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ARTICLE I.

MESHAKAH ON SCEPTICISM.¹

Introduction.

THE old records of Assyria are being disentombed and read by Biblical scholars with eager interest; but the buried intellect of the East, also, being raised from the grave of centuries, is no less worthy of our regard. As Christians, we have a special interest in the converts brought to Jesus by our missionaries; and it is a duty we owe no less to ourselves than to them, that we become acquainted with the living stones there built up a spiritual house, and their agency in still further advancing the kingdom of our Lord. It may benefit, also, any surviving remnants of that class who used to think any one fit to be a missionary, to take the measure of one of the minds with which they have to deal;

¹ A Treatise entitled: An Argument on the Weakness of Man, written by Mikhael Meshakah of Damascus. Prov. 3: 7 and 5: "Be not wise in thine own eyes, and lean not unto thine own understanding." Job 38: 33: "Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?" Beirût, 1853. — The date is inserted here for convenience of reference. In the original, as in Arabic generally, it is placed at the foot of the last page in the book.

and it may do no harm to young America to learn that there is some intellect in the world besides the Anglo-Saxon.

The writer of the following treatise, Mikhael (Michael), son of Joorjis (George), son of Ibrahim (Abraham), Meshakah the Lebanonite, or, more briefly, Mikhael Meshakah, was born in Damascus in the year 1800, and by birth and baptism was a member of the Greek Catholic church, which is the name of that portion of the ancient Eastern church that has given in its adhesion to the pope of Rome. He was descended from a noble family, and his father held an honorable office under the government of Mount Lebanon. At the age of fourteen, under the tuition of a relative who had been taught by the French, in Egypt, under Bonaparte, he made considerable proficiency in algebra, geometry, astronomy, and the natural sciences.

This education, while it elevated his views of the Creator, led him to despise the unscriptural practices and traditionary errors of his sect ; and, as he knew nothing of a spiritual Christianity, he learned to look upon all religion as a contrivance of the more intelligent to secure the control of the ignorant masses. The result of an examination of the books of the various sects around him, was the conviction that all were alike corrupt, and that nothing more was required of him than that, rising above the empty show got up to impress the vulgar, he should be upright and benevolent according to the light of nature. Still, to avoid offence, he attended church and conformed externally to ecclesiastical requirements.

In 1821 Jonas King, D. D. was the guest of his father, in Deir el komr, the capital of Mount Lebanon ; but though the missionary conversed much with others, he seems to have overlooked our author, who did not dare to bring forward his own difficulties lest he should be shunned as an infidel by the bigots of the town. While the arguments addressed to them wholly failed to meet his case, still the intelligence and kind forbearance of the missionary with their ignorance and rudeness, as compared with the spirit of the native priests, did not fail to be observed and to leave a good impression.

It was some time after this, and when he had again returned to Damascus, where he has since been engaged in the practice of medicine with great success, that among other issues of the mission presses at Malta, a translation of Keith on the Prophecies fell into his hands. At first he was disposed to laugh at the idea of any one soberly undertaking to defend a system so full of falsehood and folly as that which he had hitherto known as the Christian religion. The preface, however, disposed him to read the book with candor; and, with his Bible lying open before him, constantly turning to every passage referred to, he studied the book through three times in the course of a single month. Nor did he leave it till he was fully satisfied that the Bible was an inspired revelation from God. He now saw the danger of the path in which he had been straying, and thanked God that, instead of cutting him off in his unbelief, he had, by means of this book, rescued him forever from its power. He longed also to see the author, that he might tell him in person how much he owed him. This last wish was gratified when, in a subsequent visit to Syria, Dr. Keith became his guest in Damascus.

But, though satisfied that the Christian religion was from God, he was still at a loss to know precisely what that religion was. Like many others, he was much perplexed by the multiplicity of sects, though the difficulty presented itself to him in a different light from that in which it usually appears with us. He saw one part of the papal church selecting a saint to be its special intercessor with God, who was counted a son of perdition by another portion of the same church. Different sects, too, claimed the authority of the same Fathers of the church, for opinions and practices very far apart, if not directly opposed to one another.

In this state of mind, desiring light from all quarters, he providentially became acquainted with some of our missionaries; and, having collected the publications of our mission press, that had been removed from Malta to Beirût, he carefully compared them with papal works written on the other side. The result was, that he found everything which had for-

merly led him to despise and renounce Christianity, was not Christianity itself, but the unauthorized additions that had been made to it by men; while the religion of the Bible, apart from these human additions, was every way worthy of its author. Still desirous to know the truth, and fearful of being led astray, he made known some of his difficulties to the most learned dignitaries of his own church, and their replies were so manifestly contradictory to Scripture, that after much internal conflict he felt constrained to leave them; and, notwithstanding the odium of such a step in tradition-loving Damascus, took firm and decided ground in favor of the religion of the Bible. Accordingly, Dec. 14, 1848, we find him writing to his dear friend, the late Eli Smith, D. D., "that his mental distress continually increased, and he studied the Bible day and night, yet could find no peace except in resolving openly to profess his attachment to the truth, which he soon did without the least reserve. His letters, at this time, to Dr. Smith, breathe the spirit of a little child, humble and self-distrustful, yet firm and decided in his adherence to what he felt was the cause of God and truth. Of course his enemies were not idle. Such a man could not be allowed to stand up for evangelical religion, if any effort could put him down; and no means were left untried. He was constantly harassed by the visits of ecclesiastics, singly and often by whole companies at once, of the members of his former church, to argue, or to beseech him to return to the fold. At one time he asked them why they did not devote some of the labor they bestowed upon him to recover those who had apostatized to Mohammedanism, and was told that, if he had become a Moslem, that would have been a lighter affair; for then he would not have injured their church so much as now. This, with the controversy into which he was drawn with his patriarch Maximus, brought on a brain fever, which for a time drove reason from her throne. But, to quote his own words in a letter to Dr. Smith, written on his sick-bed, "by the prescriptions of one of my medical scholars, God saw fit to give me relief, and I became convalescent. To-day there remains only weakness, which

prevents me from rising. May God, in answer to your prayers, restore me to health, that I may finish the work which I have begun, lest it should come to nought and the enemies of the gospel triumph."

Jan. 27, 1849, Dr. Smith writes to America: "Dr. M. has openly declared himself a Protestant; this has brought on a controversy between him and his former patriarch; and, as he is probably the most intelligent native layman in the country, and the patriarch the most learned ecclesiastic, intense attention is directed from all quarters to the discussion. In the mean time our correspondence is frequent and full; and, as my letters to him require investigation, not of the Bible only but of the Fathers also, are long and written in Arabic, they take up no little time; but I have never had more delightful work, nor any from which I hoped for more important results. He favors me with a copy of all the correspondence between him and his antagonist, and also of his journal. The whole is deeply interesting, both from the ability displayed and the deep Christian sincerity that animates him. Every word of the documents in my hand deserves to be translated and printed at home."

