

THE

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# **PRESBYTERIAN PREACHER,**

OR ORIGINAL SERMONS BY LIVING MINISTERS IN THE PRES-  
BYTERIAN CHURCH,

ON

THE IMPORTANT DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY,

PRESENTED IN A CLEAR AND COMPREHENSIVE MANNER, FOR THE IN-  
STRUCTION OF THE PRESENT AGE, AND IN DEFENCE  
OF THE TRUTH.

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The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.—PSALMS.

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EDITED BY REV. S. C. JENNINGS.

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VOLUME I.



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**SERMON VI.**

BY G. W. BAXTER, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,  
VIRGINIA.

**THE WICKED ARE WITHOUT PEACE,**

ILLUSTRATED BY THE VIEWS AND STATE OF INFIDELS AND OTHERS.

ISAIAH 57:21. *There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.*

THE term WICKED is very comprehensive. It includes every one who has not made his peace with God on the plan of the Gospel,—or who has not been regenerated and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. And the most charitable view of our fellow men will on this ground compel us to acknowledge, that the wicked form a large majority of our species. The characters of the wicked are greatly diversified; some are openly moral, others are profligate;—some are the ornaments, others are the pests of society;—some are plunged into the grossest errors, others are right in speculation, and only wrong in the state of their hearts; but taken altogether, they form an immense multitude of people, and they all lie under this denunciation from Heaven, that they are strangers to peace. The assertion of the text is made in the most solemn manner. It has not the form, but it has all the solemnity of an oath. The Prophet not only felt himself as in the presence of God, when he wrote this assertion, but he introduces God himself as delivering it. “There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.”

My design is to illustrate the text, by the application of it to a variety of characters, and to shew that they must be STRANGERS TO PEACE.

Peace, in the meaning of the text, is the privilege of the Christian;—the legacy which our Saviour left his disciples. It is the tranquil state of the soul, which is stayed on God, and which loves the law of God. This peace can arise from nothing but the truths of the scriptures, as applied by the teaching of the Divine Spirit. When the Spirit sanctifies the soul, and gives it a near view of the perfections of God, as revealed in the bible, and as seen in the face of Christ;—when the whole character of God is presented as near, and not as a God afar off;—and when the soul throws itself on the promises of the new covenant, then it is that it possesses that peace, which constitutes the inheritance of the Christian. This peace never can exist in an unregenerate heart. The first participation of it, in the young convert, fills him with the conviction, and brings him to the confession, that he never felt peace before;—that the ease and security of the sinner, had no resemblance to the peace of the Christian. As a Christian he now looks at the promises as his own;—the omnipotence of God is his guarantee forever, and the short afflictions which are permitted to mingle in his cup on earth, shall work out for him an eternal weight of glory.

To produce a real peace, man must have an assurance that things will be well with him forever. To be in comfort to-day would not do, if the scene might change to-morrow. Or, could he be assured of his prosperity during his life on earth, whilst an eternity of misery might await him beyond the grave, he must be a stranger to peace.

We shall first apply the proposition of the text to the mere *speculative believer*, whose heart has never been regenerated by divine grace. This man may possess the hope of divine favor, or he may not. If he possess a hope, it is one which is not supported by the bible, and which will not bear a scriptural investigation. If he read the scriptures, he will find that his faith, his prayers, his humility, his love of holiness, his desire after communion with God, and his conflicts with the evils of his heart, are not such as belong to the children of God, and of course that his hope is not built on a good foundation. If on the other hand, the speculative believer has no hope of his present acceptance with God, he must quiet his conscience by the promise of future repentance. But there are so many things to weaken the faith of that promise, that it cannot divest his mind of all uneasiness. Whatever period he may have fixed upon for his future repentance, death may come before that period arrives or the period may find him without any resolutions

for the fulfilment of his promise. He cannot but know that a similar procrastination has ruined thousands, and he is probably conscious to himself, that he has already passed some periods, which he had solemnly fixed upon, as the times of his becoming religious. In this case then the man has much which ought to disturb his peace.

