

“Then,” said he, “how does it happen that you and I view the same thing in such a totally different light?”

“Neither you nor I, nor any other man,” said I, “is the standard of truth. There is a common standard—the word of God.”

‘I wish I had more confidence in it,’ said he, interrupting me.

“How improbable it is, Mr. W.,” said I, “That a benevolent God would leave his creatures without some common standard of truth, which would be the arbiter among the contrary judgments and moral sentiments. This argument in favor of a Divine revelation convinces me that the Bible is the word of God, He who gave us the magnetic needle, He who has made the human hand and the eye with such wise and benevolent adaptedness to our wants, would not, He could not, fail to supply us with such a means of instruction and comfort as a revelation from himself. He knew that the greatest desire of His creatures would be, to have authentic information of the character and the wishes of the Being who holds them at His will, and of the way to please Him,—to say nothing of other things, which would make a revelation indispensable. There must be such a revelation, Mr. W. Did not the astronomers, witnessing the perturbations of Uranus, say, ‘There must be a planet beyond him to account for these disturbances?’—Did they not calculate where the undiscovered world must be, and settle its distances, and weight, and orbit, by rules which required all which they afterward discovered? I say that such a system as that under which men live requires that there be a Divine revelation, if there be a benevolent God.”

“Oh,” said he, “you go too fast and too far. I have not settled the point that there is such a benevolent Being.”

‘My dear friend,’ said I, you cannot mean that sufferings counterbalance all those proofs which Dr. Paley, for example, in his *Natural Theology*, quotes from every side to show the goodness of God in the whole structural economy of animate and inanimate things.”

‘How shall I account for it, then, that I am an exception?’ said he.

‘I deny that you are,’ said I. ‘You could not count up the number of those who have suffered as much as you. That peculiar trials should have fallen to the lot of any is to be exemplified hereafter, and not perhaps in this life: an old writer says, ‘Quarrel not with God’s unfinished providences?’ You have no doubt that your wife and little child are gone to heaven.’

He made no reply.

‘Your other daughter too, I learn was a Christian. Suppose your son also, have been prepared to die; and suppose, now that you could look in upon your whole family in heaven, would you feel that some great calamity had happened to them?—Might not some there say, What family is this? Whom has God loved and honored so, that He has transferred them together here? There they are, a constellation of four stars in the firmament of heaven, known by some name, perhaps and as beautiful to spectators as the Southern cross, or Pleiades, with a vacant place in their arrangement waiting for you.’

‘That makes my present loss and pain no less,’ said he.

‘But,’ said I, ‘seventy years are a small part of our whole existence. God may have judged that the very best way to secure your usefulness here, and your eternal happiness, was to take all your family to heaven. There you may see that the greatest kindness God ever bestowed upon you was to bereave you, and thus to keep you from having your portion in this life. He broke up your nest, and took you on his wings, and bore you abroad. He is now seeking to win your confidence and affection, that He may save you. Are you aware, my dear sir, that God loves you?’

‘He cannot be what you say He is, if He can love me,’ said Mr. W.

‘Because He is what He is, He loves you with infinite compassion; but not of course with complacency. His feelings toward you are those of infinite benevolence.

You will be as welcome to His favor, and to eternal happiness as any man. I am persuaded that the peculiarity of your afflictions is a proof of peculiar regard for you; God is making peculiar effort to save you. Do not frustrate them. These clouds may be full of mercy. How much your family in heaven must love you!—