

The Progress of Error

by William Cowper

The sermon explores the nature of error, the consequences of error, and the importance of virtue, education, and morality.

Scripture: Proverbs 27:12, Romans 12:14, 2 Corinthians 8:21, Philippians 2:4, 1 Timothy 5:8

Topics: "Christian Responsibility", "Pastoral Care"

Description

Greek Word Studies for aid_number 35414 delves into the concept of 'respect' (pronoeo), which means to think before, observe in advance, and plan carefully. It involves giving careful thought and consideration to respond appropriately, especially in caring for others and meeting their needs. The idea is to have continuous responsibility and an attitude that motivates one to do the right thing, as seen in Paul's writings to Timothy and the Corinthians.

Transcript

THE PROGRESS OF ERROR.

Sing, muse (if such a theme, so dark, so long

May find a muse to grace it with a song),

By what unseen and unsuspected arts

The serpent Error twines round human hearts;

Tell where she lurks, beneath what flowery shades,

That not a glimpse of genuine light pervades,

The poisonous, black, insinuating worm

Successfully conceals her loathsome form.

Take, if ye can, ye careless and supine,

Counsel and caution from a voice like mine!

Truths, that the theorist could never reach,

And observation taught me, I would teach.
Not all, whose eloquence the fancy fills,
Musical as the chime of tinkling rills,
Weak to perform, though mighty to pretend,
Can trace her mazy windings to their end;
Discern the fraud beneath the specious lure,
Prevent the danger, or prescribe the cure.
The clear harangue, and cold as it is clear,
Falls soporific on the listless ear;
Like quicksilver, the rhetoric they display
Shines as it runs, but, grasp'd at, slips away.
Placed for his trial on this bustling stage,
From thoughtless youth to ruminating age,
Free in his will to choose or to refuse,
Man may improve the crisis, or abuse;
Else, on the fatalist's unrighteous plan,
Say, to what bar amenable were man?
With nought in charge he could betray no trust:
And, if he fell, would fall because he must;
If love reward him, or if vengeance strike,
His recompence in both unjust alike.
Divine authority within his breast
Brings every thought, word, action, to the test;
Warns him or prompts, approves him or restrains,
As reason, or as passion, takes the reins.
Heaven from above, and conscience from within,
Cries in his startled ear--Abstain from sin!

The world around solicits his desire,
And kindles in his soul a treacherous fire;
While, all his purposes and steps to guard,
Peace follows virtue as its sure reward;
And pleasure brings as surely in her train
Remorse, and sorrow, and vindictive pain.
Man, thus endued with an elective voice,
Must be supplied with objects of his choice,
Where'er he turns, enjoyment and delight,
Or present or in prospect, meet his sight:
Those open on the spot their honey'd store;
These call him loudly to pursuit of more.
His unexhausted mine the sordid vice
Avarice shews, and virtue is the price.
Here various motives his ambition raise--
Power, pomp, and splendour, and the thirst of praise;
There beauty woos him with expanded arms;
E'en bacchanalian madness has its charms.
Nor these alone, whose pleasures less refined
Might well alarm the most unguarded mind,
Seek to supplant his inexperienced youth,
Or lead him devious from the path of truth;
Hourly allurements on his passions press,
Safe in themselves, but dangerous in the excess!
Hark! how it floats upon the dewy air!
O what a dying, dying close was there!
'Tis harmony, from yon sequester'd bower,

Sweet harmony, that soothes the midnight hour!
Long ere the charioteer of day had run
His morning course the enchantment was begun;
And he shall gild yon mountain's height again,
Ere yet the pleasing toil becomes a pain.
Is this the rugged path, the steep ascent,
That virtue points to? Can a life thus spent
Lead to the bliss she promises the wise,
Detach the soul from earth, and speed her to the skies?
Ye devotees to your adored employ,
Enthusiasts, drunk with an unreal joy,
Love makes the music of the blest above,
Heaven's harmony is universal love;
And earthly sounds, though sweet and well combined,
And lenient as soft opiates to the mind,
Leave vice and folly unsubdued behind.
Gray dawn appears; the sportsman and his train
Speckle the bosom of the distant plain;
'Tis he, the Nimrod of the neighbouring lairs;
Save that his scent is less acute than theirs,
For persevering chase, and headlong leaps,
True beagle as the stanchest hound he keeps.
Charged with the folly of his life's mad scene,
He takes offence, and wonders what you mean;
The joy the danger and the toil o'er pays--
'Tis exercise, and health, and length of days.
Again impetuous to the field he flies;

