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Philosophy," by James Thompson

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The Effect of the doctrines of christianity
on the progress of Philosophy

Othered pluly 19th A.S. 1838)

Oarlisle.

Inquities reneening the origin and government of the world, the nature of mind, and the moral constitution of man appear to have occupied the attention of lociety put its partiest Stages of civilization. - This Statement is founded, on Sketches of traditional history, which have come down to us from the most remote periods of which we have any knowledge. - The history Three distinct periods or ages. biz. The ancient the scholastic and the modern. Each marked by the peculiar state of preciety which existed at their respective periods. - Jum will not permit no to go into a deffinite detail of the peculiarities of these three Systems. Nor would it be necessary in the discussion of this Subget to give a detail which would only Jueary Down, and afford but little profit to others - That the progress of philosophy has been slow is Rushow to most if not all of us, of we cast our eyes back to the comme-

necement of the sixteenth century what shall we see worthy the existence of man, through a space of abutat six thousand years. And yet his moistingations upon these Subjects have been continued throughout the whole of this time. - Thering to the promulgation of the christian religion philosophy had made considerable advancement. The principles on which its mostligations had been coulnoted in many instances loese correct; And bid gain soul to open to the long deluded and dar kened mind of man, the path which should lead him into a knowledge of those Sciences, which now but they who know Pan fully appreciate; and which places men and nations high on the tablet of fame - Dut these happy improvements were doobned to destruction and D Blace givent to a new System, which to us is as including as it it is prolish - This was the Commencement of the scholattic ago in which Lober neason was distregarded and a loose vein given to the wildest fancies and most imagmative speculations - Theories were projected, land were made, and principles laught to

conform to them. - And mand, originally created after the image and likenis of God himself, we find großing his way in darknift for a Thousand years - But can this which to the on ward course of philosophy be attributed to the stocking of christianity : By no means. If they had been applied, and produced There results, then such a reverse could with Some propriety be laid to their charge - But was this the ease! Was it not rather a perversion of those doctines that brought about So unhappy state of Society! Christianity was not intended to answer for the de prabety and wilful ignorance of man, but as El nestraint which being applied Ihoula curb and fremor Thom - Other, causes Came in to dishipate and destroy these advand menty in Jeimel. - The Froman government which by the power and terror of its and had Inbjected almost the Whole Known world was now Through the corruption and hiddence of its citizens fast falling into decay - And by invalions from the north was From seduced

to a State of Lemibarbarism. House learning was me gle ted, and the quiet pursuit of philosophy dispised - Thus for we have shown that the true doe doctring of christianity have had little or no bearing on the invistigations of Decence - It nows rentains to be shown to hot has been their influence in later hours - havel back two hundred years. we behold a world of terror, confusion and ignorance. A Seligion pure, and holy, and perfect as the Lord that gave it, darkened with the blackest crining and cleaking the direct infamy. The very names of Carning and Seione scattered to the lounds of Theaven, and their Seals no longer known on darth . In the midst of This line veryal ruis, we be the Solitory Juther Omerysung from his narrow and cloistered cell, with the bible in one hand, and reason in the other, and and eloquence, powerful us the tushing torrent, proclaining to man this inclienable juglity and the injustice of the oppression under which he graned - Then it was that philosephy received a new impulse. And after the Strong burners which Supertiling head erected were leveled by the plain buthy of the book

Tosophy, and in it her laws were founded. And this draw has formed the theme of modern contention Many minds withing to ching to the old exploded systems a unwiling to feccive the Simple doctions ohristianity of christianity as their sule of life, Sawght by means of their own puny efforts to establigh a more perfect sulten, and induce man again to east away the anchor of his hope -Many objections have been skilfully urged on the apparent disendence of experience and the chingtian doctring, and unfortunately beceive but to ready credence from the depraved, the ignorant and the thoughthis - But to whom is mun undebted for all those great advantages enjoyed by civilized lociety. Those ingening looks! the product only of walter spirits - 23 it to the infidel, Dy it to the caviler of the bible ; In the whole catalogue of names which have risen above the common level of man, and Hood forth as the brighter floringaries of the human mind, there is not one to be found who having executed the precepts of otherst from

shillsophy has every benefited dociety on jot-It is true and loc histale not to avow it, that there are in some of the branches of phild oply prince ples apparently conflicting with statements of the bible, and cavilery have not failed to ex Ledge and lularge upon them? Our instance will suffice to show how shallow such objections are, In the Science of Geology. The most butline to which modern times have given with are difficulty arises, and but our - I had although perhaps of minor importance in ittely. It has Shook the faith of new most emercuty priors. It is this. The invitigations in geology have proved beyond the doubt of any lave the thost em fihrmed Deptie and bigot, that the times occupied in the formation of the Earth, must have been bery much greaters, than that popularly beceived, at the time from the Musaical account - But by more witnute investigations into all the principles which are involved in this subject even This difficulty is in a great measure, in not, whily no bled - And the book comes in but to Sanction experience -

Again, Who are they, who have made the most useful discoveries his Science! They are the professed believery in a revealed religion. Those who have been schooled in the drething of christianity, and oftenward made them their rule of life - Then where named shall decend to posterety consoled with the most enviable associations -

