

character whatever was pure, whatever was refined, whatever was spiritualizing. A little work on duty, which Cicero has left behind, betrays, by its numerous shortcomings, how incomplete was the ethics of even the wisest and best of the ancients. But the life of Cicero itself, or that of Cato, both "model" men of their day, reveals how far the modern standard of right was the standard of Paganism. When the purest men, of their time advise suicide, and practice other flagrant crimes, what must be the condition of the mass?

It was from this state of moral degradation that Christianity raised mankind. But when we speak of Christianity as doing this, we mean the faith taught in the Bible, and not the creeds, the ceremonies and the trivialities which error or bigotry have added to it. It is in the life of its great founder, in the precepts inculcated by Him, and in the beautiful narratives with which the gospels especially are crowded, that we must look for the living influence, that like a purifying stream has washed away whatever was foul in the past, and made the moderns, as compared with the ancients, what a May meadow is to a stagnant marsh. The whole moral tone of society has been regenerated by the example of Him, who "went about doing good," and of the secret teachings of that sermon on the Mount, where He "spoke as never man spoke." No one sect has done this, nor any combination of sects, perhaps; but the life-giving principles of Christianity alone, as taught in the Bible.

In a word, ancient Paganism brutalized man, while Christianity spiritualizes him. The one fostered the animal part of our nature, the other cultivates all our better qualities. The one lowers the human race to the level of "the beasts that perish," the other fits it for high aspirations and teaches it to believe in an immortal life.—*Banner of the Covenant.*

### THE CHAIN OF TRUTH; OR, AN UNBELIEVER SHUT UP TO THE FAITH.

BY THE REV. DR. SMITH OF BIGGAR.

It is a very common thing for unbelievers to justify their unbelief on the ground of the unreasonableness of faith. They believe not, they tell us, because their reason will not allow them to embrace a system inconsistent with itself, and at variance with the nature of things. We refer here, not merely to the extreme class of unbelievers called infidels, but to all who from unbelief stop short of receiving Christ as Saviour, and their Saviour. All agree, though they may not express it in the same form, in placing the ground of their rejection of the truth, whether evangelical or simply revealed, in its opposition to reason. But they do this wrongly. Faith and reason are not contrary and hostile principles.—They are to be distinguished, indeed, but they are not opposed. They act in the most beautiful harmony—are mutually dependant, mutually supporting. We may say, in fact, of them, what the Apostle says of the man and the woman, "neither is faith without reason, nor reason without faith in the Lord." It is not the person who believes the Gospel, but the person who rejects it, who acts the unreasonable part. Nothing is more reasonable than faith, nothing more unreasonable than unbelief. The faith of the Gospel, indeed, is the noblest exercise of human reason.

The Apostle in his Epistle to the Galatians, speaks of a person—a person under the law, being shut up to the faith of the Gospel. The phrase is very significant and expressive. The idea is a military one, and seems borrowed from the operation of a besieging army. The original word, rendered "shut up," is that employed by the Septuagint, to describe the state of Jericho, when beleaguered by the army of Israelites under Joshua. The Apostle represents persons under the law as hemmed in against escape, like the inhabitants of a besieged town, driven from position to position, till they are shut up and compelled to surrender.—His meaning is, that if men under the law would follow out the principles of the law itself, would just go where it leads, they would be conducted, as by a schoolmaster's hand, to Christ, and forced, so to speak, to embrace the Gospel.

The Apostle's principle here applied to a particular case may be generalized—extended to the case of all persons whatever, enjoying the light of nature. Truth in general, and especially religious truth, is one—a united whole—a single chain though composed of different links, the lowest link fastened to earth, but the highest and topmost one connecting with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Let a man take hold of one link, and if he does not do violence to the system—break the chain—he will be carried forward from link to link,—one link naturally and necessarily leading to another,—till he is brought to the last link—shut up in the faith—the faith of Christ as a Saviour, and his Saviour.—Starting, then, with the simple admission that the external world exists, we wish to show that if men would be faithful to themselves, think and act out consistently their own admitted principles, they would be in succession shut up, not only to the faith of religious truth in general, but to the faith of Christ as a Saviour, and their Saviour in particular. Natural religion and revealed, the works of creation and the doctrines of the Gospel, are all harmoniously connected, forming together a kind of Jacob's ladder, by which we ascend from nature not only to nature's God, but to man's Saviour.