Leaps every fence but one, there falls and dies;
Like a slain deer, the tumbrel brings him home,
Unmiss'd but by his dogs and by his groom.
Ye clergy, while your orbit is your place,
Lights of the world and stars of human race;
But, if eccentric ye forsake your sphere,
Prodigies ominous and view'd with fear:
The comet's baneful influence is a dream;
Yours real, and pernicious in the extreme.
What then! are appetites and lusts laid down
With the same ease that man puts on his gown?
Will avarice and concupiscence give place,
Charm'd by the sounds--Your Reverence, or your Grace?
No. But his own engagement binds him fast;
Or, if it does not, brands him to the last
What atheists call him--a designing knave,
A mere church juggler, hypocrite, and slave.
Oh, laugh or mourn with me the rueful jest,
A cassock'd huntsman and a fiddling priest!
He from Italian songsters takes his cue:
Set Paul to music, he shall quote him too.
He takes the field. The master of the pack
Cries--Well done, saint! and claps him on the back.
Is this the path of sanctity? Is this
To stand a waymark on the road to bliss?
Himself a wanderer from the narrow way,
His silly sheep, what wonder if they stray?

Go, cast your orders at your bishop's feet,
Send your dishonour'd gown to Monmouth-street!
The sacred function in your hands is made--
Sad sacrilege--no function, but a trade!
Occiduus is a pastor of renown;
When he has pray'd and preach'd the Sabbath down,
With wire and catgut he concludes the day,
Quavering and semiquavering care away.
The full concerto swells upon your ear;
All elbows shake. Look in, and you would swear
The Babylonian tyrant with a nod
Had summon'd them to serve his golden god.
So well that thought the employment seems to suit,
Psaltery and sackbut, dulcimer and flute.
O fie! 'tis evangelical and pure:
Observe each face, how sober and demure!
Ecstasy sets her stamp on every mien;
Chins fallen, and not an eyeball to be seen.
Still I insist, though music heretofore
Has charm'd me much (not e'en Occiduus more),
Love, joy, and peace make harmony more meet
For Sabbath evenings, and perhaps as sweet.
Will not the sickliest sheep of every flock
Resort to this example as a rock;
There stand, and justify the foul abuse
Of Sabbath hours with plausible excuse?
If apostolic gravity be free

To play the fool on Sundays, why not we?
If he the tinkling harpsichord regards
As inoffensive, what offence in cards?
Strike up the fiddles, let us all be gay!
Laymen have leave to dance, if parsons play.
O Italy!--Thy Sabbaths will be soon
Our Sabbaths, closed with mummary and buffoon.
Preaching and pranks will share the motley scene,
Ours parcelled out, as thine have ever been,
God's worship and the mountebank between.
What says the prophet? Let that day be blest
With holiness and consecrated rest.
Pastime and business, both it should exclude,
And bar the door the moment they intrude;
Nobly distinguish'd above all the six
By deeds in which the world must never mix.
Hear him again. He calls it a delight,
A day of luxury observed aright,
When the glad soul is made Heaven's welcome guest,
Sits banqueting, and God provides the feast.
But triflers are engaged and cannot come;
Their answer to the call is--Not at home.
O the dear pleasures of the velvet plain,
The painted tablets, dealt and dealt again!
Cards, with what rapture, and the polish'd die,
The yawning chasm of indolence supply!
Then to the dance, and make the sober moon

Witness of joys that shun the sight of noon.
Blame, cynic, if you can, quadrille or ball,
The snug close party, or the splendid hall,
Where Night, down stooping from her ebon throne,
Views constellations brighter than her own.
'Tis innocent, and harmless, and refined,
The balm of care, Elysium of the mind.
Innocent! Oh, if venerable Time
Slain at the foot of Pleasure be no crime,
Then, with his silver beard and magic wand,
Let Comus rise archbishop of the land;
Let him your rubric and your feasts prescribe,
Grand metropolitan of all the tribe.
Of manners rough, and coarse athletic cast,
The rank debauch suits Clodio's filthy taste.
Rufillus, exquisitely form'd by rule,
Not of the moral but the dancing school,
Wonders at Clodio's follies, in a tone
As tragical as others at his own.
He cannot drink five bottles, bilk the score,
Then kill a constable, and drink five more;
But he can draw a pattern, make a tart,
And has the ladies' etiquette by heart.
Go, fool; and, arm in arm with Clodio, plead
Your cause before a bar you little dread;
But know, the law that bids the drunkard die
Is far too just to pass the trifler by.