Dr. Meshakah, as soon as possible, prepared a treatise, addressed to his countrymen, explaining the reasons of his secession from Rome, and setting forth the corruption of her doctrines and practices, which was published at the mission press in Beirût, 1849. pp. 324.

In this work, after an account of his own religious history and the correspondence already referred to quoted in full, he goes on to disprove the supremacy of the pope, the existence of any other priesthood or sacrifice but that of Christ; shows that the early church had only two officers, viz. presbyters and deacons; overturns the foundations of transubstantiation, the worship of images, prayers to saints and angels, the confessional, purgatory, the claim of the pope to be the only authorized interpreter of Scripture, prayers in an unknown tongue, and the doctrine of justification by works. He then expounds the doctrine of regeneration, sets forth the antiquity of the Protestant church as compared with the more recent

origin of the papacy ; exposes the interference of the popes with secular governments, vindicates the right of all men to read the Scriptures, and closes the whole with an earnest practical appeal to his brethren and friends.

Dr. Smith says of the book : " It is well and thoroughly argued ; sometimes most impressively solemn ; at others, keenly sarcastic ; and throughout, both spirited and fearless. It is a remarkable production. I am strongly tempted to undertake its translation, had I only the time and strength.

The lamented Whiting, in writing an account of several members of the mission church, June 10, 1852, says : " The next is Dr. M. of Damascus, whose conversion was certainly one of the most important that has occurred here since the mission was established ; for general intelligence and weight of character, he has no superior among the native population ; he is by far the best native physician and the ablest writer in Syria. His work on the errors of the Roman and Greek churches, for force and attractiveness of style, will compare with the Letters of Kirwan ; and his writings will be read in spite of the anathemas of all the hierarchies in the land."

In 1852 he published a reply to animadversions on his former work, under the title of " the Answer of the Gospelers to the Vanities of the Traditionists." pp. 115.

The work here translated is a tract of fifty-eight pages, originally written as a letter to his brother at Deir el komr, but subsequently rewritten and enlarged at the suggestion of Dr. Smith. It might very properly be called " Meshakah on Scepticism ;" and though more time has been spent on the translation than the translator would like to own, yet let no one think that it does justice to the original work. The author still lives to do good in his native city, and long may he remain a light kindled by the Spirit of God to enlighten the darkness round about him.

Preface.

In the name of the living God, who is from everlasting. Praise be to God, the self-existent, the exalted above all his creatures. He, the essence of whose great majesty no powers of imagination can comprehend, and whose absolute nature no one knows save himself, the wise and to be praised for his excellent greatness.

After this ascription of praise, the feeble, failing servant, Michael son of Joorjis Meshakah of Lebanon proceeds to say: Not long since I met with the volume called "The correct guide to the verity of the Book,"¹ from the perusal of which the excellence of the author, Dr. Alexander of America, is very manifest. May God give him a large reward; and, as it is the best work on the truth of prophecy and its fulfilment that has been translated into Arabic, setting forth also solid proofs of the soundness of the Christian religion, and I knew that some of my brothers and friends were very much in doubt on this last point, and questioned whether it was really revealed from God, I wrote to one of them, who is very dear to me, requesting him to read the book with patient attention and note the cogency of its arguments, hoping that thus his doubts might be removed. His reply to me was as follows:

"I understood what you wrote about the book, and so read it for myself, and have found that all you said in commendation of the author is true. Indeed before perusing it, I had no doubt that religion was better for man than infidelity; but now I see also that Voltaire and those who, like him, wrote against religion, were not true philosophers, as I cannot doubt that religion is necessary to man, inasmuch as

¹ "Evidences of the Christian Religion," by A. Alexander, D. D. This, like most Arabic titles, is in rhyme, and reads thus:

"Deleel essowab,
Illa sooduk el ketab."

The Essay here translated is called in the original:

"Erresalet el mousoomet bilboorhan,
Aalah Dhaaf el ansan."

it gives him peace of mind, sets his heart at rest, frees him from vice, makes him companionable, a lover of what is good, and beloved of others, and adorns him with every amiable quality. But with all this I beseech the most high God to grant me grace and make me to know certainly which is the true religion; for each one praises itself and condemns all the rest; and I see the leading religions of the world resemble each other in substance and differ only in points which I cannot think God will take any notice of."

After considering the drift of this reply, though this dear brother was clearly not yet satisfied, yet I could not despair of his coming to the truth since he sought the gracious guidance of the Lord.

It was on the strength of that hope that I began to write this little book as a friendly advice to him and to others in danger of being led away as he was; and I pray God that he would guide me, so that everything I advance may be correct, and then make it influential on the minds of those who read; for no plant which our heavenly Father has not planted, shall either stand or bring forth fruit. I have named it "An argument on the weakness of man," and I pray the Most High to guide me in an even way by his grace and favor. Amen.

CHAPTER I.

It becomes a man to examine a statement contrary to his previous opinions with attentive consideration.

Many men, when they meet with a proposition opposed to their own settled belief, treat it with contempt before they have mastered its meaning. Perhaps they toss the book aside which contains it, or even tear it in pieces, trusting to the correctness of the views already deeply rooted in their minds. And yet for all that, it is possible that the statement treated with such scorn may turn out to be the truth, and therefore they do not judge a righteous judgment in not giving it a most careful perusal, and diligently considering its nature and design.

It cannot be denied that a wise man is bound to admit his own fallibility as well as that of others ; and for that reason he should be at great pains to understand what he reads, and weigh well the arguments advanced, to see whether they are conclusive or the reverse, besides laying aside all selfish leanings, hereditary, and blind adherence to tradition ; for these things perpetuate ignorance between different parties, and prevent their pleasant intercourse together. The reader should also be candidly disposed to receive whatever appears to be true, although contrary to his own ideas ; and whenever the least thread of evidence shows itself, he should lay hold of it and examine minutely whatever is connected with it, dependent on it, or resulting from it. When he does this, in most cases it will not be long before he sees the truth loom up before him like a strong and lofty rampart unshaken by the onsets of the foe. But if he turns away his eye from the strength of the argument, confident in the correctness of his own ideas or the traditions of his ancestors, he will remain bound in the chains of stupidity and fetters of tradition, in the dungeon of the blackness of ignorance.

