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ART. I.—*Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, which met in Edinburgh, May 22, 1851. From the Home and Foreign Record.

THE opening sermon was preached by the Rev. Dr. Paterson, of Free St. Andrews, Glasgow, the Moderator of the last Assembly, from John viii. 32.

According to the Scottish custom, the moderator of the former Assembly nominated the Rev. Dr. Duff, and he was chosen by acclamation; and on taking the chair, delivered an animated and interesting discourse, in which he took a comprehensive but rapid survey of the fortunes of the Church of Scotland, and her struggles with Papacy and Prelacy; and then came down to the disruption in 1843, by which the greater part of the evangelical clergy of the Established Church voluntarily relinquished their livings and their resources, rather than yield to the Erastian principles adopted by the civil government. He concluded by earnestly recommending to the Assembly the sustentation of all their *schemes* connected with the prosperity of the Church, and especially urged the importance of prosecuting foreign missions with increasing ardour and liberality. The address occupied more than an hour in the delivery.

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ART. II.—*The Method of the Divine Government, Physical and Moral.* By the Rev. James McCosh. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers.

SAYS Lord Bacon, "the declinations from religion, besides the primitive, which is atheism, and the branches thereof, are three; heresies, idolatry and witchcraft: heresies, when we serve the true God with a false worship: idolatry, when we worship false gods, supposing them to be true; and witchcraft when we adore false gods, knowing them to be wicked and false." Wherever the influence of the Bible has been felt, it has exorcised the two latter forms of false religion. Idolatry and witchcraft sooner or later vanish before the faintest rays of scriptural light. It is true that Mariolatry and the worship of saints and images, defile some apostate Christian churches. But in these communions the Bible is a sealed book; its light is extinguished by the edicts, and its authority supplanted by the spiritual despotism of the hierarchies that have usurped its office.

Aside from this, through Christendom, the true religion is confronted by atheism or heresy, and is compelled to contend, not against those who worship false gods, but against those who ignore or deny the very being of a God, or those, who, confessing his existence, worship him falsely. Atheism, however, unless in times of tumultuous popular excitement, is too cowardly to avow or display itself. It usually preserves a prudent silence, or masks itself under some disguise, which it labels "liberal and improved Christianity." The same is true also of most of the infidelity in Christian countries. It shrouds itself in like plausible disguises. Denying everything that constitutes Christianity, it still comes forth in the guise of a reformed Christianity. So of all attempts now made to undermine the Christian faith. They claim to be attempts to reform that faith, and relieve it of the crust of errors with which human dogmatism has gradually overlaid it. Hence, the great conflict of the Church in our day, is with heretics, who assuming the Christian name, make war against the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, on the plausible pretext of improving that faith. Many of these conceal their infidelity from the view of shallow

and unsuspecting minds, by the extreme liberality and vast comprehension of faith which they profess. Is he an atheist who believes that everything is God? Is he a heretic who can accept every creed, not even excepting the orthodox? But to say that everything is God, is to deny the living and true God—to say that everything is true, is to obliterate all distinctions between truth and falsehood. The next step often and easily taken, is to say that everything is good and right, and that the very idea of sin and guilt is a mere freak of a distempered fancy.

We are sorry to see so many indications that this poison infects much of the reading which is moulding the rising race. It has insinuated itself, more or less, into much of the journalism, many of the novels, the poetical and imaginative works, which go to make up the light literature of the day. And it too often defiles grave, elaborate, and formal treatises on ethics and theology. It would be surprising if sentiments so congenial to the depraved heart, did not worm their way into the minds of the young upon whom they are so assiduously inculcated, and undermine their religion and their morals. We believe that this process is going forward to an extent most disastrous and deplorable.

Even those who so far preserve their proper humanity, as to withstand the contagion of these desperate and abominable errors, are not therefore free from all peril. Pantheistic Transcendentalism, indeed, is an exotic among us. It is not native to the British or American mind. This has, generally, too solid a stratum of good sense, to lose itself in these gorgeous mists. Still it cannot be denied that multitudes among us, including many of those gifted ones who are read and heard with the highest admiration, show a fondness for these sceptical German theories. Many others neither have, nor give, any conception of any moral attribute in God, except benevolence. Our most fashionable preachers of a miscalled liberal Christianity, many brilliant discoursers and essayists, and not a few teachers of natural, and even of revealed theology, set forth God as merely a benevolent Being, and utterly ignore his holiness and punitive justice. This error, though less extravagant and licentious than the former, ultimately tends to dissipate the

sense of sin and guilt, to confound moral distinctions, and to relax the bonds of moral obligation. Yet this is not only the favourite view of the various classes of writers of whom we have spoken, but forms the very warp of some systems of theology, which retain in strange mixture with it some of the fundamental principles of Calvinism. All the symptoms of the case show that this unnatural alliance is not destined long to endure. The dogma that mere benevolence is the only moral attribute of God, cannot long retain in its company the doctrines of vicarious atonement and eternal punishment. They are mutually contradictory. They cannot stand, and never have stood, side by side for any length of time. The opinion that mere benevolence comprehends the whole of God's moral excellence, has usually sooner or later sunk the whole scheme of doctrine into which it has been incorporated through the successive stages of Arminian and Pelagian heresy, down to blank Socinianism or Universalism, and at last to unmitigated infidelity. On the other hand, those classes who, having imbibed this one-sided theory, still cling to the great doctrines of atonement and future punishment, have at length found themselves compelled to renounce it, and to lay the foundations of evangelical theology broad and deep, not only in the benevolence, but in the holiness and retributive justice of God. Lax theologians understand the bearings of this question full well. Owen quotes Socinus as having said, "If we could but get rid of this justice, even if we had no other proof, that human fiction of Christ's satisfaction would be thoroughly exposed, and would vanish." There cannot be a doubt what God signifies to us on these subjects in his word. That surely attributes to him infinite love and benevolence. It as surely attributes to him immaculate holiness and an immutable disposition to punish sin, either in the person of the sinner himself, or of an accepted substitute. It no less plainly and manifoldly declares the correlate doctrines of eternal punishment, and of salvation only by the vicarious sacrifice of Christ. All this is so palpable and conspicuous in the Bible, that he who runs may read it, and few are bold to dispute it. Yet among those who do not conform to God's terms of salvation, and submit to his righteousness as declared by him, there is a constant and unrelenting war against these and kindred

