

I have quoted this passage in the hopes of inducing the reader to reconsider the whole chapter; both for its own value, and because it is in itself an ample refutation of an opinion unaccountably maintained by some writers, that the heathen philosophers of antiquity had no knowledge of God except what was derived through a corrupted tradition.

Were it true (which it certainly is not) that the heathen writers never argued from final causes to the being of a God, still we should not be justified in saying that the argument had no weight when handled by a Christian. Truths, whether physical or moral, are not less real because they have been hidden for many ages, and are only brought to light by the progress of other truths. No wonder that the truths of natural religion should have been oftener pressed by christian than by heathen writers. The Christian makes them not the foundation of his faith. He seeks them not because he doubts, but because he believes: for they are the external means of communion with a being whom he is taught to love, and in whose more immediate presence he hopes hereafter to dwell. It is through these embodied truths that in the mechanism of his own material frame, in the wonderful adaptation of his senses to the material world without, in the constitution of his mind whereby he learns the existence of intellectual natures like his own, in his power of modifying the order of events by the operations of his will, in his capacity of ascending from phenomena to laws, and of contemplating through them the marks of pre-ordaining wisdom—it is through these truths that in all the world around him, in whatsoever manner his soul regards it, he is taught to read an everliving lesson of the benevolence and the power of God.