

CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHY.

RELIGION TRUE PHILOSOPHY.

RELIGION deserves the name of philosophy for this important reason. It is certainly the most sublime study, and calls forth into exertion all the noblest powers and faculties of man. Every other study is much limited in its extent, and falls infinitely below this in the importance of its practice. Most of the studies in which men spend the best part of their lives, are only amusements; some of them are childish, and some of them egregious trifles, and very few of them lead to any thing useful. A great number of them are but of very little service to the world, and of no great profit or satisfaction to the man himself. They are most of them only so far advantageous as they keep off the tediousness and disgust of life, which arise from idleness. They are advantageous so far as they occupy the mind, and act as preventives of great vices or crimes. But religion leads the mind to the most sublime and elevated studies, and, when properly directed, must have a very commanding influence over the life.

The philosophers of old ranked their profession very high, as they professed to be employed in the study of wisdom; our modern philosophers still retain the name, but some of them have very much narrowed the circle of the study. Take religion out of their studies, and let us examine what remains behind to dignify their labours with the name of wisdom. The study of the universe is certainly a sublime occupation. The contemplation of the works of nature, their laws, their connections, and dependencies, is an excellent employment for the human mind: but if we stop short—if the mind never rises beyond the mere workmanship, it becomes a lifeless, a barren, and a dead study. Unless you connect it with the great Author and the First Cause of all, what account can you give of its origin and preservation? What hope can you have in its continuance? How can you account for the several appearances, if you remove the Creator from his works? When you look up into the heavens, and contemplate the glorious bodies that are placed there—their magnitude, their order, their harmony, and their countless numbers—you see a magnificent building, but without an inhabitant, without intelligence, without goodness, without an animating principle to give life and joy to the whole.

Without religion, that is, without a Supreme Being, and his perfections and providence, it is a vast silent expanse, filled with innumerable bodies, but without power to uphold, without wisdom to govern, and without goodness to comfort.

Man, by the assistance of science, and many modern improvements in the mechanical arts, has carried his researches to an amazing extent. He has discovered many new wonders in the heavens—new planets, new moons, and new stars; and his discoveries, so far from exhausting the subject, only serve to convince him, that the works of the Creator are inexhaustible: the further that improvements carry the sight, you see still new wonders rising behind, the circle of creation spreading wider and wider, till the mind becomes overpowered with the contemplations.

Again, with the aid of the same glasses acting in an opposite direction, contracting more and more his views in the examination of the minutest particles of matter, and the smallest form of animal life, new wonders here again open. You cannot limit even the minuteness of these works: and the nearer you examine, the more order and perfection you discover in the smallest parts. Now, can any man stop short of such an enquiry? Can he feel satisfied without asking himself, who made and regulates all these things? Who provides for the wants of all these creatures? What skill, what wisdom, and what goodness do we find here! Would you call it wisdom to neglect these enquiries; and would you call it philosophy, not to feel, and acknowledge, and adore these perfections, which are here discoverable in every part of these works?

How useless and unfruitful is the study of the works of nature, that does not lead the mind to God? After feeling the mind enraptured with the contemplation of perfect power, wisdom, and goodness, which are manifest everywhere, to stop immediately short, to look forward to no Creator or Governor, is a joyless and mortifying study, and overspreads, instantly, those raptures with melancholy and gloom.

How much more reasonable and sublime is the spirit of the Christian philosopher, that directs the mind to the great First Cause? He sees everywhere almighty power, infinite wisdom, goodness and love. He sees an Author worthy of his work—and he sees life and intelligence in every part of this vast fabric. He sees man in his proper station, inferior to many other created existences, and dependant for every thing on God. This is the rank that the Gospel assigns him, and suitable to the station that he occupies.

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THOUGHTS ON DEATH.

THERE is no truth within the range of human conception of more importance to man, than that often-reiterated scriptural annunciation: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,"—and yet, there is, perhaps, no subject connected with the existence of man so little thought of as DEATH: although the absolute certainty of it does, under peculiar circumstances, sometimes force itself upon the most thoughtless and inconsiderate.

