Goldsmith and Religion*

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At that period of life when Dr G. lived under the roof of Dr Milner, at Peckham, he seemed much impressed with a sense of religion. Not that he was bigotedly attached to any particular system of faith, or to any particular mode of worship. He joined himself to no one peculiar sect or denomination of the christian world – but admired every character amongst them in whom devotion and benevolence were united. So far from resembling too many men of genius in that infidelity and scepticism by which our age is unhappily distinguished, he recognised with joy the existence and perfections of a Deity. For the christian revelation also, he was always understood to have a profound respect – knowing that it was the source of our best hopes and noblest expectations.

One of Dr Milner's daughters, an excellent young lady, died while he was at Peckham: one morning, on his coming down to breakfast, he enquired after her with his usual solicitude; and being told she had expired in the night, he lifted up his hands and eyes, exclaiming with a solemn emphasis – '*She is now with God!*' The manner after which he uttered these expressions, struck the family with a deep impression of his piety. Indeed there are passages in his works which bear testimony to his belief of a *future state*, as well as to his sense of the *wise and superintending providence* of the Deity.

* 'Prefatory Address to *The Traveller*', in *The Poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith* (London: Thomas Hurst, 1804) pages unnumbered. Editor's title.