But it is my intention to apply this subject principally to professed *unbelievers*. Much has been written and published to prove that the bible is the word of God, and of course, that the infidel is in a dangerous error. It is not my intention to enter into the general argument on this subject, but simply to maintain and enforce this truth, that the infidel must be a stranger to peace. This seems to be an appropriate remedy in his case. It was to unite peace with those enjoyments which the bible condemns, that he became an infidel, and could he be convinced, that the rejection of the bible will not calm his fears, and that infidelity, without producing peace, only leads him into greater danger, and removes him further from hope, on the supposition that the bible should prove true, it might make a salutary impression on his mind. At any rate, if the only object, for which he became an infidel is to be lost, and if the life of an infidel must be filled with perturbation as often as he thinks of the future, these considerations ought to deter a wise man from embracing the infidel creed. The great cause of secret dread to the infidel is, that he can have no assurance, that he will not find that very state of things in eternity, which the bible describes. He can have no assurance that there is no hell in eternity. An atheist, declaiming about chance making the world, and about the inconceivable power of chance, was greatly confounded by some one asking him, if such a chance as he described might not be able to make a hell. It is true the infidel may not have the same assurance of hell as if he believed the bible, yet when all hope from the bible is given up, the mere possibility, and much more, the probability, that that book may prove true, is a terrible thought. The sword suspended over the guest by a single hair, had no certainty of falling, but the consideration that if it should fall, death would be inevitable, was sufficient to destroy all his enjoyment. The sword suspended over the head of the infidel, threatens the death of the soul, and neither atheist nor deist can know that this sword will not fall.

The first class of infidels which I shall notice, consists of those who have rejected the bible without knowing by what evidence the bible is supported. They did not doubt the truth or oppose

the claims of Christianity, till they found that Christianity was opposed to their lives; and the best reason they can now give for their unbelief is, that they had heard of some great men who had rejected the bible as a system of priestcraft. It is evident at first view, that these men can have no pretensions to peace. Every thing with them is in the dark;—they know not whither they are going; they follow their leaders, and if their leaders are ruined, they will be ruined also. Besides they know not what induced their leaders to become unbelievers. It may have been prejudice, or the strictness of the bible in condemning their conduct. Here is certainly a bad security for things of infinite importance. If such men are without alarm, their security does not arise from their creed. It must arise from something else. Perhaps they are banishing all thought;—their days have been days of prosperity and health;—they are rejoicing in their youth, and the days of darkness they have never considered. Have they tried their principles on a sick bed? Have they found them sufficient for the hours of adversity;—for the approach of death and the coming of the Judge?

But perhaps it may be thought that there are no such infidels as I have described, and that such trifling, where the highest interests of man are concerned, is a folly too great for human nature. I hesitate not to say that there are many infidels who take their creeds on trust, and who have no better reason to silence the voice of conscience, and the misgivings of a dying hour, than that some philosophers have believed that religion was a dream. Some years ago, when professed infidelity was more common in this country than at present, I have no doubt that nine out of ten, or indeed ninety-nine out of an hundred of our infidels, were of this description. One of the most distinguished infidels who ever lived in our country, has given, as I think, sufficient proof in his writings lately published, that even he had taken his creed upon trust. When speaking on politics he was not the same man, as when he spoke on religion. In his religious discussions there is a crudeness, not to say a coarseness, and a want of all that plausibility which his pen spread over every other topic, which showed the man to be dealing in borrowed coin, and that he had not made himself familiar with his subject. But we have evidence to the same point in the numerous confessions of infidels who had never examined their creeds, and in the many cases of those, who, when at last brought to the examination, have renounced their creeds and professed Christianity.

But I believe it is not only true, that many infidels take their creed on trust, I also believe that such infidels are generally less liable to the alarms of conscience than any others. It is difficult, indeed to form an estimate of the hearts of those who are living under the power of sin. They pass through many scenes of anguish and bitterness under the mask of levity. They have a laughter in which the heart is sorrowful. If Col. Gardiner, was hailed by the whole circle of his acquaintance as a happy man, when he would willingly have exchanged conditions with a dog, we can easily believe, that there are at this time many deceitful appearances among the wicked;—many minds apparently tranquil, who are nevertheless like the troubled sea when its waters cannot rest. We only know the state of the wicked, when the intensity of misery becomes such as to take off all disguise, and force the sufferer, to disclose the anguish of his soul. Such disclosures seem to be most frequently made, by those infidels who are most employed in the investigation of the subjects, and who stand forth as the champions of the cause. Volney, Voltaire, Paine, and Gibbon are melancholy examples of the state of mind to which infidelity brings its votaries in the hour of danger or of death.

