

ture of the age of Queen Anne could effect in a year. In France and Germany the same sort of publications have immense circulation.—[Here Mr. Y. exhibited a great variety of these foreign publications, of which he had procured specimens, explaining their objects, history and price.] And yet with these obvious improvements in society—in the advance of the sciences—in the arts—in the number of publications in their triple form of volumes, periodicals, and newspapers—in the increased intelligence of the people—in the accumulation of private and public wealth—there exist certain classes who pretend that mankind are retrograding, and that in religion and all the elements of social virtue and happiness, our destinies are less propitious even than in former ages,—and this they attribute to the spread of education! *It is to this 'grave argument' we have now to address ourselves.*

I press the opinion with no improper tendency, but it seems to speak little either for the divine influence of Religion, or for the devotion of its Ministers, if it suffer from the spread of intelligence, and do not impart, amid the light of learning, a more apostolic odour and sanctity of character to its followers. Its doctrines were never so widely disseminated, and the altar of the true God never encircled by such a crowd of worshippers, as at the present time.—And yet is there less virtue, less charity, is the golden rule of morals more openly violated, and vice more daring and avowed now than in the past ages of history? I ask the proof, for it seems to me, apart from general declamation—that abstract reasoning, as well as the experience of mankind, support an opposite conclusion. The whole tone and essence of divine faith is favourable to intelligence, and courts the spirit of unsparing enquiry. It seeks no shelter from the boldest and sternest investigation. A religion divine, and intended to be universal—to be permanent—enduring—fixed upon the rock of ages, and the same from the days of the Apostles to the end of time, never can dread the subtlest enquiries of that spirit which it is meant to address, to animate, to soften, and to control. I cannot comprehend the doctrine of Channing, who would impart to it a plastic character, the power of yielding to the pressure of change and circumstance, for as it is true truth is eternal, and the essence of morality must be the same in the last age as in this. But is not the Bible itself a “fountain of living waters”, of wisdom and philosophy? The perfection, the benevolence—the omnipotence of the Deity, are shadowed forth and dwelt upon in the wonders of the firmament—the beauty of the earth—and the moving of the great waters. The extent of divine power is measured by the things of the earth—‘he layeth the beams of his chamber on the water, he maketh the clouds his chariot, he walketh upon the wings of the wind;’ Psalm 104. The pi-

ety of believers is inspired by a reference to the manifestation of the supreme intelligence visible in the productions of the natural world. The abuse of knowledge—the tendency of shallow thinking—prompted by an unholy and feverish ambition, may create doubt, disbelief, and the propagation of erring creeds, but the spirit of sound philosophy, blending itself with the love of truth, brings new arguments to support that faith, which is founded upon revelation. It affords one of the noblest fields for eloquence upon which the disciples of Christianity delight to expatiate, that the most profound moral philosophers—Barrow—Locke—Newton—Boyle—Herschel—Davy—those who have penetrated the arcana of Nature, who have reached the loftiest pinnacles of those eternal hills of Truth and Science which human genius has yet ascended, and thus surveyed, in its comprehensive and illimitable range—the connection of matter and mind—the obedience, if I may so speak, of the *physical effect*, to the Divine Cause—have been the most pious and humble believers. It is the proudest boast of the present age that philosophy has been the handmaid of Religion. Let any Sceptic sit down and study, with the desire of attaining the truth, Paley’s Natural Theology, Dick’s Christian Philosopher, Shuttleworth’s Consistency of Revelation, the last days of a Dying Philosopher, by Davy, and that splendid addition to pious learning, the Bridgewater Treatises, and he will then be convinced that the cultivation of science and general knowledge is not hostile to the Christian faith.

Brougham in his late work upon Natural Theology, has laboured to shew that the existence of the Deity, his power, omniscience, benevolence, can be proved by inductive reasoning with the same certainty as mathematical truths. All nature indicates a design—contrivance—aptitude—simple in execution, but elaborately philosophical in conception. Take for example the late discoveries in astronomy. Stars have been discovered so distant in space that the rays of light which they emit, and which fall upon the lens of the Telescope, must have been four thousand years in their passage. Three millions of Comets are now supposed to pursue their eccentric revolutions in the universe; all those known are diminishing in magnitude,—whence this law of change?—what purpose do they serve in this magnificent creation of worlds? That of Encke’s is gradually approaching the sun, and must eventually either fall into it or be dissipated by its intense heat. The relative distances of the Planets in our own system have been found to be ranged in geometrical proportion. What power has disturbed the series between Mars and Jupiter, and broke the intervening planet into four smaller? How boundless—how imposing is the range of these enquiries. What conceptions of the supreme intelligence do they create—how fa-