fundamentals of evangelical and scriptural theology. These men do not relish the doctrines of human corruption and spiritual regeneration at all better than those of divine redemption and eternal retribution. They assail them all by that plausible declamation which appeals to our instinctive horror of pain, to that sentimental and poetic, and genteel benevolence, which shudders at such austere views of God and man. They ply those captivating sophisms which, if valid for this purpose, are valid for a great deal more. They show that under the government of God there ought to be no sin, no pain, no evil whatever, as much as they show that they ought not to exist in the degree asserted by the orthodox scheme. If, then, these reasonings are just, they go the length of proving that the evil and pain which burden the earth, are inconsistent with, and so impossible under, the government of a perfect God. This kind of sentimental sophistry of course ends where it begins, in the denial of the plainest facts which surround us, in the denial of all sin, and the abolition of all punishment, in infidelity and atheism.

Many who nauseate the fancy-stock declamation of which we have spoken, which for a large class is their whole stock in trade, and who deal in more substantial wares, nevertheless lose sight of, or purposely and steadily keep out of view the holiness and punitive justice of God. Many treatises on science, philosophy, ethics, natural and apologetic theology, reason as if there were no moral attribute in God but benevolence. When they touch the evidences of the existence and attributes of God, furnished by science, or by nature, and providence generally, they array in eloquent and glowing style the proofs of God's benevolence with which all creation is resplendent. They ingeniously explain away the seemingly conflicting evidence furnished by the wide-spread sin and suffering that infest the world. But they are blind to, they wholly ignore, the demonstration thus afforded of the creature's sin, and of God's holiness and justice, without which these stubborn facts admit of no satisfactory explanation; in the recognition of which, not only is God vindicated, but nature harmonized both with itself, and with revelation and evangelical theology. Indeed, on any other scheme of divinity, nature is a perfect chaos of contradictions. Even some

eminent defenders of Christianity, have conducted their defence on the supposition that God is merely benevolent, and although they have done good service in their way, yet they have left some of the cardinal principles of religion in inextricable confusion; till we are almost prepared to justify Coleridge's project of a treatise entitled, "Christianity defended from its defenders."

It would be strange if an error propagated in so many ways, defended with consummate skill, glossed over by the charms of poetry, eloquence, and all the fascination of elegant letters, in itself attractive to the depraved heart of man, had not spread itself to a deplorable extent, through society. The evidence is cumulative and appalling that such is the fact. The loose schemes of religion which run into mere philanthropy, and uplift man, while they dethrone God; the growing disposition of many calling themselves evangelical, to impugn the doctrine of vicarious atonement, while they observe a respectful silence in regard to eternal punishment; the increasing fondness for that pantheistic theology which obliterates all moral distinctions, and makes sin a necessary incident in the development of humanity; the multitudinous schemes of social reform and reconstruction spawned forth by those who are looking for the abolition of all punishment, human and divine; to say nothing of the mawkish tenderness towards atrocious crime which taints the novels read so freely by a majority of the young—all these are so many painful proofs of the wide diffusion and baleful influence of this leaven. Our author justly observes, "the spirit of the present age is much opposed to everything *punitive*." If this be so, it is as surely "much opposed" to the living and true God, and to some of the most fundamental principles both of natural and revealed religion: for both alike teach us that they who commit sin are worthy of death, and that where there is no *sacrifice* for sin, there remaineth a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation!

The volume of Mr. McCosh is an attempt to provide an antidote to this contagious distemper of the times, and in our judgment, as a whole, it is a happy and successful effort. We have never heard of his name in any connection, except as the author of this book. But if this should prove (as we hope it

will not) his last as well as his first book, he has won for himself an enviable celebrity. It is rare indeed that any author, by one production alone, has achieved for himself a fame so wide and enduring. He has already left his impress upon many of the educated and reflective minds of Britain and America, and dissipated powerful prejudices against evangelical religion among those who read and think. We trust that this is only an earnest of the good yet to be done by this important work.

The scope and plan of the volume are briefly as follows: His great object is to show what we may learn from the light of nature, *i. e.* from all sources except revelation, concerning the moral character of God and man respectively, their consequent mutual relations to each other, and especially the manner in which God regards and treats sin. As the conclusion of the whole, he shows how all the lines of evidence furnished by nature and providence, converge towards and confirm the distinctive principles of evangelical religion. In pursuance of this end, he notes four principal sources aside from revelation, whence men derive their idea of God. 1. The design exhibited in the separate material works of God. 2. The relations which the physical world bears to man, which he calls the providential arrangements of the Divine government. 3. The human soul with its consciousness, its intelligence, and its benign feelings. 4. The moral qualities of man, or the facts presented by conscience and its workings. The first of these shows us an intelligent First Cause, an uncreated Creator, a Supreme God. By the third, we are led to believe that he who endowed us with self-consciousness and personality, is himself a self-conscious and personal God. These two sources of evidence, one without and the other within us, have been thoroughly and successfully explored by the great teachers of natural theology. The other two, however, which display the moral qualities of God and man, and the characteristics of God as the moral governor of his creatures, have been but casually and slightly investigated, and for the most part wholly passed over by previous writers. Dr. Chalmers, in his admirable discourses on natural and apologetic theology, has taken the lead in giving due prominence to these departments of inquiry, and setting

forth their important bearings upon evangelical religion. He sunk a shaft into this rich mine, and beckoned others, who could give themselves wholly to it, to enter after him, and bring forth in lucid and beautiful order the fulness of its treasures. Mr. McCosh was his disciple, and acknowledges that it was owing to the suggestions made in the lectures of his great teacher, that he was led to project and undertake this volume. If it is true that previous writers on these topics have in the main overlooked the method in which God administers the physical world in reference to man—the course of providence without us, and likewise the operations of the conscience within us; then it is doubtless true that they have overlooked the most momentous parts of the whole subject—the moral character and relations of both God and man as developed by the lights of nature.

