

**THE CONSISTENCY OF THE  
WHOLE SCHEME OF  
REVELATION WITH ITSELF  
AND WITH HUMAN REASON**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649257201

The consistency of the whole scheme of revelation with itself and with human reason by Philip Nicholas Shuttleworth

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Cover @ 2017

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**PHILIP NICHOLAS SHUTTLEWORTH**

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NEW-YORK:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY J. & J. HARPER,  
NO. 82 CLIFF-STREET,

AND SOLD BY THE PRINCIPAL BOOKSELLERS THROUGHOUT  
THE UNITED STATES.

1832.

SP3470

## P R E F A C E.

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THE object of the following dissertation is to do justice to the internal evidences of Christianity, by disencumbering them of the weight of that class of objections which, though in popular discussion generally considered as affecting the cause of revelation exclusively, stand in reality in no need of refutation, for the plain and simple reason that they are applicable in exactly the same degree to every possible modification of religion whatever. There is certainly much confusion of idea displayed in the mode by which skeptics for the most part make their assaults upon the credibility of revelation. Of the arguments alleged by them, far the greater proportion will usually be found to militate against principles already admitted by themselves, while almost all of them consist of isolated and desultory attacks upon some detached point of belief, rarely, if ever, at the same time taking an enlarged and impartial survey of the antagonist difficulties which attach to the opposite view of the same question. It is obvious, however, to every person who has paid the slightest attention to the topics of theology, that objections which, when considered separately, appear perfectly unanswerable, may often lose the greater



part of their power of embarrassment when taken as integral portions of a complex system, and even, when viewed as a counterpoise to other propositions not less formidable, may contribute rather to the removal than the suggestion of doubt. Natural no less than revealed religion, in fact, consists of a mass of startling problems, each of which individually appears pregnant with insuperable difficulty, and yet between the counteracting forces of which our faith, whether as philosophical theists or as devout Christians, must be content to preserve its balance. Nothing, accordingly, is so easy of achievement as the task undertaken by the infidel, provided his object be to become the assailant. He has only to limit the discussion to one single view of a necessarily complex subject, and the perplexities which immediately suggest themselves will, of course, so long as we confine ourselves to the same restricted mode of defence, exceed our means of disentanglement. The obvious and, indeed, the only remedy for this species of misapprehension, to which the natural indolence and the less venial passions of mankind too easily dispose them, is that of acquiring, as much as possible, the habit of looking upon the subject-matter of our religious belief as an entire and connected whole; and of considering no one proposition which it seems to involve as altogether inadmissible until we have cautiously balanced it against that contradictory dogma which, in case of its rejection, we shall be obliged to substitute in its place. It is surely, however, no breach of charity to assert that the skeptical disputant against revelation rarely, if ever, proceeds to this length;

and yet, until he has done so, it is certain that he has not given the grand question which he takes upon himself to determine the consideration which it deserves, and which it is fairly, in strict reasoning, capable of receiving. The object aimed at in the ensuing pages is, to expose the fallacy involved in this mode of argument. In so short a work, an attempt to give a general and connected view of the internal evidences of our faith must necessarily confine itself to the discussion of the more general and prominent topics. It will, however, answer its purpose, if, by affording to the reader a comprehensive sketch of the main outline, it induces him to fill up the detail by pursuing that train of thought which the contemplation of so interesting a subject cannot fail to suggest. Even the most firmly-grounded faith in this life being established rather upon a balance between conflicting difficulties than upon positive demonstration, it follows, that the wider we make our intellectual range in examining the general system of Providence, the more we become familiarized with those astounding facts which form the basis of every possible theological theory, and the less we are in consequence disposed to be offended with what we find to be rather the result of an incurable defect in our own intellectual apprehensions than a substantial refutation of our religious creed. It is thus that in proportion as we advance in practical knowledge, the more we perceive the wisdom of that submission of the understanding in certain cases, the idea of which is so offensive to every beginner in the study of theology, but of which no person who, by laborious experience,

has learned the necessity of walking by faith will be ashamed to make his profession. Certain, at all events, it is, that the denial of Christianity affords no escape whatever from most of the difficulties with which, in the hasty judgment of mankind, it stands almost exclusively charged. To every mind endued with the vital feeling of religion sufficient evidence has been afforded by the mercy of the Creator for every purpose of effective moral probation, however inadequate it may be for the gratification of mere curiosity: but the insatiable spirit of skepticism, if it will pursue its course rigorously and consistently to the last, has in strictness no assignable resting-place or limit short of the hopeless extreme of atheism itself.