The philosophy of religion, or, An illustration of the moral laws of the universe

Dick Thomas
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Author: Dick Thomas
THE

PHILOSOPHY

OF

RELIGION;

OR

AN ILLUSTRATION

OF THE

MORAL LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE.

BY THOMAS DICK,

AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHER," &c. &c.

"Knowledge is Power."—Lord Bacon.
"Love is the fulfilling of the Law."—Paul.

SECOND AMERICAN EDITION, WITH CORRECTIONS AND

NOTES.

BROOKFIELD, MASS.
PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY E. AND G. MERRIAM.

1830.
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS, to wit:

District Clerk's Office.

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"Knowledge is Power."—LORD BACON.

"Love is the fulfilling of the Law."—PAUL.

First American Edition, with Corrections and Notes.

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JNO. W. DAVIS,
Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.
This volume was not designed to be the Philosophy of Mediation. It is a lucid developement of the relations, which intellectual and moral agents sustain to their Creator and to each other; and of the reasons of the Law which requires us to “love the Lord with all the heart and our neighbour as ourselves.” The character of man in all ages and under various circumstances is tried by the principles, “on which hang all the Law and the Prophets;” and is clearly shown to accord with those representations of our alienation from God, which are repeatedly made in the Scriptures. The work is presented to the American Public with an assurance, that it will be found interesting, instructive and useful.

Brookfield, Mass. 1829.
PREFACE.

To delineate the Moral bearings of the Christian Revelation,—to display the reasonableness and the excellence of its precepts, and the physical and rational grounds on which they rest,—and to exhibit a few prominent features in the moral aspect of the world,—were some of the principal objects which the Author had in view, in the composition of the following work. He is not aware that a similar train of thought has been prosecuted, to the same extent, by any preceding writer; and is, therefore, disposed to indulge the hope, that it may prove both entertaining and instructive to the general reader, and to the intelligent Christian.

It may not be improper to remind the reader, that the Author's object simply is, to illustrate the topics he has selected as the subject of this volume. As he has taken his fundamental principles from the system of Revelation, he was under no necessity, as most ethical writers are, to enter into any laboured metaphysical discussions on the foun-
dation of Morality, and the motives from which moral actions should proceed.—The truth of Revelation is, of course, taken for granted; and all who acknowledge its Divine authority, will readily admit the principles which form the basis of the system here illustrated. But, although it formed no particular part of the Author's plan to illustrate the evidences of the Christian Revelation, he trusts, that the view which is here given of the benignant tendency of its moral requisitions, will form a powerful presumptive argument in support of its celestial origin.

The Christian reader may also be reminded, that it is only the Philosophy of Religion which the Author has attempted to illustrate. It formed no part of his plan to enter into any particular discussions on the doctrines of Revelation, or on those topics which have so frequently been the subject of controversy in the Christian church. It is not to support the tenets of Calvinism, Arminianism, Baxterianism, Arianism, or any other ism which distinguishes the various denominations of the Religious world, that these illustrations are presented to public view; but to elucidate an object which it appears to be the grand design of Revelation to accomplish, and in the promotion of which, every section of the Christian church is equally interested, and to which they would do well to "take heed."—In his illustrations of this subject, the Author has kept his eye solely on the two Revelations which the Almighty has given to mankind,—the system of nature, and the sacred records, just as they stand,—without any regard to the
theories of philosophers, the opinions of commentators, or the systems of theologians. He is disposed to view the Revelations of the Bible, rather as a series of important facts, from which moral instructions are to be deduced, than as a system of metaphysical opinions for the exercise of the intellect.

On the leading topics which have divided the Christian world, the Author has formed his own opinions, and has adopted those which he has judged, on the whole, to be most correct; but it is of no importance to the reader what these opinions are, or what system of speculative theology he is inclined, on the whole, to support. He sets very little value upon purely speculative opinions, except in so far as they tend to promote the grand moral objects of Christianity; and, while he assumes the unalienable right of thinking for himself on the subject of religion, he is disposed to allow the same privilege to others. He believes, on the authority of Scripture, that "God is the Creator of heaven and earth;"—that "he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works;"—that "he is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works;"—that "he so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life;"—that "Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he rose again from the dead, according to the Scriptures;"—that "he is the propitiation for our sins, and that he ever lives to make intercession;"—together with all the other facts and doctrines with which these are essentially connected. But he views the recognition of
such doctrines and facts, not as the end of religion, but only as the means by which the great moral objects of Christianity are to be promoted and accomplished.

In illustrating the Moral state of the world, the Author is sorry that he was obliged to compress his details within so narrow limits. Few readers, however, will appreciate the labour and research he was under the necessity of bestowing, in order to select and arrange the facts which he has detailed. He has occasionally had to condense a long history or narrative, and even a whole volume, into the compass of two or three pages; and to search through more than twenty volumes, in order to find materials to fill a couple of pages. With the same degree of research, (excepting the mechanical labour of transcription,) he might have filled several volumes with similar illustrations; and he is convinced that a work of this description, judiciously executed, would prove highly instructive, as well as entertaining, not only to the Christian world, but to readers of every description.

Various topics, connected with the Philosophy of Religion, still remain to be illustrated. These shall form the subject of discussion in a future volume, should the present work be received with general approbation.

Perth, January, 1826.
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