Both baby-featured, and of infant size,
View'd from a distance, and with heedless eyes,
Folly and Innocence are so alike,
The difference, though essential, fails to strike.
Yet Folly ever has a vacant stare,
A simpering countenance, and a trifling air;
But Innocence, sedate, serene, erect,
Delights us, by engaging our respect.
Man, Nature's guest by invitation sweet,
Receives from her both appetite and treat;
But, if he play the glutton and exceed,
His benefactress blushes at the deed.
For Nature, nice, as liberal to dispense,
Made nothing but a brute the slave of sense.
Daniel ate pulse by choice--example rare!
Heaven bless'd the youth, and made him fresh and fair.
Gorgonius sits, abdominous and wan,
Like a fat squab upon a Chinese fan:
He snuffs far off the anticipated joy;
Turtle and venison all his thoughts employ;
Prepares for meals as jockeys take a sweat,
Oh, nauseous!--an emetic for a whet!
Will Providence o'erlook the wasted good?
Temperance were no virtue if he could.
That pleasures, therefore, or what such we call,
Are hurtful, is a truth confess'd by all.
And some, that seem to threaten virtue less

Still hurtful in the abuse, or by the excess.
Is man, then, only for his torment placed
The centre of delights he may not taste?
Like fabled Tantalus, condemn'd to hear
The precious stream still purling in his ear,
Lip-deep in what he longs for, and yet curst
With prohibition and perpetual thirst?
No, wrangler--destitute of shame and sense;
The precept, that enjoins him abstinence,
Forbids him none but the licentious joy,
Whose fruit, though fair, tempts only to destroy.
Remorse, the fatal egg by Pleasure laid
In every bosom where her nest is made,
Hatch'd by the beams of truth, denies him rest,
And proves a raging scorpion in his breast.
No pleasure? Are domestic comforts dead?
Are all the nameless sweets of friendship fled?
Has time worn out, or fashion put to shame,
Good sense, good health, good conscience, and good fame?
All these belong to virtue, and all prove
That virtue has a title to your love.
Have you no touch of pity, that the poor
Stand starved at your inhospitable door?
Or if yourself, too scantily supplied,
Need help, let honest industry provide.
Earn, if you want; if you abound, impart:
These both are pleasures to the feeling heart.

No pleasure? Has some sickly eastern waste
Sent us a wind to parch us at a blast?
Can British Paradise no scenes afford
To please her sated and indifferent lord?
Are sweet philosophy's enjoyments run
Quite to the lees? And has religion none?
Brutes capable would tell you 'tis a lie,
And judge you from the kennel and the sty.
Delights like these, ye sensual and profane,
Ye are bid, begg'd, besought, to entertain;
Call'd to these crystal streams, do ye turn off
Obscene to swill and swallow at a trough?
Envy the beast, then, on whom Heaven bestows
Your pleasures, with no curses at the close.
Pleasure admitted in undue degree
Enslaves the will, nor leaves the judgment free.
'Tis not alone the grape's enticing juice
Unnerves the moral powers, and mars their use;
Ambition, avarice, and the lust of fame,
And woman, lovely woman, does the same.
The heart, surrender'd to the ruling power
Of some ungovern'd passion every hour,
Finds by degrees the truths that once bore sway,
And all their deep impressions, wear away;
So coin grows smooth, in traffic current pass'd,
Till Caesar's image is effaced at last.
The breach, though small at first, soon opening wide,

In rushes folly with a full-moon tide,
Then welcome errors, of whatever size,
To justify it by a thousand lies.
As creeping ivy clings to wood or stone,
And hides the ruin that it feeds upon;
So sophistry cleaves close to and protects
Sin's rotten trunk, concealing its defects.
Mortals, whose pleasures are their only care,
First wish to be imposed on, and then are.
And lest the fulsome artifice should fail,
Themselves will hide its coarseness with a veil.
Not more industrious are the just and true
To give to Virtue what is Virtue's due--
The praise of wisdom, comeliness, and worth,
And call her charms to public notice forth--
Than Vice's mean and disingenuous race
To hide the shocking features of her face.
Her form with dress and lotion they repair;
Then kiss their idol, and pronounce her fair.
The sacred implement I now employ
Might prove a mischief, or at best a toy;
A trifle, if it move but to amuse;
But, if to wrong the judgment and abuse,
Worse than a poniard in the basest hand,
It stabs at once the morals of a land.
Ye writers of what none with safety reads,
Footing it in the dance that Fancy leads;

