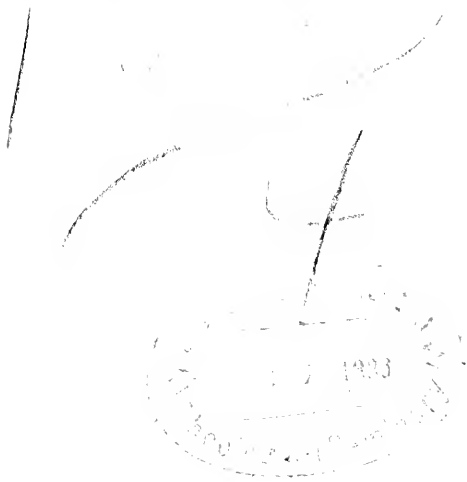


A YOUNG MAN'S
DIFFICULTIES
WITH HIS BIBLE

BY

D. W. FAUCIUS D. D.



BS 511 .F37 1876
Faunce, D. W. 1829-1911.
A young man's difficulties
with his Bible



A YOUNG MAN'S

DIFFICULTIES WITH HIS BIBLE.

BY

REV. D. W. FAUNCE,

AUTHOR OF FLETCHER PRIZE ESSAY, "THE CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD."

NEW YORK:
SHELDON & COMPANY,
NO. 8 MURRAY STREET,
1876.

VALUABLE RELIGIOUS BOOKS.

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By Rev. D. W. Faunce.

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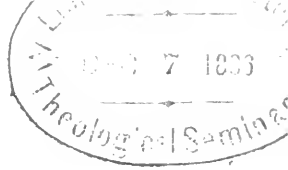
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P R E F A C E .

THE author, on assuming the pastoral charge of a church in a thrifty and intelligent inland city of New England, found in the community a large number of young men not exactly sceptical but a good deal unsettled in their views of religion. They were graduates of Grammar and High schools ; intelligent young men who, though employed as clerks or apprentices, found time to read the papers, the magazines, and occasionally a book. They had caught the drift of one section of popular thought. They asked for some book which should meet briefly and yet fairly the difficulties which they felt. There were plenty of scholarly volumes, suited to men who had received a liberal education and who were masters of their own time. But a small, popular and at the same time accurate volume, suited to this demand, the author could not find. It occurred to him to invite these young men to state to him frankly their perplexities, and then to give a course of lectures on the general subject of these "Difficulties." The lectures were given to crowded houses on Sunday evenings, one in each month, for two successive seasons. It has been thought

that good might be done by publishing selections from these lectures. A few of them have been taken, and the style somewhat changed from the spoken to the written form. The aim has been to give the results of careful study without the processes, to be as accurate in the statement of facts as if the work were to be used as a text-book, and yet to keep in mind the class of young men for whom it is designed. Every chapter, without an exception, has grown out of an actual conversation held with some young friend or else out of some letter or message received from him. When delivered as lectures the author received repeated thanks from individuals to whom they were helpful. Given originally to his former charge at Concord, N. H., a portion of the lectures have been repeated to the congregation which he now serves in Lynn, Mass. It is his prayer that God may make this little volume a blessing to those who read it.

D. W. F.

LYNN, MASS.

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A YOUNG MAN'S
DIFFICULTIES WITH HIS BIBLE.

CHAPTER I.

THE YOUNG MAN'S BOOK.

It is told of a certain publisher that he was in despair because a rival firm had issued so many excellent and successful books of advice to the young. He confided his perplexity to a friend. That friend advised him to select the finest paper and the clearest type, and then to reprint that book of the Bible known as "The Proverbs of Solomon" under the new and startling title of "Counsels for Young Men by a King." Whether the advice was followed, and whether if followed the venture was successful as a business speculation, is not known. But this is certain; that if some would be disappointed at their first opening of such a volume, on further reading they would be compelled to admit that the old book was new, and that the new book was the freshest and richest of all the many volumes addressed to young men.

Solomon had the advantage of knowing thoroughly

of the things about which he wrote. The son of a king, inheriting wealth, with princely tastes, with a love for learning, and a natural shrewdness in dealing with men, with manners courtly, elegant in person, a close observer of all the things and all the men about him, he gathered up the wise sayings of the ages, and passing them through the mint of his own mind, he issued them, newly coined, for the moral and social and spiritual currency of all the world. The Psalms of David his father were for closet use and for temple service on the Sabbath. The Proverbs of Solomon, the son, were for out of door life on all the week days of the year. David helps us sing and pray, but Solomon tells us how to live wisely when the prayer and the worship are ended. His proverbs are the condensed and portable wisdom of the ages. The versatility of the author is amazing. He seems to have listened to the prattling of childhood, and to the whispered accents of youthful lovers to have put himself into sympathy with the trader in his store and the wife in her home, with the priest at the temple altar, and the beggar at the temple gate, to have heard the grumble of the disappointed man and the chuckle of the man who has just seized on worldly success, to have heard all the haughty tones of the prince and the lowly words of the peasant, to have stood by manhood in its developed strength, and by age tottering under the load of buried hopes towards a willing grave; and to each one of all these classes he interprets, better than the

man himself could do it, the peculiarity of his wants, and the needs of his life, and then he offers by way of practical commentary, some quick pithy sentence of sanctified wisdom. He fused the older proverbs of the world, extracted the dross and retained the gold. He took up the selfish shrewdness of mere worldly wisdom, and where the proverb was wrong he made it right, and where it needed the salt of religion he always added it, as a power to purify and save. One idea, that of *godliness*, runs through the book. Wisdom is godliness; and by godliness he means "the love of God," and "the fear of God," the sense of the "eyes of the Lord as in every place," and of God as one who "will bring every work into judgment whether it be good or whether it be evil." This intense godliness is the golden thread on which all these pearls of proverb are carefully strung.

Nor was his Encyclopedia, for the book is really such in its character, the result alone of observation and learning. The author had known the *experience* of life. Written near the close of a singularly varied and extensive career, in which he touched heights and depths seldom visited by one and the same human soul, with memories of the widest possible contrasts of physical mental and moral position, an outcast at one time, a king at another, here heading a rebellion, and there the most loyal of men, at one time fascinated by philosophical speculations, next tossed to and fro by the dreariest scepticism as to God and the immortality of the soul,

and again bedraggled in the mire of heathenism through the persuasions of his idolatrous friend, Hiram, king of Tyre, and then leaving his thin philosophy, coming out of his scepticism, and up from the slough of the lowest idolatry, we see him emerge upon the high ground of religion, humbled by his fall, penitent for his guilt, and resting, at length, as the result of the broadest experience of life, the climax of all his wisdom and knowledge, in the conclusion of the whole matter, that to fear God and keep his commandments is the whole duty of man.

His fall was indeed a sad one. For only one who stands so high can fall so low. Another has said of him that "He sinned with a high hand on a large scale and with a certain royal gusto. He drank of the cup of corruption deep and large; emptying it to the very dregs. His fall is instructive. The pinnacle overhangs the precipice. And any great proportion between gifts and graces renders the former fatal as is a knife in the hands of a suicide, or handwriting to a forger. His misery became something wonderful. And thus on all sides, bright or black, he was equally and soundly great. Like a pyramid, the shadow he cast in one direction was as great as the light he received in the other." In the Ecclesiastes we have his spiritual biography. We go with him through the changes of his infidelity, of his sensualism, of his ambition, of his disappointment in them all, and we see him in his return to God. And

then, revising all his former work, recasting his maxims in the crucible of his own experience, and setting, in the purified wisdom of his later days, the seal of a divine inspiration upon them, he writes in his maturest years this book of "The Proverbs" which is addressed to the thoughtful and earnest men of the world.

Such is the book which commends itself to the study of young men. On further, we are to take up the matter of a young man's difficulties with his Bible. Objections are to be considered. The gravest questions about the volume which is popularly called by those who know it best and love it most "the Word of God," are presently to be discussed with what of fairness and candor we can bring to the consideration of them. But as every building must be in some way approached, as the architect plans always a portico to his edifice, so we will enter upon our work, through this royal gateway of ancient wisdom, by our study of Solomon—the wise man of the olden time.

Let us be sure that we get clearly before our minds the object of the author in this book, of "The Proverbs." There is indeed one general design running through all these books of the Bible. And yet under this general purpose, there are as many subdivisions as there are books. No two cover the same ground. For we have here a history, and there a biography, in one book a direction as to what to believe, in another as to what to practice, now a collection of devotional psalms; and

then an epistle to a church, or a letter to a prominent man. But in each of these books there is a specific design to be accomplished.

What, then, is the aim of the author in the Proverbs ? A very brief examination of the book will convince us that its specific purpose is to show men their *duty in practical life*. It ferrets out men. It shows the eye of God's omniscience to be upon all the minutest thoughts and feelings and acts of our mortal existence. If other books concern themselves with the questions of our immortal life, this has to do chiefly with our present conduct as citizens of God's world. If any man says the Bible talks as if we had nothing to do but to die, talks as if "our life were all to be passed in a monastery or a church," we say to him, here, at least, is a book which follows you to your business, goes into the shop, comes behind your counter, sees the weights as true or false, looks over your shoulder at the ledger, goes back to your family, has a home thrust at every part of your daily life. There are no metaphysics here ; for all is intensely practical.

If a young man with earnest heart comes to ask how he can gain the earlier inward experiences of religion, we would not point him to this book ; unless we knew that some outward wrong had kept him from right feeling. It is true that we find the elements of every truth in this book of Proverbs. But who would go into a well that he might read by the starlight that penetrates

to its depths, when he can have the full sunlight without that trouble? To the gospels, to that especially of John, would we send him; to the Acts of the Apostles he should go and see how inspired men answer the great question of the ages, "What must I do to be saved?"

But if a man is already a Christian and would know how on that foundation to build a noble structure; if he would do the best with himself, and make the utmost out of life, we would point him to the Book of Proverbs.

So, too, if there be any young man who has supposed that the ordinary social virtues are all the religion a man needs, and if he has an impression that the Book of Proverbs favors this idea, let him come and study these pages. He will find that no book is so at war with the idea of the merely ornamental virtues when not attached to a holy heart. God is in this Book of Proverbs. It insists in its opening chapters that sooner or later, in time or eternity, utter ruin will overtake the character that is not built upon "the fear and the love of God." Wisdom, moral wisdom, that which takes God's claims into account—is the basis of the morality it enjoins. This, the foundation stone, once laid, the book shows how every stone is to be hewn and every course to be placed as we build the edifice. And so all private life, and public life, all social, domestic, and political relations, all moralities and courtesies and charities are here separated and then combined and illustrated, their shape and

color all given, and the whole commended and commanded to the young men of all ages and climes. Or, it may be, that one has imbibed notions which he thinks more especially broad and free. He cares less for the right ordering of outward life, thinking it more a matter of custom, convenience or education. He has become interested in the speculations of the hour as to the origin of all these things about us, and as to the laws of this wondrous nature that is engaging the attention and awakening the keen interest of the thoughtful and intelligent young men of the day. He is becoming less stout in his assertion of what man can do, and more aware of the mighty forces of the world. He is smitten by the majesty of law. He comes to think of this force, compared with which man's power is so feeble, as impersonal. Solomon became at one period absorbed in the thought of the objects of the natural world, as a modern young man is in danger of becoming absorbed in the thought of its laws. As the one found himself drawn to be an idolator, so the other is drawn towards fatalism in the presence of the vast powers of the universe. But there comes a time when a man sees the tendency of things. He has to own an impersonal nature, or else a personal Creator and Sovereign. Fatalism says *It*, exactly as religion says *God*.

Each of these excludes the other. If there be a *God* who rules his universe, there is no room for the fatalistic *it*. If there be, in the smallest event, anything

outside the divine control, then there is no more an infinite God. Fatalism, a century ago, loved to talk of all things as coming by chance, as if everything were too loose for a God. To-day it would insist that everything is so fixed, so bound by law, that there is no place nor need for God in the working of events. They work themselves out in definite ways. Buckle, with scholarly phrase, will have it that even moral actions are as fixed as physical events. And, in social life, a frivolous fatalism is constantly heard, saying, "It is all fixed, all fated. It happens so. It can't be helped. It is a thing of destiny. What is to be will be."

