

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XIII.—NO. 2.

JULY, MDCCCLX.

ARTICLE I.

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW ON "CHRISTIAN REVIVALS."

The maxim of the wise man, that "there is nothing new under the sun," that, "that which hath been is that which shall be," seems to meet its verification in nothing more clearly than in the ever-recurring cycles of opinion. To a philosophic mind, observing the course of human history, nothing seems more clear than that certain forms of opinion held by men in all recorded ages, are continually disappearing, and being re-produced. As the occasions which give rise to these forms of opinion become more fully developed, and their advocates become overborne by counter testimony or argument, the peculiar phase then assumed by these opinions vanishes and is held in abeyance for a time. But as the world rolls on, and the restless activity of human thought evolves new theories, or new combinations of old theories, the exploded sophism is re-constructed, and made to figure on the arena of discussion, until it is again consigned to its temporary obscurity. As an illus-

rule of faith and practice, and the introduction of philosophy, and human reason, and natural affections, and fanciful imaginations, as disturbing elements, in the place thereof. It is amazing how such errors should enter and maintain their footing in the Church for so many ages. But a distinction may, and should be, drawn between praying for the dead and Purgatory. In the earlier ages of the Church, as is evident, the one did not involve the other. Prayers for the Dead, in these ages, were not offered in view of a Purgatory, and cannot be cited as evidence of the belief of the Church in the existence of such a place. Since the adoption of Purgatory into the faith of the Romish Church, Prayers for the Dead are offered for those only who are supposed to go to that dolorous place; but there being no such place, Prayers for the Dead are a vanity; and upon whatever ground offered, in any age of the Church, being without authority from the Word of God, have been and are, and ever will be, vanity and sin!

ARTICLE IV.

A SUPERNATURAL REVELATION NECESSARY.

In the early ages of the Church, we do not recollect that the question of the "necessity" of a Divine Revelation was ever mooted by the assailants of Christianity. It was a universally received opinion, that the gods had intercourse with men—and, in fact, dwelt amongst them, as the existence of their numerous "Oracles" evinced. But in modern times, and in Christian lands, altogether the most important part of the discussion of the "Evidences" relates to the NECESSITY there is for a supernatural communication from God to man.

It must be confessed, that if it be possible for man to be fully developed, and to attain his highest perfection and happiness, simply and solely under the influence and guidance of the light of nature, then a Supernatural Revelation is *not* necessary, and consequently has not been given. God does not deal in works of supererogation—He does not aid man unless such help is needed. We must put our own shoulders to the wheel before we call on Hercules! But, on the contrary, if it be found that the light of nature is *not* sufficient to meet the moral and spiritual demands of humanity, and to lead to its highest moral and intellectual attainments, then, on the supposition that God is good, and designs the greatest happiness of his creature, man, an unsophisticated reason is compelled to conclude that He, as a kind Father, will provide for man that which is necessary to the fulfilment of the true end of his being, which is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The NECESSITY for a Divine Revelation being once granted, it follows that one has actually been given. And this once admitted, the task of deciding as to the precedency of the rival claimants for this high honor is comparatively easy. So that to establish the *necessity* for a Divine Revelation is, in our estimation, by far the most important part of the discussion of the claims of the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. We propose, therefore, in the present article, to give—what may possibly not be new to others of deeper thought and more extensive reading, but nevertheless what is with us—an original argument in favor of the necessity of a Supernatural Revelation from God to man.

Truth is as essential to the growth and well-being of the soul of man, as food is to the body. And that same necessity, if such a term be allowable in this connection, existing in the character of God, the great Father of being, which prompts Him to provide suitable aliment for our physical natures, would also require Him to furnish such food for the mind as is adapted to its development, growth, and

full expansion. Without the ability to grow in knowledge, wisdom, and intellectual strength and capacity, man would be no more than a sagacious brute:—nay, without instincts, without clothing, without natural armor or means of defence and protection, he would be amongst the most miserable of brutes! That man, therefore, should grow in knowledge, and increase in moral and intellectual vigor and strength, is a necessity of the circumstances of his existence; it is, to the eye even of a naturalist, manifestly essential to the fulfilment of the end of his being. Let it be granted, therefore, that God designed man, in his original creation, to be a *progressive* being, growing in knowledge, wisdom, and in intellectual capacity.