Hume is the boast of modern unbelievers. They tell us that he spent his last moments in diverting himself and his friends with jests and witticisms, about the river of death and his passage into the invisible world. But in this there is something so forced—so hypocritical, and so unnaturally profane, that the representation strikes me with as much horror, as perhaps any thing I have ever heard of a dying infidel. There is no creed which can transform death into an object of merriment or sport. If death were an eternal sleep, it would forever separate us from all the friends and things which we have known;—and this consideration alone would fill the mind with sobriety and tenderness. The man who, in any view, can make a jest of death, must be made of different stuff from the rest of men. Such a man, as an eloquent writer has expressed it, would be prepared to smile on Nineveh in ruins; to hail with delight the view of Lisbon destroyed by an earthquake; and to congratulate Pharaoh on his overthrow in the Red Sea. But there is something in this statement, so unnatural and improbable, as to force the conviction that it does not contain the whole truth, and the account of Hume's nurse is necessary to explain that of his biographer. The nurse tells us that when company was present he forced an appearance of levity and merriment, but

that when alone, he sunk into gloom and trembled till the bed shook under him.

The cause why reflecting infidels are most liable to the alarms of conscience, is, that infidelity is not founded in reason. It is founded in feeling or prejudice, and places its principal security in the banishment of all thought. We have much infidelity in the present day, and it is altogether supported by a kind of irreligious thoughtlessness. It lives in the corrupted and licentious passions of the heart, and is proof against all the arguments of the pulpit and the press; for as it was not reasoned up, it is not to be reasoned down. More than thirty years have passed since any infidel has dared to write a book, but yet infidelity dares to live. The last contest drove the deist so completely out of the field, that we fondly hoped, as the argument was at an end, so the cause of infidelity would sink into oblivion. In this hope we have been lamentably disappointed. Infidels still hold their creeds and cherish their vices by them, although they prove at every step, the truth of the prophet's declaration, that there is no peace to the wicked.

The principal cause why the infidel finds no peace, is, that his arguments are not calculated to lead the mind to any satisfactory conclusion. They are arguments calculated to disturb the peace of others, but not to confirm his own: they pull every thing down and build nothing up. If the infidel could prove all that he aims at proving, he should still be as far from heaven as when he set out. The infidel argument does not aim at proving, that the principal things contained in the bible are not true, *but only*, that we have not sufficient evidence to believe them.

There is, indeed, one set of unbelievers, who would place the controversy on grounds somewhat different, if we were obliged to attend to them. These are the men who assume to themselves wisdom sufficient to govern the universe, and to "rejudge the justice" of their Maker. They tell us what sin is, and how far God ought to punish it, and what severity of penalty is necessary to support the honor of a law, and of a government which maintains the order and happiness of more worlds than we have numbers to calculate. It is generally supposed, that if any thing we are acquainted with requires the full exercise of infinite wisdom, it is the adjustment of the moral government of the universe, as this is the great and delicate object which lies nearest the happiness of the whole moral creation. But when men tell us that they are wise enough to do all this, whilst their

acquaintance think them not wise enough to govern a State, or even a family, their pretensions are entitled to but little regard.

And as to the infidels of every other description, I repeat the assertion, that could they prove conclusively, all they attempt to prove, it would only show that we have not sufficient evidence to believe the bible, not that the substance of what is contained in the bible is untrue. Some of the substantial things contained in the bible are comprised in the following facts;—that God governs the world in righteousness;—that man has violated the divine law;—that there will be a judgment, and that there is a heaven and a hell,—and that the death and resurrection of our Saviour, furnishes the only hope of escaping the punishment of sin. Some of these facts are of such a nature, that, when once announced to the world, they take so firm a hold of the conscience that the impression can never be eradicated. These are also the principal facts of revelation which disturb the peace of a guilty world and induce men to become infidels. Now the question is, whether there is sufficient power in the infidel argument to secure the mind against the annoyance of these facts. Suppose for example, that Mr. Hume could prove that human testimony could not make a miracle credible,—would this prove that God was not righteous?—that sin was not dangerous?—or would it in fact prove that a miracle had not been performed? To say that we have not sufficient evidence to warrant the belief of a thing, is not saying that the thing itself is untrue. The circumstance that human testimony is too faithless to support the belief of a miracle, corroborates the fact that man is a sinner, but certainly does not prove that God will not punish sin.