Mr. McCosh undertakes to fill this chasm. Giving little attention to the fields of natural theology already sufficiently explored, he prosecutes the inquiry, What light is thrown upon the Divine perfections, upon man's moral state, and his relations to God by the phenomena of God's providence towards him, and of his own moral nature? He distributes his treatise into four books. The first gives a general survey of the phenomena presented by the providence of God and the conscience of man, though generally overlooked. The second contains a minute inquiry into the method of the Divine government in the physical world, especially as it shows the relations of providence to the character of man. The third enters minutely into man's moral nature, the will and conscience, and his actual moral state, and shows him to be both depraved and condemned. The fourth presents the symptoms of the intended restoration of man from his ruin, and inquires what is necessary to such restoration. Here he shows that man needs for his recovery just the salvation which the Scriptures reveal to him. At this point, finding himself already carried beyond the sphere of natural, into the precincts of revealed religion, he drops the investigation, leaving what remains to the regular teachers of Christian theology, for whom he has thus prepared the way. He brings to the subject a familiarity with all the literature and science pertaining to it, a

metaphysical acumen, and logical grasp, a confidence tempered with caution, a richness, vivacity and vigour of style, which give his work an unusual power over all thoughtful readers, whether learned or unlearned.

In the general preliminary survey, he says that on the most cursory view the providence of God displays to us, 1. Extensive suffering, bodily and mental. 2. Restraints and penalties laid on man. 3. God at a distance from man. The soul of man in its relation to God shows us likewise, 1. God at a distance from man. 2. Man at a distance from God. 3. A schism in the human soul. All these things surely are conspicuous and undeniable on the most superficial inspection of the race. Suffering not only exists; it not only infests the bodies of men; it lodges its sharpest pangs in the soul. It is not slight, or transient, or limited. It is severe, enduring, wide-spread. Vanity, the negation of substantial and positive happiness, is the highest boon of unrenewed human nature, in the few exceptional intervals in which it is freed from positive "vexation of spirit." Now, how are we to account for all this? Does the mere fact that God is a benevolent being account for it? Does benevolence prompt the infliction of pain and anguish? Not, assuredly, unless it be the necessary means of preventing still greater suffering. Hence the favourite solution of this problem given by many, has been, that this suffering is inflicted for the purpose of preventing still greater woes, either in the sufferer himself, or in the world or universe of which he forms a part. But has not God power to avert pain without inflicting pain? And can we say that dreadful suffering exists, and that God at the same time has no quality inclining him to inflict suffering for any purpose except to avert suffering, without setting limits to his power, and denying his omnipotence? Is it said that this pain is necessary as a moral discipline, to improve the character of those who suffer it? But how innumerable are the cases in which men, when smitten, receive no correction, revolt more and more, sinking into the most desperate obduracy and reckless wickedness! How often are men hardened by the mere terrors of the Lord, and melted only by his love! Moreover, if the moral improvement of men be not only one object sought in the infliction of pain, (which is not questioned), but the exclusive object of it,

then this proves that in the eye of God there is a greater good than mere happiness; a greater evil than mere pain;—that moral good and evil surpass all other good and evil, and that, under the Divine administration, suffering is allotted to support the moral law, and to remedy and offset the violation of it. The vast extent then of this suffering as surely shows the fearful prevalence of the disease to be remedied by it, as the abundance of prisons marks the abundance of crime in a country. Not only so, but the existence of mental anguish attendant upon the indulgence of certain lusts, cannot be accounted for by the supposition that it is designed to prevent greater misery. Why is there any misery at all in this case? And why does it increase in proportion as the offence increases? Does not this show beyond a doubt the Divine abhorrence of sin, the indissoluble connection which exists between it and misery; that his wrath is revealed from heaven against it, and that in all this “he is not warning us against the misery, but against the sin, and by means of the misery”? The prevalence of suffering thus proves the prevalence of sin, and of a property in God which hates it, and manifests that hatred by visiting pain upon evil-doers.

Looking next at “the restraints and penalties of Divine providence,” can we avoid believing, that in a sinless world, moral agents are governed by an inward sense of duty, and a love of good, which incline them freely to do right, and so bind them to God with all the strength and certainty of the law of gravitation?

Far different, however, are the means by which man is governed, says our author. “Man is placed under an economy in which there are numberless restraints, correctives, medicaments, and penalties, all originating in the very constitution of the world, and falling out in the order of Providence, and ready to meet him at every turn—now with their bristling points to stop his career, and anon with their whips to punish—and forthwith with their counter moves to destroy all his labour, and throw him far back, when he seemed to be making the most eager progress.” As in the best constructed and regulated insane retreats we may admire the architecture, the regimen, the perfect adaptation of every arrangement to its end, while yet all would be clumsy and senseless, except on the supposition

of the evil they are planned to remedy, so we see singular wisdom in the government of our world, but wisdom applied to the prevention, correction and punishment of evil. We see everywhere a strange "apparatus of means proceeding upon and implying its existence." Always allowed a certain liberty, man seems nevertheless like a prisoner confined within narrow limits, and awaiting his final trial. "Why such bridles to curb, such chains to bind, and such walls to confine, if the inhabitants of this world are reckoned pure by Him who rules them?"—pp. 44, 5.

Had one, previously ignorant of the whole case, seen Napoleon at St. Helena, treated now as if a felon, and now as if a monarch, he could scarcely have solved the anomaly, until the idea of his former greatness and subsequent degradation had been in some way suggested, which would at once explain these seemingly incongruous phenomena. So the inquirer into the present state of man, who sees him to be in some respects lord of creation, and in others, guarded, watched, punished as a felon, will be baffled, until alighting upon the idea of man's original perfection and subsequent fall, he finds himself relieved—master of a "truth which gives consistency and coherence to every other truth."