We read in the history of astronomy that, when the celebrated Galileo advanced the doctrine of the earth's motion, based on satisfactory evidence, the learned ecclesiastics of that day did not receive his theory with that careful investigation and thorough examination which it deserved, but gave themselves up to what was fixed in their own opinions, confident in the correctness of what they held to be so beyond dispute, and in the truth of the belief they had received by tradition from their fathers, and also seemed manifest to their own senses, of the apparent motion of the stars and immobility of the earth. So they punished him for his wisdom by casting him into prison, vainly imagining that his doctrine would lead to infidelity, as something that went beyond all faith even in the greatness of the power of the Most High. But as truth is a light ever radiating, they could not hide it long, before the evidence of the truth he taught shone out on the darkness of their error, and they

were compelled to believe him and acknowledge his excellence and the injustice of their sentence. Now had they thrown off the garment of pride and candidly received his doctrine as such things ought to be received, and given it its due of patient and minute examination, they had not been stained with the blood of that man so unjustly persecuted, and they had escaped the infamy perpetuated in the history that records how they were compelled to confess their own ignorance and go over to the opinion they had united to condemn.

I would remind that brother also of what I said to him in 1840 about the daguerreotype, which enables us to take likenesses by means of light and certain chemical agents. He then denied the possibility of such a thing, and blamed me for giving credence to it, till I proved the truth of my assertions by sending him my own photograph, when he believed in the actual occurrence of what he had pronounced an impossibility.

So if a Sadducee should be told of the resurrection from the dead, he would refuse to believe it, confiding in the traditionary faith of his sect and his own observation; he could not comprehend it, inasmuch as he had never witnessed a resurrection. So, in accordance with these slender arguments, he pronounces it an impossibility. Yet if he had calmly considered his own inability to comprehend matters above the reach of the human mind, and looked closely into the mode of his own coming out of non-existence into being, or the mode of the germination of the seed after its death in the ground; and how, after that, it grows and yields its fruit; if he had studied the changes of the egg of the silkworm, how it becomes first a caterpillar, and then a cocoon, and last of all a moth, then he would have seen that the resurrection is among the possibilities. Indeed, it is wonderful, but only when viewed in reference to human power, not to the power of the Creator, who brought into existence all things that are, and gave them wondrous ordinances which manifest themselves in their results before our eyes every day and every moment, and not one of them all is under

our power or control. This is sufficient to convince us of the need of minute and diligent examination of whatever is presented before us, ere we decide upon it this way or that ; for very likely the truth is quite different from what at first appears.

CHAPTER II.

In man, the faculty of judgment is not perfect, and therefore errs sometimes in its decisions.

Error in judging things to be good or bad arises not only from want of accurate investigation, but also from weakness in the faculty of judgment itself, which evidently exists in man in a manner far more excellent and more perfect than in all the rest of the animal creation ; but notwithstanding its acknowledged superiority in the human race, it never attains to perfection in any man, however diligently he improves it by the accumulation of knowledge and in other ways. It is absolutely certain that on trial its imperfection will be most clearly manifest, and so man errs very often in his judgments.

If we look at the injuries which happen to man, many of them proceed from defect of judgment in his pronouncing that to be good which in itself is evil ; as, for example, he who thinks the use of intoxicating drinks beneficial because of their tendency to exhilarate, and overlooks the results that follow, loses his health and good name, and gains both poverty and deepest disgrace. So also he who pronounces any religion good, because it enjoins the worship of the Creator, confesses his unity, demands uprightness, and forbids wickedness, while he overlooks the things which it calls righteous, such as making war on those of a different religion, plundering them or shedding their blood ; or does not notice what it reckons as crimes, such for instance as showing mercy or giving good counsel or manifesting love or respect to those of an opposite persuasion. Such an one falls into worse than infidelity in believing that the compassionate Creator asks from man such service as this. So also he

who thinks himself possessed of great intelligence and the "ne plus ultra" of knowledge, because he has mastered a few sciences and so despises every one who is not a proficient in them, judges himself more excellent than others and seeks to bow all human customs to his views; such an one falls into the vileness of pride, and it needs no arguments to establish the folly of those in that category before the eyes of all.

Seeing, then, it is impossible for any of the human race to attain perfection, the first duty incumbent on a wise man is to know his weakness and the imperfection of his knowledge, and set it down as a fixed fact that, according to the measure of his intellectual powers, even though they are of the highest order, he is unable to comprehend the absolute truth of things, but is limited to the knowledge of them according to their present appearances. As the physician who knows that such and such a medicine is hot or cold in its nature, has merely a knowledge derived from those external facts which he has established by experiment; but he cannot attain to the absolute knowledge of the reason why it is so. Or as the chemist who knows the rules of chemical combination between different bodies, but the extent of his insight into the matter is, that he knows what is obvious from the actual occurrence of the combination, as for instance that of oils with alkalies or of magnesia with acids in certain proportions; or he knows that nitric acid will dissolve silver but not gold, and many other chemical actions; but he does not know the cause that operates in them, nor how it produces any given result, nor the reason why it secures that particular one rather than another. The same is true of those who are proficient in the other natural sciences; as, for instance, the natural philosopher, who knows that of the two electric fluids, viz. the vitreous or positive and the resinous or negative, likes repel and unlikes attract each other, but he does not know the absolute truth in the matter. Or the physiologist, who acknowledges that the images of the things that are seen are inverted when impressed on the retina of the eye, but cannot show why it is that we see them in their natural position

Therefore it may be said to them all, ye are ignorant of the true science of these things, and that which ye do know ye have derived from the observation of facts in nature which occur in a manifest uniformity, such as any man may know when he sees them taking place before him ; but you have not attained to absolute knowledge, that you should comprehend the verities of things as they are in their essential natures. The utmost that can be said is, that you are the historians of natural occurrences, or the readers of the records of nature, but ye do not know her truths from whence they are, as it is thought ye do.

CHAPTER III.

The inability of the human mind to comprehend many truths, is something that cannot be denied.

The utmost limit to which human knowledge attains after expending all its force, is the knowledge of its ignorance of the verities of created things, and that its comprehension of the works of God is not without some resemblance to the apprehensions that the brutes have of the greatest works of man. For they see the lofty buildings, the swift ships, and the delicate fabrics of the loom. They hear harmonious sounds and the like, but do not understand how they are made. Yet this their ignorance concerning these things necessitates neither the denial of the existence of the things themselves, nor of them that made them, for their want of knowledge does not proceed from the non-existence of the things, but from their elevation above the comprehension of such observers.