Now how is this fatalism to be met? By asserting the truth of man's free will? But that is simply meeting the vastly lengthened line of fatalism at one point. It is opposing an avalanche, by the brandishing of a pin. Within certain limits man is free. But his circle is as that of a peck-measure to the orbit of the most distant planet. A thousand things touch every man, over which he has no control. His birth, in its time, place, manner, circumstances, and, usually, his death also, are not matters of his own will. First and last and midst and always through his life, he encounters powers and events that are beyond his control. There is then no sufficient answer to fatalism in the undoubted truth of man's free will. There is one and only one answer broad enough to meet all the facts. It is the answer of religion. Religion insists upon a God, all-wise, all-just, who,

through fixed law, and, if need be, over fixed law ; who, through man's freedom, and if need be, over that freedom, can and does control all things according to the counsel and purpose of his own eternal intelligence and will. Strangely enough, some men always confound these two things—fatalism and the divine election. But they are as far apart as the poles. They exclude each other. Both cannot be true. One of them must be. And the only reply to the fatalistic *it*, is that furnished by the being and rule of a personal *God*.

Fatalism may be compared to a vast revolving iron wheel. It goes round remorselessly, pitilessly, crushing all before it. It can have neither intelligence nor purpose, neither justice nor compassion. It shrieks with every revolution, "It can't be helped. It must be endured. It is all fixed and fated. There is no purpose, no reason, no result. *It* is the only God." Before these awful revolutions of this terrible and monstrous lawless law—for law without a God is really lawless—all the light and love and joy of the divine Paternity are crushed out, and man seems to be the mere mote imprisoned in the mountain. Oh, how widely different in all its power on human life, is that great solar fact that "the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth !"

There is an ante-war incident that shows the power for despair of the one, and for hope of the other view. A dark cloud hung over the interests of the African race in our land. There seemed no way of deliverance.

Frederick Douglass, at a crowded meeting, depicted the terrible condition. Everything was against his people. One political party had gone down on its knees to slavery. The other proposed not to abolish it anywhere but only to restrict it. The Supreme Court had given judgment against black men as such. He drew a picture of his race writhing under the lash of the overseer and trampled upon by brutal and lascivious men. As he went on with his despairing words, a great horror of darkness seemed to settle down upon the audience. The orator even uttered the cry for blood. There was no other relief. And then he showed that there was no relief even in that. Every thing, every influence, every event was gathering not for good but for evil about the doomed race. It seemed as if they were fated to destruction. Just at the instant when the cloud was most heavy over the audience, there slowly rose, in the front seat, an old black woman. Her name, "Sojourner Truth." She had given it to herself. Far and wide, she was known as an African prophetess. Every eye was on her. The orator paused. Reaching out towards him her long bony finger, as every eye followed her pointing, she cried out, "*Frederick, is God dead?*" It was a lightning-flash upon that darkness. The cloud began to break, and faith and hope and patience returned with the idea of a personal and ever-living God. Such is always the result, whether we look out on the broad scenes of human history, or in upon the lowering

events of any one human life. Everywhere *it* is the word of despair, and *God* is the word of faith and hope.

And as the divine plan of things is the true view of them, so there must be, unto the complete answer of all fatalism, an emphasis put upon the *eternity* of this divine plan of things. For are not all our thinkers pushing their inquiries backward? Are they not asking whence and when this established order of things? They go back before man to find his origin in some vast process of development. They push back their fatalistic *it* until they come virtually to make an *eternal* it. And the only answer possible is that furnished by the Scripture doctrine of an eternal God who from "before the foundation of the world hath chosen" the things that shall be. It is Solomon's doctrine that the recognition of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom, and the sum of all knowledge. And Christian thinkers are being driven anew to assert this doctrine by the fatalistic tendency of certain lines of modern thought. As nothing less than the thought of an eternal and personal God meets the demands of the intellect, so nothing less than this meets the yearnings of the heart. How justly and beautifully has Faber said :

"O Majesty, unspeakable and dread!
 Wert thou less mighty than thou art,
 Thou wert, O Lord, too great for our belief,
 Too little for our heart.

But greatness which is infinite, makes room
For all things in its lap to lie ;
We should be crushed by a magnificence
Short of infinity.

Great God ! our lowliness takes heart to play
Beneath the shadow of thy state ;
The only comfort of our littleness
Is that thou art so great."

And when an inquiring young man is driven back to recognition of God, as a logical necessity of all thought, as a demand alike of brain and soul, of the outward nature that surrounds him and the inward nature that is made to know and judge of these outward things and to trace back facts and laws to their only possible origin in the personal thought and personal act of a personal God, he has come to stand not only upon a broad and lofty ground, but beside all the best thinkers of the world. For some of those thinkers whose philosophic theories are often regarded as tending towards the denial of a personal God, make haste to deny the inference. Herbert Spencer claims that the doctrine of the correlation of forces does not exclude that of God, and Tyndall hastens to correct the inferable Atheism of his Belfast address.

And so the world's experience of philosophy and even of speculation leads a man back to the place where Solomon was brought—the place, beneath the fear, love and service of God, from which he never should have

wandered, and which he entreats every young man never to leave.

Or, if one has been tempted to think it brave to doubt about God and the soul and immortality, this book will serve as a tonic for his faith. One book of Solomon the Ecclesiastes is the book of doubts ; or rather the book of doubts solved. In that book Solomon recounts the old arguments used when he was a sceptic, when he was a pleasure seeker, when he was astray in idolatry. We see him, hear him at his worst ; and then, with him, go back to the " conclusion of the whole matter," in the devout recognition and the earnest service of God. But in the " Proverbs" there is a strong joyous faith which the writer not only possesses but commends to the young men of the world. The young man is addressed as *capable of faith*. God made man to believe. The great difference between him and the higher animals is very largely in the fact that he has the capacity for faith ; the ability to believe upon testimony. The beast has no such power. The brutes can remember, can do many acts singularly like reasoning. But they cannot collect and compare evidence and believe and so act upon it. The men of fifty years ago collected various items of knowledge ; and the boy of to-day starts where they ended ; for he is able to believe. Not so the colts of to-day ; for their sires collected no testimony. There is neither capacity to believe nor amassed material on which to exercise faith. Something can be done by interbreed-

ing to develop other powers. But no capacity for faith in testimony can be developed in the brute creation. Hence progress for them is impossible. They have no faculties adapted to faith in others' testimony. They are made to know what they can through eye and through ear, by touch and by taste. Man alone is *capable of faith*. He receives most of his knowledge by credence. He believes it on the testimony of others. Man, unlike the brutes, is by his nature a believing animal. When he has no faith in testimony he is no better than a brute. A man's great characteristic is power to believe—to believe the testimony of his fellow-man and the revelation of his God.

Some young men are tempted to think that, since we have the power of doubting as well as the power of believing, we are to work both by doubt and by belief. But we have the power of doubting just as we have the power of sinning. We sin by perverting our powers. They were given us not for sin but for service. So we have eyes for seeing, but we have power to put them out. Nevertheless God gave us eyes not that we might be blind with them, but see with them. Seeing is the legitimate use of the eyes, just as believing is the legitimate use of the faculties of the mind and soul. And what blindness is to eyes made for seeing, that doubting is to a mind made for believing. When shutting the eye and closing the ear are the best ways of seeing and hearing, then doubting will be the best way of gaining

knowledge about truth and duty. That young man who supposes that if he is just a little sceptical, he shall be more likely to know what is truthful, makes a terrible mistake. The habit of doubting is the least reasonable of all habits. For a man was made to believe ; and he had better believe wrongly on some subjects, than to believe nothing on any.

There can be no progress by doubt and negation except in error. But, says one, "Would you not have a man doubt an error, and is not such a doubt a help toward coming to the truth." We answer that if a man doubts an error because he is in the habit of doubting, he will doubt the truth for the same reason. We would have him see and believe the truth, and then whether he doubts or does anything else with the error, is of no consequence. Let any young man see that the believing and not the doubting spirit is the guide to truth. For God made us and Jesus commands us to believe. So, too, if we are made to believe, there is *something to be believed*. God made the eyes to see something. If the feet are to stand, there is provided an earth to stand upon. If man is a believing animal there is somewhere truth to be believed. Truth must be a positive thing. It is of God. For God is the "God of truth." It is sometimes said that the truth to any man is what he honestly believes it to be. "It is truth to him, though error to another." If that were so, truth would not be truth, but only each man's fancy. But God made the mind to

believe, and the truth to be believed. When a young man says "I cannot decide among so many religions," he says either that God has not given him brains enough to believe, or else has withheld the truth, so that he cannot know it. If he says the first he denies his own manhood; if he says the second he condemns his God for so making the mind and not making the truth which the mind was made to believe.

In dealing with his doubts a young man should also be careful and not deem doubting the sign of a stronger intellect. It is far from that. Anybody can doubt. And a man who is floundering in a sea of doubts has no right to call out to others to come and see how brave and strong a swimmer he is. The strong and brave swimmer is he who gets through and gains the other shore, and stands firmly on the rock. He who can never quite make up his mind on any subject is not usually praised for vigor of intellect. The young man who begins a trade, a business, a profession, and then, speedily doubting his ability or taste for it, turns to another only again to doubt his ability, is a young man who awakens only pity for his want of perception or of purpose. He who cannot make up his mind on any public question, who always doubts how to vote, gets no praise for manliness. Doubt and indecision are marks of weakness rather than strength, and this book of the "Proverbs" breathes all through it a bracing atmosphere of faith in truth, in right, in manhood and in God. It

shows on every page the native nobility of the man who is strong alike in the integrity of his outward virtue and his inward faith.

The *plan* of the book of the Proverbs is in harmony with the design of its author. Its sayings are often used by us in disjointed fragments. For it is portable wisdom. But then any separate part is richer when seen in its connection with the scope of the entire book. It is not a chance medley of miscellaneous remarks. It is no mere scrap-book. It is far from being a confused mass of apothegm and epigram. The casual observer of the heavens on a winter's night might at first think the skies were full of bright disorder. To him it might seem as if God had scattered here and there the dust of stars carelessly over the firmament. But his friend bids him observe the lines of gigantic boundary, tells him of the order and place of each constellation and shows him that instead of chaos, there is plan in the skies. So it is with these proverbs. They seem like a whole firmament of gems. Such is their point and brilliancy that the very things that make them proverbs give them also their seeming abruptness and lack of connection. But the plan is there, and study will bring it out, until we admire the setting as much as the gems themselves.

The first part of the book comprises nine chapters. In these the importance of a well grounded and firmly settled piety is insisted upon for every young man. The dangers and duties of early life are pointed out so

clearly that this portion of the book has been called the "Young Man's Directory." The second part, comprising the next fourteen chapters, supposes that the clerk or apprentice or student has acquired his business, his trade or his profession, and is ready to step forth into actual life. It tells him how to deal with men in such a way as to be prosperous and at the same time please the Lord. This second part may be called the "Merchant's Directory." The third division, though endorsed by Solomon, is the work of the son of a noble mother, who, with that mother in mind, sets forth the glories of true womanhood. It is the finest word painting in literature; and that too in a line where the poets of the world have woven their choicest garlands and sung their sweetest songs. But if these are the main divisions of the book, it comports well with its plan, that all through it, there should be delightful episodes; the bowers of fancy where the poet may sing his verses, and the gardens where the philosopher may walk without interruption while talking to the admiring disciples, who, after the manner of eastern scholars, love to call some veteran in wisdom by the name of master.

In a gallery of art there are large and even colossal objects in one picture, while another is a miniature of not more than a hand's breadth. And here in this gallery are pictures with a solitary figure—a single proverb; and there are also pictures of broadest artistic grouping. Here is a brief sentence, and there a long

allegory. At one turn, we see the gilded coverings stripped from some sin, and at the next, the polished and barbed arrow goes home to the heart of a cherished wrong. And the whole is so condensed and pithy, so full and yet so keen, with outward duty mentioned and yet the right heart so insisted upon, piety blended with morality and morality so enforced by piety, that the book is always venerable but never stale, can always be consulted yet never exhausted. The oldest finds in it food for thought and the youngest a diversion and a delight. Those who enjoy the sketches of character and those equally who love to see a condensed argument in a single sentence, can find in this book the thing that suits their taste. Will that single proverb ever grow obsolete while men love their holy dead—the proverb that says, “The memory of the just is blessed ;” or will men ever cease to own the aptness of the saying “The heart knoweth its own bitterness and a stranger intermeddeth not with its joys ?” And who has not been compelled to say as he has met the experiences of life, “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful ?” And how pertinent the sentence, “The beginning of strife is as the letting out of water ; therefore leave off contention before it is meddled with.” What convert coming into the peace of God’s forgiveness has not repeated those words, “Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace.” Lord Bacon has been applauded for

his saying "Knowledge is power." But put the word wisdom for the word knowledge, and Solomon had said the same thing ages before.