Then, while God is near man in his power, works, and invisible presence, how distant is he from us as to any medium of knowing or conversing with him! Aside from revelation and grace, how dark and enigmatical are all the intimations he gives us of his designs and purposes, and of the destiny before us! And how completely has he barred all approach to, and communion with himself on our part! How silent is he to all the moans, and complaints, and entreaties of men, at least of those beyond the power of his redemption work! Yet God does not let man alone. He has lodged within every breast a witness for himself, to declare his will, to sting the soul with self-reproach, and with threatenings of future woe for all violations of that will.

"Now, combine these two classes of facts, the apparent distance of God, and yet his nearness intimated in various ways, his seeming indifference, and yet constant watchfulness, and we see only one consistent conclusion which can be evolved, that

God regards man as a criminal, from whom he must withdraw himself, but whom he must not allow to escape." p. 51.

If God withdraws himself from man, no less surely does man shrink away from God. Although a transient feeling of gratitude, the apprehension of danger, the sense of sin, and dread of punishment, may sometimes incline him to seek God, yet there is a more powerful principle of repulsion, which inclines him to forget, and hide himself from his Maker. Says Mr. McCosh,

"The fact that there is such an alienation proceeding from a consciousness of sin cannot be disputed, for history and experience furnish too abundant proof of its existence. Every man feels that, while it is natural, for instance, to the father to love his child, it is not natural to love God as he ought to love him. But while man is thus driven from God by one principle, there is something within, which at the very time is testifying in behalf of God. 'Man,' says Vinet, 'cannot renounce either his sins or his God.' There is, in short, a conscience, but a conscience unpacified, a conscience telling him of God, but urging him to flee from that very God to whom it directs him." p. 54.

Thus our author finds another proof of the sinfulness of man, and of God's displeasure against it, in that shrinking away from God which is so characteristic of our race, and proceeds from the operation of conscience announcing both of these facts. "Hence," says he, "the strange contradictions of the human soul." "Hence the vibrating movements of the world's religious history." Men have that within them which draws them toward, and draws them away from God, which makes them now Sadducees and now Pharisees; now sceptics and now devotees; here atheists and there idolaters, while most are oscillating between the two extremes. Madame De Sevigné speaks for vast numbers when she says, "I belong at present neither to God nor the devil, and I find this condition very uncomfortable, though between you and me, the most natural in the world."

Thus we see that man is not only at war with God, but that there is a schism in the human soul itself. Man, by the very constitution of his mind, approves of moral good, and disapproves of moral evil; on the other hand, he neglects the good, and commits the evil. No facts are more clearly evinced by human consciousness, the best of all witnesses on the subject.

Conscience affirms "the indelible distinction between good and evil, and points to a power upholding this distinction in the government of the universe."

"But, on the other hand, these fundamental and indestructible principles in the human soul can be made to condemn the possessor." * * * "Man cannot rid himself of his conscience on the one hand, nor of his sins on the other. The judge is seated for ever upon his throne, and the prisoner is for ever at his bar; and there is no end of the assize, for the prisoner is ever committing new offences to call forth new sentences from the judge." pp. 66, 7.

The summation of this preliminary survey he puts in the following terse and vivid passages from Pascal. "Had man never fallen, he would have enjoyed eternal truth and happiness; and had man never been otherwise than corrupt, he would have attained no idea either of truth or happiness." "So manifest is it, that we were once in a state of perfection, from which we have now unhappily fallen." "It is astonishing that the mystery which is farthest removed from our knowledge, (I mean the transmission of original sin,) should be that without which we can have no knowledge of ourselves. It is in this abyss that the clue to our condition takes its turns and windings, insomuch that man is more incomprehensible without this mystery, than this mystery is incomprehensible to man."

Such is the lesson derived from the most cursory view of nature rightly interpreted. It shows not only benevolence, but holiness and justice in God, whereby he is displeased with sin, and disposed to punish it. It shows in man sin and guilt, a consciousness of having incurred the displeasure of a holy God, and a dread of his avenging wrath. "God indicates his displeasure against man, and men universally take guilt to themselves. God hideth himself from man, and man hideth himself from God." Thus the doctrines of human corruption and divine holiness are deeply laid in every source of evidence afforded by nature and providence.

Withal, those writers who overlook or disregard these elements in their reasonings, find themselves entangled in the most formidable perplexities. They have yielded the vantage-ground to the sceptic. For how manifold and stubborn are the

facts which admit of no explanation, if benevolence is the only attribute of God, which can be accounted for on no conceivable hypothesis, except that of sin on the part of man, and holiness and retributive justice on the part of God! If the believer dwells, as well he may, on the endless bounties and favours lavished on man, in proof of the goodness of God, will not, and does not the sceptic confront him with the endless troubles and woes which infest the earth, as proving no less decisively, a malevolent principle in him who rules the world? Hume, arguing on the supposition that all moral goodness consists in benevolence, contended that the miseries of the world cannot consist with the reign of perfect goodness—that such a cause as infinite benevolence is not proportioned to the effects we witness. But let us suppose that sin exists, and that it is as much a part of God's perfection to abhor and punish it, as it is to communicate happiness to his creatures, and we have a cause adequate to produce all the effects in question. Thus the true view of this subject, which takes in all the facts pertaining to it, affords the strongest support to faith, and the best antidote to scepticism, because it accords with all the conditions to be met.

Finally, our author shows that while the world abounds with things good and lovely, it also exhibits them marred and defaced. It is full of wrecks and ruins, yet they are glorious ruins of a magnificent fallen edifice. Nor are they mere ruins. They are not left like the ruins of man's works to ever increasing decay and desolation, in wild dismemberment and chaotic confusion. The earth is not neglected or abandoned. All its parts are carefully preserved, and adapted and turned to use. As there is nothing in the single works of God, not a nerve, or a fibre, or an atom that is useless, so we must believe that the world and man are thus cared for and preserved, for some important purpose. Many blessings, liberties, and privileges, are yet vouchsafed to man. He is not abandoned, though disciplined, chastised, warned, rebuked. This world is not hell. It is full of tokens that God has not forgotten to be gracious. Does not nature, then, give the pleasing intimation that God has designs of restoration and reconstruction—that we may hope for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth

righteousness? Here the light of nature has conducted us to its own horizon, and brought us to the confines of revelation.