Commencement Oration of James McFarlane Thompson, Class of 1838
Transcribed by Sarah Skalak, June 2008
Edited by Tristan Deveney, July 2008

The Effect of the Doctrines of Christianity on the Progress of Philosophy

Inquiries concerning the origin and government of the world, the nature of mind, and the moral constitution of man appear to have occupied the attention of society in its earliest stages of civilization. This statement is founded, on sketches of traditional history, which have come down to us from the most remote periods of which we have any knowledge. The history of philosophy may be properly divided into three distinct periods or ages. Viz. The ancient the scholastic and the modern. Each marked by the peculiar state of society which existed at their respective periods. Time will not permit us to go into a deffinite detail of the peculiarities of these three systems. Nor would it be necessary in the discussion of subject to give a detail which would only weary some, and afford but little profit to others – That the progress of philosophy has been slow is known to most if not all of us. If we cast our eyes back to the comme-

ncement of the sixteenth century what shall we see worthy the existence of man? Through a space of almost six thousand years. And yet his investigations upon these subjects have been continued throughout the whole of this time. Previous to the promulgation of the christian religion philosophy has made considerable advancement. The principles on which its investigations had been conducted, in many instances, were correct; And bid fairs soon to open to the long deluded and darkened mind of man. The path which should lead him into a knowledge of those sciences, which none but they who know can fully appreciate; and which placed men and nations high on the tablet of fame – But these happy improvements were doomed to destruction and place given to a new system, which to us is as incredulous as it is foolish – This was the commencement of the scholastic age in which sober reason was disregarded and a loose rein given to the wildest fancies and most imaginative speculations – Theories were projected, laws were made, and principles saught to

conform to them. And man, originally created after the image and likeness of God himself, we find groping his way in darkness for a thousand years – Yet can this chick to the onward course of philosophy be attributed to the doctrines of christianity? By no means. If they had been applied, and produced these results, then such a reverse could with some propriety be laid to their charge – But was this the case? Was it not rather a perversion of those doctrines that brought about so unhappy state of society? Christianity was not intended to answer for the depravity and wilful ignorance of man, but as in restraint which being applied should curb and remove them – Other causes came in to dissipate and destroy these advancements in science. The Roman government which by the power and terror of its arms, had subjected almost the whole known world was now through the corruption and indolence of its citizens, fast falling into decay – And by invasions from the north was soon reduced

to a state of semibarbarism. Hence learning was neglected, and the quiet pursuit of philosophy dispised. Thus far we have shown that the true doctrines of christanity have had little no learning on the investigations of science – it now remains to be shown what has been their influence in later times – Travel back two hundred years, we behold a world of terror, confusion and ignorance. A religion pure, and holy, and perfect as the Lord that gave it, darkened with the blackest crimes and cloaking the direst infamy. The very names of Learning and Science scattered to the winds of heaven, and their seats no longer known on earth. In the midst of this universal ruin, we see the solitary Luther emerging from his narrow and cloistered cell with the bible in one hand, and reason in the other, and an eloquence, powerful as the rushing torrent, proclaiming to man his inalienable rights and the injustice of the oppression under which he groaned. Then it was that philosophy received a new impulse – And after the strong barriers which superstition had erected were leveled by the plain truths of the book

of God: experiment was adopted as the test of philosophy, and on it her laws were founded. And this again has formed the theme of modern contention. Many minds wishing to cling to the old exploded systems or unwiling to receive the simple doctrines of christianity of christianity as their rule of life, saught by means of their own puny efforts to establish a more perfect system, and induce man again to cast away the anchor of his hope. Many objections have been skilfully urged on the apparent discordance of experience and the christian doctrines, and unfortunately receive but too ready credence from the depraved, the ignorant and the thoughtless. But to whom is man indebted for all those great advantages enjoyed by civilized society? Those ingenuis works? The product only of masters spirits. Is it to the infidel, Is it to the cavilers of the bible? In the whole catalogue of names, which have risen above the common level of man, and stood forth as the brighter luminaries of the human mind, there is not one to be found who having [excluded?] the precepts of christ from

philosophy has ever benefited society one jot. It is true and we hesitate not to avow it, that there are in some of the branches of philosophy principles apparently conflicting with statements of the bible, and cavilers have not failed to [illegible] seize and enlarge upon them. One instance will suffice to show how shallow such objections are. In the science of Geology: the most sublime to which modern times have given birth one difficulty arises, and but one – And although perhaps of minor importance in itself, it has shook the faith of men most eminently pious. It is this. The investigations in geology have proven beyond the doubt of any save the most confirmed skeptic and bigot, that the time occupied in the formation of the Earth, must have been very much greater, than that popularly received as the time from the Mosaical account. But by more minute investigations into all the principles which are involved in this subject even this difficulty is in a great measure, if not wholy resolved. And the book comes in but to sanction experience.

Again, Who are they who have made the most useful discoveries in science? They are the professed believers in a revealed religion. Those who have been schooled in the doctrine of christianity, and afterward made them their rule of life. Men whose names shall decend to posterely coupled with the most enviable associations.