Observe also that many of these proverbs get their power from some picture in them. A comparison of a single word in the heart of a pithy sentence has made it easy to remember, and pertinent for quotation. "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth;" "He that watereth shall be watered;" "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city;" "The slothful man saith there is a lion without;" "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." And if any man thinks these proverbs are mere truisms, let him pause over them and study them till they reveal themselves. He will find that there is a heart behind them. For they rise higher and strike deeper than the mere surface of our ordinary life. I never knew a man of sagacity, of practical skill in dealing with men, who was not fond of this Book of Proverbs. Such men have often these proverbs close at hand, an exhaustless treasure for daily use.

The moral sketches that are scattered through the book are worthy of our study. They are exceedingly graphic. Perhaps there is no more terrible sketch in the Bible than that given in the opening chapter. A young man is warned not to go out into actual life without true piety. If he shall do it, all will go wrong. If he shall do it, God will be angry. God against him,

calamities will sooner or later gather about him, and destruction come like an armed man and there be none to deliver. "They shall call but I will not answer. They shall seek but not find." To the young man that laughs at religion and mocks at pity, who goes the voyage without the chart that God has given, he saith, "I will laugh at your calamity and I will mock when your fear cometh; when distress and anguish come upon you." And the reason for all this is given, in these words, "*because they did not choose the fear of the Lord.*" So that in the opening chapters we have the key note of the whole book, and no where is there any declining from this grand and lofty tone with which the book begins, viz: that the fear and love, the trust and the joy of the Lord are the essential things in a true and noble life. The high and beautiful severities of morality and religion stand forth, the glorious mountain summits that are never to be lost sight of in all our climbing. The air grows purer, the vision broader. The very precipices of doom are for a salutary warning that we venture not too near the shelving edge of any evil, lest we provoke God to leave us. And thus alike by warning and by wooing, by words that startle and those that encourage, by the fear of God and by the love of God, we are instructed, admonished, profited. The ruin of the godless man is made in this opening chapter a minister of salvation to all who propose to "walk

not in the way of the wicked and refrain the foot from their path."

Another of these character-sketches is peculiar to eastern life as seen to-day among the unaltered customs of the Orient. There, enervated by the climate, by lack of general enterprise, by the ease with which the few necessities of life are gained, men will doze away a lifetime in an idleness that has no prosperity to excuse it. The idle man in the East is not a retired rich man, but often one who has need of daily labor. And Solomon's picture of the idler is drawn so sharply that we can almost see him in his sloth. There he is, prone on his bed, though the sun has risen, and others are at work. His fields are grown over with weeds. "Yet a little more sleep," he says drowsily when one would rouse him,—"Yet a little more sleep, and a little more slumber, and a little more folding of the hands to sleep"—and he has gone again. Roused once more, he turns lazily on his bed and says, "There is a lion without in the way; yet a little more sleep." Do *we* need to study this picture? If we had lived in the former ages before industry had become a passion of the nations, some exhortation towards worldly thrift might have been needful for us. But industry is the New England virtue, and a lazy man is the contempt of the community. And yet this outward thrift is often unattended with any inward aspiration. "To get on in the world" becomes the great aim. The intellect is often untilled, and the soul

is a luxuriant wilderness of weeds, the chance growth of accident on a soil that needs to be reclaimed and redeemed for God. Idlers on one field we despise. Then must there be care lest, looking on the picture which Solomon has placed before us, we should fail to see his two-fold meaning; fail also to see that we may have escaped from the one to be ensnared in the other and the sadder peril.

And the drunkard is also sketched by our royal artist. The twenty-third of Proverbs has been called the "drunkard's looking-glass." "*Look not upon the wine when it is red; when it giveth his color in the cup; when it moveth itself aright.*" Do you see the man in the picture as he balances daintily the cup, as he looks lovingly upon it, lifts it carefully, then drains it off deliberately with the gusto of the finished drinker. He does not look within. He does not see the bottom of the cup. But Solomon—and he had seen it in a sad experience—will allow us to look through his eyes. And now looking closely at the picture, you will see that Solomon has painted a *serpent* in the cup. How plain it is. It is visible to every one except to the drinker himself. And as he drinks "it biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder." The deadly wine begins to circulate. Through every part of the system it is borne. And now comes the result. "Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow?" "Who hath contentions,"—is ever quarrelsome? "Who hath babbling?"—that word

“babbling,” is the very word ; for the silly besotted man has now become a creature to whom blasphemy is wit and nonsense wisdom. “Who hath wounds without cause ?”—received of course in some low drunken brawl. “Who hath redness of eyes ?” “*Those that tarry long at the wine.*” It seems then that a man may become wretchedly, boisterously, filthily drunk, though he may only drink wine.” He continues,—“Thine eyes shall behold strange women.” Strong drink feeds the flames of a raging lust. “Thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea ; thou shalt be as one that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast.” Is not that an exact description of the staggering gait of a drunkard ? “They have stricken me, thou shalt say, and I was not sick ; they have beaten me, and I felt it not.” The poor inebriate has been kicked and bruised by the men who induced him to drink, and he did not know it at the time. And when he comes to understand it, instead of resolving never again to touch the maddening draught, he cries out, “When shall I awake ? I will seek it yet again.”

Such is Solomon's picture. And, if I could get every young man who reads this volume to look fairly upon that picture in its faithful lines and its terrible colors, and then could show him that there was the remotest possible danger of such a fall for himself ; or that some friend might thus fall ; or that there is one solitary man on earth who might come down into this misery ;

and if, on the other hand, I could show him that by total abstinence he could certainly preserve himself, could prevent his friend, could hinder even an *enemy* from this result, I should have an argument of no small force to press upon him for signing at once the most stringent of pledges to avoid all that intoxicates.

And surely there never was a more strict pledge than this of Solomon. "*Look not,*" he says. We think it enough to say, drink not. But he knew the force of the temptation. The color, the sparkle, the very sight may awake the demon of appetite that is never allayed. "*Look not on the wine.*"

There is also, in these Proverbs a picture of true and noble *womanhood*. And it stands right over against a vivid portraiture of her whose house goes down to death. In the latter sketch, the wiles, the tempting words, the whole process of allurements are described; and then the folly, the wretchedness, the miserable and accursed end of him "Who goeth after her straitway as an ox goeth to the slaughter." "Her house is the way to hell going down to the chambers of death." But the other portrait, how beautiful—beautiful in itself and beautiful in contrast. It is the portrait of a noble woman—the picture of a mother by her son. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust her so that he shall have no need of spoil." "She worketh with her hands." The writer had no idea of a human doll too dainty for labor and fit only for show. "She riseth and giveth meat to

her household." She is domestic, and yet while domestic when there is need for it, she is skilful in trade. "She considereth and buyeth a field." She is industrious—for it is said, "her hands hold the distaff." She is charitable. "She stretcheth out her hands to the poor." But mind and heart are not neglected. "She openeth her mouth with wisdom." "Her children rise up and call her blessed." She has helped and not hindered her husband's prosperity; for it is said "Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land."

I would have a young man believe in God with a practical daily faith. I would have him believe in good men, and keep company with them. But next to this, I would have him believe in a pure, noble womanhood. There are doubtless base women. There are frivolous creatures, who live with no plan but to see and to be seen. And such women a young man should avoid as he would the plague. But there are those whom God sends for a man's help and guidance. He who believes in noble womanhood can find it. He who sneers at woman's virtue only proves himself to be base. A true man shows the nobility of his nature by his high ideal of womanhood; and in turn they who are to meet that ideal have need to be careful of purity, honor, intelligence and religion.

Enough has been said to show the general spirit and tone of this book of the Proverbs. Its peculiarity above

any other one book of the Bible, is in the fact that it is directly addressed to young men. And this sketch of its contents is placed here at the beginning of the discussion as a sort of a portico, royal in its origin, attractive in its form, through which we may enter the temple of revelation, and mark certain mysteries, certain wonders, even certain difficulties that have perplexed many a young man and kept him from joining in the worship. It may be that we shall find some of them to be less embarrassing, less difficult than we had thought. It may be that, visiting this temple at first from a natural and laudable curiosity, we shall find ourselves inwardly persuaded to be more than spectators and shall remain to share the service, our voice rising in the song and our heart uttering the Amen.

CHAPTER II.

IS THE BIBLE TRUE ?

“YOU believe in the Bible, I presume,” said a man to his fellow passenger in the railway car. “Certainly, I do,” was the instant reply. “I presume you believe in it because of your mother’s teaching,” said the first man, in a sneering tone. “Precisely so,” was the answer, “I do believe in the Bible for that among other good reasons.” “I don’t see,” was the reply, “how that can be a good reason. Suppose your mother had been born a Hottentot, you would then have believed in idolatry, or, if she had been an Indian woman, you would have had faith in Juggernaut.” “I probably should,” replied the other. “I am surprised to hear you own it. Nine-tenths of the people who believe in the Bible have no better reason for their faith than just this ; their fathers taught it to them, and their mothers made them say their prayers, and so they believe in religion. I am independent. I don’t mean to believe any thing because somebody else does so.” “Stop,” said the other, “Stop right there and hear me a moment. I was taught the Bible by my mother, by her life as well as her lips. The Bible made my mother the best, the

sweetest, the noblest woman I ever knew. It was her strength in life, her comfort in sickness, her all in death. I saw what it did for her, and I started with every presumption in its favor. I have other, and perhaps to you, they would be stronger, reasons for believing in my Bible. But let me tell you that for myself, the strongest of all reasons is that my mother, and she was such a mother, taught me its truths. I had a Christian home. I have travelled some; and I know that there is not a Christian home on the continent of Africa; there is not one in Asia, aside from what this religion of the Bible has done within a few years just past. In the hut of a Hottentot, or in the tent of a Bedouin Arab, I should have been taught in another religion, exactly as I should have been taught in another kind of astronomy, and natural philosophy and geology. What then? Shall I think less of the true system of astronomy because I was educated to believe it in Christian New England, or doubt the facts of natural history because Agassiz taught them to me in America? Shall I believe less firmly the facts of science because I learned them under circumstances most advantageous, in places where they could best be learned, and from the best of teachers? And as for you, sir," turning to the other, "let me say just this; either you had or did not have an early Christian home. If you had a pious father and a praying mother, and were taught the Biblical truths, and now have turned away from the Holy Book, you are,

I am certain, far less of a man morally for it. For you have not the sanctions of that book when you do right ; nor its warnings when tempted to do wrong. You are not so pure, so strong in principle. Right and wrong, good and evil are not words with so much meaning as they would have had if you had read your Bible and striven to shape your life by its directions. Or, if you had no Christian home, if your parents were not devout people, then you started in life under a terrible disadvantage, a disadvantage to your moral nature as great as it would have been to your physical nature if you had been born without feet or without hands. And instead of you reproaching me for my mother's religion, I am the one who should pity you for the terrible calamity under which you commenced life—the calamity of not having a Christian home.” “Yes,” continued the young man, “I do believe in the Bible, in part at least, because my mother did. And it is dearer because it was *her* Bible, and my God is more revered because he was my mother's God, and Christ is loved because he was my mother's Saviour, and heaven is more precious because the heaven of the Bible is my mother's heaven.”

And the sceptic was silent. What was there for him to say ?

Many a young man educated to believe the Bible is entirely satisfied for himself. He knows that the book, which, universally obeyed, would bring universal joy—for that is its result as far as its precepts are followed—

must be God's book. His Bible is true. And yet, he is disturbed sometimes by the objections brought against it. He wishes to be more familiar with the outward evidences of the integrity of the Bible, that he may answer the sneers of opposers, and also that he may feel sure, on other and independent grounds, of the truthfulness of the Scriptures. And there are some young men about whom, early in life, were thrown hosts of difficulties and perplexities ; and these were accompanied with sneers and innuendoes against Christians. Such young men have no appreciation of the moral argument from the elevation of a Christian home, nor can they understand the moral power of those benign influences which make up the moral atmosphere into which the more favored young men of this country were born. So that the argument to be presented in this chapter, having these two classes of young men in mind, must needs be both historical and moral.

