orbits and their axes, thereby preventing a multiplication of eclipses and other serious interruptions to the existing harmony and "music of the spheres;" all these present an argument to the sober, reflecting mind, that all nature bears evidence that it is the effect of a pre-existent, designing cause.

In arguing against the Christian religion, I often premised thus:—"Belief of every kind is solely the result of evidence; and evidence in all cases must be beyond the control of the believer." Having been led by the writings of infidel authors, to take a kind of political view of religion, and my natural pride of heart refusing to bend to the simple precepts contained in the Bible, I inferred that I had no *Divine evidence* of the truths of Christianity, and therefore excused myself from not believing them. I concluded also, according to temporal things, that if a revelation of God's will be made to *one person* it could be a revelation to *no other*. The absurdity of such notions I trust will be made appear in the sequel. It is extremely improper to jump into conclusions of this kind without examining primary matters of fact, if we wish truth to be the result of our inquiries, or if we wish to have opinions of *our own*.

My desire to read works of a philosophical character was enkindled by the "Letters of the British Spy," (since known to be the production of the pen of the Hon. Wm. Wirt,) which I read and re-read with much avidity. Tales of fiction have never occupied much of my attention. Poetry, pathetic, passionate and sublime, has always found a welcome to my heart, because it paints best to my mind the truths of mental conception, of fancy and of feeling, as well as the cold realities of tangible things. I have long had an uncontrollable desire of knowing the naked truths of matters engaging the faculties of my mind, and the general result of these truths. In fact, I was always very inquisitive; being unwilling to believe any thing without the most unquestionable reasons to do so. Had *experimental religion* been more generally preached to me, I think I should have been brought to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus before. But taking a superficial view of Christianity, as exhibited by the various denominations of professors, I knew not how to reconcile matters between them and myself. I will here quote a paragraph from one of my newspaper essays, to show the cast of my belief four years ago. "It is a self-evident fact, that contrariety of opinion can only exist concerning matters not perfectly understood, and that, therefore, all the various tenets of religion, and all other subjects,

accrue from ignorance and misconception; for if every subject were perfectly understood by all, then certainly there would be no room for a contrariety of sentiment; and even those subjects which are incomprehensible in their nature, if they were recognized as such, would also preclude that disagreement on doctrinal points which has for so many ages cursed the world." Although I wholly disbelieved the divinity of our blessed Saviour, and the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, yet I could not oppose Christianity openly in the public prints, on account of popular opinion. I always carried "my dagger under a cloak." It now, indeed, appears strange that my mind was so long blinded by "the god of this world."

I will now relate my conviction and conversion to the truth of Christianity, and the circumstances which preceded and attended this memorable change. About the beginning of last winter I began to reflect upon the advantages and objects of this transitory life. I saw that those who are wealthy are discontented. The philosopher, the historian, the orator, the poet, the renowned champion of military achievements, are alike unsatisfied amidst all their honours. This led me to consider what had yielded me the most happiness, and the contrary: I found that the most happiness I could recollect ever enjoying, was in acting kindly toward my fellow creatures, and in favouring, as much as possible, the cause of virtue by my own conduct. A little previous to this I had contracted a kind of fondness for theatrical amusements; but they soon became dull, empty, and insipid to my taste; and on noticing this I was led to inspect more closely what had given me the most happiness or misery in my former readings. I concluded that all the pleasure I had enjoyed in reading the theological works of Thomas Paine, was principally of a character to call forth my derision and ridicule of the Christian religion, to the torment and anxiety of its votaries. For I never could enjoy myself with the principles set forth in the "Age of Reason" in my solitary meditations. I recollected that the reading of "Volney's Ruins of Empires" almost caused me to doubt my own existence. The greater part of the works of Lord Byron had also given me no solid comfort in the perusal. There is in most of the productions of that mighty poetic genius *a tincture of misanthropic gloom, truly characteristic of the infidel mind*. The following lines seemed applicable to my case:—

"My mind is dark; O quickly string  
The harp I yet can brook to hear;  
And let thy gentle fingers fling  
Its melting murmurs o'er my ear;  
And let the strain be wild and deep,  
Nor let the notes of joy be first:  
I tell thee, minstrel, I must weep,  
Or else this heavy heart will burst:  
For it hath been by sorrow nursed,  
And ached in sleepless silence long,  
And now 'tis doomed to know the worst,  
To break at once, or yield to song."

The mind of an irreligious man must be sorrowful, must be tormented at times, and it is often the nature of the unconverted heart to court its gloomy feelings rather than to banish them. After having taken a se-

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