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"WISDOM IS THE PRINCIPAL THING; THEREFORE GET WISDOM."

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Theology.

A CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

What must we regard as the just description of a *Christian Church*?—What the fidelity of the pastor and the devotion of the flock? what their coincidence of sentiment, principle, and motive, enhancing the piety of each and the happiness of all? What readiness to dedicate their respective talents to the general good, and to relinquish all selfish gratification, or needless peculiarities,—laying aside pride and jealousy, and self-will, that the body may be edited and knit together by the increase ministered from every part,—and bending the common force of the community to the promotion of that one great cause which every one feels to be emphatically his own? What combinations of tender relationships, of reciprocal services, of united prayers? What spread of enkindling confidence from bosom to bosom and from man to man, while all advance with a firm and steady tread, as an host pressing forward to the battle, and gathering energy and ardour from every inspiring glance and every kindly gratulation.

These are the glorious things that are spoken of thee, O Zion, city of God! And such, O Zion, were once the boast and honour of thy children! As they adorned thy rising, so shall they complete the brightness of thine evening hour. Before that epoch of universal joy, churches shall rouse themselves, and awake as from the tomb. Their dew shall be as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth her dead. Voices of welcome shall be heard, and the shout of a king in the camp of Israel. To be enrolled amongst the saints, and to partake their fellowship, shall no longer be regarded as involving privations and creative of restraints; but multitudes, thronging around, shall press into the temple and cast themselves before the altar, exclaiming: "Doubtless thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us and Israel acknowledge us not. Yet thou, O Lord, art our Father and our Redeemer; thy name is from everlasting."—In that happy and prosperous era, thought, learning, genius shall not remit their toils nor quench their brightness;—science shall not abandon her researches nor eloquence withhold her glory;—but all shall be invested with a holier beauty and beheld amidst diviner light. "The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man shall be made low, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." Wealth, consecrated by religion, shall no longer cleave as a curse to its possessor, to obstruct his entrance into the path of life; but it shall be unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, enabling him by whom it is devoutly and faithfully employed to "do good, to be rich in good works, laying up in store a good foundation against the time to come." While happy and contented poverty, relieved from the burden of want, not by mercenary hirelings but by a brother's hand, shall be adorned and hallowed, like the penury of the Son of God, by tranquil resting on a never-failing Providence and calm certainty of an inheritance in heaven. The hoary head shall be encircled with lambent glories and a brightening diadem, already half revealed,—while ardent and generous youth, pacting after deeds of holy enterprise and fired with no other ambition than might glow within the breast of angels, shall stand prepared for every summons and ready to spring forth at the first call, whether to honourable service, or triumphant death.—*Rev. R. S. MAIR, LL. D.*

THE TESTIMONY OF NATURAL THEOLOGY TO CHRISTIANITY.

Among the modern contributors to theological literature and science, the eloquent and judicious GIBBORNE (of the Church of England) deserves distinct and honourable

notice. His publications on the "Duties of Men" and the "Duties of Women," as well as his "Survey of the Christian Religion," evince a clear understanding, a sound judgment, a refined taste, and a well-cultivated mind. He has also written on—"THE TESTIMONY OF NATURAL THEOLOGY TO CHRISTIANITY." This work is designed as a supplement to Paley's Natural Theology. It takes the close of the latter as its point of departure, and professes to supply those principles and lessons which properly belong to Natural Theology, and which Paley has altogether omitted. The Author highly and justly eulogizes Paley's admirable work, but thinks it defective in not pointing out the indications of the Creator's holiness and of Man's degenerate condition and moral relations, which Natural Science contains.