We will ask two questions. One of them is this : "*Is the Bible true?*" The other, immediately following it in logical order, shall be : "*Is the Bible inspired?*"

In asking whether the Bible be true, the question is of the same kind as that raised when we inquire whether Macaulay's or Motley's or Bancroft's histories are true. It is an inquiry whether the persons who wrote these books of the Bible were eye-witness of the facts, or, if not, whether they had access to documents which they used so fairly that we can trust them as we do other

historians. When they state facts in their narrative, we propose to ask first as we do about any other writers of history, *Are they credible men?* Are they men whose character, opportunities for knowledge, whose presumed motives and whose conduct in life warrant our confidence? Finding them reliable historians, men who state actual historic facts, it is indeed possible that we shall be compelled to go further. It may be that if true, they are true about such things, and in such a way true, that we shall be obliged to go on and to own their inspiration. But the inquiries before us now are with reference to their truthfulness, their integrity, their credibility.

Nor can we here take up in order the vast number of facts they state, and examine them in detail. That would be to write a commentary on the Bible. Nor can we quote at length the testimony of travellers in the lands of the Bible, nor recite the evidence accumulating every year from Assyrian, Babylonian, Judean and Egyptian tombs and monuments—that vast mass of corroboration of many of the more important statements which are given in the scriptures. This is a field of unspeakable richness and of unending interest. Nor can any man spend an hour with such a book as Rawlinson's "Historical Illustrations of the Old Testament" without wonder at the new evidence, reserved for the investigations of the present generation, of the minute accuracy of many portions of our historical scriptures. To enter on this field is impossible for us in this volume. Nor is it

needed. For the strictly historical argument is really very simple; is narrowed down to the establishment of a very few facts which any man of ordinary judgment can easily understand, and about which he can easily make up his mind. The whole inquiry concerns the New Testament. And of the New Testament we need only to consider the integrity of the four Gospels. For if these biographers of Jesus are to be trusted, our Lord indorsed the Old Testament and *promised* subsequent books of the New Testament similar to those which we have now in the Epistles and the Revelation. So that the whole inquiry for us is just this; have we reason to believe, that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John have given us a fair and correct account of what Jesus Christ said and did? To this inquiry the whole matter comes at length; and on this thing depends the historic argument.

Nobody doubts the existence of just these sacred books which we call the Old Testament in the days of Jesus. He quoted that volume, citing those very facts to which most objection is made, viz: the fall, the flood, the attempted sacrifice of Abraham, the descending manna, the lifted serpent and the story of Jonah. Sometimes he quotes the volume itself; sometimes he gives the name of the special book from which he quotes. To a people venerating their sacred writings to the verge of bibliolatriy he said "search the Scriptures," and he continually was saying that certain things were done, "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled."

So that the whole question of the integrity of the Old Testament, though abundantly capable of defence on independent grounds, for us, in our present argument, may be said to be involved in that of the truthfulness of the New Testament. And as the Gospels indorse the Old Testament, so they also carry with them the integrity of the Acts, the Epistles and the Revelation. Assured that we have a fair record of what Jesus did and said, we find among his undoubted discourses direct promises of a superhuman guidance, not only in bringing to mind what he had said to his disciples, but in guiding them into all truth ; even that which he could not tell them while he was in the body. He had more truth to reveal when the Holy Spirit should be given and they were to be shown the things to come. And assuming that these Gospels accurately report him, where shall we find the fulfillment of his promise except in these later New Testament books ? These later writers make the claim, and they are the only serious claimants to-day. If Jesus spoke truly in the promise as recorded in the Gospels, then these other New Testament books are the fulfillment of his words.

The whole matter comes down to very narrow limits. A thousand incidental questions may be raised which have only an incidental bearing. The decision as to *three vital questions* will decide the whole case. They are these. *First* : did books substantially like our four Gospels exist in the earliest Christian centuries ?

Second: did the authors of them enjoy opportunities for knowing what they affirmed ; and were they such persons that we can trust them to tell us the truth ? And *Third*: have these four histories of Christ been preserved with as reasonable a degree of integrity, and have they been as fairly transmitted to us as have the works of other ancient historians ?

As to the first of these inquiries, viz : the early existence of the books, little need be said ; for the unanimous verdict of scholars is well known.¹ Volney and his school, in an unfortunate hour, ventured to utter doubts as to whether Jesus and his apostles had ever lived. It was instantly shown that heathen and Jewish, as well as Christian *historians* testified to the existence and influence of him and his religion. And in the face of the fact that Christ's religion, as recorded in these books, had named an era in human history, this class of sceptics saw that they had blundered. And no decently informed man repeats these absurdities to-day. Rosseau, himself belonging to another school of scepticism, published an answer to Volney, in which he insists, that if Jesus did not live those who invented such a character as that given in the four Gospels, putting

¹ Those who desire a full discussion of this matter can find it in the elaborate work of Tischendorf, "When were our Gospels Written." See also Westcott's, "Introduction to Gospels." In these lectures, I have endeavored to give the results reached in the present state of Biblical scholarship, without entering at all into the processes by which those results have been gained. This is true both of this and the following chapter.

such words into the lips of an imaginary being—have performed, in so doing, a greater miracle than any that they ascribed to Jesus. To-day the assent is uniform as to the existence of these biographies in the earliest Christian centuries—a fact allowed by Strauss and Renan. No matter, here and now, for the way in which these two distinguished authors account for the fact. No matter for any theory, once attracting some notice and now vanishing, of myth as mingled with historic truth. No matter, so far as the present part of our inquiry is concerned as to whether the books contain only a mere substratum of truth ; no matter if any one should have the hardihood to venture again the absurdity of Volney that the very basis was false. The argument now is about the early *existence* of these books,¹ the Gospels. And here there is an absolute unanimity ; all admitting that such documents, the basis of appeal for both friends and foes as to the alleged facts, did exist in the earliest Christian centuries.²

¹ “The strictest historical investigations bring this compilation—even by the admission of Strauss himself—within thirty or forty years of the time when the alleged wonders they relate are said to have occurred.”—*Henry Rogers in “Reason and Faith.”*

² On this point see the exhaustive treatment of Westcott in “Introduction to the Study of the Gospels.” He shows that the “Oral-Gospel,” was the first Gospel—the story of the facts as told by word of mouth ; the apostles repeating the facts. And he shows why it was so for years in Palestine ; and how, at length, out of this, came the Four Written Gospels ; the apostles committing their facts to writing when in the course of nature they must leave their work—a work in which they could have no

These four histories of Jesus Christ began to be read in churches as they became known; John's Gospel being thus indorsed and employed last, because last written, and because one early sect deemed the teaching of John's Gospel to be in opposition to their peculiar views.¹ But these objections were soon removed, and the Chris-

successors. Jesus himself wrote no line. Not that he was unable so to do; for his knowledge of "letters," *i. e.*, languages, amazed some of his hearers. He knew the Aramaic, his native speech; he quoted the Hebrew; he used Latin words, again and again, with the precision as to derivation which marks the scholar; he quoted from the Greek language the very words of the Septuagint. In adopting the oral method rather than the written, he did exactly what other teachers of his age were wont to do. And so far from an objection, it is a confirmation of Christianity, that it represents our Lord as adopting at the outset the usual oral method.

¹ For an account of this sect, the Alogi, see Westcott's "Introduction, etc.;" in which there is shown the reason why this heretical sect hesitated for a time to acknowledge this Gospel *as inspired*. But the point *here* made in my argument is not the inspiration but the *existence* of the book. And as to its genuineness as history, it is perhaps a stronger proof of the carefulness of the early churches, that while there was the least doubt, they hesitated. But doubt for the reason given by the Alogi—that it condemned their doctrine—is a doubt which is an evidence of the integrity as well as the existence of the Fourth Gospel. Not one solitary fact was ever alleged against the genuineness of the book, save this that I have named. The hint which was thus furnished 1700 years ago has been taken up and used by unbelievers within the last fifty years. And the decision of 1700 years ago is now reaffirmed. Ewald, the great German critic, who has devoted immense labor to the matter, sums up the whole discussion as follows: "Every argument, from every quarter to which we can look, every trace and record combine to render any serious doubt upon the question *absolutely impossible*."

tians of the early Christian centuries received the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John as the authentic documents of the new religion.

The second inquiry is as to the authorship of these books. All accounts represent the authors of them as once residents of Palestine. All accounts represent them as plain men ; in part Galilean fishermen ; with one only of them, Luke, the physician, a man of professional education. The writers were plainly not scribes of the law ; they were not ecclesiastically educated men. But it is equally sure that they were not untutored peasants. They show a peculiar but an untrained ability. They see things clearly, and have the mastery of a style of description that in its simplicity is at a world-wide remove from that of the elaborate historians of the age. They had just keenness and culture enough to make the very best class of witnesses to a question of fact, and to enable them to state that fact in honest, unadorned, but accurate language. That they were men of either the ability or training required to *originate* such a character as that of Jesus Christ, is too absurd for any man's belief ! What ! Galilean fishermen describing such a character, putting him into the most trying positions, in which he never once failed, placing words in his mouth that have led the wisdom of the ages,—*they* giving us the only ideal of perfect manhood that is found in all the literature of the world—and doing this out of their own brain—mere novelists

depicting an imaginary hero! To believe *this* is a far greater demand upon our faith than to believe any or all the miracles that are found in the Bible. Our Lord must have lived, and these men must have been with him in the intimacies of social life as well as in his public teachings. They must have been witness of his miracles and so his historians'. An actual life, and the historians of that life his friends, intimates, disciples—these two things are demanded by the whole scope and the entire detail of the books themselves. Nor is there another claimant to the authorship of them. It is they, or the authors of books that would have made a world-wide reputation for any body, are unknown. The verdict of the world is given in favor of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John as the writers of the respective books which are everywhere known under their names.

As to the theory once defended, but now entirely abandoned, that they were impostors, it is enough to remark that the ordinary motives to imposition are wanting, and that it is not possible to imagine motives for such a kind of deception, much less that these men could have done it, and then could have succeeded in foisting their imposition upon the keenest age—the Augustan age—

¹ Mark's Gospel is an exception only in appearance. For, (1,) the *internal* evidence that it is the work of an eye witness is stronger in Mark than in any other Gospel. And (2,) the Gospel is Peter's Gospel as to facts, while it is Mark's as to arrangement and verbal authorship.

which the world has ever seen. Impostors could not if they would and would not if they could invent such a character as that of Christ.

The theory of imposture surrendered, is that of *self-deception* any more plausible ? Enthusiasts with fancies for facts would have fared ill in publishing their pretended histories to a keen generation in which not a single false or even exaggerated statement could have passed unquestioned. Names, dates, places, referenes to streets and to persons, to public facts and private details, are scattered through these Gospels with lavish hand. And with such means of detecting the error furnished to them in the very documents themselves, it is certain that the skilful opponents of Christianity would have seized upon any alleged fact, and have proved it false, if that could have been done ; and in this way they would have inflicted such a serious blow upon the new religion as to have crushed it at the outset. For in no way could they have so destroyed the force of the new faith as by showing an error in its authentic documents on a question of public fact. Had such error been detected it would have been at once published to the world ; and, once published, the work containing it would not have been allowed to perish. But no such work exists. Keen opponents there were, who, if Jews, ascribed the Gospel facts to Satan, and if Gentiles, ascribed them to magic ; in either case owning the facts ; and always quoting the facts from these accepted narratives of the Evangelists.

And as to the theory that these Gospels *might have been* written and placed in their present form partly by good men and partly by bad men—a theory just now most popular with objectors, and a theory the most desperate and the least plausible of any—it is enough to say that what might have been is not a proper matter of historic inquiry. No absurdity can be greater than to imagine the doings of this singular conclave where pious saints and impious knaves have met for the purpose of foisting Christianity on the world,—one party supplying a miracle and the other furnishing the teaching to match it, and the two woven together so firmly in one narrative that, like the seamless robe of Jesus, no men may part it. Or, if the good men and the bad men are supposed to have worked separately, what more incredible than that bad men should retouch the draft of good men, and their patch-work of evil be undiscernible from the original fabric, unless it is the still more incredible supposition that good men should consent to retouch the draft of evil men, knowing it to be the evil work of such men, and yet indorsing it! Strange good men, those!