Such is the result of a general survey of nature—gathering its scattered rays into one focus. We have given but a meagre and feeble outline of what the author sets forth at length, clearly and impressively, vivifying the whole with frequent passages of great beauty and power. We shall have gained our object, if our readers are induced to examine it for themselves.

In the remaining books, Mr. McCosh follows out these views in detail, vindicating them against objections, and thoroughly discussing the questions which are interlinked with them, so far as they affect his main argument. In his second book, he considers the manner in which God governs the material universe. After disentangling the subject of cause and effect from various abstract theories, he comes to the conclusion that an effect always “implies a change, something new.” A cause involves the idea of a “substance acting according to a definite rule,” in the production of such changes. One advantage of this definition is, that according to it the Supreme Being is not necessarily an effect requiring us to look for any cause beyond himself. In regard to material objects, we discover in them a property of producing certain changes uniformly, when they are placed in certain relations to each other. The mutual interaction of both bodies is requisite for the development of the causative agency and the consequent effect. Hence, in order to the production of any single effect, or series of effects, and especially of the vast variety of effects in the material universe, a most exquisite adjustment of these bodies to each other is indispensable. Mere uniform laws of nature, separated from a living, intelligent Disposer of all things, will not account for the multitude, complexity and harmony of events ever occurring in the material universe. A living, personal, all-wise and omnipotent God, is required to arrange things so that causes will operate to produce the grand effects we witness. This brings us to that topic first made beautifully prominent in natural theology, by Dr. Chalmers, viz: the collocations and dispositions of matter. These adjustments are made with reference to their properties, their quantity, to time and to space.

It will be seen at once that all the changes or effects which occur with respect to material bodies, depend upon disposing them aright in each of these particulars. We should be glad if we had space, to present some of the striking and beautiful examples which our author has presented in illustration of this great fact. We can only, however, quote the result of his inductions. "So far from general laws being able, as superficial thinkers imagine, to produce the beautiful adaptations which are so numerous in nature, they are themselves the results of nicely balanced and skilful adjustments." p. 119.

Thus he discards as both unphilosophical and irreligious the view of many votaries of physical science, who regard God as having launched the universe into being at some epoch in the remote past, and then, after committing it to the guidance of the general laws which he established over it, as leaving it to its own course, withdrawing himself from the active government and disposal of it. These general laws themselves are but the uniform rules or methods of his own benignant action. They require the constant exquisite adjustments of all parts of the physical universe, in order to their continued operation. God maintains a constant connection with all his works. Nay, he is ever working in them. He plans and makes, sustains and renews them, by his ever present energy—over all, in all, and through all. According to the beautiful figure of Edwards, he sustains all by a ceaseless replenishment from his own infinitude, as the image in a mirror is upheld by ever successive rays of light like those which first produced it. Yet, although God is in all works, he operates by general laws, without which there could be no confidence in any thing future, no motive to human exertion, no inducement to human virtue, no possibility of human improvement.

The infinite wisdom required to govern such a world is obvious, and is happily and forcibly illustrated by our author. Let the slightest derangement take place in the collocations of matter, let the smallest planet be jostled out of its orbit, with no power to restore it, and for aught we can see, there must follow the wreck of worlds. And what finite mind, even if we could suppose it armed with infinite power, and furnished with all supposable general laws, could plan or preserve the needful

adjustments of such a universe, even to the balancing of the very clouds themselves?

Although the world is governed by general laws, yet man is permitted to know but a small portion of them. A large part of the events which occur, proceed from the working of laws and adjustments which are beyond his ken. These too, often work in such a manner as to cross and counter-work, and in many instances wholly neutralize the operation of those which he does understand. Thus he may be baffled in all his undertakings. So far as he can discern the second causes which produce many events in which he is interested, they are fortuitous, or rather, they are as if they were wrought by the direct interposition of God himself. Man may know all the conditions on which a good crop or a good voyage depends. But some of those general laws on which the realizing of some of these conditions depends, are utterly beyond his knowledge. Thus, if all other conditions are fulfilled, his whole success may depend upon the weather, which it is impossible for him to predict, because he knows so imperfectly the laws by which it is governed. The same is true of health, life, every branch of industry, the markets, pestilence, famine, all that most nearly concerns man. We know enough of some of the general laws relating to these things, to induce exertion, and that degree of confidence and hope, which are the incentives of all sustained effort. Nor are this faith and labour ordinarily vain. Yet we are not such masters of all the laws and all the possibilities that may bear upon them, that we can ensure ourselves against defeat in any given instance. Thus we are in all things left absolutely dependent upon God. He can do his whole pleasure concerning us. Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Aside from the religious bearings of this truth, its effect is most salutary upon man in all respects. If all events occurred to him only according to uniform known laws, his life would be a tread-mill round of monotony and stagnation. His ignorance and uncertainty stimulate the thirst for knowledge, discovery, enterprise, progress. On the other hand, if all things were, so far as man is concerned, utterly fortuitous, we would sink into reckless indifference and sullen apathy. Mr. McCosh happily compares

the uniformities of providence to the conservative, and its (to human view) fortuities to the progressive principle of society.

Nor does the progress of science at all alter man's condition in this respect. He surmounts some of the great obstacles of nature, and harnesses her great elemental forces into his service. Has he not so far lessened his dependence on God? Not at all. In proportion to his mastery over immediate obstacles, he becomes more complicated with things remote. The more he knows, the more are the sources uncontrollable by himself, whence he may derive joy or sorrow. If steam and electricity connect him closely with the distant and before unknown, they also make him more dependent upon causes distant, unknown, uncontrollable, for his weal or his woe. His happiness becomes interlocked with the state of the whole globe. Withal, man's knowledge of the laws which govern objects wholly beyond his control is much more perfect than his knowledge of those which govern things directly affected by his labours. He knows perfectly the laws which govern the celestial orbs, but can he make his power felt upon them? He can do what he pleases with his field of grain, but how poorly does he understand many of the laws regulating growth, and many of those contingencies which have to do with a luxuriant harvest!