If Mr. Hume could prove that human testimony could not establish the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, still the resurrection might be true notwithstanding this deficiency of human testimony. The truth is, there is but one way of getting clear of that array of facts which the bible presents, and that is by what is called proving the negative. If we would disprove the resurrection, we must bring our witnesses from the time and place of its supposed occurrence, and if we would disprove the existence of a heaven or a hell we must bring our witnesses from the other world.

The Jewish rulers at the time of the resurrection, seem to have attempted a more direct course than our modern infidels. They tried to prove by witnesses, who, however, were asleep at the time, that the disciples stole the body. This was not going

far enough; it only accounted for some appearances at the sepulchre, but did not contradict the report of his appearance afterwards alive. To have produced the crucified body would have proved the negative, and at once have overthrown the Christian system. And the fact that they did not, and could not do this, considering how much they had at stake, and how fully that circumstance would have refuted every thing the apostles could say, affords the strongest indirect evidence, that the resurrection was indeed true. Mr. Hume's argument from first to last, goes on the supposition that it is impossible for God to make a revelation to man. If this impossibility could be proved, the proof would be altogether impertinent, as it relates to the sinner's peace. That impossibility of a revelation would not prove that God did not hold the sinner accountable for all his conduct, and that he was not in danger of everlasting ruin. Such is the ground on which the infidel must be left after all his efforts to subvert the scriptures. Awful possibilities, and even probabilities stand around him, which he has no means of getting out of his way. He must obtain ease of mind, if he does obtain it, by not thinking on the subject of religion at all. And if a day must come which will force the subject upon him, he must bear the solemnities of that day as he can. Perhaps on his death bed, he may say with Gibbon, that the future is all impenetrable darkness,—or he may tremble and shake his bed like Hume,—or he may blaspheme and curse his associates and his day, like Voltaire. "In the morning he may say, would to God it were even, and in the evening, would to God it were morning,"—or he may wish, as an infidel once did, that he were already in hell that he might know the worst.

We have hitherto attended principally to the system of Mr. Hume, but the result is the same on the examination of every infidel system. Gibbon's argument consisted in the supposition of five secondary causes, which assisted the propagation of Christianity by natural means. These secondary causes were only calculated to disprove or weaken the force of that miracle which enabled twelve fishermen to spread Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. There can be no doubt that the manner of propagating Christianity, when fairly stated, contains an overwhelming argument for its truth. Yet if this one argument were weakened, or even entirely set aside, ten thousand other arguments remain, wholly independent of this, and abundantly sufficient of themselves to prove the truth of the religion. One is here disposed to wonder, that infidels should ever have thought of congratulation, or of taking comfort to themselves

from any thing that Gibbon has written. The infidel cause never appears weaker than in the contemplation of this case. What would it avail to set aside one argument for the bible, if ten thousand others were left? If a prisoner were bound by ten thousand independent chains, his breaking one, when he saw no possible way of breaking the rest, would be no great matter of triumph. But the case shows one mortifying truth, that is, that men do not reason in religion as they do about their temporal concerns. If our great enemy found it as difficult to cheat men out of their souls, as a villain would find it to cheat them out of a little property, the kingdom of darkness would not multiply subjects as it does.

The supposed *contradictions* of the bible, constitute the only remaining source of infidel argument. But could these contradictions be fairly made out, yet there might be so many suppositions to account for them, that they would afford no satisfactory conclusion to the unbeliever; as they might have arisen from innumerable circumstances connected with the transmission of the revelation to us. We have now before us the whole groundwork of the infidel cause, and if we except the allegations of those who presume to direct their Maker in forming his own government, it is evident that, if the infidel could maintain all his positions, could prove all he attempts to prove, his cause would still be desperate: he might still find the same state of things in eternity which the bible describes.