The *third* point of vital importance is as to whether there has been a fair transmission to us of these Four Gospels. They were at once earnestly sought and highly prized by the friends of the new religion. The doctrines founded upon these facts which they state were made instantly matters of controversy. Every one can see

that it would be impossible to interpolate a new miracle or new sermon into these Gospels to-day. And for the same reason it would have been impossible fifty years after the books were written. Enemies were alert, and friends were already divided in their views of doctrine and duty. To have added any thing of importance, any new fact, favoring any particular school of belief, would not have been allowed any more than it would be to-day. In the second and third centuries, amid the divergence of beliefs, it was wished by some of the sects to obtain if possible the attestation of the apostles to the new doctrines and practices. But mark one universally conceded fact. The heretics, not daring to tamper with the recognized documents, invented others, *new Gospels*, to some of which the more bold ventured to affix the names of the apostles. But to all the Christian world by the close of the second century the fraud was as apparent as it is to us to-day. A few persons were deceived for a time. But the imposture is as evident as would be the interpolation of a sentence of Jefferson Davis' speech on secession into the Emancipation Proclamation of Abraham Lincoln. In a subsequent discussion this matter will be named again. It is mentioned here only to show that the very existence of such fraudulent books, is a positive proof that the accepted documents could not be then altered by the insertion of any new miracle or doctrine.¹ They could no more have

¹ Westcott, in his "Introduction, etc." has shown that in the

been purposely corrupted or changed then, than they can be to-day. Of course no miracle is claimed for the preservation of the Scriptures. In printing the Bible even with our splendid facilities there occur typographical errors. Indeed it has been claimed that no volume of the size of the Bible has ever been printed without some mistake. But these errors do not harm the substance of a volume. The most of these are of about the same importance as the omission to dot an *i* or cross a *t* on the written page. They are never alleged as against the integrity of an author's work. Changes in languages, differences caused by thousands of various readings as in other ancient works, have had their influence upon the text of the New Testament. But these things injure the integrity of the books just as little as they do the works of Caesar and Sallust and Virgil and Demosthenes. These verbal variations are merely curious questions of nice scholarship, and do not affect any one of the great Christian facts.¹

The Gospel writers are unimpeached. The records are fairly preserved. For the jealousy of friends as well

second century the *whole New Testament*, as now we have it, Epistles, and Acts and Revelation—the Gospels of course much earlier—was accepted with the same reverence with which Christians regard the Scriptures to-day.

¹ "By all the omissions and all the additions contained in all the manuscripts no fact is rendered obscure or doubtful."—*Pres. Hopkins*. "By none of these variations etc., shall one be able to extinguish the light of a chapter or disguise Christianity but that every feature of it will be the same."—*Bentley*.

as the hostility of foes has combined to preserve these documents from any considerable error. They are trustworthy histories of actual events. And these true, as has been shown before, they carry with them the truth of the Old Testament which they indorse and the remaining portions of the New Testament which they promise.

It would be of interest to note how the Gospels once ascertained to be true and so the other parts of the scriptures also true, that they in turn yield their evidence to these four Gospels. Given the books that go before, given also those that follow, and somewhere there must be such books as these gospels ; and it is these or none that can fill the conditions of the question. The Hebrew ritual obliges us to find somewhere the New Testament Christ. And the Acts are impossible apart from the christian facts which they indorse and out of which they grew. And Paul takes up every main fact, not by any special purpose, but incidentally, in his epistles, so that he has been called our fifth Gospel.¹ But all this is incidental proof, nor need it be entered upon.

The vital points of the historic argument have been presented, and the proof given that we have in the works of Matthew, Mark and Luke and John, trustworthy histories, and that in a fair degree of purity these books have come down to our own times. And it is clear that,

¹ See this idea developed in an article "Paul as an Argument for Christianity" in "Baptist Quarterly," October, 1873.

these points proven, we may turn a deaf ear to a hundred minor questions, even if they have difficulty in them. For these questions are of side issues, and they bear only remotely on the subject. The opponents of Christianity have skillfully raised many a discussion on these side issues ; and the friends of a historic religion have allowed themselves to be seduced from the main question to engage in controversy on points not vital to the main argument. Says Isaac Taylor, "The subjects of debate in the Christian Argument have come to us in inverted order. The logical order is this : Are the *principal facts* on the reality of which every thing rests, real or not ? If *they* are true, the conclusion carries with it all we need. If they are untrue, then a laborious discussion concerning such things will barely repay the few who abound in leisure and learning."

In a very simple way elsewhere we ascertain a question of common fact ; as for instance, of the sailing of a ship from Liverpool to New York. There are a thousand incidental questions that can be asked about that ship, all of them of interest, some of them highly important for other purposes, but none of them having the least bearing on the inquiry "did the ship actually make the alleged voyage from Liverpool to New York." Questions might be raised about her hull as wood or iron ; about her cordage and cable as wire or rope ; about her capacity as so many or not so many tons ; about her engines as American or English ; about her

cargo and of what proportion was dry goods and what hardware ; of her officers and her crew as capable or inefficient, and of her voyage as smooth or rough. And it is possible to conceive of men as exercising their ingenuity so sharply on these things about that ship, and raising thereby such a multitude of difficulties, that some would be inclined to express a doubt as to whether there was such a ship and such a voyage. And this is exactly what has been done about the Bible. Opponents have seized upon minor matters and pressed them. They have drawn off public attention from the very few vital facts, against which, once established, all objections are useless. They have discussed questions as to sails and hull and course and cargo. Meanwhile there are just a few facts which can easily be settled, as to the voyage of the ship, and which decide fully the whole matter. They are these three : Did she sail ? And the record on the books of the Custom-House at Liverpool settles that inquiry. Did she arrive in New York ? And the record on the books at New York is the evidence. Is the record correctly transcribed and faithfully forwarded ? And this third inquiry can be easily made, and an exact answer be given. And this closes the evidence. Precisely so in the case before us. The three questions we have discussed as to the Four Gospels, cover all that is essential. Nor should any young man allow himself to be confused by inquiries not vital to the historic argument for the integrity of these books.

The argument stands unimpeached. And the religion of the Bible is able to make the high claim, that it is a *religion of facts*, and a religion that presents these facts as proof that it is from God.

2. To the *moral argument* we now turn. The general influence of the Bible on men is a fact that one cannot overlook. The question is not whether any perfectly obey it. But whether any are made better by it; whether its tone is healthful. Does it elevate society to have the Bible circulate in the homes of a community, to have the Sabbath it enjoins devoutly kept, to have the religion of the Bible studied and practiced in some fair degree? I need not ask these questions of any young man. They scarcely admit of being stated; for the whole thing is almost self-evident. There is not a piece of property that is not worth more, nor an industry that does not thrive the better, for the practice, however partial and imperfect, of the precepts of the religion of the Bible. The church building increases the value of the property in the town; and purely as a means of general thrift, of public virtue and moral education, in more than one New England community, men of sceptical views have given liberally towards the erection of the sanctuary and the support of the Sabbath School. It is true that some have insisted upon charging the wars and persecutions unfortunately too common in human history to the influence of the Bible. But this is to confound its pure teachings with man's perversions, mis-

takes and hypocrisies. As reasonably might an argument be constructed against all government on the ground that men had wrested it from its purpose and used it as an instrument of tyranny. If every crime has been at some time perpetrated under the name of religion or of government, we are not to attribute that fact to any thing that belongs to pure religion or good government. Surely we are able to make the distinction between the Christianity of the Bible and man's corruption of it in human history. And the good influence of Christianity—good in exact proportion to its purity—is seen everywhere. It is the strength of law. It gives purity to public sentiment. It favors learning. It extends the domain and strengthens the motives of all sweetest and most blessed charities. It gives sacredness to social life. Everywhere it is the friend of truthfulness, of honesty, of purity, of every noble virtue. Could bad men have given the world such a volume as the Bible, even if they would ; or would they if they could ?

* It is moreover a singular fact that those who *know this book best love it most*. They are best qualified to judge of it. The devoutest students of it are just those most thoroughly persuaded of the divine origin of the book. True, some persons of intellectual eminence have rejected Christianity. But in nearly every case, they have not known intimately the New Testament. For it by no means follows that because one is eminent as a

naturalist, or as a mathematician, or as a historian, or as a literary critic, he is therefore a Biblical scholar. A mathematician and not a poet is the best judge of a question in the calculus. Indeed the poet's opinion may be worthless. And so on these questions of the integrity of the Bible, an array of great names is sometimes quoted on the side of unbelief. The eminence of these men in their own department, so far from qualifying them for authorities in such Biblical questions, is often the very thing that renders their opinions on this matter almost valueless. Hume's historical inquiries were confined to a certain secular line. Huxley's naturalistic studies are not of the slightest value in questions of religion. Large attention elsewhere, hinders necessarily large attention here. Hume gave himself to history and philosophy. His works would stand substantially as now if he had never seen a New Testament. For his arguments are directed against all religions, and indeed against all actual knowledge of every kind. He aimed to sever the relation of cause and effect. He needed no acquaintance with the New Testament to construct a metaphysical argument which strikes a blow equally at all religion and all science. Voltaire's name has been quoted among those whose scholarship has been arrayed against revelation. But he had no scholarship at all on *this* matter. He made blunders that would have disgraced a Sunday-school boy of a dozen years, in quoting Biblical incidents. He gave

his life to other books, and did not know the Book he denied. And Gibbon at 22 years of age or thereabouts says, "Here I suspended my religious inquiries." And he confesses to an idle life before this time. Surely such a man, however eminent in other lines, has no weight at all as against the sentiment "they who know the Bible best love it most." There are men of majestic intellect, and of calm, careful, profound scholarship, men who have made this book their study for years—men like Newton and Pascal and Leibnitz and Edwards and Chalmers; and these are the men competent to testify in the domains of scholarship. Nor scholars only. There are tens of thousands of honest, careful, sound-minded men in every walk of life who have just lived mentally and morally on this book. They have thought of it on the week day and studied it on the Sabbath. *They know the Book.* If an imposture, they would be the first to discover it. If it did them harm to practice the directions of the book, they would long ago have renounced and denounced it. They are honest, trustworthy men, if there are any such on earth. And they say that they read it with more and more interest and admiration and love with every year of their life. Such evidence is not to be set aside.

There is also a wide difference between the *morality* taught by the writers of the Scriptures and that expressly taught by the leading sceptics of the century now ending. Some of these writers of the Bible were

certainly men all of whose acts no one defends. And here is the thing to be noticed ; they do not defend themselves. In wrong doing they do not go with but against their own teaching. They condemn their own mistakes and confess their own sins. We had not known those sins, but for their honest confession and condemnation. Their precepts and the vast preponderance of their personal conduct are certainly on the side of virtue. But what of the *teaching* of men like Herbert, who declared that lust and passion were no more blame-worthy than hunger or thirst ; like Hobbs who maintained that right and wrong are but mere quibbles of imagination ; like Bolingbroke who insisted that the chief end of man was to gratify his passions ; like Hume who declared that humility is a vice rather than a virtue, and that adultery elevates human character. Paine was in his last days a drunkard, and Voltaire was found by his friends to be so often a liar that his word was worthless. Let a company of men believing these teachings organize themselves into a society for putting them into actual practice in any community, and that community would be compelled to rise and expel the foul plague from their borders. In short, let a company of men undertake to obey such teachings exactly as a church is organized to obey the teachings of Christ, and let them do it as far as Christians obey the precepts of the Bible, and who could or would endure it ? And while the Biblical precepts perfectly obeyed would bring

almost the old Eden days to our sorrowful earth, these precepts of sceptical writers perfectly obeyed would make a very pandemonium of wretchedness and abomination.