On this basis, which our author sets up with commanding light and power, he rears an argument to prove the powerful means which God has for governing man, in his providential disposal of the physical world. These fortuities he can adjust so as to gladden or distress, restrain or aid, punish or reward him; in short, to show his hatred of evil, his love of goodness. Not only so; prayer is the natural duty and privilege of a being thus dependent; and God has infinite resources for answering it, without violating any law or arrangement by which he accomplishes predetermined ends; for prayer itself may be included as an integral part of the means on which the result depends, according to his eternal counsels.

He proceeds, in the last chapter of this book, to depict in a graphic manner, the relation of the providence of God to the character of man, and to show by a large collection of facts, ingeniously grouped together, that in his physical government,

God evinces his hatred of sin, and deals with man as if he were a sinner, but a sinner not as yet hopelessly abandoned.

Among the first and most indisputable of the facts revealed by consciousness, are the essential distinction between good and evil; the immeasurable superiority of the moral to the physical; the fact that man, while he approves good, does evil, insomuch that assuming the lowest standard that can bear the name of moral, we find on a careful examination, that men are disobeying it; that physical agencies and effects are in various ways made subservient to moral results. Thus, in the absolute power which God possesses over human life, he has an almost illimitable resource for touching the springs of moral action within man, which revelation informs us he has not failed to exercise in the successive ordinances made by him for shortening its duration; and which we now see that he constantly exercises in all the forms by which disease and death are visited upon our race. How much are the moral condition and conduct of men affected by bodily temperament, by the whole state of the world around them, by the physical agents and circumstances wholly beyond their control which contribute to their happiness or misery! "While man's will and accountability remain untouched, God has means of accomplishing his will, and that with or without the concurrence of man's will." This power God employs to promote virtuous conduct: 1st, in the direct pleasure which he causes to attend and follow it, while evil passions and acts are in themselves harassing and tormenting. 2d. Virtuous conduct usually leads to manifold beneficial consequences, while iniquity usually leads to the opposite evils, insomuch that it is the stalest of proverbs that "honesty is the best policy." 3d. God often favours the good, and thwarts the wicked by more special interpositions. When a Luther or a Wilberforce has triumphed, or the Nimrods and Napoleons of our race have been prostrated, there has been a current of favouring circumstances which even the most frigid and irreligious have been constrained to recognize as proceeding from the overruling hand of God. 4th. There are groups of arrangements fitted to restrain men from vice. In the city, the multitude are so far unknown to their fellow citizens, that they feel little of the regulative force of public opinion. A police sup-

plies its place. In the country, a police is impossible. But all are under the inspection of all, and public opinion is more effective than an organized daily and nightly watch. Under the thousand influences which Providence brings to bear upon them, men unconsciously pursue and realize a thrift, a decency, a respectability, which not the wisest despotism on earth could constrain them to attempt, if these God-sent influences were removed. Hence, any successful attempt to improve the character and condition of men, must aim to put them more thoroughly under that constitution of things which God has ordained. All Socialist and Fourierite schemes, which aim to improve man by a dissolution of the family and the State, and a Eutopian reconstruction of society, will be signalized only by utter and universal failure.

Our author proceeds to depict the developments of human character, when these extraneous aids to virtue, and restraints upon vice, are withdrawn. By a strong array of familiar facts, he shows that the degree of decency and propriety which remain among men, are due rather to such external influences, than to any internal principle of goodness. Individual classes, communities, and nations, upon which they have ceased to operate, have generally abandoned themselves to most desperate and diabolical crime. Without the restraining or renewing grace of God, man shows himself half brute, half fiend. Many cannot endure the idea that the wicked should be consigned to outer darkness. But let them be cast together in a sphere where all checks upon their inherent propensities were removed, and it would be hard to conceive of a state of existence more intolerable. On the other hand, suppose that man were pure, and practised virtue from the spontaneous working of his own inward propensities, is it conceivable that God would ordain such a system of external checks, penalties, and counteractions, in order to keep the world from becoming one universal Sodom?

The great mystery which shrouds the actual condition of our world is the existence of evil, evil moral and physical, sin and suffering. No theory can annihilate these facts. That is most worthy of acceptance, which best accords with, if it do not account for them. Sin is the work of man. It is not necessary to go beyond man to account for it. Suffering is inflicted by

God. How shall we justify him in its infliction? We are so constituted that we cannot but condemn sin, though we commit it. We do not condemn, but we instinctively avoid pain, while we cannot but judge it a far less evil than sin, which we do not avoid, despite the pain which we know will follow it. But if conscience pronounces pain a less evil than sin, it also pronounces it a fit punishment of sin, such as it becomes a holy God to inflict. Once make due account of the existence of sin, and all else that we see is accounted for, in consistency with the reign of a perfect God. We are sure, if we are sure of any thing, that the blame of sin belongs to him who commits it, and that the appropriate punishment of it evinces the purity of the moral Governor and Judge. Some justify the infliction of evil on the ground that it will produce greater good. But conscience would not justify its infliction on this ground, unless it were also deserved. If it be deserved, we need look after no other ground for it. No satisfactory theory of our existing world can be framed, which denies either the existence or the demerit of sin, and the appropriate punishment of it by a holy God. This view commends itself to the conscience, the only power within us authorized to judge of moral subjects. If this be satisfied, it matters not what floating feelings or sentiments are unsatisfied. They are not the tribunal for adjudicating these questions.

We find ourselves compelled to pass rapidly over the remaining books of this treatise, barely advertng to some of their more prominent features. The third book is a survey of the moral constitution and state of man. The most important questions that arise here, respect the conscience and the will. Upon these the author dwells at some length, advertng casually to the intellectual and emotive departments of the mind, as these stand related to the former. He includes under the will, not only the faculty of positive volition, but of desire and wish, all that belongs to the *optative* power of the soul. Indeed, on account of the ambiguity of the term "will," it being used by some to signify merely the power of forming purposes, while most make it include the desires and wishes, he would prefer to call the faculty under consideration the *optative faculty*. In its feeblest exercise it wishes; its more positive

state is desire; its most decisive act is positive volition, purpose, determination. Upon each and all of these states the conscience sits in judgment, and approves or blames them according as they are good or evil. The will, he contends, is in the most absolute sense free, yet it is under the law of cause and effect, in a manner which, whether explicable by us or not, no way infringes upon its freedom. Each truth stands upon its own independent evidence, and as such is to be received, whether we can see their mutual consistency or not. He objects to Dr. Chalmers, that he did not extend the domain of will far enough to include in it, wish and desire, as well as positive volition.