But justice to this subject requires us to say, that infidels have failed in proving what they attempted to prove, and they appear to be conscious of that failure. Infidels generally who have written on the subject, have given up the contest after the first blow. Some, indeed, have carried on a kind of skirmishing warfare, during the whole of their lives, but when any infidel has made a set attack, and has been fairly opposed, he has very seldom returned a second time to the field of combat. Gibbon and Paine never answered Watson. Hume said he at one time intended to answer Campbell, but afterwards laid aside that intention. Mr. Hume did not tell us why he declined answering, but I presume, every one acquainted with the controversy will easily discover his reason. Had Hume given a fair and logical answer, such as he knew the world expected from his talents, he would have shown that his principles unsettled all the grounds of human belief. Long before he could have invalidated the evidence of the New Testament, he must have destroyed the authority of all other history. He must also have destroyed all

reasoning from cause and effect, and reduced the world to general scepticism. Indeed nothing could have been more pleasing to the friends of religion, than to have seen an answer from either Hume or Gibbon to their opponents, and it is hard to conceive how any book could have done as much good to the cause of Christianity, as such answers from such men would have done. Suppose for a moment that Gibbon had replied to Watson. After all the facts were set right, and the misrepresentations cleared away, what would have become of five secondary causes? Or how would Mr. Hume, after Campbell's comments, have maintained his distinction between a contrary experience and a different experience, as in the case of the king of Siam?—a distinction of vital importance to his whole cause. Indeed the true reason why the infidel dislikes to come a second time to the contest, is, that the principal strength and plausibility of his book consists in the coloring of his facts. The Christian controversy, embracing a wide field of history, affords ample scope for such coloring, but when that coloring is brought to the proper test, the whole cause is exhausted.

It would illustrate the weakness of the infidel cause, could we give a history of the controversy, and of the arguments produced in opposition to Christianity, from our Saviour's time to the present day. The unbelieving Jews opposed Christianity, because they thought it would overturn the authority of Moses. Modern infidels can see that the Christian dispensation gives the best confirmation to that of Moses, and that the two dispensations must stand or fall together. For three hundred years after the resurrection of Christ, infidels never attempted to deny the miracles of the New Testament, but asserted that they had miracles also in favor of heathenism. No unbeliever would now think of supporting himself on that ground. The silversmith at Ephesus, charged Paul with preaching the doctrine, that those things which were made with hands were no gods. This proved a most popular argument, and threw the whole city into commotion. Such an argument would have little weight in a large city in the present day.

Such are the varying grounds on which our religion has been opposed;—and such the arguments on which infidels of former days ventured the salvation of their souls. The souls ventured on this ground are now lost forever, and the time will come, when the infidel arguments of the present day, will not be considered as a whit safer than those which have heretofore occasioned so much ruin. There is one circumstance which throws

more than suspicion on the whole infidel cause;—it is built on principles directly the reverse of those which govern human nature. The infidel tells us that a revelation is so wonderful, that human testimony cannot make it credible. History informs us that the whole heathen world lived under the belief, that God was making communications of his will every day, and that wise men were discovering those communications. It was this belief, and nothing else, which gave the soothsayer and the oracle, the power of stopping the march of armies, and controlling the affairs of the world. The infidel may say, this was a superstitious belief. I answer, it was the belief of human nature, and of that very human nature which they are now attempting to fortify against the threatenings of the word of God. This proneness to believe in communications from heaven, is a principle which the infidel cannot eradicate, even from his own bosom, and which, in spite of his pride, makes him tremble on the verge of the grave.

There is another class of men, to whom the declaration of the text may be applied,—men who do not call themselves infidels, but whom we cannot consider as Christians, and who appear to be as remote from peace, as any errorists in the world. These are the UNITARIANS. The Unitarian appears to me to place himself on a more precarious ground, and in a situation more liable to disturbance, than even the infidel himself; for, after the bible is admitted to be the word of God, I think it more difficult to maintain the Unitarian hypothesis, with any thing like a common sense consistency, than to maintain any other error.