The moral argument for the Bible plants itself upon the substantial agreement of its different parts. Revelation is progressive. There is a progress of development from first to last. And truth is given in forms more crude in the earlier and more finished and comprehensive in the later books of the Bible. Hence here and there those merely verbal and temporary discords which serve, as musicians say, to heighten the whole effect. Those who would make capital of these things playing off a partially revealed truth of the Old Testament as in some sense antagonistic to the full-orbed truth of the New Testament, only show their lack of appreciating the breadth of God's plan in his Holy Word. And as to the slight discrepancies of the Evangelists, it is enough to say that they are just such and so many as a lawyer likes to have among the witnesses on the side of his client. For they prove that there was no collusion, no agreement to support a fraud. These little discrepancies are exactly in those things necessarily omitted in the mere sketches and fragmentary notices of Jesus Christ which these writers profess to give us. As between any two of them, often a single word supplied incidentally by the third gives us the missing link that was needed to make the story coherent. And some difficulties remain on

the face of the narratives when we would make a perfect harmony of the order of the events, which doubtless one word would solve—a word that, needless then, would be helpful now. It was indeed no part of the work of either to indorse the others. When they do it, it is not of design. Each had his own work to do, and did it. Had they been careful of their own harmony, mutually indorsing each other, their evidence would have been terribly weakened. But their carelessness in that matter, their “abandon,” to their work, by which they go each straight to his own mark, without one thought that Peter’s facts may cross Matthew’s, or John’s narrative injure Luke’s story—their perfect unconsciousness of any suspicion—these are among the evidences of their divine commission. And the agreement not only in the facts, but what is far more important, in those great ideas that run through the Bible as to God, as to immortality, as to the way of salvation, as to a judgment, as to future awards—the agreement as to the *ideal* of Jesus Christ shown by the four writers of our Gospels, shown also by the writer of the Acts, shown also by Paul, by Peter, by John in their Epistles—*this* is the highest and best possible agreement, an agreement deeper than that of mere words. We see the blended rays of the same great solar truth, whether beheld in the promise of its dawning, in its onward march up the sky, or in the full glory of its midday completeness.

There is a powerful moral argument in the *idea* of

Jesus Christ which the Scriptures present. Reference has been already made (See page 61) to the fact that the writers of the four Gospels are in substantial accord, as between each other; in their portraiture of the character of Jesus Christ. But here the argument is drawn from the *ideal* itself. Whence came the *thought* of such a person? If he is a fiction, existing only on these pages, somebody originated the fiction. And whoever that person or that company of persons, it is certain that the creation of such a character was too great an achievement for the party or parties to remain unknown. But where are the claimants of this greatest of honors? Who originated the idea? Even Rousseau, himself in some respects a sceptic, was struck with the moral majesty of the conception. He writes as follows:

“Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime should be the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred person whose history it contains could be a mere man. What purity, what sweetness! what sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What truth in his replies! Shall we suppose the evangelic history a mere fiction. It bears not the marks of fiction. The history of Socrates, which nobody presumes to doubt, is not so well attested as that of Jesus Christ: the marks of truth are so striking that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.”

Again I ask the question whence this idea of Christ?

Did a knot of plebeians in Galilee, the most despised portion of a far-off Roman province, themselves unskilled in the grand conceptions of Grecian or Persian or Arabian poets and philosophers—did they *invent Christ*? Setting aside, now and here, the absolute impossibility that they should have perfectly depicted him—depicted him with just enough of diversity to give unity to our impression of him, where did they get the ideal perfect man. There is one, and only one explanation. *Jesus must have lived.* His disciples saw him, listened to him, reported him. The Roman hero was no such character. An educated Roman would have made Jesus say, Blessed are the brave, the heroic and the noble. A brutal Roman would have said, Blessed are they that can strike back; the men of nerve and muscle for the combat. But Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek.” A Grecian would have made him say, Blessed are they who, wrapped in the contemplation of divine philosophy, forget the common herd of men, above whom they stand. But Jesus said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” The Pharisee would have had him say, Blessed are the exact and careful in the ritual law. The Sadducee would have had him say, Blessed are they who care for this life, as the real life, and leave the future, if there be a future, to care for itself. The Essene would have had him declare, Blessed are they that conquer the body with stripes well laid on for righteousness’ sake. But Jesus, turning from every form of Jewish

ideal, said, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Hillel, the first Rabbi of the age of Christ, would have said, Blessed are the educated in the Levitical law; "for no common person is pious."¹ But Jesus said, "Come unto me *all* ye who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." How is it that here we have a character absolutely perfect! Whence came the *idea* of Jesus? There is only one possible answer. And that answer owns that the one great miracle that of Christianity, its sun to which all other miracles are but the stars, is the *character of Jesus Christ!*

¹ His very words. And yet the Jews to avoid the force of the powerful argument in support of Christianity of the *character of Christ*, have intimated that some of his sayings might have come from their Rabbi Hillel; a hint not lost on Renan in the French novel which he has called "The Life of Jesus."

CHAPTER III.

IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED ?

PILATE'S question "What is truth," has been called the question of the ages. For we are made up in such a way as to believe in truth. And no matter how many wrong answers have been given, the fact remains that men will believe that truth is *real*, and that the *truth can be known*. This is so, of course, only about what can be proven. And we have seen how careful is the Bible to appeal to evidence. Christianity is a question of fact. It offers proof of its truthfulness in miracle, in prophecy, in peculiar teaching, in the person of Jesus Christ.

But every young man opening the pages of his Bible can see that, true at all, the book is peculiarly, grandly true—a kingly book among men's books. The tone of it is unlike anything else in all the literature of the world. It asserts. It speaks with authority. It does indeed give proofs. But it does it easily, incidentally; never with labor, as if men were hesitating and so it must hesitate; never as if doubting somewhat its right to the most direct and positive speech; never as if its absolute authority could be questioned. It is a book

that, allowed to have any claim, must be allowed all its claims. True at all, it is true in such a way, and about such things, that there is not nor can there be any other such volume on earth. Nor is this claimed for the Bible simply on the ground of its literary character. It has indeed poetry that is sublime, history that is dramatic in its form and careful in its fact, and narrative that is unequalled in simplicity and dignity. These are the indubitable marks of human genius. It needs no proof that some of these writers—the claim is not made for all—were men of exalted ability. They have made a book that is without a peer. It stands up alone, apart, peculiar in its claims, giving evidences of its truthfulness, and compelling homage for the genius that irradiates its pages.

And now comes the further inquiry as to this Book, the truthfulness of which we have already ascertained, whether besides human genius, there is also divine guidance ; whether God had any thing to do with this book in a sense in which he has not had with any other ; whether the book has not only the human inspiration of exalted genius, but also the superhuman inspiration, not of angel or of seraph, but of God's Holy Spirit. And the inquiry is whether, obliged to admit as much as we have already seen with reference to the book, we are not compelled to go on, and to admit that the book is divinely inspired. .

Let us ask what is meant by the *inspiration* of the

Scriptures ; next consider some of the *objections* to this claim ; and then let us attend to any direct *proof* that this human book is really a divine inspiration.

We are sometimes asked to define inspiration. Let it then be at once conceded that it is easier to describe than to define what we mean by that word. Even as to those sudden intuitions, discoveries, disclosures, those revelations of the mind to itself as to the way in which a given thing can best be done, that surprising insight which in some gifted moments enables us to see what was dark before, that quick flash of sunlight on the perplexity that had baffled our study for days and weeks, that unravelling and clearing of a tangled skein of things, that glad heart-throb when an idea is born, a thought struck out, an invention perfected—even as to these inspirations of human genius, it is not easy to offer any careful and exact definition. The great inventors and discoverers and poets and painters and orators cannot tell you what it is they feel. They can only give us some very general account of the state of mind in which they are when seized upon with the idea which they have given to the world. They say it must be felt in order to be understood.¹ But we have no man

¹ Mozart describing the state of mind in which musical composition was to him most lively and successful says ; “ Then, the thoughts come streaming in upon me most fluently, whence or how is more than I can tell. Then follows the clang of the different instruments ; then if not *disturbed*, the thing grows greater, broader, clearer. I see the whole like a beautiful picture. This is delight.”

living to-day who is under a *divine* inspiration ; the inspiration not only of one's own genius, but of a divine guidance for the communication of new moral truth to the race. We have no man who has the peculiar consciousness of speaking "the words, not which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." And only incidentally did those who once were thus inspired tell us of the state ; nor do they inform us how they knew when they were and when they were not under the influence of this inspiring Spirit. Evidently it was not their ordinary and normal state as Christians. For they often distinguish between the sanctifying and the inspiring influence. But if they do not define they describe ; and if they do not tell us specially of the state itself, they tell us of the results of that inspiration in the production of the volume which we call the Bible.

As we look upon these pages, we see that there must be a great variety in the forms and degrees and kinds of inspiration. The inspiration where a man is an eye-witness of events which he is to record must be very unlike that needed when a man is uttering prophecy, the full meaning of which it may or may not be needful for him to comprehend. And yet in all of it there may be needed that superintendence which preserves from actual error, even in the record in things that have fallen under the direct notice of the narrator himself. And besides the evidence furnished in the volume

itself, as to the kind and degree of this guidance, we must take the testimony of the writers of a book which we have found to be truthful, with reference to the fact of their inspiration. They claim, and their work proves it as well as their words, that their work is two-fold in its character. It is human, they say. And they say, just as distinctly, that it is the work of God's inspiring spirit.

Beginning, then, on the *human* side, in our description, we should say that we have here in the Bible a book written, not by angels, not by God, but by *men*. Their own description of the human element is given in the words of one of them as he speaks of his work and that of the others. It is this; "Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Notice the recognition of the human element.

"*Holy men* spake." They were voluntary agents, using their own human language. But they "spake as *moved by the Holy Ghost*."

And in this combination of a human element and a divine element, we have not partly the one and partly the other; not one text fallible and the next infallible. But all of it is of man, and all of it is of God. God penned not one word. Man wrote it. Man wrote not one word by himself unwatched, unassisted of God. So that it is both man's word and God's word. It is the work of Moses, Isaiah, John, Paul, and the rest of them. And yet at the same time it is God's inspiration of

man's thought as he was "moved," and of man's word as he "spake."

Or, approaching this matter from the *divine* side, as do these men sometimes in their descriptions, we hear them say, "All Scripture is given by *inspiration of God.*" So that we have an instance in which God takes up frail and imperfect men and human language in order to come near and reveal himself in human *literature*, even as he has done in human nature by his Son Jesus Christ.

And just as a superior overworks and absorbs an inferior power, so God infuses his thought into men, and secures its accurate expression by them. And thus they become his voluntary or his involuntary instruments. When they are bad men, as in the case of Balaam, the inspiration is involuntary. These cases are few. And when they occurred, it was to confront and overwhelm evil prophets and evil men. But the Scriptures, it is claimed, were God's inspiration through good men to teach the world authoritatively the truth it needs to know. There is a human element ; and so we see various styles and methods of writing. But there is, we claim, a divine element, and this overspreads and animates the human ; the stronger using the weaker. As God is true, so his word is true. It is without admixture of error, and is thus a final authority in faith, in doctrine, in duty ; and it contains all about religion that we need to know or can know on earth. "The word of the Lord is perfect."

Two men, intimate friends, are seated together at the same table. One of them will write a narrative of certain events on which he has a considerable degree of knowledge. It is necessary that the narrative should be accurate. The first shall write; but the second, whose knowledge is full, accurate, perfect, will help the first man. He names no new items of information. But he corrects the impressions of the first so far as they are imperfect. If a wrong word is about to be used by the first, the second man suggests the right one. If the preposition *to* will convey the thought to be expressed better than the preposition *of*, he suggests that word in place of the other. He writes not a word himself; yet on the other hand not a word is written but he weighs its meaning and indorses or corrects it. In the narrative, as corrected and published to the world, you have the style of the first man, his peculiar methods of expression. It is his book. But it has also all the accuracy, all the thoroughness, all the *inspiration* of the second man.

Put God's Holy Spirit in the place of one of these men, and Matthew, Mark or Luke, in the place of the other, and you have the very case before us. And the result is a human book, and a divine inspiration, a book all of man, and also a book all of God.

Let us consider, next, some of the popular *objections* to the divine inspiration of the Scriptures.

| The *individualism* every where apparent in the

volume has been urged as antagonistic to its claims. Paul does not write like John, nor David like Moses. And this fact has been alleged to be inconsistent with a divine revelation. To which it is enough to reply that there is no reason why God's inspiration through a man should change his style of writing any more than it should alter the features of his face. Indeed, these peculiarities are fresh proofs of the divine wisdom in the selection of fitting instruments to do a given work. To know men is kingly. To know them so as to use them, each in the best way, is proof of superior genius. A wise general employs subordinates according to their gift. Grant had his Sheridan for the valley of the Shenandoah, and his Sherman for the march from Atlanta to the sea.