So man, if his intellect falls short of comprehending the verities of created objects and the methods of the operations of God, and if such is the limited nature of his knowledge in things cognizable by the senses, it does not become him to stumble at that in spiritual things which confounds his imperfect comprehension, but he ought to have faith in the existence of that which rises above the level of his knowledge. Let him confess, that, although what God has re-

vealed to man rises above his comprehension in many things, yet he is bound to believe it, confiding in the prophets and apostles who spoke not otherwise than by the inspiration of God, and moreover established the truth of what they taught by the evidence of miracles such as no infidel can deny under pretence of the antiquity of their times and the possibility of an easy credulity on the part of their observers, or the want of veracity in their reporters. They confirmed their teachings also by prophecies, many of which were fulfilled in exact accordance with the predictions recorded ages before the events took place; prophecies, too, about things of which man could have had no possible knowledge beforehand except from God.

Again, it will not do for him to say: Why can I not master these spiritual truths, since he knows that man is naturally unable to form a correct judgment about them because of their exalted nature. Since, if they had been matters we could reason out for ourselves, we had not needed a revelation from God to make them known, nor had there been occasion for sending apostles, who proved the truth of what they taught concerning them by miracles beyond the power of man to perform. Besides, do we not despair of knowing accurately many things that take place before our eyes, so that we do not even comprehend our own selves,¹ which of all other things are certainly the nearest to us; yea we cannot have an absolute knowledge of the nature of one of the hairs of our head.

But how can we deny the imperfection of our judgment when we look at the manifest inability of our senses to perceive much that is clearly perceived by the lower animals? For most of them distinguish accurately food and drink that is beneficial from that which is hurtful, by a sense utterly incomprehensible to us, for we can distinguish them only by experience. Even the young mouse flees the first time it sees the cat; but man, if he did not know the nature of the scorpion by experience, would lay hold of it with his hand.

¹ Or "souls." The original may signify either.

The bird, too, distinguishes objects at a distance where we cannot even perceive them at all ; and the dog follows, unerringly, the slightest scent, where we can discern no trace whatever ; and why is this, but because of the weakness of our senses ?

So also if we fix our eye on the gradual movement of the shadow, we can perceive no motion at the moment of its occurrence, nor do we detect it till after it has moved to a perceptible distance. Now it is well known that it has not moved so far at one impetus, but by imperceptible gradations ; and so we form a judgment of its movement by our minds. The principle is the same in the gradual growth of plants and animals, which we cannot perceive directly. So we cannot see the motion of projectiles, as that of a bullet for instance, though it pass close before us, and the stars move at a vastly higher rate of speed, but we see them as if they stood in the centre of their orbits at perfect rest. Moreover, the telescope reveals stars in the heavens without number ; and in the water, the microscope brings to light animalculæ equally innumerable ; and all this would be forever out of the reach of our senses, were it not for the aid of these instruments ; and had they not been invented, then had all these sights continued invisible, just as others that we can imagine are even yet unknown to us. Therefore the inability of our senses to perceive these things affords no ground for denying their existence.

But if our senses often fail to impart the knowledge of the properties of created objects through inability to perceive them, and we need to exercise our judgment in order to ascertain them, would it be strange should we find this same deficiency in the intellect itself in its comprehension of high spiritual truth ? And if its judgment in such matters is incorrect, it is *either* on account of inability to know them through its own weakness — not because they do not exist, as illustrated by what the bird sees, the dog smells, and optical instruments bring within the sphere of vision ; — *or* it is on account of blindness that befalls it, in the form of a vain confidence in tradition, or an overweening trust in our own

wisdom, or something else of a similar nature, that operates like conjunctival ophthalmia in the healthy eye;¹— or it arises from the imprisonment of the soul in a body whose grossness hinders its perceptions from seeing these exalted truths in their true relations, just as colored glass stains objects with its own colors; nor can they be seen as they are till it is removed from between them and the eye. So the soul, when released from its prison, sees things in their true light. We have an illustration of this in objects seen in dreams: for, while it is asleep, the mind decides that they are real; but when it awakes, then appears the incorrectness of its previous judgment, which was caused by the mind being held back from its normal action, seeing things in wrong lights and passing judgment on them as they appeared to it, and not as they are in themselves. But when it obtains its liberty, it sees things according to the degree of its natural power.

Moreover, since the brother before mentioned is skilled in the science of numbers and in Geometry, I wish to show him the imperfection of our perceptions of the truth, by presenting some matters from those sciences, which men cannot know, though they truly exist, are not absurd, and, indeed, are themselves not unknown to him.² I ask, then, why are we unable to ascertain the exact amount of the square root of a surd, which, in the nature of things, need not be unknown? To say that it does not exist because it is greater than the square root of the next rational number below it, and less than the square root of that above it, and so is a whole number and a fraction, and that there can be no doubt of the existence of a fraction in the square that has a fraction in it,— what is this but logomachy, like the saying of the poet?

‘As if we were together, and the water round about us,’—

‘A company sitting, and round about them water.’

¹ This illustration is much more striking in Syria where that disease is common, than with us where it is scarcely known.

² The apparent inconsistency here is explained as the argument proceeds.

For the exact square exists in itself, and the existence of that which exists is neither absurd nor impossible; since, if we draw the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle, the sum of the squares of whose two sides is a surd number, so that one of them, for example, is three, and the other, one; then the line drawn is the square root of ten, which is three known, with a fraction unknown. And so, if we make that same line the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle, having its two sides of equal length, then each of the two is two known, with a fraction unknown; and, in that case, there is unknown to us the amount of all its three sides, though we know certainly that the measure of the area of this triangle is two and a half.

If these things be so, I ask, how can the human mind admit that lines drawn before the eyes defy the philosophers of the whole world to measure them, and that they cannot assign their fraction to any one known measure, whatever devices they may invent for that end; when, if this should be told to a man ignorant of the rules of Geometry, he would deem the quandary of the philosophers an absurdity, and never believe that a garment or a cord could be found, which would defy all men to measure exactly its number of yards, seeing it is before their eyes and handled with their hands.

The same is true in the case of any line of given length. If it is divided into two equal parts, then subdivided, and again subdivided to the end of the line, concerning the existence of which there can be no doubt, then the sum of all the divisions is a unit certainly known. The first of them is one-half, the second one-fourth, the third one-eighth, and so on; and yet the knowledge of the last of these divisions is impossible, though it exists necessarily, and ends at the end of a known line. If it be said that it is a geometrical point, that is out of the question, for it must of necessity be equal to one of the two equal parts of the division next above it; but if it were a point, then the next above it must also be a point, and, if we traced back the whole series, the sum of the whole line must likewise be a point, whereas it is a unit of known length.