Ye novelists, who mar what ye would mend,
Snivelling and drivelling folly without end;
Whose corresponding misses fill the ream
With sentimental frippery and dream,
Caught in a delicate soft silken net
By some lewd earl, or rake-hell baronet:
Ye pimps, who, under virtue's fair pretence,
Steal to the closet of young innocence,
And teach her, inexperienced yet and green,
To scribble as you scribbled at fifteen;
Who, kindling a combustion of desire,
With some cold moral think to quench the fire;
Though all your engineering proves in vain,
The dribbling stream ne'er puts it out again:
O that a verse had power, and could command
Far, far away, these flesh-flies of the land,
Who fasten without mercy on the fair,
And suck, and leave a craving maggot there!
Howe'er disguised the inflammatory tale,
And cover'd with a fine-spun specious veil;
Such writers, and such readers, owe the gust
And relish of their pleasure all to lust.
But the muse, eagle-pinion'd, has in view
A quarry more important still than you;
Down, down the wind she swims, and sails away,
Now stoops upon it, and now grasps the prey.
Petronius! all the muses weep for thee;

But every tear shall scald thy memory:
The graces too, while Virtue at their shrine
Lay bleeding under that soft hand of thine,
Felt each a mortal stab in her own breast,
Abhorr'd the sacrifice, and cursed the priest.
Thou polish'd and high-finish'd foe to truth,
Graybeard corrupter of our listening youth,
To purge and skim away the filth of vice,
That so refined it might the more entice,
Then pour it on the morals of thy son,
To taint his heart, was worthy of thine own!
Now, while the poison all high life pervades,
Write, if thou canst, one letter from the shades,
One, and one only, charged with deep regret,
That thy worst part, thy principles, live yet;
One sad epistle thence may cure mankind
Of the plague spread by bundles left behind.
'Tis granted, and no plainer truth appears,
Our most important are our earliest years;
The mind, impressible and soft, with ease
Imbibes and copies what she hears and sees,
And through life's labyrinth holds fast the clue
That Education gives her, false or true.
Plants raised with tenderness are seldom strong;
Man's coltish disposition asks the thong;
And without discipline the favourite child,
Like a neglected forester, runs wild.

But we, as if good qualities would grow
Spontaneous, take but little pains to sow:
We give some Latin and a smatch of Greek;
Teach him to fence and figure twice a week;
And having done, we think, the best we can,
Praise his proficiency, and dub him man.
From school to Cam or Isis, and thence home;
And thence with all convenient speed to Rome,
With reverend tutor, clad in habit lay,
To tease for cash, and quarrel with all day;
With memorandum-book for every town,
And every post, and where the chaise broke down;
His stock, a few French phrases got by heart,
With much to learn, but nothing to impart;
The youth, obedient to his sire's commands,
Sets off a wanderer into foreign lands.
Surprised at all they meet, the gosling pair,
With awkward gait, stretch'd neck, and silly stare,
Discover huge cathedrals built with stone,
And steeples towering high, much like our own;
But shew peculiar light by many a grin
At Popish practices observed within.
Ere long some bowing, smirking, smart abbé
Remarks two loiterers that have lost their way;
And, being always primed with politesse
For men of their appearance and address,
With much compassion undertakes the task

To tell them more than they have wit to ask;
Points to inscriptions wheresoe'er they tread,
Such as, when legible, were never read,
But being canker'd now and half worn out,
Craze antiquarian brains with endless doubt;
Some headless hero, or some Caesar shews--
Defective only in his Roman nose;
Exhibits elevations, drawings, plans,
Models of Herculaneum pots and pans;
And sells them medals, which, if neither rare
Nor ancient, will be so, preserved with care.
Strange the recital! from whatever cause
His great improvement and new lights he draws,
The squire, once bashful, is shamefaced no more,
But teems with powers he never felt before;
Whether increased momentum, and the force
With which from clime to clime he sped his course
(As axles sometimes kindle as they go),
Chafed him, and brought dull nature to a glow;
Or whether clearer skies and softer air,
That make Italian flowers so sweet and fair,
Freshening his lazy spirits as he ran,
Unfolded genially, and spread the man;
Returning, he proclaims, by many a grace,
By shrugs and strange contortions of his face,
How much a dunce, that has been sent to roam,
Excels a dunce that has been kept at home.