The next question to be determined is—what kind of knowledge and culture is most suitable for man, as he is constituted? By examining the comparative anatomy of an animal, we can determine in what element it is designed to live, whether in the air, or earth, or water; and, also, what kind of food is most suitable to its nature, whether flesh, or grain, or grass, or fruits. By examining the soil by the tests of agricultural chemistry, we can readily decide as to what it is best adapted to produce, whether cereals, or grasses, or vines, etc. So, in like manner, by examining man's moral and intellectual anatomy—the soil of his mind—we may find an index as to what kind of seed it is best to sow, and what kind of intellectual food is most suitable to develope the mind, and to enable man to accomplish most successfully the design of his creation.

There will be no difference of opinion—there can be no dispute, as to the fact that man is capacitated to become familiar with the earth on which he is placed, and the physical universe within the range of his senses. Indeed, such knowledge is essential to his continued and comfortable existence in this world. His perceptive organs, his eye, his ear, his hand, etc., are all designed to bring him into immediate contact with physical nature. And he has

other faculties, admirably adapted to reproduce sensations and impressions, to compare, to generalize, and to draw conclusions, and thus to ferret out the secrets of nature, and to become master of what is called natural science. We find, therefore, a mutual adaptation between certain constitutional attributes of man and the natural world around him, insomuch that we cannot conceive what use man would have for certain capacities were there no physical world:—as, for example, what use there would be for the power of vision, were there no light; or that of hearing, were there no sounds; or for the touch, were there no material world. We perceive, then, the adaptation that God has established between the outward world and certain faculties, which we will call, for the sake of distinction, the natural faculties of the mind, which would not, and could not, be unfolded and exercised in the absence of these congenial circumstances. Let it be remembered, therefore, that the mind of man would fail to attain the true end of its being without this natural development. So that there is a *necessity* for these congenial circumstances, insomuch that if we may suppose a being like man, created in some remote part of immensity, where, as yet, there was nothing—where all was without form and void, and darkness was on the face of the deep—it would be reasonable to conclude, *a priori*, that God would create a physical world around him, for the purpose of developing the germinal attributes with which he was endowed.

Let it be granted, then, that, as man is endowed with certain natural faculties—that is, germinal capacities, which the works of nature are calculated to draw out—there is a *necessity* that the works of nature should exist, or that something should exist that would develop these embryon faculties, and that man would be imperfect and fail to accomplish the end of his being without such natural development.

But, further, man has certain *moral* attributes, as well as

natural, which need to be developed and cultivated in order to his protection. And this, so far as we are capable of judging, constitutes the grand distinction between man, made in the image of God, and the brute creation. That brutes possess the same perceptive organs that man does, and, for the most part, in a much higher and more perfect degree, all admit. That they have certain other faculties, memory for example, none will deny; and that some of them are capable of a species of reasoning, of comparing and drawing conclusions, it would be difficult to disprove. But that they possess a moral nature—are influenced by any thing like a conscience—or have any sense of moral right or wrong, guilt or innocence, we have not the slightest evidence to believe. That man possesses these moral and elevating characteristics needs no proof—they are part of his nature—and, consequently, the consciousness of every human being is sufficient, without further argument or evidence, to convince him of this fact. A blind man can have no conception of colors, nor a deaf man of sounds: the fact, therefore, that he can see and hear is proof of the existence of the eye and the ear without further evidence. So, in like manner, the fact that a man may, under any circumstances, feel a sense of guilt or moral wrong, of penitence, faith, resignation, love, spiritual joy, or have an idea of moral justice, holiness, righteousness, spirituality, forgiveness, pardon—we say the fact that man, under any circumstances, is capable of having those moral conceptions and ideas, is proof of the existence of moral faculties, as much so as the sensations of light and sound are proof of the existence of the eye and the ear. All can understand how it would be impossible for a man who was born blind ever to have the slightest idea of color. Equally impossible would it be for him to have the remotest conception of right and wrong, guilt and innocence, repentance and faith, justice and holiness, mercy and pardon, without certain moral faculties, which serve as organs by which such ideas are apprehended.

Let it be granted, then, that man possesses certain moral attributes as well as natural, which, in order to his symmetrical development and the perfection of his being, it is essential should be drawn out and cultivated.

Now, since man confessedly has these moral germinal faculties, the development and cultivation of which is essential to the perfection of his nature, it is reasonable to conclude that the Creator would furnish some suitable means to that end—that is, to their proper development and cultivation. We have already admitted, that if the Almighty were to create a man with eyes, ears, and other perceptive organs, in some remote, void, and empty part of immensity, supposing such a place possible, that it would be no more than reasonable to conclude that a material and sensible world would be created suitable to the development and exercise of these organs; or that he would be removed into the midst of congenial and apposite circumstances. With equal propriety may we conclude, that if God has endowed man with certain germinal moral attributes—which we have already admitted that He has—that He will also furnish something suitable to develop them. On this question we take it for granted that we are of one mind.