This view sufficiently shows our author's position on the orthodox side in respect to the will. Yet some passages in which he strongly asserts the freedom of the will, its independence of extraneous control, and its self-acting power, can be, and have been plausibly quoted, for the purpose of impressing him into the Pelagian ranks. His real doctrine appears to be, that the will cannot be determined by circumstances *ab extra* without destroying free-agency and accountability—p. 278. But that it is determined, or determines itself *ab intra* by the laws of its own freedom, and that here it comes under the reign of cause and effect—p. 294. That the power of an external motive is as much governed by the state of the will, as the will is governed by it—p. 280. That acts are none the less, but rather the more praise or blame-worthy where they proceed from a will, rightly or wrongly biassed, immovably holy, or hopelessly depraved—p. 287. And finally, that the connexion of God with the sinful acts of his creatures, neither exonerates them from blame, nor attaches blame to him, because it is not such as makes him the author of sin, or impairs their freedom in its commission.

While we think this a fair representation of the author's views on this subject, and that they include the substance of the truth in relation to it, yet we think that he has spoken about it occasionally in terms somewhat incautious or obscure. Thus he says, p. 77: "It may be involved in the very nature of a state of freedom, that those who possess it are liable to abuse it." Is this so? Are not God's holy angels, the saints

in heaven, free? Are they liable to abuse their freedom? These questions answer themselves. It might, perhaps, be safely said, that *freedom in creatures* is liable to abuse, unless God graciously prevents it. But can he not prevent this abuse of freedom without destroying it? We think that Mr. McCosh would never dispute that he can. We have a great stake in this question. It involves the only security of the redeemed in heaven and earth, against apostasy and final perdition.

Conscience judges of the acts of the will. When these acts pass in review before the mind it cannot avoid declaring them good or bad, "and it does so according to a principle which cannot be resolved into any thing more simple." * * "It seems evident to us on the one hand, that this principle cannot be resolved into any of those intellectual axioms on which the understanding proceeds in acquiring knowledge. Compound and decompound these as we please, they will never lead to the ideas of right and wrong; nor, on the other hand, can it be resolved into those principles which are connected with the desire of pleasure or the aversion to pain. No composition of such ideas or feelings could produce the idea or feeling expressed in the words 'ought,' 'duty,' 'moral obligation,' 'desert,' 'guilt.'"—pp. 299, 300. We thank our author for this distinct and emphatic assertion of a principle, which is fundamental to all sound ethics and theology. We only regret that we have not space to follow him through his able vindication of it. He proceeds to consider conscience as it is a law to us; then as it is a faculty revealing and applying that law; then as it is a sentiment raising emotions pleasant or painful, when, as a law, it has been obeyed or disobeyed. Thus, that which makes man a responsible as well as intelligent being, is will and conscience, freedom and law. When we inquire what is the common quality of virtuous action, we discover—1. That it is found only in the acts of the will. 2. That it includes benevolence. 3. Justice, or righteousness. These two are not rivals or opposites. They are distinct, but diversified forms of the same moral excellence: complementary of, not hostile to each other. The first is the motive, the other the regulative power. Either alone is sickly and distempered. In God and all holy beings they are beautifully and inseparably blended together.

Further, we find that the moral faculty, and God for whom it is a witness, judge not merely of the act, but of the agent who performs the act. *He*, not his act, must bear the responsibility, and *he* is judged of, in and by his act. We agree with Mr. McCosh when he says, "These considerations lead to the conclusion that an agent in a virtuous state, and no other, can perform a virtuous action. It is not enough to consider the isolated act, we must consider likewise the agent in the act before we can pronounce it to be either virtuous or vicious. We hold this principle to be one of vast moment both in ethics and theology."—p. 321. The denial of this plain principle runs through nearly all the diluted practical and speculative theology which has infested American Presbyterian and Congregational churches for a quarter of a century. And we have already seen quotations from our author of passages in which he speaks of conscience as taking cognizance of no acts but those of will, so put as to imply that he agrees with those who attach moral quality to *acts only* and not to the state of the agent who performs them, and who hold that a wicked man can instantly make himself good, by that all-powerful power—even the power of contrary choice!

We infer the character of God from the moral constitution he has given us. We cannot but believe that he approves holiness and condemns sin, from the fact that he has so made us, that we cannot but approve the one and condemn the other. We cannot but attribute to him in an infinite degree all moral goodness, "the two co-ordinate moral attributes:—infinite benevolence and infinite righteousness."

Mr. McCosh, in further analyzing the nature of conscience, observes that it pronounces its decision on the state of mind of the responsible agent, as the same is presented to it. It is the office of the intellect to represent the case, as it occurs, to the conscience. These representations made under the influence of a perverse will, seeking to avoid the pain arising from condemnation by the conscience, are often one-sided, miscoloured, and utterly erroneous. Most of the voluntary acts of mankind are of a very complex nature. It is not easy to know all the motives which govern us in most of our conduct. Hence it is easy to make a false statement to the conscience. Thus its

judgments with respect to the individual and his conduct may be false, though right with respect to the case presented to it. "Hence the conscience of two different individuals, or of the same individual at two different times, may *seem* to pronounce two different judgments on the same deed:" or as presented to the conscience it is not the same, but two different deeds on which it passes judgment. "This accounts for those irregularities and apparent inconsistencies in the decisions of conscience, which have so puzzled and confounded ethical and metaphysical inquirers." Here we have a clue to the process by which a conscience may really be active, yet become perverted and disordered in all its operations. It could not become thus perverted in a pure mind. But if we suppose a depraved will, "even the mind and conscience may become defiled." In no sphere does the human mind so task its ingenuity, as in deceiving the moral faculty, and avoiding its humiliating judgments.

The deplorable consequences of this, he teaches, are three-fold.