In early life we seldom reflect upon death. While in the possession of health, and engaged in the pursuit of pleasure, or of business, our minds are so intensely occupied that we find no place for such gloomy associations; and thus we advance from youth to manhood, in the ardent pursuit of wealth, of pleasure, or of fame, apparently unconscious of the destiny which awaits us in another state of retributive existence.

Death, the relentless enemy of man, is never satisfied. He selects his victims without pity, and slays them without remorse; like an unyielding tyrant, he glories in the intensity of the sufferings of humanity, and sports with the agonizing shrieks of those whose naked spirits are in a few moments to stand in the presence of the Judge eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God. We may indulge in all the gaiety and thoughtlessness of life,—we may frequent the most fashionable and captivating places of amusement,—we may decorate our persons with all that is elegant and costly, and we may aspire to the highest honour and distinction amongst men,—we may "seek the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth,"—and in the midst of all, there is something, on reflection, which is calculated to "drink up all our joys"—the brevity and uncertainty of human life.

The life of man is justly represented by the passing shadow, the drooping flower—which appear for a moment, and then vanish away. How short the life of the prattling infant—the mother's joy! It appears on the theatre of life this moment—in a few days, or months, it sickens, and it dies! The youthful maid, too, in all the loveliness of her person, and amiability of her character and disposition, springs up like a flower, unfolding its beauties in its progress—captivating the affections of tender parents, and the admiration of those who are interested in her welfare; but, almost imperceptibly at first, a change takes

place—the flower assumes a sickly hue—the progress of disease advances with fearful rapidity, and every succeeding day bears its distressing testimony, that the lovely victim is fast approaching her final destiny—till at length, amidst the sorrows and tears of afflicted relatives, her spotless spirit wings its happy flight to those delightful mansions, where there is no sickness, nor sorrow, nor pain.

The uncertainty of life appears also in the case of the premature death of that aspiring youth, who, actuated by the noblest motives in the pursuit of literary and scientific attainments, has devoted his youthful days to study, and his nights to the contemplation of those subjects in which his soul delighted; but, intense application, and an ardent desire to excel, has operated unfavourably on his delicate constitution, and has ultimately terminated in an early tomb.

Another, to "fortune and to fame unknown,"—possessed of the most brilliant natural abilities, yet surrounded by the most abject poverty and want—has struggled for some time with adversity, with sickness, and with sorrow; but, at length, like the bending willow, was uprooted by the storm.

Knowledge to his eyes its ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, didst ne'er unroll:
Childpenury repress his nobler rage,
And froze the genial current of his soul.

To every reflecting mind, death is a solemn subject. When we view the death-bed of a friend, and witness the restless anxiety of the sufferer—the piercing looks which he throws around him—the heaving of his palpitating breast—our deepest sympathies are naturally awakened, but more especially, if he be one who has lived, habitually careless of eternal consequences, without God and without hope in the world. Then it is that "the frantic soul raves round the walls of its clay tenement, turns to each avenue and seeks relief, but seeks in vain."

A death-bed is a detector of the heart; we are this moment in time, the next in eternity! We stand upon the shore, ready to launch away: the unknown and boundless ocean of eternity is before us, with all its glories or its horrors—and in a few moments we shall realise all that we have heard or read respecting that untried state of existence. The thought of such a change to the man who has neglected his eternal interests up to this solemn hour, must be agonizing in the extreme! It has been remarked that men of strong minds frequently manifest great fortitude and heroism at the approach of death, and that they die like brave men. But how much better to be enabled to say, he died nobly like a Christian. There is but one remedy for the ultimate removal of death's terrors, and that is, the sacrificial atonement of the Saviour. The application of his atoning merits to the guilty circumstances of the sinner, can alone remove the apprehensions of future wrath, and enable the justified believer in rapture to exclaim, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Death is no respecter of persons—the youth—the aged—the noble—the ignoble—the peasant, and the prince—all—all must bow to his stern authority.

The late mysterious dispensation of Providence—in the removal, by death, of the justly lamented LORD SYDENHAM—has led us to these reflections. This highly gifted Nobleman appears to have applied all the energies of his capacious mind to mature and carry out those great and extensive plans for the future prosperity and happiness of this interesting portion of the British Empire—and