

Complaints have been made, and especially of late years, that the growth of piety has not always been commensurate with the growth of knowledge, in the minds of those who make nature their study. Views of an irreligious character have been entertained, it is sometimes said, by persons eminently well instructed in all the discoveries of modern times, no less than by the superficial and ignorant. Those who have been supposed to deny or to doubt the existence, the providence, the attributes of God, have in many cases been men of considerable eminence and celebrity for their attainments in science. The opinion that this is the case, appears to be extensively diffused, and this persuasion has probably often produced inquietude and grief in the breasts of pious and benevolent men.

This opinion, concerning the want of religious convictions among those who have made natural philosophy their leading pursuit, has probably gone far beyond the limits of the real fact. But if we allow that there are any strong cases to countenance such an opinion, it may be worth our while to consider how far they admit of any satisfactory explanation. The fact appears at first sight to be at variance with the view we have given of the impression produced by scientific discovery; and it is moreover always a matter of uneasiness and regret, to have men of eminent talents and knowledge opposed to doctrines which we consider as important truths.

We conceive that an explanation of such cases, if they should occur, may be found in a very curious and important circumstance belonging to the process by which our physical sciences are formed. The first discovery of new general truths, and the developement of these truths when once obtained, are two operations extremely different; imply different mental habits, and may easily be associated with different views and convictions on points out of the reach of scientific demonstration. There would therefore be nothing surprising, or inconsistent with