Accomplishments have taken virtue's place,
And wisdom falls before exterior grace:
We slight the precious kernel of the stone,
And toil to polish its rough coat alone.
A just deportment, manners graced with ease,
Elegant phrase, and figure form'd to please,
Are qualities that seem to comprehend
Whatever parents, guardians, schools, intend;
Hence an unfurnish'd and a listless mind,
Though busy, trifling; empty, though refined;
Hence all that interferes, and dares to clash
With indolence and luxury, is trash;
While learning, once the man's exclusive pride,
Seems verging fast towards the female side.
Learning itself, received into a mind
By nature weak, or viciously inclined,
Serves but to lead philosophers astray,
Where children would with ease discern the way.
And of all arts sagacious dupes invent,
To cheat themselves and gain the world's assent,
The worst is--Scripture warp'd from its intent.
The carriage bowls along, and all are pleased
If Tom be sober, and the wheels well greased;
But if the rogue be gone a cup too far,
Left out his linchpin, or forgot his tar,
It suffers interruption and delay,
And meets with hindrance in the smoothest way.

When some hypothesis absurd and vain
Has fill'd with all its fumes a critic's brain,
The text that sorts not with his darling whim,
Though plain to others, is obscure to him.
The will made subject to a lawless force,
All is irregular, and out of course;
And Judgment drunk, and bribed to lose his way,
Winks hard, and talks of darkness at noonday.
A critic on the sacred book should be
Candid and learn'd, dispassionate and free;
Free from the wayward bias bigots feel,
From fancy's influence, and intemperate zeal;
But above all (or let the wretch refrain,
Nor touch the page he cannot but profane),
Free from the domineering power of lust;
A lewd interpreter is never just.
How shall I speak thee, or thy power address,
Thou god of our idolatry, the Press?
By thee religion, liberty, and laws,
Exert their influence and advance their cause:
By thee worse plagues than Pharaoh's land befell,
Diffused, make Earth the vestibule of Hell;
Thou fountain, at which drink the good and wise,
Thou ever-bubbling spring of endless lies;
Like Eden's dread probationary tree,
Knowledge of good and evil is from thee!
No wild enthusiast ever yet could rest

Till half mankind were like himself possess'd.
Philosophers, who darken and put out
Eternal truth by everlasting doubt;
Church quacks, with passions under no command,
Who fill the world with doctrines contraband,
Discoverers of they know not what, confined
Within no bounds--the blind that lead the blind;
To streams of popular opinion drawn,
Deposit in those shallows all their spawn.
The wriggling fry soon fill the creeks around,
Poisoning the waters where their swarms abound.
Scorn'd by the nobler tenants of the flood,
Minnows and gudgeons gorge the unwholesome food.
The propagated myriads spread so fast,
E'en Leuwenhoeck himself would stand aghast,
Employ'd to calculate the enormous sum,
And own his crab-computing powers o'ercome.
Is this hyperbole? The world well known,
Your sober thoughts will hardly find it one.
Fresh confidence the speculatist takes
From every hair-brain'd proselyte he makes;
And therefore prints: himself but half deceived,
Till others have the soothing tale believed.
Hence comment after comment, spun as fine
As bloated spiders draw the flimsy line.
Hence the same word that bids our lusts obey
Is misapplied to sanctify their sway.

If stubborn Greek refuse to be his friend,
Hebrew or Syriac shall be forced to bend;
If languages and copies all cry, No--
Somebody proved it centuries ago.
Like trout pursued, the critic in despair
Darts to the mud, and finds his safety there:
Women, whom custom has forbid to fly
The scholar's pitch (the scholar best knows why),
With all the simple and unletter'd poor,
Admire his learning, and almost adore.
Whoever errs, the priest can ne'er be wrong,
With such fine words familiar to his tongue.
Ye ladies! (for, indifferent in your cause,
I should deserve to forfeit all applause)
Whatever shocks or gives the least offence
To virtue, delicacy, truth, or sense
(Try the criterion, 'tis a faithful guide),
Nor has, nor can have, Scripture on its side.
None but an author knows an author's cares,
Or Fancy's fondness for the child she bears.
Committed once into the public arms,
The baby seems to smile with added charms.
Like something precious ventured far from shore,
'Tis valued for the danger's sake the more.
He views it with complacency supreme,
Solicits kind attention to his dream;
And daily, more enamour'd of the cheat,

