

were a mutual retirement from the field, and with this principle, that a controversy which cannot be settled should just be let alone.

22. We hold it greatly better, on the one hand, for the religionists to attempt no positive or confident solution of the problem—and, on the other hand, there are three distinct considerations which might tend, we think, to nullify the argument by which the irreligionists have attempted through the means of this difficulty to subserve the cause of scepticism.

23. The first is, that when they assume the omnipotence of God as a reason for expecting no evil in the Universe—seeing that God could have caused it to be otherwise if He would—they assume a principle which must be received with certain qualifications. It is no aspersion of His dignity but the opposite, when we affirm that there are certain things which God cannot do. We read in a Book the authority of which we trust afterwards to demonstrate, that He cannot lie. This is one limit to the universality of their assertion, though no limit but the contrary and on the perfections of God. It is not a physical but a moral necessity which makes His utterance of a falsehood impossible. It is not because He has not strength for the utterance; but it is the very strength of His character which restrains it, and puts it forth as it were beyond the domain of possible things. It is not because He is short of omnipotence that He cannot lie—for there is the force of omnipotence in His recoil from such a violence to his moral nature. He cannot because He will not—