And what can I say concerning the matter of the essential unit, about which philosophers do not agree, for even now some affirm its existence and some deny it, and each party brings proof of the truth of its own opinion, which the mind pronounces to be satisfactory, and there is no way of clearly disproving either of them, for the affirmative support their side by a mathematical point, for instance, on the apex of a triangle, and the negative fortifies his position by the capacity every material existence has for division, so that if it were placed between two bodies it would present a surface to one which it does not to the other. Now, the human mind allows the belief of each of these views, though they are opposed to each other; and yet, the existence of a contradiction in truth is impossible in the nature of things.

If, then, man's inability to comprehend the verities of many things evident to the senses, be a thing acknowledged, does it become him to dogmatize about spiritual truths that rise above the comprehension of created minds, and decide that this should be thus, and that so, and not rather yield in his ignorance to the wisdom of him who created all that is, and endowed him with a measure of comprehension, not that he might dogmatize with it concerning his Maker, teaching him how he should act and how decide, but that by it he might know him, and learn from him how to serve him, and what he owes to God and his neighbor.

No educated man is now ignorant of the greatness of the masses of the stars, and that the earth is a little star, a planet belonging to the system that revolves around the sun. Yet this was all unknown to the ancient philosophers, so that even now men of good intellect may be found who deny these established truths, because they have not met with the proofs of their correctness.¹ But ignorance of these truths in the past, and among some at the present day, does not annihilate them, nor does it prove the incorrectness of what all intelligent men acknowledge to be true.

¹ The reader will bear in mind that this was written in Damascus.

From what has been advanced, we may be satisfied concerning the limited nature of the human understanding, and the inability of our minds to attain to much of truth, as also that the matters we cannot comprehend are not thereby proved incorrect in themselves, and that we have no right to deny them under pretence of the want of power to comprehend them, unless they are impossible in the very nature of things; let this suffice.

CHAPTER IV.

The united intellect of the race cannot exceed its limits, and so cannot understand what is beyond the power of comprehension given of God to one man of normal abilities.

The union of many minds does not enable us to attain to the knowledge of those truths which are above the utmost powers of comprehension granted to man. For he who is to be praised and exalted has dispensed to every animate existence a degree of intellect adapted to its condition, and has made man to excel the whole, but without lifting him up to the point of perfection, for that is the exclusive prerogative of the Holy One; and, since in man the powers of external perception depend on organs limited in their nature, and having no partnership with one another, their union cannot avail to strengthen their respective apprehensions of external objects; for instance, we cannot see with two eyes twice as far as we can see with one; and four men together cannot hear four times as much as would be heard by one of them; so the union of minds is of advantage only as it remedies the deficiencies of some whose mental powers fall short of the normal standard. For example, though many men should come together to see the new moon, very likely some would see it and others not, provided it was far enough from the sun to be visible to the eye at all, otherwise there would be no profit in their coming together.¹

¹ This illustration is much more appropriate in Syria than with us. For as the Mohammedan months are lunar, the long fast of the month of Ramazan, during which Moslems are allowed neither to eat nor drink between sunrise and

The object gained by it then is merely the attainment of the extent of the knowledge actually within the power of man, not in the removal of any deficiency arising from *absolute* want of power, but only of that *relative* deficiency wherein some men fall short of the degree of perceptive power that exists in others, and so might have existed in them also.

Therefore, the attainment of some to a degree of knowledge not reached by others, does not prove the possibility of their knowing all truth. It does not even prove that they even comprehend as much as others can, whether in the matter in hand or in something else; just as the inability of some to master all that others do, does not necessitate their rejecting whatever they cannot comprehend.

All this is true, though man, in the lapse of ages, has been able to invent many instruments, some to assist his senses in the performance of their functions, and others to increase his muscular power, so that he can transport what otherwise he could not lift. To aid his sight he has invented convex lenses, which make the rays of light converge to a focus; and also concave mirrors; by these he can discern distant bodies like the stars, and such minute objects as the unaided powers of vision could never have distinguished. To assist his sense of hearing, he has devised the hollow tubes called ear-trumpets, which collect the airy undulations proceeding from the action of things that produce sound, so that he can detect very slight and distant sounds, which otherwise would make no impression upon the ear. And for transporting heavy things he has invented many machines by which he can move weights so great as almost to exceed belief.¹ But time would fail us to enumerate the

sunset, cannot come to an end till some one has actually seen the new moon. Great pains are taken to do this as early as possible, and success is announced by the firing of cannon, which is the signal for general joy. It would not be strange if sometimes there was occasion to quote the couplet, that

“Optics keen, it needs I ween,
To see what is not to be seen.”

¹ The Arabic is literally: “Drive out belief in them from the house of the intellect.”

many inventions man has devised, to aid him in his labors. Let these already mentioned suffice.

Now it was his intellect that enabled man to originate all these inventions ; but it is not in the power of that intellect to devise an instrument for its own help, so that by means of it it can comprehend what it could not comprehend unaided. The only thing that can aid it, is the diligent use of its own powers, in order to learn what others have already attained to in the same way. And this acts as Collyrium (Ar. K Koh'l) on the eye, which clears it of injurious particles, or removes injuries that have been inflicted on the substance of the eye itself ; or as the cultivation of any external sense by exercise. This is of advantage that the organ of sense may perform its functions according to the measure of its natural power ; but it confers no new power to exceed the constitutional limit assigned to it by its Creator.

Now, since we need some instrumentality to lift up our minds to the knowledge of the truth that lies beyond their reach, God has given us his Holy Word, which does not, like the telescope of Herschel, reveal to us the stars alone, but enables the eye of our mind to pierce the pavement of the highest heavens, and know what there is above them of bliss and glory. Our ears hear the praises of angels, and the ordinances of God, and his judgments, which are very deep. Just as the most distant stars mock at our powers of vision so long as we do not look at them through the tube of the astronomer, so the comprehension of the judgments of God and the glory of heaven, as they are in themselves, mocks at the powers of our intellects, so long as we do not look at them through the Word of God, which is not made by Herschel or any other man, but by the hand of God, who gave it to us as the only instrument through which we can look upon himself.

CHAPTER V.

The discrepancy between some revealed doctrines of religion and the natural judgment of man does not destroy the truth of those doctrines.

The inability of the human mind to comprehend all truth has already been set forth; also, that we cannot comprehend much that is perceptible to sense; not because it does not exist, but on account of the weakness of the senses with which we perceive it; and when the mind is in its normal condition, its perception of some truths obvious to the senses does not necessitate its perception of them all, just as its ignorance of some things above the reach of external perception does not involve its ignorance of all truth.