Kneels, and asks Heaven to bless the dear deceit.
So one, whose story serves at least to shew
Men loved their own productions long ago,
Woo'd an unfeeling statue for his wife,
Nor rested till the gods had given it life.
If some mere driveller suck the sugar'd fib,
One that still needs his leading-string and bib,
And praise his genius, he is soon repaid
In praise applied to the same part--his head;
For 'tis a rule that holds for ever true,
Grant me discernment, and I grant it you.
Patient of contradiction as a child,
Affable, humble, diffident, and mild;
Such was Sir Isaac, and such Boyle and Locke;
Your blunderer is as sturdy as a rock.
The creature is so sure to kick and bite,
A muleteer's the man to set him right.
First Appetite enlists him Truth's sworn foe,
Then obstinate Self-will confirms him so.
Tell him he wanders; that his error leads
To fatal ills; that, though the path he treads
Be flowery, and he see no cause of fear,
Death and the pains of hell attend him there:
In vain; the slave of arrogance and pride,
He has no hearing on the prudent side.
His still refuted quirks he still repeats;
New raised objections with new quibbles meets;

Till, sinking in the quicksand he defends,
He dies disputing, and the contest ends--
But not the mischiefs; they, still left behind,
Like thistle-seeds, are sown by every wind.
Thus men go wrong with an ingenious skill;
Bend the straight rule to their own crooked will;
And, with a clear and shining lamp supplied,
First put it out, then take it for a guide.
Halting on crutches of unequal size,
One leg by truth supported, one by lies,
They sidle to the goal with awkward pace,
Secure of nothing--but to lose the race.
Faults in the life breed errors in the brain,
And these reciprocally those again.
The mind and conduct mutually imprint
And stamp their image in each other's mint;
Each, sire and dam of an infernal race,
Begetting and conceiving all that's base.
None sends his arrow to the mark in view,
Whose hand is feeble, or his aim untrue.
For though, ere yet the shaft is on the wind,
Or when it first forsakes the elastic string,
It err but little from the intended line,
It falls at last far wide of his design;
So he who seeks a mansion in the sky,
Must watch his purpose with a steadfast eye;
That prize belongs to none but the sincere,

The least obliquity is fatal here.
With caution taste the sweet Circean cup;
He that sips often, at last drinks it up.
Habits are soon assumed; but when we strive
To strip them off, 'tis being flay'd alive.
Call'd to the temple of impure delight,
He that abstains, and he alone, does right.
If a wish wander that way, call it home;
He cannot long be safe whose wishes roam.
But if you pass the threshold, you are caught;
Die then, if power Almighty save you not.
There hardening by degrees, till double steel'd,
Take leave of nature's God, and God reveal'd;
Then laugh at all you trembled at before;
And, joining the freethinkers' brutal roar,
Swallow the two grand nostrums they dispense--
That Scripture lies, and blasphemy is sense.
If clemency revolted by abuse
Be damnable, then damn'd without excuse.
Some dream that they can silence, when they will,
The storm of passion, and say, Peace, be still:
But "Thus far and no farther," when address'd
To the wild wave, or wilder human breast,
Implies authority that never can,
That never ought to be the lot of man.
But, muse, forbear; long flights forebode a fall;
Strike on the deep-toned chord the sum of all.

Hear the just law--the judgment of the skies!
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies;
And he that will be cheated to the last,
Delusions strong as hell shall bind him fast.
But if the wanderer his mistake discern,
Judge his own ways, and sigh for a return,
Bewilder'd once, must he bewail his loss
For ever and for ever? No--the cross!
There and there only (though the deist rave,
And atheist, if Earth bear so base a slave);
There and there only is the power to save.
There no delusive hope invites despair;
No mockery meets you, no deception there.
The spells and charms, that blinded you before,
All vanish there, and fascinate no more.
I am no preacher, let this hint suffice--
The cross once seen is death to every vice;
Else He that hung there suffer'd all his pain,
Bled, groan'd, and agonised, and died, in vain.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/william-cowper/the-progress-of-error/>

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