

## NOTE (C), p. 32.

IT has been sometimes objected to natural religion that it misleads men by a dim and deceitful light, on matters clearly put before them in the word of God. The objection is sound, so far as it applies to those who set up natural, in the place of revealed truth: but it is invalid in any other sense, as it strikes at the root of all knowledge that is not religious. If the conclusions of natural religion be true, then must they well deserve our study; and they are of no small moral worth, provided they be kept in their proper place, and in subordination to truths of a higher kind. Were all men honest believers in the word of God, then could the inductions of natural religion add nothing to the strength of their convictions of his being and providence. But to doubting minds, entangled in the mazes of a false philosophy, or lost perhaps in sense, and unused to any severe exercise of thought, the ready inductions of natural religion may bring convictions of the greatest moral worth—at moments too, when proofs of a different kind would be denied all access to the understanding. Moreover, the habit of contemplating God through the wonders of the created world, and its adaptation to the wants of man, is not only compatible with firm religious belief, but with the highest devotional feeling; as is proved by passages, almost without number, in the sacred poetry of the Bible.

The chief ground, however, for urging the habitual study of natural religion upon those to whom the preceding discourse is addressed, is the belief that it is a wholesome exercise for the understanding. In rising, step by step, to an apprehension of the