The Unitarian admits the bible to be a divine revelation. This at once excites expectation. A revelation supposes miracles;—miracles are a violation of the laws of nature,—and God would not disturb the order of the universe, to make a revelation to man, unless something very important was to be communicated. Curiosity, or even anxiety, is here worked up to the highest pitch;—man is about to receive an important communication from his Maker. But all this expectation is raised to be disappointed; for as soon as the Unitarian applies his rules of interpretation to the bible, it becomes a revelation which reveals nothing. I hesitate not to say, that those rules of interpretation which can expunge the divinity of our Saviour from the bible, can expunge from it any other truth. Let such rules of interpretation be once admitted, and we can give any meaning, or no meaning at all, to that book, or to any other book, just as it suits our pleasure. The orthodox have shown, with the fullest evi-

dence, that the Scriptures have given to our Saviour the name of God in its fullest and most awful sense, even in that sense in which it implies self-existence, and in which therefore it cannot be communicated to any creature. The Scriptures also give him all the attributes of God;—all the works of God, even the creation of the world, and the management of the last judgment; and also the worship of God. Now if we have any understanding of any thing, that being who has all the names,—all the attributes,—all the works,—and all the worship of God, must be God. We are supposed to have the knowledge of God, before we receive a revelation from him. But how do we get that knowledge? Paul tells us, it is from the works of creation;—he that built all things is God. But our Saviour made all things, therefore he is God. Now after what the bible has said in setting forth the divinity of Jesus Christ, if that divinity can be expunged from the bible, then any other truth can be expunged from the bible. Dr. Priestly says, that the New Testament, and the mission of our Saviour, were intended to reveal the resurrection of the body. I have no doubt the resurrection is plainly taught in the New Testament, and yet I have as little doubt, that Hymeneus and Philetus, when they denied the resurrection, could support themselves by as good arguments as the Unitarians can, in denying the divinity of our Saviour. Indeed, it would seem that the arguments and mode of reasoning in both cases were the same:—they consisted in resolving into a figure, every thing which they did not choose to understand in any other way.

But here is another difficult matter for the Unitarian to account for. They suppose that the notion of our Saviour's divinity, first arose from a blunder of the orthodox party, in understanding literally what they ought to have taken figuratively. But then the matter did not stop here; for by taking other things literally, which the Unitarians consider as figures, they have formed a whole system of doctrines, all the parts of which must stand or fall together. For the doctrines of the atonement, human depravity, regeneration, and in fact, the whole orthodox system, according to Unitarians, has come out in the same way, by understanding literally what ought to be considered as figures. And, what is certainly more wonderful than all the rest, is, that Dr. Priestly, and other Unitarians of high standing, have confessed, that this system, which arose from a continual tissue of blunders, has been found more efficient in promoting sound morals and genuine piety, than what they call the true doctrines of the Scriptures. Now this is certainly, too wonderful for belief. To promote good morals and piety, was certainly

the design of God, in giving a revelation. And can these men suppose, that the Divine Being would have failed of his design in some degree, had not the blundering of the orthodox made the system more effectual for the divine purpose than was originally intended? All this is deduced by fair inference from the Unitarian scheme; but to believe a scheme which authorizes such consequences is evidently a matter of some difficulty.

But perhaps it may be said that the infidel or Unitarian, in rejecting the entire Bible, or its leading doctrines, as not supported by sufficient evidence, is acting on the same principle on which we reject Mohammedanism. But the cases are materially different. We receive the bible as an authenticated revelation, which, as such, will set aside the pretensions of every religion supported by inferior evidence. And this, it appears to me, is the only mode of deciding the question of a divine revelation, consistently with the tranquillity of the human mind. That readiness with which mankind naturally receive supposed communications from the Deity, as manifested by the experience of the whole heathen world, must prove that God formed man for religious direction, and intended to give him a revelation. If infinite wisdom was concerned in the formation of man at first, that proneness on the part of man to receive a revelation, makes it more than probable that a true revelation is somewhere to be found. And as the evidence of the bible is incontestably superior to that of any other system, we can then rely on the bible to silence the claims of every imposture, as well as to direct us to future happiness. And this I conceive to be the safest mode of deciding the question of a divine revelation. The Christian believes that if mankind would act on the plan of examining all the religions in the world, and choosing the best: the whole world would soon settle down upon the Christian faith. The infidel must believe, that if mankind should honestly examine all the religions in the world, they would as honestly reject them all. On this point, the suffrage of human nature is against the infidel; for all nations have chosen some religion, and all enlightened nations have chosen religions supposed to be founded on some form of divine revelation. And for my part, when I behold the avidity with which the most enlightened nations of the heathen world, received the pretended communications of oracles and diviners, I feel convinced that if man was not made to receive a revelation from his Maker, he was made to be the sport of superstition, and to live and die without peace.