And when, in his providence, God has a work to be done, he has always a man to do it. In like manner when he has a revelation to give to men about matters touching eternal salvation, he selects not weak or unsuitable men. That would be to ignore his own infinite wisdom. But he has a Paul to write the epistle to the Romans, and a David to sing the songs of holy experience, and a Luke, the physician, to chronicle the life of Jesus, and a John to reason not through the brain like Paul, but to enwrap all truth in the roseate hues of his own loving heart. God makes no mistakes. Paul never has John's work to do. The inspiring spirit adapts means to ends.

Another objection is drawn from the scientific allusions of the Bible. "A perfect volume," it is said, "should be perfect in its science." Yes; we reply, if it attempts to teach exact science. But the Bible makes no such claim. It is a religious book; recording facts from a religious point of view, and teaching men about God and duty. When it alludes to science, it adopts the scientific language of its various eras. No other course was possible for such a volume. Had it used the terminology, had it declared the discoveries of the centuries since it was written, the book would have been loudly denounced in all former centuries as false. A volume claiming to be five hundred years old that described the modern steam engine and the telegraph would be likely to awaken not only suspicion but derision. Indeed, had these scientific truths been here stated, the fair inference would have been that the Bible was a forgery. Then, too, if it had used the words of exact science, the world would in many things have utterly failed to understand it. And as to "exact scientific accuracy," about which so much is said, who will pretend that we have come to the era of perfect science? We are, in our turn, to be laughed at a thousand years hence, for our mistakes in astronomy, in geology, in chemistry and in all the other sciences. Perhaps allusions to exact science, as it is to be in some coming time, would be riddles to us.

"But does the Bible teach scientific *error*," asks

one. No ; it teaches nothing about science.¹ It names the facts of the physical world and the mental world as illustrations of moral truth. To-day we find, in the most careful writers even upon astronomy, allusions to the “rising and the setting” of the sun ; to “the ends of the earth ;” and to “the revolution of the heavens.” To deny the accuracy of such writers because they employ the popular phraseology of their times is absurd. A revelation from God in our human language must use the modes of speech, scientific, literary, or even religious, which men commonly employ at the time when its writers are living. It can do nothing else. The attempt to do otherwise would awaken suspicion. And no course can be more unfair than to demand that a revelation from God shall tally with “the latest form of science,” whatever that phrase may mean. For who

¹ What the writer would assert is, that science, in its classified and arranged form, is not distinctively taught. There are Biblical *facts* of Cosmogony, of Geography, and of Ethnology. The Bible goes not out of its way to state them. Some of our Christian scientists have been at great pains to show that when it is said, “He hangeth the earth upon nothing,” there is the *scientific* statement of a fact ; similarly some have dealt with the Mosaic account, which in advance of modern science, they say, has put the light before the sun, the plant before the seed, the period of fishes and plants before man. It is not intended, in the above, to assert that when the Bible teaches a *fact*, scientific, geographical, or ethnological, it is of no authority. Far from that. But as against objections, it is claimed that, in the mode of statement, its usual language is not that of scientific theory, deduction, and classification. “Science,” says Webster, “is a collection of general principles or truths *arranged in systematic order.*”

shall tell us which of the conflicting theories of eminent geologists is to be taken as the standard on any question they have raised ; say, if you will, on the question of the age of the earth. They differ from each other by tens of thousands of years. But if they agreed in placing the age of the earth at any vastly distant period of the past, there would be no conflict with the Mosaic story. For interpreters there have been, even from the second century, who have stontly insisted that the opening verses of Genesis describe an indefinite past age in which God created the matter out of which he subsequently shaped the earth, as recorded in the succeeding verses of the sacred story. And not only are geologists divided among themselves, but they are in conflict with leading naturalists like Agassiz, and especially with leading astronomers, like Thompson, who deny the immense age of the earth which is claimed by the theories of leading geologists. The "latest phase of science," is a difficult thing to be ascertained ; for these phases chase one another like cloud-shadows across a mountain-side, so that it requires a nimble eye to keep even some general knowledge of them as they come and go.¹ It

¹ Lamark held to spontaneous generation. The author of the book "Vestiges of Creation," so celebrated thirty years ago but utterly fallen out of the popular notice to-day, took even more extreme views. Darwin denounces both. Huxley is at swords' point with Darwin on the question of a Creator who breathed life at first into one or more beings. Wallace insists that Darwin's great doctrine of natural selection is not proven ; and if proven would be entirely inadequate to account for the origin of man.

may be that the Darwinian theory of the "survival of the fittest," finds its real application when applied to the multitudinous theories of scientists. And yet all truth that is really gained, from whatever source, is gladly welcomed by intelligent believers in the Scriptures. For they hold that the facts of the world of God and of the word of God will stand. Science is the name we give to the interpretation of the one ; theology is the name we give to the interpretation of the other. Neither science nor theology can add a fact or change a fact. There are the facts in the world and in the word. We simply classify, and, as best we can, explain them. They often are mutually explanatory ; for they show in many things that they have a common origin in the mind and heart of God. When after the clash of theories, the truth has obtained the victory, when that has survived which was not always the most confident and most noisy in its claims, it has always been found hitherto that science and religion, the interpreters of God's world, and God's word were not aliens but friends.

We can afford to wait when adverse theories rise with eminent men as their defenders. For the history of science, while it has its living achievements, is also a strand sown thick with opinions once earnestly defended and honestly believed, but now regarded not only as

Owen contends for the physical unity of the race, and Agassiz, while granting the *moral* unity of the race, contends for different pairs in different geographical centres.

untrue but absurd. The truth about a created nature and the truth about an inspired Bible will survive ; and all the record of the past warrants the belief that these truths will be found evermore in essential agreement.¹

Another objection to the inspiration of the Scriptures is drawn from the *history* of our usually received sacred books. It has been alleged, that the selection of these books was arbitrary ; that uninspired ones may have been included and inspired ones admitted ; that what is called the "Canon of Scripture," was made by men, their taste and judgment deciding what to accept and what to reject from a multitude of writings all professing to be inspired.

The reference is to the fact that about two hundred years after the death of Christ, a Council or Convention of churches made public declaration to the world as to what books had been believed from the first to be genuine Scriptures. For there were forgeries in that age. Heretics, unable to introduce new verses into the well known documents, devised new Gospels ; and here and there a man had been for a time deceived. But these apocryphal Gospels have come down to us. And

¹ The grand old book of God still stands, and this old earth the more its leaves are turned over and pondered the more it will sustain and illustrate the sacred word.—*Dana*.

All human discoveries seem to be made only for the purpose of confirming the sacred Scriptures.—*Herschel*.

In my investigations of natural phenomena, when I can meet any thing in the Bible, it affords me a firm platform on which to stand.—*Maury*.

any man who knows our four Gospels and then compares these apocryphal books with them, will not wonder an instant at the rejection of writings full of puerilities and absurdities—writings that carry, by their allusions to manners and customs absolutely unknown in the days of Christ, their own refutation ; writings the whole tone of which is utterly unlike that of the New Testament. And this is so evident that if these rejected books are true, our Gospels are false, and if ours are true these are an imposture. The inventors of these apocryphal gospels never designed them as substitutes, but only as additional gospels. But they go not together ; “the new agreeth not with the old.”

It is customary for some church creeds to make declaration as to the books they hold to be inspired. Churches did the same in the second century. This is done to-day where Romanism prevails, to show that Protestants do not regard the Jewish books called the “Apocrypha,” as having divine inspiration. A church of Christians at Salt Lake City would be very likely to make a statement of their belief in this matter, so that none should suspect them of believing in the pretended revelations of Joseph Smith. But he who should assert that such a declaration, made to-day, was an arbitrary or accidental settlement of a question that was not settled as much before, would hardly be more wide of the truth than those who insist that a similar declaration in the second century was accidental and arbitrary ; and that it was

then, for the first time, claimed that these books were inspired. God's people are intrusted with his Word, and it is their duty to make statements to the world of their belief. So did the early churches ; so do those of to-day.

The alleged *discrepancies* of the Scriptures have been urged as an objection to its inspiration. It is admitted, nay claimed, that there have been and still are things in the Scriptures "hard to be understood." But their number is rapidly diminishing. Under discoveries in sacred geography, under explorations in ruins where long buried inscriptions give the missing facts that have explained hundreds of apparent discrepancies and have thrown light on verses of the Bible that seemed almost contradictory, under researches in natural science and ancient history, the things once thought to be stones of stumbling are many of them among the strongest confirmations of the truth of Holy Writ. And when larger investigations have been had, other difficulties without doubt, will vanish, and in their place shall stand new evidences.

And when it is remembered that these books of the Bible were written by men who lived in lands widely distant from each other, in different ages, in different languages and dialects, in centuries in which there were different ways of computing time and also different eras from which to date the years, in which periods of time of the same name were of different lengths, and

even days were differently arranged as to their hours, the only wonder is that we do not find more difficulties of this kind—difficulties that do not seriously impair the confidence of any candid man in the integrity of religious teaching of the Bible. These writers in giving lists of families, quoted from public official documents, and any error in official tables that did not affect their immediate purpose it was not theirs to examine and expose ; they used here Jewish and there Roman methods of computation ; and probably, sometimes, Assyrian and even Grecian methods. The inspired Ezra reëdited Moses, and gave, exactly as is done in modern works, a word or two as to the author's death. Different writers, living years apart, give in different words, and from different points of dating, the facts of Jewish history. They copy public documents in one case or rely upon personal memory in another, with exactly such small disagreements as might be expected. The differences touch nothing vital ; and all of them may be yet explained by our fuller knowledge, as has been the case with other difficulties in the past.

Our ignorance must not be set down as against the Bible itself. In nothing perhaps is our ignorance so great as in this matter of chronology.¹ And we have

¹ "Chronology is peculiarly difficult when we have to do with oriental modes of computation which are essentially different from ours."—*J. R. Thompson*. Hebrew and Arabic permit one to write first the units and then the tens and then the hundreds, or to reverse the order, and write the highest first. Hence con-

exactly the same trouble in making out the figures of Josephus and other ancient authors as in the case of the Bible. The ease with which mistakes may be made when, as in all the older records of the race, letters are used for numerals, is acknowledged by every scholar. That such errors in matters not vital may have crept in, would not be denied by many fast friends of revelation. And yet others after the most careful study of years, find no need of admitting that there are such errors. In either case they never affect the reality of Christian fact or the substance of Christian doctrine. For the truth, which, as its friends claim, is here given, is not the truth of inspired science as of Geology or Astronomy or Chemistry. It is *moral* truth as supported by the great historical facts of the dispensations which culminated in the advent of Jesus Christ. Nor do the friends of the Bible claim any miracle in its preservation but only such providential care that the books shall not become worthless for the purposes for which they were given. For we may be certain that the God who guides the fall of the sparrow would not allow an inspired book which was of any use to the world to-day, to be lost. For this age needs, as does each age, a directory reliable and sure ;

fusion and the liability to terrible over-statements in translation. The case in Samuel is an illustration, where "fifty thousand three score and ten men," are mentioned. Literally it is "seventy" and "fifties" and "a thousand,"—which *may* mean either as in our version, or it may mean one thousand one hundred and seventy.

a volume without admixture of error in its statements of moral fact and human duty.

In short, all the objections ever urged have one defect. They forget that the book is professedly *human*. They forget that the presence of the human element, so far from being an objection, is the very thing for which the friends of the Bible contend. No matter if Paul uses bad grammar, if Jesus speaks the impure Aramaic of his time, if Matthew writes with Hebrew idioms ; no matter if Luke uses round numbers rather than exact figures. These men are men ; and it is *men* for whom we claim inspiration. But they are men used of God as the stronger uses the weaker ; God's inspiration preserving them from error when they utter religious truth. Did you ever stand beside the pilot of a noble ship as she bounded over the billows a thing of life ? Did you ever watch his eye as it glanced at the compass, then up at the sails, then over the side as he saw the coming wave ? If every thing goes right he stands motionless. But if he sees that a flaw of the freshening wind is about to change his vessel's prow but a trifle from the true course, how quickly he turns his wheel to meet the new deflecting force. Or if a broad wave, gathering on her quarter, is about to strike his ship from the line of her progress, swiftly he reverses his wheel. And thus amid all the disturbing influences of wind and wave, the pilot, with hand on the helm, guides the ship surely and safely in her unchanged path. So God guides the men

through whom he will make known his will. The helm governs the ship. God is the helmsman, and this is the bark. Amid all human imperfections, amid the veering of winds and the tossing of the waves, the helmsman never steers wildly, never loses his control, never is deflected from his course. Man's book, we most fully believe, has God's inspiration.

