

duct. But in what an eccentric orbit does he revolve ! His eccentricities usually become greater and greater, until at last he flies off in an orbit which carries him entirely out of the regions of common sense and rational religion — never to return.

A case, however, may be quoted from the opposite extreme. A man begins his religious course in a circular orbit — that is, there is a proper balance in his mind between the influences and principles that form a religious character. He bows down to the authority of the Bible, and receives it as a little child. With him, it is evidence enough for any doctrine or precept if he can be assured that God has announced it. But at length his heart begins to be less interested in religious things, and a spirit of speculation and scepticism takes possession of his mind, and becomes a new and mighty impulsive power which carries him rapidly away from the quiet path in which he had been moving. He soon finds religion to be full of difficulties which he cannot solve. Having broken loose from his former principle, that he would implicitly receive whatever statements God had made, and which formed his sheet anchor, he is now adrift on the stormy sea of speculation, with human reasoning only for his compass. One doctrine after another, fairly subjected, as he fancies, to this ordeal, and found wanting, he throws overboard, until his creed has become a mere wreck of old opinions, with nothing in their place. His increasing scepticism calls forth the animadversions of his Christian brethren ; and this wakens in him a pride of opinion to defend his new views. He soon finds, however, that the full inspiration of the Scriptures stands in his way ; and he clearly perceives that the sacred writers sometimes reason incorrectly, and therefore they sometimes reason without inspiration. Thus is he driven farther and farther away from the controlling influence of the Bible by