But there is another difference between our rejection of Mohammedanism, and the infidel's rejection of the bible. Mohammed makes no important addition to what the light of nature teaches. On the other hand, the bible not only confirms all that is taught by the light of nature, but supplies those things in which the light of nature, as a religion for fallen man, is evidently deficient. The light of nature was the religion of man in a state of innocence: in a fallen state, man must have a revelation to teach him the certainty, and the manner of obtaining the pardon of sin. By rejecting the bible, therefore, the infidel rejects the only rational hope for a sinner, and throws himself into a state of darkness and fearful anticipation. The common notions of mankind respecting religion will still remain. The inevitable distinction between right and wrong, and that instinctive something which naturally arises in the human mind—takes hold of a moral government, and points man to a judgment to come, will give dreadful annoyance to a mind not supported by the hopes of the gospel.

How unavailing, then, for the infidel to prove, even if he could prove it, that we have not sufficient evidence to believe the bible. If we had not sufficient evidence for the bible, yet all would be dark without the Bible. If we had not sufficient evidence for the bible, still the worst things threatened in the bible, are also threatened by the light of nature, and the bible presents the only hope of escape. But the mere circumstance of insufficient evidence, is a bad cure for the stings of conscience, as many an infidel has found on a death-bed. Thousands of things are true of which man has no sufficient evidence. The most dreadful things are coming on the world every day, of which the world had no evidence until they did come. And suppose, for the sake of argument, that we had no sufficient evidence for the truth of the bible, yet the judgment, the heaven, the hell, the lake of fire, and the never-dying worm of the bible, might all be solemn truths. If an inhabitant of one of our large cities, at a distance from home, should hear a report that the pestilence which now alarms our country, had invaded the place of his residence, he might trace the report and find it destitute of evidence; but that would not remove his apprehensions; for notwithstanding that want of evidence, the pestilence might be in the neighborhood, and in the dwelling of his family.

But this pestilence itself refutes the infidel. It is a novel destroyer of the human race. It pays no respect to seasons or

climates;—its appearance, its symptoms, its causes, its mode of traveling through the world, and attacking human life, are all new, and human experience is as much against its existence, as against the existence of a miracle; and therefore, according to the highest infidel authority, we ought not, on human testimony, to believe in the existence of such a pestilence. A moment's reflection shows how inefficient such a reasoning would be in quieting the alarms of the public mind in the present case;—and when man is brought to his serious and honest hour, they will prove equally unavailing in quelling the fears of futurity. But I am tired of unraveling the fallacies, and exposing the sandy foundations on which men are resting their eternal interests,—“O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.”

I have brought forward these statements with the design, if possible, of presenting some antidote to infidelity, and of saving some of my fellow creatures from its fatal consequences. Much has been written in the form of direct argument, to prove the truth of the Scriptures. Indeed, if any thing has ever been proved, which depended on human testimony or historical evidence, the miracles and resurrection of our Saviour, and of course, the truth of the Christian religion, has been proved. One who has fully and honestly attended to the evidences on this subject, would as soon expect, that the existence of France as a nation, or of London as a city, should prove a dream, as that the Christian religion should prove a dream. But with all this evidence before the public mind, we have infidels, and the prospect of reclaiming them seems to be almost desperate. I have attempted a new course, and I humbly pray, that God may give it success. I have attempted to fix their attention on the plain fact, that infidelity is a stranger to peace, and that by their creeds they are destroying their own happiness. I have reminded them of this,—that the infidel, after all his devices, subterfuges, and sophisms, has no assurance that there is not a hell, and that he may not be in that hell to-morrow. What will the infidel plead against this statement of the case? Will he pretend to deny it? Will he say that he has an assurance that he will not be in hell to-morrow? Let him show us, if he can, from what part of his creed he derives this assurance. I say, for the sake of himself, and for the sake of thousands who are following the same career of darkness and ruin, let him show us, if he can, from what part of his creed he draws the assurance that he will not be in hell to-morrow. And if he can make no reply to this,

will he still attempt to persuade us that his soul is at peace? and will he persuade others to trust to the same broken reed? The mind of man can never rest upon such ground as this. The brute has no anticipations of the future, and therefore can be contented with its present good. But the soul of man dwells more in the future than in the present, and without some security for things to come it can have no peace,—and this want of peace is the greatest of positive evils,—worse than all the diseases of the body. “The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?” Amen.