The next question to be settled is this: Is the natural world adapted to develop, cultivate and exercise man's *moral* and *religious* nature? or must we look to something supernatural to accomplish this end? Let us, if you please, interrogate nature on this subject.

The account given in the book of Genesis of the creation and early history of man in the Garden of Eden, leads us to infer that it was not the design nor the expectation of the Creator that the natural world should do more than develop man's natural faculties, and that his moral nature would be developed by immediate intercourse with the Almighty or His angels. But, after man's fall and corruption, it was no longer suitable for him, an unholy being,

an enemy, to commune with a holy God ; or even for sinless angels to have social intercourse with sinful men. But yet without this, or some substitute for this, man's moral nature must forever remain undeveloped. Does the natural world furnish this substitute ? Let us see.

Man has a CONSCIENCE:—What, in the natural world, is calculated to develope and cultivate it ? The beautiful and sublime things in nature will develope the taste, but not the conscience. The wonderful mechanism of creatures, from the highest to the lowest, illustrates the wisdom of the Creator, and will extort admiration, but will not develope the conscience. The terrible things of nature, the thunder, the tempest, the earthquake, will awaken fear and dread, and inspire awe, but they do not awaken the conscience to a sense of moral guilt ! Here, then, is a faculty, part of our moral constitution, that, whilst its presence is more or less felt in every bosom, yet the natural world cannot develope and direct. And, if the fulfilment of the end of man's being, and his future happiness, depend in any degree upon the development and proper cultivation of this faculty, it is perfectly evident that they must fail without help other than that nature can give.

Again : Man has a sense of HOLINESS, of moral purity, indicated not only by consciousness, but by the baptisms, the ablutions, and purifications of all religions. But what is there in the natural world adapted to develope, cultivate and perfect this idea ! It is true that nature is pure in all her varied departments—in her light, her air, her dews, her fountains, her opening flowers ; but it is not *moral* purity—it is only physical—and the only lesson that this fact can teach is simply the propriety of bodily purity, common cleanliness, and no more. The moral idea of HOLINESS, the great idea of the Bible, remains wholly undeveloped. If, therefore, the development and cultivation of the idea of holiness be essential to man's perfection, (and it is impossible for him to know God without it,) it is

perfectly manifest that there is nothing in the natural world adapted to accomplish this end. We must look to something supernatural.

Once more : There is in man that which seeks for MERCY and PARDON (shall we call it an appetite for mercy and pardon ?); it is a sense of *guilt*—a feeling of ill-desert on account of sin, so universal that we shall regard it the same as a self-evident truth. Now, as every bodily appetite has something corresponding to it, peculiarly and precisely adapted to meet its demands—the appetite of hunger finds its appropriate food ; of thirst, drink ; curiosity, knowledge ; the social principle, society, etc.—so it is reasonable to look for something to meet the cravings of our moral appetites. But what in the provinces of nature is calculated to do this—to soothe the agonizing sense of *guilt*, or to gratify the irrepressible cravings for *mercy* and *pardon* ? There is nothing—absolutely nothing ! The laws of nature know nothing of mercy and pardon ! Nature's judges are blind ! In her code every law has its penalty, and every penalty, without mercy or mitigation, is inflicted to the letter, where there is an infraction of her laws ! Natural laws, therefore, do not admit of mercy, reprieve, or pardon ! And the God revealed only by nature, is wanting in the attributes of mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

If, therefore, a sense of moral guilt be in accordance with man's nature, (and he could not feel it if it were not, no more than he could feel hunger without a stimulating appetite,) and if guilty man has within him an instinctive craving for mercy and pardon, (and every man's own breast can testify as to this,) what, in all the wide range of nature, is adapted to meet, to quiet, to soothe, this sense of guilt—to gratify this irrepressible craving for mercy and pardon ? The answer is, nothing—absolutely *nothing* ! If, therefore, it be essential to man's happiness, and the perfection of his being, that these moral outgoings of his spiritual nature should find something suited to meet their

wants and gratify their cravings, he must look to something *supernatural*, since the natural world is confessedly insufficient.