The book consists of thirteen chapters—the first introductory. The Author defines his theme:—"Natural Theology is that knowledge concerning the Deity and our relations to Him which, by observation and natural reasoning, man is capable of attaining." We happen to be among the number of those who believe that every topic in moral science should be investigated with every aid which Nature, Revelation, and History affords. We think that instead of attempting to explore the temple of science with only the dim taper of unassisted human reason, we should open its portals and windows and let the broad blaze of Heaven illuminate the mighty and majestic fabric. But these views involve no objection to the matter of such treasures as Paley's and Gisborne's, but only to the order and connexion. Every enlightened and independent student of Divinity will have his own outline (either original or selected) of theological truth; and will know how to avail himself of real assistance, from whatever quarter or under whatever form it may come.

Chapter II. is designed to evince man's fallen condition and rebellious conduct, from Geological disruption, disorder and change. But the appropriate and beautiful illustration with which it sets out, and which we cannot withhold from our readers, will best exhibit the scope and materials of the Author's argument:—

"Suppose a traveller, penetrating into regions placed beyond the sphere of his antecedent knowledge, suddenly to find himself on the confines of a city lying in ruins. Suppose the desolation, though bearing marks of ancient date, to manifest unequivocal proofs that it was not effected by the mouldering hand of time, but has been the result of design and violence. Dislocated arches, pendant battlements, interrupted aqueducts, towers undermined and subverted, while they record the primeval strength and magnificence of the structures, proclaim the determined purpose, the persevering exertions, with which force had urged forward the work of destruction. Suppose farther, that, in surveying the reliques which have survived through the silent lapse of ages, the stranger discovers a present race of inhabitants, who have reared their huts amidst the wreck. He enquires the history of the scene before him. He is informed that the city, once distinguished by splendor, by beauty, by every arrangement and provision for the security, the accommodation, the happiness of its occupants, was reduced to its existing situation by the deliberate resolve and act of its own lawful Sovereign, the very Sovereign by whom it had been erected. The Emperor of that part of the world.—'Was he a ferocious tyrant?'—'No,—it is the universal reply.—He was a monarch prominent for consistency, forbearance, and benignity.'—'Was his judgment blinded, or misled, by erroneous intelligence as to the plans and proceedings of his subjects?'—'He knew every thing but too well. He understood with underrating accuracy, he decided with unimpeachable

wisdom.'—'The case, then,' cries the traveller, 'is plain: the conclusion is inevitable. Your forefathers assuredly were ungrateful rebels, and thus plucked down desolation upon their city, themselves, and their posterity.'

"The actual appearance of the globe, on which we dwell, is in strict analogy with the picture of our hypothetical city."

Having thus opened his way he adverts to the objections of sceptical geologists against Divine revelation. In relation to the strata of lava in the Etna well, of which so much has been said, he observes that there is abundant reason to believe that the asserted vegetable mold between the strata is in reality volcanic ashes, as Dolomieu specifically asserts; and that "beds of lava may be speedily transformed into an expanse of plenty." He then proceeds to point out, by appropriate quotations from geological writers, several instances of dislocated strata; "blocks and masses of particular species of stone, bearing the marks of having been rounded by attrition in agitated waters," the distribution of shells and fossil remains in circumstances which clearly bespeak a mighty and general disruption, and "immense deposits of marine salt subsisting in each of the four quarters of the globe." "In many cases not to be termed subterranean," but forming large mountains. All these betoken geological convulsions, great and universal, which can be accounted for only by the belief of Divine agency visiting mankind with "penal infliction" for legal offences. In other words, geological facts clearly indicate the DELUGE and the moral considerations which it involves.

Chap. III. gathers evidence of the Deluge from "a survey of the present superficies of the earth." In the second chapter he drew arguments from Geology; in the third he quotes facts from Geography to show that "in every region, in every portion of every region, the surface testifies that its form was produced by the action of water, by the action of retiring water." He then takes a rapid survey of the principal mountains and rivers of the earth to show that "there exists a gradual descent from the highest elevation to the circumjacent seas;" and passes from the grand outline to the minutest details of districts, hills and valleys, inferior rivers and streamlets, to impress upon the minds of his readers the same fact. Successive ranges of high grounds, at different distances from the rivers, "and with fronts more or less abrupt towards the river in proportion to the hardness or the softness of the materials of which they are constituted," clearly indicate the successive subsidences of the retiring waters, till the diminished floods formed existing rivers, or, in consequence of strong and firm barriers, settled into greater and smaller lakes.