Observe, then, in the first place, how by admitting the existence of the external world, a man is shut up to the faith of a God. The latter follows as a necessary deduction from the former. The argument is simply this, that an effect must always have a cause. Grant that something exists, and unless this something can be proved uncreated, which nothing we see can be, it must follow that there is a God. In this way, even a

stone of the field, or a cloud of the valley may demonstrate the existence of Deity. But when we think what it is that exists—a world, a universe replete with marks of designs, proofs of intelligence, which blindness alone can overlook, or fail to apprehend—the argument is irresistible. "There is not indeed another truth, as one expresses it, within the whole compass of morals, which according to the justest laws of reasoning admits of such strict and rigorous demonstration." What absurdities, —monstrosities, we might say, must they embrace, who can bring themselves to believe that a world so fair, so rich, so admirably formed, and exquisitely laid out, is the product of chance, the work of accident. The Apostle utters not only inspired Scripture, but sound philosophy, when he says, "The invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse."

In the second place, by admitting the being of a God, a man is shut up to the faith of a divine revelation. There are just two steps here between the promise and conclusion, but they are intimately, necessarily connected steps. The first is, that God having brought into being, intelligent and rational creatures, must have willed them to subservise certain purposes. "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house." The second is, that God having willed these things in reference to his creatures, must, in some way agreeable to their nature, have communicated to them his will. The servant must know his master's will in order to do it. The only question, therefore is, in what way has God made known his will to the children of men? Now, there are three conceivable ways in which he may have done this. He may have done it by writing it upon their hearts, interweaving it with the very constitution of their nature, as by means of instinct he has done in the case of the brute animals. Or he may have done it by endowing them with a faculty in the exercise of which by comparing, inferring, judging, they may discover this will for themselves. Or he may have done it by divine revelation. We cannot conceive of a fourth mode. But he has not adopted the first of these ways. He has indeed, endowed men with instincts, natural and moral, which are as a light shining in a dark place: but it is very observable that instinct in man does not act with the same force, nor operate with the same certainty, as in the brutal tribes; and especially, that the higher our instincts rise, they become the feebler,—our moral instincts being much weaker than our natural ones. It is evident, therefore, that God has not intended to communicate his will to men in the first of the ways mentioned, at least to such an extent as would be sufficient for their guidance. But has he not done it in the second way? Has he not bestowed upon men a faculty in the exercise of which, by comparing, inferring, judging, they may discover his will for themselves? We answer no. He has, indeed, bestowed upon the faculty of reason—a faculty as high above instinct as spirit is above matter, and which has enabled men to fathom some of the profoundest depths of philosophy, ascend the height of the stars, and take even the measure of the vast globe itself. But when the question is proposed, what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty does God require of man—especially—how are we to be delivered from that state of sin and misery in which we feel ourself plunged, or can we be delivered at all—reason is either altogether silent, or is completely non-plussed. Its deductions in reference to religious truth want the fulness and clearness, and certainty and authority which are necessary in an infallible guide. We are thus shut up to conclude either that God has made a revelation of his will to men, or left them altogether, or almost altogether, destitute of information as those matters which it most concerns them to know; that is, has launched the bark of man upon the tide of time, but has left it to float without chart or compass, or even a rudder. This last alternative we cannot entertain for a moment.

But, in the third place, by admitting the reality of a divine revelation, a person is shut up to the faith of the Bible. That there is a divine revelation, and that that revelation is the Bible, are very nearly identical propositions. There are, indeed, other writings that claim to be divine revelations. Such are the Koran of Mahommed, the Shasters of the Hindoos, and the Zendvesta of the Persians. But these are not to be compared for a moment with the Bible, in regard to the evidence by which their respective claims are supported. While the Bible carries along with its own evidence, and is seen, like the sun, by its own light, these other pretended revelations carry along with them their own confusion. We have only to open them in order to perceive that they are not inspired. Infidels themselves, at least all those of them who make the least pretension to impartiality, will acknowledge that if there be a divine revelation in the world, the Bible is that revelation. The controversy, according to themselves, is not between the Bible and another writing claiming to be of divine origin, but between the Bible and no revelation.

Again, by admitting the inspiration of the Bible a person is shut up to the faith of Christianity. The Old and the New Testaments are so indissolubly bound together, that with the single exception of the Jews, no one ever thinks of separating them. The reception of the one is held to involve a reception of the other. The case of the Jews is indeed a peculiar case. It is just that, however, of a person who, possessing part of an instrument, refuses to receive as its proper complement, the corresponding portion, though answering to it in every respect, and admirably fitting in to it. Who can compare the Old Testament and the New and not observe, not merely the harmony, but the unity of spirit and principle and character which pervades them; or compare the statements of the one with the doctrines of the other, and the types and pre-