But the conviction that religion is essential to man, belongs to those truths that may be ascertained by the human mind, as it is also able to distinguish true religion from false. Yet the mode of service acceptable to God, man cannot know, save as it is revealed to him by divine inspiration. That the necessity of religion to man may be known without that, is manifest, for its very essence is the confession of the existence of our Creator, and his government involving the necessity of loving and serving him, and loving one another for his sake; and his existence is evident from many proofs that reveal clearly both him and his government, the most obvious of which is the evidence of a cause furnished by the existence of the effect; for on all sides we see the creation, which could not exist as it does without a wise Creator, and he who is all-wise and powerful claims our love and service. So also as to the love of our neighbor. The sane mind intuitively concludes that we ought to do to him as we would wish him to do to us. Our need of society also involves this, since all enjoyment in society depends on that harmony that is based on sincere affection; and so we are shut up to loving one another.

The truth that man can distinguish the true religion from what is false, is a point to which I shall devote a special

chapter, and so pass it over for the present; but his inability to ascertain the mode of service which will be pleasing to God is evident, because this is a matter that concerns the Most High himself, and not the creature; for man, though he knows the Creator may be exalted, and that he is all-wise and good, yet comes far short of the absolute knowledge of God; and since he fails to comprehend the perfection of the essential attributes of God, how can he know intuitively the mode of service suitable to the exalted nature of the Most High? Therefore, though the services prescribed in holy writ do some of them seem to human weakness inconsistent with the dictates of our judgment, still it does not follow that religion is false; for the service of God is not a matter to be determined by our imperfect apprehensions of the truth.

Take an illustration in support of this, from matters of every-day observation, which we believe to be true, though in apparent contradiction to reason. Look, for example, at the mode of treating superficial erysipelas; for though it is an inflammatory disease, you see it cured by cauterization. Now this is contrary to scientific treatment; for science says that inflammation must be reduced by its opposite, and we all know that actual cautery produces inflammation, and the parts cauterized continue inflamed so long as that remedy is employed. So it is said that inflammatory ophthalmia is often cured by the application of the solution of the nitrate of silver. Now since these things are so palpably true that we must perforce assent to them, we see the secret things of nature mark out for us a true judgment, according to observed facts, and these again are opposed to the decisions of reason in points that cannot be denied, and we cannot tell the cause of the contradiction.

Since then there are opinions about material nature that must be true, inasmuch as they are established by experiments, which yet contradict reason, is it strange if the Creator reveals truths which contradict our apprehensions of things, and still are truths? Surely then we ought to yield credence to whatever the Most High prescribes in his law, even though some things in it seem to differ from our

own conclusions; for man is necessarily less able to understand the cause of the seeming contradiction here than in those lower matters already noticed.

CHAPTER VI.

Man can distinguish the true religion from the false.

In the last chapter I promised to devote another to this matter, and now proceed to remark, that if we would know how to distinguish the true from the false among the principal religions of the world,¹ let us look first at the books which their followers believe to be from God, and enquire whether they were actually written by the author to whom they are ascribed. Then are the occurrences said to have taken place, true or false? Are the narrations trustworthy in all respects? The evidence required on these points is precisely that which is requisite to prove the genuineness of any other book, and no one will deny that man is adequate to sit in judgment on the matter. In carrying on this investigation, then, let us compare the contents of these with other histories, and with what we learn in other ways concerning events and philosophical opinions. If then we find that one of them contains histories or doctrines contradicted by facts or established principles of science, we must withhold from it our confidence. But if each new historical fact gleaned from ancient books, from inscriptions painted on the temples of ancient Egypt, or engraved on marbles excavated from the buried cities of Assyria, or obtained from any other source, uniformly corroborates the testimony of the book, and nothing exists in the principles of the most recent science, that is really established, to oppose its teachings, then our confidence in it is proportionably great. Now these last statements express what is true of the book which

¹ The author means such as the Christian and Mohammedan religions as distinguished from the sects into which they are subdivided, and his argument skilfully contrasts the Bible and Koran, without mentioning the last, as indeed it might not have been safe in Damascus.

Christians say is from God, and I would ask, are they true of any other book ?

Then, if satisfied of the genuineness of the book, let us examine with care whatever it contains of history or doctrine; and if we find in it prophecies written many ages before their fulfilment, and then fulfilled to the letter by men who did not believe, or had not even heard of them, we conclude that, beyond a doubt, they are from God, for only he who is great and mighty knows the secrets of the future. So, too, if we find in it the record of miracles utterly beyond the powers of nature, or such as openly defy its laws, we decide, at once, that God has wrought them; for only he can change or set aside the laws which he has appointed to created things. Then, if we find that the men who uttered these prophecies and wrought these miracles, themselves wrote the book, claiming that all which they wrote was from God and confirmed by his authority, we conclude that such a book is the book of God. For the Most High does not confer the gift of prophecy on teachers of error, nor does he enable a man to work miracles so as to give divine authority to doctrines that are false.

This is precisely the course of argument which establishes the genuineness of the Bible, and proves its teachings to be from God. Moreover, these proofs are plain, and no more transcend the ability of men to understand them than any which are used in ordinary affairs. And where is another book established by such proofs ?

Let us next look at the influence of these religions on individuals and nations. As to the former, what religion leads its followers to avoid whatever is base and dishonorable? be truthful and trustworthy in word and act? kind, not only to their co-religionists, but to all? and conformed to him who is perfect in purity and truth, and causes his sun to shine on the evil and the good? We expect all this from the religion which proceeds from God, and this is precisely the fruit produced by the religion of Christ on those who truly imbibe its spirit; and where is the other religion of which we can say as much? It is true that in many

who are called Christians these points do not appear, but the reason is that they set aside the Bible and take the commandments of men in its stead, or neglect the duties of religion altogether, as is the case with most of the (nominal) Christians in our land.¹

As to communities, how great are those blessings the Christian religion has conferred on the nations that embrace it! Before, they were savage barbarians; but under it they have gradually advanced in civilization, till they excel all others in whatever conduces to the good of man, in the general education of their children, in the knowledge of books, in their advance in commercial prosperity, in the prosecution of the most profitable manufactures, and in a constant improvement in the higher departments of science. These nations are in various stages of progress in these things; but every one of them increases in power and energy, and their people advance in prosperity in proportion to the closeness of their adherence to the Word of God. Now, does it seem as though a sane mind could not understand that the book which secures benefits like these must be from God?