1. By presenting evil and good in a false light, the will beguiles the conscience, in regard to many actions, to call evil good, and good evil. The action being complex, only one side of it is displayed to the conscience. Thus moral distinctions are confounded. All know how hard it is to get a favourite sin condemned.

2. Men are led to form a too favourable estimate of their own character. They will not know themselves. This however betrays a sense of guilt. They are afraid to look into their accounts, for fear of the losses and bankruptcy they will disclose. Here our author displays the deceitfulness of the heart under the heads so common with evangelical preachers.

3. The mind becomes completely perverted and disordered, and often becomes comparatively unable to distinguish right from wrong. Hence we have conscience in manifold states among men. There is an "unenlightened conscience," a "perverted conscience," an "unfaithful conscience," a "troubled conscience," a "conscience pacified and purified by the gospel."

Now the conscience of each man, whatever may be his standard of duty, announces to him that he has sinned. This involves a great deal more than most are aware of. It is

a virtual announcement that he is condemned by a holy God. Nor will it ever pass any other sentence upon this conduct, at whatever period of our existence we may review it. No repentance, even if it were in the power of one thus fallen, can ever annul this decision. Though some gentle systems of divinity teach that repentance atones for and procures the forgiveness of sin, conscience testifies the contrary, as the sacrifices which men have ever offered in expiation of it, abundantly prove. It teaches that repentance is a duty, but not an atonement.

If man is thus sinful, what is the extent of his sinfulness? In order to answer this question, our author propounds two preliminary principles. 1. "That the mind in judging of a responsible agent at any given time, ought to take into view the whole state of the mind. 2. That the mental state of the agent cannot be truly good, provided he is in the meantime neglecting a known and manifest duty." He who speaks not the truth, or prays not to God, though discharging every other duty, is in a bad moral state. Thus his actions, which are right in themselves, proceeding from a corrupt principle within, are tainted at the core. So we may bring home the sense of guilt to every man's conscience: not merely of sinful acts, but of constant, abiding, entire sinfulness. Especially is this true of ungodliness, his sin of sins. The fact, that conscience assures men that God justly condemns them, disinclines them to think of him, or to serve him, and disables them from loving or trusting him. Thus an evil, condemning conscience, hardens his heart, and vitiates his whole moral being. All this may be, notwithstanding many amiable traits of character, many good deeds, abstinence from many sins; and notwithstanding that there are few so bad, that they might not become worse. Yet, as to the fundamental element, ungodliness and its fruits, could we look at men, unbiassed by sinful prejudice, and view them from that sphere of cloudless light through which God beholds them, our judgment would be like his. "God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek after God. Every one of them is gone back, they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one." "There is no difference." We

include all men under sin, not by debasing them, but by exalting the standard of virtue. Yet conscience exercises a powerful influence in restraining men from the commission of sins to which their passions incline them; especially do they shun sins which are not easily cast into oblivion, or which are likely to be brought often within the purview of conscience, and call forth its renewed reproaches. Hence arises a prodigious check to the eruptions of human depravity.

We should rejoice, if we had room to present an outline of our author's analysis of the effect of an evil conscience in hardening the heart, drying up its pure affections, fixing it irrecoverably in sin, like a wandering star, which, shot madly from its sphere, cannot of itself regain its orbit. We should also be glad to notice his survey of those active principles, neither virtuous nor vicious, which influence men, and are made so to operate as to restrain the workings of human depravity; also his exhibition of the ways in which evil passions sometimes counterwork each other, and prevent the grosser outbreakings of sin. We can only refer our reader to the profound and graphic discourses of the book itself in relation to these topics. The author makes the following summation of his whole argument.

“We have failed of the object which we had in view, if we have not shown that the two, the physical and the moral, are in complete harmony—a harmony implying, however, that man has fallen, that God is restraining while he blesses him, and showing his displeasure at sin while he is seeking to gain the heart of the sinner. Leave out any one of these elements, and the world would appear an inexplicable enigma.” pp. 445, 6.

In the concluding book, in the reconciliation of God to man, he begins by stating that his object has been to harmonize science with religion, by a careful collation of the facts belonging to each respectively, and “to contribute his quota of evidence to the support of the divine original of the Scriptures.” Following Butler, he strongly urges the “analogy between natural and revealed religion, as an argument in behalf of the latter.” And he has done his work with the hand of a master. He brings the evangelical system into alliance with the existing state of moral and physical science. He proceeds, in an elo-

quent style, to contrast the scriptural with the mechanical, the sentimental and the pantheistic view of God, the first of which denies that he is a living and personal, the second that he is a holy, the third that he is either a living, or personal, or holy God, or that he exists at all separately from his creatures.

This holy God, though he abhors sin, has not abandoned the sinner. He still is interested in him, bestows favours upon him, employs means to lead him to virtue. This, with other things already alluded to, is symptomatic of an intended restoration. What, then, is necessary to that restoration? We cannot stay to carry our readers through our author's happy and forcible reasonings on this point, which are so well adapted to impress the stupid or the unbelieving, whether learned or unlearned. It is enough that he has shown that the three great troubles of man are an evil heart, a condemning conscience, and an offended God. Christianity provides resources which give a PURIFIED HEART, A PACIFIED CONSCIENCE, AND A PACIFIED GOD. It meets the want. It provides the perfect and only cure of man's distemper. It gives all things pertaining to life and godliness. How strong, then, is the antecedent presumption, not only that the Bible is true, but that it contains the evangelical system!

Such is the work to which we have called the attention of our readers. It is one of the noble contributions to apologetic theology, by which our brethren of the Scotch Free Church have begun to signalize themselves. We have been able to give only the bare skeleton. Those who will read the book will find it instinct with life, power, and beauty. We know of no work which we would sooner give to a person of cultivated or thoughtful mind, who had imbibed any of the fashionable prejudices against the fundamental principles of evangelical doctrine.

ART. III.—*Philosophy of Philo.*

THE ancient Grecian philosophy died with scepticism. When this last system took its rise, it appeared barely as in opposition to Stoicism and Epicurism; but it changed into a denial of every