Since, therefore, it is most clearly manifest that IF the development and cultivation of the moral attributes of man be *essential* to his final perfection and happiness, that the works of nature alone are not competent to the end, and, therefore, this part of man's nature must remain undeveloped and uncultivated, or something supernatural must effect this, it becomes of the utmost importance to dispose of the "*if*," and to decide absolutely whether the aforesaid moral culture *be* or be *not* essential to his best interests.

This now all important question we are constrained to answer in the affirmative, from the following and like considerations, viz :

First : The very fact that God, infinitely wise and good, has made man with a moral nature, leaves it reasonable to infer that the development and cultivation of this moral nature would be for the best.

Second : It is essential to the symmetrical proportions of man's spiritual constitution that his *whole* nature should be developed—his *moral* equally with his intellectual—since, as in the material so in the spiritual world, a being with a part of its organization unduly developed, to the neglect and disparagement of the other part, becomes disproportioned, one-sided, and monstrous !

Third : We take it for granted that intelligent creatures are happy, and accomplish the end of their being in proportion as they resemble and approach the character of their Father-Creator, the fountain head of all excellence : and as God, this Father-Creator, is characterized by moral attributes as well as natural, we conclude that it is essential that man's moral nature be developed with equal step (*pari passu*) with his intellectual, in order to his perfection and greatest happiness ; or, in other words, it is essential to his being in "the image of God." Let it be granted, then,

unconditionally (without any "if"), that the development and cultivation of man's moral attributes *are* essential to his final perfection and happiness.

Let us now see exactly where we stand. We have agreed that the development and cultivation of man's moral attributes are essential to his perfection and happiness, and, also, that there is nothing in the natural world calculated to effect this desirable end. We are, therefore, necessarily left to one of two conclusions: either, *first*, that man, the noblest of terrestrial creatures, will fail in fulfilling the true end of his being, and consequently must be ultimately miserable; or, *second*, that God will, in a *supernatural* way, meet the wants of his moral nature. Which of these two conclusions shall we adopt, since we are under the necessity of adopting one or the other?

Let us, if you please, for the sake of argument, adopt the first, and conclude that, although man confessedly has certain germinal moral constituents, yet that they must, from the necessity of the case, remain dormant and uncultivated, and that, consequently, man must fail to attain final perfection and happiness! Is this our conclusion? Then it devolves upon us to explain this singular phenomenon—we say *singular*, because it is *anomalous*—contrary to God's dealings with all his other creatures! The brute beast seems, so far as we are capable of judging, to accomplish the end of its being; the little bird fills its true destiny; the insect, the plant, nay the least and lowest of God's creatures, are all "very good"—all fulfil perfectly their destiny—and only man, his last and noblest work, fails to accomplish this end!—and that, too, for the want of a provision suitable to meet his moral demands! Is it not singular? and does it not need an explanation? How, then, shall we solve the difficulty?

First: Shall we take the ground that the Creator was wanting in *goodness*, and therefore wilfully, and with malice prepense, so conditioned man that he must of necessity be

miserable? This fills our idea of a devil, but not of a God; such a being is fit only to be hated, not loved! We can not, therefore, rest in this conclusion. Our minds instinctively revolt at such a conception of God—we cannot tolerate it.

Second: Shall we, then, explain the problem by the supposition that God was wanting, not in goodness, but *wisdom*? and that the reason why man's entire nature—his moral, as well as his intellectual—was not harmoniously and happily developed by a suitable provision, was owing to an over-sight in the Creator—a deficiency of knowledge and wisdom? Shall this be our solution of the problem? Then is our God to be blamed for attempting what He had not sufficient skill to accomplish! The very statement of the conclusion does violence to our feelings of reverence! We cannot, therefore, adopt this explanation.

Third: Shall we, then, in the absence of other explanations, attempt to account for this singular phenomenon on the supposition that the Almighty was wanting, not in goodness, not in wisdom, but in *power*, and, therefore, was incapable of perfecting His good and wise designs? Is this our answer to the difficult question? Then is our God to be *pitied*, rather than blamed, for the unfortunate predicament in which His nobly endowed creature, man, is placed! What! pity the Almighty for His want of might and power! The very thought is irreverently absurd!

Now, we demand whether there be any other more reasonable or more probable solution of the difficulty than the aforesaid, viz: a want of goodness, wisdom, or power, on the part of the Creator? Are we satisfied with this? Can we take this as a satisfactory explanation of the strange conduct, if we may be allowed the expression, on the part of God, in not providing for the development and cultivation of man's moral and spiritual nature? Every principle of our bosom revolts at such a horrible conclusion! It is impossible for a sane mind to entertain it for a moment.