So much for the question, as it relates to the principal religions of the world; but as to the different sects of the same religion,—for example, the Christian religion,—we remark that they differ mostly about matters not mentioned in the Word of God;² and is it difficult for an honest mind to decide that such are without divine authority, and therefore of no binding obligation? But if the points in debate are mentioned in the Bible, then must we search out the meaning of that book, as we would the meaning of any other, by employing the usual means to that end. And here, more important than all else, is rectitude of motive, and a mind unprejudiced; for the fundamental teachings of Scrip-

¹ With admirable tact the errors of the nominal churches of the East and the true nature of a spiritual Christianity are here set forth, yet without the mention of a single name that might awaken the prejudices of those for whom it was written.

² This is as true of the nominal Christian sects in Turkey, as it is not true of the different denominations in Protestant countries.

ture are very plain, and honest inquirers readily understand them.

But we have a few words to say about the remark of the brother already mentioned, that "the differences between different religions, concern matters wholly beneath the notice of God." In them we have no reference to the existence of God, or his unity, or the duty of love and obedience to him, or such things as the different religions agree in, but we have our eye on that great subject by which the Christian religion is distinguished from all others — the doctrine of atonement or salvation from sin, through the death of Christ in our stead. No one can deny that a doctrine like this is essential and claims the supreme attention of every member of our sinful race. Paul the apostle, whose labors exceeded those of all the rest, counted it so important, that he wished to preach nothing else but Christ crucified; and the apostle Peter, when a prisoner in the presence of the Jewish council, cried out that there was no salvation in any other, for there was not another name under heaven whereby we could be saved. John the forerunner said, pointing to Jesus: Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world; and Jesus himself said, at his death: "For this hour I came into the world." He said also: "No one cometh unto the Father, but by me;" and the Father, by his voice from heaven, testified, "this is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased," and commanded men to hear him. Finally, if we searched the New Testament to ascertain the essence of its teaching, that to which it ever returns, and on which the whole depends, we should find that it was this doctrine of atonement through the death of Christ. For the apostles taught it in all they wrote, and Christ held it up as the end for which he left the glory which he had with the Father before the world was, clothed himself with human weakness and bowed submissive to shame and suffering. For the sake of this, also, the Father did not spare his only Son, but delivered him up into the hands of sinners. If all this be true, how can the denial of the atoning death of Christ be a matter beneath the notice of God? How can he count it a

venial sin, if we neglect this Saviour, or apply to any other for salvation? Or how can he overlook our error if we think that our own good works can save us? thus degrading the toils and sufferings of Christ as unmeaning and useless things? Would not that be contradicting God, when he calls this the greatest of all things? Would it not be an open insult to the Most High? All this, provided the gospel is from God. If it be not, then to entertain such thoughts is blasphemy. So that, on either supposition, it cannot be a matter of indifference to God.

Therefore let this dear brother study the word of God with care, that he may know the value of those teachings in it that are linked in with the doctrine of atonement through the blood of Christ, and then shall he comprehend the greatness of his error.

CHAPTER VII.

A revealed law is necessary. Man would deny the truth even of natural laws, did not their operation continually take place before his eyes.

The decisions of the human mind, whether affirmative or negative, are not always after the same manner; for at one time it forms an absolute judgment, at another a relative one, and still again one according to analogy. An absolute judgment is one that is necessary and cannot be otherwise than it is; as, for instance, that a given number is odd or even, that the same body does not occupy two places at once, that this cannot be the same with that, that every effect must have a cause, or that a body cannot be white and not white at the same time. A relative judgment is one in which the decision has reference to some other known fact; as, for instance, that such a thing is coarse or long, that is, in comparison with another known object that is finer or shorter than it is; or that the stars are farther off than they seem to be; and so on of things relatively true.

A judgment according to analogy, is that which a man knows according to established custom, from observing the regular repetition of the occurrence, while he is ignorant of

the true cause of that occurrence ; as, for instance, that the magnet will attract iron, that the heavenly bodies attract each other, that heat expands bodies, that illuminated bodies obscure to the unaided eye are clearly seen through the telescope ; that water extinguishes, and the wind fans fire into a flame, or that the dampness of the soil causes germination of seeds ; and so on, of things man cannot know with an absolute knowledge.

These are called natural laws, and in all of them man cannot know the really efficient cause. The extent of his knowledge is the fact confirmed by his observation of the occurrences ; as, for instance, he knows the fact, but does not know the cause, why different kinds of trees growing in the same soil, or, still better, grafted on the same stock, produce fruit, some sweet, some bitter, and some sour, yet are all nourished, through one root and stem, from the same soil. So he knows not why, in a chemical solution, substances exist, not to be found in its component parts. In like manner, we do not know the certain connection between the form of the ear and the organs of generation : we only know that animals having external ears are viviparous, and all others, poisonous serpents excepted, are oviparous.

The observation of an established custom in these occurrences, constantly repeated, has led men to look on them as easily understood, though each one of them defies the intellect of the whole race to comprehend it. Indeed fire, one would say, is of all things the most easily understood ; yet suppose a people unacquainted with it should be told that a spark of it touching a combustible body, would set it in a blaze and cause a great light, till the body was consumed ; that, even if it were a whole city, it would consume it ; and that it could burn all the cities of the world, with the forests of the wilderness, till it desolated the face of the whole earth, nothing remaining of all it had touched, but ashes ; and no doubt they would pronounce the thing impossible, because it exceeded all their knowledge and experience.

But let us turn from things beyond the power of man to those inventions in which the present age excels its prede-

cessors. Look at the galvanic fluid, which produces the movements of life in the muscles of the dead. And what shall we say of casting a man into a deep sleep simply by the motions and signs of another? And if the words spoken by this sleeper concerning things absent, prove true, would not this be one of the greatest delusions, exceeding human comprehension?

These few things, besides many more not mentioned, are enough to show our inability to comprehend many truths perceived by the senses. The knowledge we have of them is based wholly on analogy. We decide that they are true from our observation of the uniformity of certain events under given conditions, and not from any comprehension of their true nature; for if that uniformity of occurrence should cease, our faith in them would also cease, and they would be non-existent so far as our inability to understand them was concerned, and actually existing so far as relates to their own absolute nature. Many things go to show this which the mind, *à priori*, pronounces impossible and then decides to be true, the moment it observes them as actually existing.