Not only the valleys which the floods scooped out and through which the rivers now run indicate a general deluge, but also the smaller and collateral valleys exhibit the channels of the subsiding and retiring floods when they "returned from off the earth continually."

The faces of perpendicular rocks exhibit "ranges of indentations or furrows, resembling the mouldings of a cornice and denoting successive stages in the sinking of the waters," similar to those which we behold in "the high banks of a river after the subsidence of a flood." "On the naked and perpendicular rocks of Mount Salève, near Geneva, Sansure remarked various ranges of horizontal furrows, broad and deep, bearing in their form, in their direction, and in the rounded curvature of their edges, the clearest proofs of their formation by the passage of waters."

He then adverts to the utility and beauty of the superficies of the earth thus formed.

The operations and recess of the deluge prepared "the desolated globe for the re-ception of a restored succession of inhabitants," for the sustenance of the animals, for the production of the trees and plants, and for the growth and commodious cultivation of the grain and fruit, of which man, in each particular region, chiefly stands in need." On the manner in which the beauty of the landscape, as declarative of the Creator's goodness, should impress us, the Author thus eloquently and devoutly expatiates:—

"Would you receive and cherish a strong impression of the extent of the mercy displayed in the renewal of the face of the earth. Would you endeavour to render justice to the subject? Contemplate the number of the diversified effects on the surface of the globe, which have been wrought, arranged, and harmonised, by the divine benignity through the agency of the retiring deluge; and combine in your survey of them the two connected characteristics, utility and beauty, utility to meet the necessities and multiply the comforts of man, beauty graciously superadded to cheer his eye and delight his heart, with which the general aspect of nature is impressed. Observe the mountains, of every form and of every elevation. See them now rising in bold acclivities; now accumulated in a succession of graceful sweeping ascents; now towering in rugged precipices; now rearing above the clouds their spiny pinnacles glittering with perpetual snow. View their sides now darkened with unbounded forests; now spreading to the sun their ample slopes covered with herbage, the summer resorts of the flocks and the herds of adjacent regions; now scooped into sheltered concavities; now enclosing within their ranges glens green as the emerald, and watered by streams pellucid and sparkling as crystal. Pursue these glens as they unite and enlarge themselves; mark their rivulets uniting and enlarging themselves also; until the glen becomes a valley, and the valley expands into a rich vale or spacious plain, each varied and bounded by hills and knolls and gentle uplands, in some parts chiefly adapted for pasturage, in others for the plough; each intersected and refreshed by rivers flowing onward from country to country, and with streams continually augmented by collateral accessions, until they are finally lost in the ocean."

These new modes of beauty are awaiting the beholder: winding shores, bold capes, rugged promontories, deeply indented bays, harbours penetrating far inland and protected from every blast. But in these vast and magnificent features of nature, the gracious Author of all things has not exhausted the attractions with which He purposed to decorate inanimate objects. He pours forth beauties in detail, and with unsparring prodigality of magnificence, and for whatever other reasons, for human gratification also, on the several portions, however inconsiderable, of which the larger component parts of the splendid whole consist: on the rock, on the fractured stone, on the thicket, on the single tree, on the bush, on the mossy bank, on the plant, on the flower, on the leaf. Of all these works of his wondrous hand He is continually varying and enhancing the attractions by the diversified modes and accessions of beauty with which He invests them, by the alterations of seasons, by the countless and rapid changes of light and shade, by the characteristic effects of the rising, the meridian, the setting sun, by the subdued glow of twilight, by the soft radiance of the moon; and by the hues, the actions, and the music of the animal tribes with which they are peopled. While Natural Theology perceives the Creator thus lavishing sources of pure and innocent and elevating pleasure on the abode of a race of transgressors; well may she listen with admiring yet undoubting faith to the voice of Revelation, which tells her that the eternal