

reigning supreme over all of which we are cognizant, without and within us; and unless we were so constituted as to feel that every instance of disorder, as in the heart of man, is the result not of the Almighty's laws, but of their breach. A grand systematic arrangement, the result of order, presides over the universe. The sentiments of that hymn, beginning,

"The spacious firmament on high," &c.,

may be taken as expressive of the voice of humanity upon this point. Nor need we wait to prove, from a consideration of the solar system, and the heavenly bodies in general, from the succession of seasons, and of day and night, from the character of the three kingdoms of nature—the animal, vegetable and mineral, and from the constitution of man—the lord of creation, with the innumerable branches of science in which he has endeavored to convey his sense of this truth,—that God's works are "well ordered in all things and sure." Therefore, if the Bible is from God, it cannot be a mass of confusion. In fact, it has its grand leading outlines also. It begins with creation; it mournfully touches upon the fall; it announces the scheme of redemption; it describes the destruction of man by the deluge; gives us glimpses of patriarchal religion—in its accounts of which every detail is subordinated to one grand design, which is kept steadily in view throughout the religion of rites and ceremonies, is touched upon in energetic language in the prophecies, and is plainly declared with the psalms of angels "in the fulness of time," as the incarnation of the Son of God. In fact, the Bible, like all true works of art, has its proper beginning, middle and termination,—its account of the creation, ruin, redemption and regeneration of man, and finally winds up with his restoration to a glory surpassing that of his original condition.

But while we cannot refuse to it what philosophers have claimed for the works of creation and providence, the possession of an order sufficiently indicative in itself of its divine origin, and of its having been written by persons invested with the divine image and inspiration, we still cannot but think it is destitute of "systematic arrangement." The following illustration will convey more precisely our meaning in the use of this phrase, than any definition however labored. If we visit the hotter regions of the earth, and commence an examination of the vegetable world, from the equator, we shall discover a profusion of magnificent trees and shrubs and flowers, peculiar to tropical countries. If we travel further towards the north, or south, and visit more temperate climates, the plurality of Providence may still be witnessed in the variety and beauty of the vegetable world. But now many of the tropical plants have disappeared, and their place is supplied by others of a hardier character. As we extend our journey towards the poles, the various species steadily

diminish in number and variety, until we arrive at the cold and sterile north, or south, where none are to be found, save a few mosses on the surface of the snow, hardly to be distinguished by the color, from the bleak and howling waste around. We thus find that nature preserves a regular order in the distribution of plants over the surface of the globe, and the same remark will apply to animals. Yet, if one wished to study botany, he would not adopt this shadowy outline of nature as the basis of his system. He would classify and arrange the objects of his study, upon very different principles; so that specimens from climates hot and cold would fall under the same head, because possessed of common characteristics. There is none of the studied order of a garden in the "forests primeval" of nature. So with the Bible. We nowhere find in Scripture, a system of theology, or arrangement of the doctrines of divinity, in that natural and consecutive order adopted in our Shorter Catechism, or the other standards of our church. The nearest approach to anything of the kind is contained in the epistle to the Romans; but this is applicable, at most only to a portion of the doctrines of Christianity, and even in this instance, the order observed does not amount to the systematic arrangement of a creed or other standard. The Bible, in this respect, resembles the book of nature; the doctrines are no more written down, than the trees of the forest are planted in accordance with a system. Sometimes a doctrine is embodied in a historical document, at others in a biographical narrative; now we have a mystic prophecy, and again a parabolic tale; here the teaching is conveyed in the form of devotional aspirations, and elsewhere it is expressed with the artlessness of an epistle.

The results of this varied method of teaching are many, seemingly, not all beneficial. I say seemingly, for we may confidently take it for granted that the best possible plan has been adopted by divine wisdom, and that where any of his gifts appear to be attended with evil results, it is because they are perverted by the wicked ingenuity of man.

(1). A good result flowing from the absence of doctrinal arrangement in Scripture is, that the Bible is the better adapted to be of universal benefit. The understanding is not the only part of man, nor is truth which appeals solely to his reason, sufficiently powerful to influence him. He is also in possession of will, and of affection; and truth, to be effective, must be calculated to bear upon the one, and to call forth the other. Nothing is so tedious as formality. Conceive a sermon composed of nothing but heads and divisions, and we shall have some idea of a Bible written in the form of a system of divinity. Take the story of Joseph, which has fascinated the young and delighted the aged for so many centuries. All the positive truth embodied in this pleasing narrative might be condensed into two or three sentences, about brother