We must, therefore, frankly confess our inability to assign any good and valid reason in explanation of the anomalous conduct of the Creator, (supposing it true,) in leaving man wholly destitute of suitable means of developing and cultivating his moral attributes. And as it is utterly illogical to maintain any conclusion without premises, without proof, without argument, without reason, much more a strange and anomalous one, of course it must be abandoned. The only alternative is to adopt the second conclusion, which is, that God will, in a *supernatural* way, meet the wants of man's moral nature. This His goodness, wisdom, and power guarantee, and this we are bound to admit, unless there be some good and valid reason for rejecting it. Can we find such?

In the first place, then, there is nothing *absurd* in the idea. If God sees fit to make a revelation to man suitable to his moral and spiritual wants, He does not thereby contradict Himself, or act in anywise contrary to His nature. He has made no pledge against it; it will not infringe upon any of His attributes, nor will it, so far as we know, run counter to any of His plans or purposes. There is nothing, therefore, in the nature or character of God, that would make it absurd for Him to make a revelation to man.

In the next place, there is nothing in *man's* nature that would debar or shut out a revelation from God. Nay, we have seen that the circumstances and condition of fallen man imperiously demand such a revelation; we have already confessed that it is essential to his perfection and happiness.

In the third place, there is nothing in the nature of the thing itself rendering it impossible or absurd. Nay, there is every reason to believe that, when man was originally created, fully grown and mature, as we must take for granted, since it was impossible, from the very nature of the case, for the first man to have commenced life and progressed up to manhood as the succeeding race has done,

God spake to him, taught him, instructed him; and *this* was a Divine revelation. And if man has *once* received a supernatural revelation from God, this proves that there is no intrinsic difficulty in the thing, and that, if necessity require, he may *again* receive a revelation from God.

And, in the fourth place, if there be nothing in the character and purposes of God preventing a revelation—and nothing in the character and condition of man debarring it—and nothing in the nature of the thing itself rendering it intrinsically impossible and absurd, we cannot conceive any other insuperable difficulty in the way of such a revelation as man's moral wants and spiritual nature require, provided God sees fit to grant it; and His goodness, wisdom and power stand mutually pledged that man's moral and spiritual wants shall be provided for, which, as nature is insufficient, as we have already freely granted, require a SUPERNATURAL provision. This is a Divine revelation—the NECESSITY of which we sincerely believe we have demonstrated, provided we have succeeded in our effort to make plain to the mind of the reader the chain of our argument. The absolute necessity for a supernatural revelation being once granted, the task becomes comparatively easy—certainly sure—of awarding the precedence over all other claimants, from the Veda and Shaster down to the Book of Mormon, to the CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES.

If the question has suggested itself to the mind of the reflective reader, whilst perusing the foregoing argument, how, if nature alone is insufficient to develope the moral attributes of humanity, can we explain the partial development of these moral constituents (sufficient, at least, to prove their existence) amongst tribes and nations who have not a written revelation? We answer, that is easily explained by the existence of the remains of a traditional revelation, handed down from the first fathers of mankind; and, also, from the influence exerted upon surrounding

nations by the Hebrew Scriptures and Theocracy. The position will stand the test of the most rigid scrutiny, that just in proportion as fragments and particles of this Divine truth have been incorporated into the philosophies and mythologies of Paganism, in *that* proportion has the moral nature of man been developed and elevated. Whilst, on the contrary, it will be found true beyond contradiction, that where this traditional revelation has not penetrated, there the moral part of humanity is wholly undeveloped, and man is but the king beast!

ARTICLE V.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, AS OBTAINED FROM
SCRIPTURE AND FROM NATURE.

We offer to the attention of our readers—and we hope to commend it to their reason—the following proposition: *The knowledge of God, as obtained from Scripture and as obtained from Nature, will approximate indefinitely, but never entirely coalesce in this life.* Let us not be misunderstood: the folly of supposing that truths ever conflict, can not be committed by any believer in the existence of God; but the harmony of truths in themselves is one thing, and the harmonizing of truths, as imperfectly discovered by man, with those consummately enunciated by God, is a very different thing. The first exists by necessity; the second, as we hope to show, can be approached, but not attained.

One element in the discussion may be very briefly disposed of: there will be no division among the readers of this Review as to the worth or truth of the Scriptures. They are a conveyance, in divinely appointed words, of that which God knows to be true, and which He wishes us to