If then we find in nature laws above human comprehension, the knowledge of most of them remaining wholly mysterious, and yet the mind decides that they must be true when the testimony of the senses bears witness to some of their manifest results, is it not much more bound to acknowledge the higher laws of him who created nature and gave her laws, and rest in the witness to their truth furnished by the prophecies and miracles of the Bible, and the evident effects it has produced on the character and condition of those who obey it? since there is no people that does not admit the necessity of a Divine law, and confess that their ignorance is the ground of that necessity; nor can the mode of its emanation hinder its reception, while its tendency to promote the good order of the world constrains our acceptance of this gift of God. For it does not become the exalted glory of the wise and just God, not to show forth his wisdom in the good government of his intelligent creatures, in the exercise of his justice, and in his reducing to or-

der the confusion that exists among them. These things cannot take place without the giving of a law, especially since the Divine Wisdom does not leave the inanimate creation, such as the stars and this our earth, without laws which may not be transgressed. Not only so, but man, weak and dependent though he be, yet gives a law to his household for its good order and continued prosperity, that learning the obedience which it owes to his requirements, it may continue to render the service which it owes to him as the provider for its varied wants. How then can it befit the greatness of the Most High, to leave his intelligent creation without a law to secure their good order and prosperity?

CHAPTER VIII.

Religion is all-important to man ; therefore there is no excuse for its neglect.

Error in judgment occasions more or less injury, according to the nature of the thing it concerns ; for instance, the unjust sentence which dooms to the payment of a fine, is not so injurious as that which dooms to the loss of our hand¹ or our head. And the man who errs in judgment in temporal things, generally finds the evil consequences endurable and perhaps balanced by some good ; at the very worst, it cannot be more than the death of the body, and it ends with the close of this fleeting life.

A man therefore should be exceedingly careful not to err in judgment ; and this care should be proportioned to the importance of the matter in question. What, then, should it be in the matter of religion ? a subject which no other can equal in importance, much less excel. A wrong judgment here cannot be rectified hereafter ; there is no escape from its consequences, however injurious, but they must abide forever, so long as God exists.

If this be so, how careful should we be not to err on such a subject. Since no other interest can be compared with it for a moment, should a prudent man neglect a matter so

¹ This and similar punishments are inflicted under Mohammedan law.

momentous? Can he return again to this present life to correct previous errors? This could only be through a miracle such as God alone can perform; and then the disbeliever in religion has no faith in miracles or in the resurrection from the dead. If he had, there would be no occasion for this present argument. If he replies by denying the immortality of the soul and future retribution, I ask him, *first*: Are these things necessarily impossible? and it devolves on him to prove that they are so, or else admit this is nothing more than an opinion of his own. Doubtless he will despair of proving them impossible, and will base his opinion that they are so on the ground that he never saw a dead man rise, or a soul pass either into heaven or into hell. Then it would be proper for me to ask him, *secondly*: What will become of the man entertaining such an opinion, should the contrary prove to be correct? for mere opinions often turn out to be erroneous, and if the event should prove this so, how could he save himself from the endless misery then actually begun? or how could he be recompensed for the loss of the only soul that he possessed? How can the man who trusts in this opinion, and neglects religion, shut out from his thoughts the possibility that he is mistaken? and that then the believers of the truth of God would be in no danger, neither in this world nor the world to come, while he would be supremely wretched both before death and after?

Besides, what is the advantage of denying the law of God? What evil does it do, that any should labor so to destroy it? If those who speak against the law are true philosophers, let them tell us whether it be the part of a philosopher to labor to destroy it? For even if he thinks it is of no benefit after death, is it not productive of real good at present? It is beyond question that he who seeks to destroy the law, seeks to destroy the good order of the world; for he takes away from it morality and prosperity, and fills it with wickedness and confusion; and he whose conduct has such an issue has lost his wits and deserves the name of fool rather than philosopher; for man is civilized and virtu-

ous, or barbarous and vicious in proportion as he observes the law or sets aside its claims. We never see religion lead a man to injure or murder his fellow men, or do anything opposed to the prosperity of nations, but just the reverse.

If, then, man can distinguish the true religion from the false, he can have no excuse for neglecting the investigation of, or failing to embrace, the truth. It is not enough that he is aware of its utility, while he remains without it. As a sick physician who knows the means of cure and does not use it, dies in consequence of such neglect, or if he does not give it to others that are sick, sets a bad example and bears the guilt of all that follow it.

We have seen that reason decides that religion is beneficial; if so, then it is a necessity of our world, and then it follows beyond all question that it is from God; for the most exalted Creator, who is perfectly good and wise, cannot neglect to give a good law when needed for perfecting the good order of his creatures; and this is reason enough to a wise man why he should not slacken in his efforts to know and embrace the true religion. He should offer up his mind to the giver of intellect in lowly obedience, and ask the grace of guidance from his mercy. Then if he devotes himself diligently to the search, renounces prejudice, and seeks the teaching of God in earnest faith, the exalted Creator will condescend to aid his weakness, and so enlighten his conscience as to lead him along the way of truth to everlasting life.

But if he neglects his duty in this matter, then his earthly life is very short, all its pleasures fleeting, and death will come, when he can no longer rectify his errors, and he will suffer immense loss in the destruction of his precious soul, for which there is no compensation. Then he will go down to that infernal pit from which there is no escape forever, where is despair and no mercy, where he will neither find any one to intercede for him or afford him a refuge. Every means of salvation will then be cut off. He will be sorry when sorrow will avail nothing. In place of the glory of heaven, the blessed vision of God, and his justification, he

shall be assigned his eternal abode in the fire of hell and the society of devils and their reprobate companions. Then let us beseech the Most High to have compassion on the work of his hands, and in mercy bestow on all the sons of men a docile spirit, and lead them to the knowledge of the truth, that they may have an opportunity for salvation and attain to the everlasting glory that is prepared for them in heaven from before the foundation of the world, that they may praise and glorify him for ever and ever. Amen.

ARTICLE II.

THE CONFLICT OF TRINITARIANISM AND UNITARIANISM IN THE ANTE-NICENE AGE.

BY PHILIP SCHAFF, D. D.

THE doctrine of the holy Trinity, that is, of the living and only true God, Father, Son, and Spirit, the source of creation, redemption, and sanctification, has in all ages been regarded as the sacred symbol and the fundamental article of the Christian system, in distinction alike from the abstract monotheism of Judaism and Mohammedanism, and from the dualism and polytheism of the heathen religions. The denial of this doctrine implies necessarily also, directly or indirectly, a denial of the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit, together with the divine character of the work of redemption and sanctification.

The Bible teaches the Trinity expressly in the baptismal formula, Matt. 28: 19, and in the apostolic benediction, 2 Cor. 13: 14, i. e. in those two passages where all the truths and blessings of Christianity are comprehended in a short summary. These passages, especially the first, form the basis of all the ancient creeds. The Scriptures, however, inculcate the doctrine, not so much in express state-