

tion, is aimed at. While he would utterly demolish our religion, he would not frame another. Why should he? The infidel does not go beyond matter, force, and law, and to venerate these, he perceives, would be degrading. He does not recognize an intelligent spiritual being. There is, then, no higher intelligence than man; there are more potent forces, but they are not combined with intelligence. How it is possible for a man to advocate such views as, "Whatever of necessity exists knows no Creator," and, "When a law is once in operation it cannot be controlled," and similar ones, is beyond my comprehension. For we can readily see that necessity is only relative, certain conditions being supposed. Let us illustrate. It would be unnecessary to surround the globe with atmosphere, were there no life upon it to be sustained. Carbon, moreover, would not be a necessary constituent of air, were it not for the vegetable kingdom. Now according to this theory, oxygen and nitrogen have no creator because they exist of necessity, and the existence of plants and animals only make them indispensable. Hence, taking this tenet in connection with our last derived conclusion, we see that the conditions, causing their necessity, must have had a creator.

Now if we acknowledge an active intelligence as the creator of these laws, we cannot doubt that he can alter them at any time and for any purpose. It would be absurd to conceive of the framer as being unable to affect any alteration. Whether this has ever occurred or not is another question, and we now come to consider the authority to which the Scriptures are entitled. It is but fair to admit that they are entitled to at least the same respect and belief as any book of like antiquity. If I have satisfactory evidence that a certain event took place, it is mere obstinacy to reject this evidence. And by satisfactory evidence must be understood the testimony of a sufficient number of witnesses, competent to discriminate between truth and falsity. If then,

this testimony can be established, any moral obligation which the nature of it imposes must be discharged. Now let us examine the Scriptures in this light.

As to the number of persons alleging their genuineness and authenticity, there is no question; but were they qualified to decide in this matter? It is true that at first the Christian religion propagated itself especially among the uneducated and the lowly. But was not all the learning and wisdom of the day confined to the Pharisees and to the doctors of the law, and did they not do their utmost to suppress this creed? And yet, did it not spread like fire, subduing nation after nation? Moreover, was not the coming of Christ heralded? Prophecy, indeed, is a stumbling block to the infidel, especially as it bears upon Christ and his mission. Whatever may be the explanation, the fact remains that events have been foretold, whether by supernatural agency or not.

I believe that inspiration had its source largely in the discerning faculty of the person supposed to be inspired. But testimony on this ground, even, is worthy of acceptance. Some occurrences, however, are recorded which no common shrewdness could have originated. The prediction of Christ's coming is one of these. This prediction was evidently intended to gain for him the recognition which he deserved. And when he actually performed those deeds which had been foretold; when he healed the sick and raised the dead, scoffers and doubters were silenced. He did not work upon the credulity of the ignorant or the faith of the simple; but his deeds were performed in the presence of many witnesses; his fame went over the whole land, and many zealous lovers of the truth, we doubt not, examined his works.

A few words in regard to the propagation of his doctrines. His principles, in imbuing the minds of mankind, had to overcome many passions and much self-love. No reward was offered except