There is proof that this volume is the inspired word of God.

1. It is *reasonable* to believe that God will give somewhere an inspired volume. No one has any too much light about religion. The wisest man, the loftiest soul among the Greeks declared that "the great want of the race is a book inspired of God." See the failure of men without it. They are like the dove sent from the ark, unable to find rest for the weary feet. Some tell us that reason is enough without revelation. But the keenest and most philosophical mind of the ancient time, the Greek mind, was busy at the problem of religion for centuries. And the result of the study of the finest, clearest, most penetrative thought of the race is seen every where else. In literature, in the plastic arts, in oratory, that mind leads still the world. But how about its religion? What is the result here? Just this; that the traveller seated on one of the prostrate columns of the temple of Jupiter Olympus at Athens, is compelled to remember that "Jupiter, king of the Gods," has not a worshiper on earth to-day!

Is reason then of no avail ? Very far from that. We only say it is no substitute for revelation. It teaches just this ; the need, and so the probable supply of the great want of our race, viz., a revelation of God in human literature. It is reasonable to believe that God has revealed his will and our duty somewhere in the course of human thought. He has revealed himself in other ways. Why not here, in the line of human literature ; and as a man discloses his thought in a book, why not God use the same simple and obvious and expected method in revealing *his* thought unto the race ? Indeed such a book is a necessity for us as much as light for the eye, and air for the lungs. God made the want in us, and God has made the supply. Otherwise we are left to men's conflicting guesses, and inevitable weaknesses, and perpetual mistakes in matters most vital to our souls' interests. There are things we need to know, and which we never can know unless God tells us ; for only God can know them of himself.

And if God must reveal himself in literature we may expect it in inspired documents concerning his Son Jesus Christ. And if this Bible is not that revelation, then somewhere in connection with the record of these facts it must be found. There is no competitor. It is this or none. There is not even the resemblance of a claim anywhere else. Even Mahomet claimed no revelation directly from God. It was through the *angel* Gabriel that his pretended inspiration came. Outside

this Bible I do not know a book on earth claiming *divine* inspiration.

The *intuitions* of our hearts teach us this need and also prepare us to expect that somewhere there is a revelation from God about religious truth. Some have said a man's own intuition or spiritual insight is enough. But how is this? Theodore Parker's insight affirms "man is immortal." But Mr. Newman, over the sea, declares that his consciousness says nothing about it. Mr. Herbert Spencer "thinks we cannot know anything by our consciousness, insight, or in any other way about God, whether there is or is not such a being;" while Mr. Parker thinks that "we are all directly conscious of God."

The truth is that, left alone to their own consciousness or insight, men can never come to an agreement as to the beliefs at the basis of religion. Their divergences on first truths show the need of a revelation from God to take us up just where our feeble intuitions fail, and to carry us on and out of the twilight into the perfect day.

God is. But who save he himself can tell us what he is? For who but he knows? Man is immortal. But where, and in doing what is that immortality to be passed? Who can tell save God? For none but he, with omniscient eye, can see the interminable future. Is there a heaven and a hell? and are they eternal? God must tell us. What will men do in eternity? God

only can see and know as of himself. We know only as he tells us. We are sinners. It is the consciousness of the race. Can sin be forgiven? God only knows on what terms he will forgive? We know from him, and if he has told us; not otherwise. The soul of man can never rest except in some authoritative expression of God. Our great soul-want is for something more certain than guesses about religion, or the differing conclusions of reason, or the partial intuitions of our hearts. We need something reliable, and sure; we need "the truth without any admixture of error." All the vast systems of ancient belief proclaim this want; all the struggling of men's souls to find a resting place declares it. It is one of the most unmistakable wants of the race. We claim that God has undertaken to supply this want. And will he be likely to do it by an imperfect book? Will he give us a revelation with error in it when the only purpose of giving it at all is to save us from error? We can err and guess without a Bible. What we need is not the mere afflatus of the poet or the dream of the enthusiast; but a book of certainty with the divine stamp upon it.

It is worthy of note that every man has a final authority in this matter of religion; if not the Bible, it is something else. The Romanist declares that the Bible alone is not enough; it must be interpreted by authority of the church—a company of men. The modern sceptic seeks his authority in his own reason.

He says "This or that thing in the Bible is unreasonable to me; I cannot believe it. This fact, plainly, is impossible; that doctrine goes against my convictions." And so he sets his own private authority higher than God's word. But mark it; Sceptic and Romanist agree in trusting human authority; one trusts man, the individual; the other trusts men, the church. But both have something they call authority, though it is only human authority. For there must be some final ground for rest. We take God. They take men.

We claim that there is an absolute need of *divine* authority, if men are to *know* about religion. We want a revelation from God;—inspired too, in every part, by God's Spirit. For a book sometimes true, sometimes false is worse than none; just as a guide sometimes trustworthy and sometimes treacherous is more dangerous than no guide at all.

Again the *early Christians* received these books as inspired. We have the writings of persons who conversed with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. And these uninspired but honest men, always quote our sacred books with marks of respect; putting a wide difference between these and all other books. These early Christian writers, call them the "Divine Scriptures," "Scriptures of the Lord," "Divinely inspired Scriptures," "Sacred Books," "The Ancient and New Oracles," "Gospels," "Divine Oracles," "Holy Scriptures." Surely these names are significant. Moreover they quote not from

general tradition but from these books when they wish to state the facts and the doctrines of religion ; quoting them as final authority. So frequently did they quote the New Testament that scholars have said that the whole volume could be collected from the citations in the writers of the few earlier centuries.

Again ; the Book *claims inspiration*. A former chapter has been devoted to the question of the general truthfulness of the Bible. In the book itself we find that God promises divine guidance. He said to Moses "I will be with thy mouth." The prophets were to speak, "in the name of the Lord." And these prophets themselves claimed this inspiration. "Hear the word of the Lord." "The Lord hath spoken." "Thus saith the Lord," is their usual formula. Moreover our Lord and his apostles indorsed the Old Testament. "Search the Scriptures," said Jesus. And he was continually saying "as it is written," and "that it might be fulfilled." It is said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." If it is possible by any words to enter the claim of inspiration from heaven it is done in these declarations. Nor is this all. Jesus promised to inspire his disciples. He promised the Holy Spirit, who should "bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had said, and should also guide them into all truth." Can any thing be more decisive than such a promise ? If then we have not an inspired volume, containing

“all truth,” Jesus spoke not truthfully, or his biographers have misrepresented him. His disciples, after his death, claimed this promised guidance. Says one of them, “ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God.” How sharp the distinction made by the Apostolic pen between words which possess only human authority, and those which have also that of God! And this is only a single instance out of the multitude of similar claims.

Something must be done with such claims. They are too frequent, and too broad to be ignored. They occur continually in the Bible. They are either quietly assumed or expressly declared in the whole volume. Open the Epistles any where you please. Hear the writers announce the most momentous truths. Do they reason as with human logic? Do they offer to prove them as do ordinary writers? On the contrary, they generally announce them in a way which shows insufferable arrogance if they are not inspired; but which is just what we should expect if their authority was the divine guidance they claim. And thus it comes to be true that these immense claims are either very arrogant and wicked, and I had almost said, blasphemous; or else they are rightful and just, and demand reverence as coming from heaven. Very bad men, and very wretched enthusiasts were these writers on the one hand; or else on the other they were good, honest, and

righteous men ;—men who were imperfect in themselves, but, as they claim, infallible when, under God's inspiration, they were teaching religious truth. In this claim of inspiration they were outrageous liars, whose pretensions should move our ridicule if not our indignation, or else they were true men, "chosen of God," to speak "as moved by the Holy Ghost." Scepticism in our day compliments the Bible as an excellent book with many valuable things in it ; but hesitates to allow it to be inspired of God and an infallible guide. We rejoice that this ground has been taken. It is a slippery ground. No man can stand long upon it. For the Bible claims to be inspired. That claim is true or false. If false, can we trust any thing in the book ? If false, this is a most prodigious falsehood. A little error in a man's words may not vitiate the main sentiment even when it awakes a degree of suspicion. But if the error be of large import, and lie at the very basis of the whole statement it is far otherwise. Now here is a claim continually made in the Bible, and a most important claim, nay, the most important of all its claims. If false, the whole book is radically false ; if true it is "the word of God." There is no middle ground. It insists not that it is simply a very good book, with excellent sentiments, not that it is, like any production of good men, of merely human authority. It disclaims this in claiming to be very much more.

We believe the volume is true. We accept it as

written by man, but written under divine guidance. They who have received it "not as the word of man but as it is in truth the word of God," have felt the more sure of its inspiration as they have studied it, and have yielded their hearts and lives to the control of the facts and doctrines. It has done them good to take it as an inspired book. They make it their final authority. "Thus saith the Lord," is the basis of their confidence in any religious belief.

And there is one thing about this book, by which, over and above all our reasonings, we may settle the whole matter of its truth or falsehood. We may use the Baconian method with it—the method of experiment and trial, and then of inference as the result of our experimental method. "If any man will do his will," said Jesus, "he shall know of the doctrine." This is perfectly fair. We are not asked to do things evil that good may come; but only to do what is obviously right; to begin with the nearest duty; to practice at once on precepts that commend themselves. The book asks you to *try it*. "Come and see," its grand message. Here is a personal test that a man may make for himself. As far as it commends itself, obey it. It bids you pray for wisdom. Do it as you would be a fair minded man and prove yourself desirous of knowing the truth. Enough has been shown in the argument thus far on the genuineness, authenticity and inspiration of the Scriptures to convince every thoughtful reader, that

this book is worthy of a very careful examination. Can you give it so much as this, without prayer for guidance and the solemn determination, just here, to *do right in regard to your Bible and your God*. For as you would not call him an honest man who used carefully his ears and would not use his eyes in investigating the common things of life, so in these higher things, it is needed that a man use not only brain but heart, not only the method of ordinary search but the peculiar method that befits this kind of investigation—the method of prayer.

Yes ; God has spoken to man. And there are thousands of the race who have listened with the reverent ear of the soul. And the utterances of God in his Word have made them men of a higher purpose and a better aim. The lowly have come and made God's truth their comfort and hope, and it has lifted them to a higher manhood. And think of how many of the most lordly souls the world has seen have brought their treasures of learning and of science to the feet of him to whom the Magi bowed. For the world's scholarship and science, and art, and culture are on the side of the Bible.¹ Little eddies of opposition there are in every

¹ "Who founded Prague and Vienna and Heidleberg and Leipsic and Tübingen and Jena and Halle and Berlin, and Bonn? Who founded Salamanca and Valladolid and Oxford and Cambridge and Aberdeen? They were Bible men. When the rest of mankind were caring for the mere necessities of the physical life, Bible men were holding the torch of science ; and these men were the predecessors of the Bacons and Newtons. Who founded American colleges? With very few exceptions, they were Bible

age; "the opposition of science falsely so called." But the little eddy near the bank could not exist if there were not further out, even in the broad and deep channel, a vast volume of water floating steadily down towards the sea. And these great souls, the real leaders of the world's thought, have weighed all the difficulties that any sceptic has ever raised; for the modern objections have little of newness. And these men have gone through all this sea of difficulties; and did not stay weak and floundering in that Slough of Despond as feebler souls have done. They have landed on the further shore of a careful belief. They know why they believe the Bible. But, over and above every other reason, they can say with Coleridge—and men in every grade of intellectual and moral development can join in the utterance,—“I know the Bible is inspired because it finds me at greater depths of my being than any other book.”

men. Newton was only one of hundreds, who, given to science, loved his Bible. From his day to this the succession has been complete. And the science that in our day boasts such Bible men as its Faraday, its Forbes, its Carpenter, its Hitchcock, its Dana and its Torrey, cannot be considered as occupying a position hostile to the Bible.”—*Howard Crosby, D. D., L. L. D., Lecture before New York Association for Science and Art.*

“Now if Christianity is the foe of science has she not taken a singular method of demonstrating her enmity? Christianity was the first as she still remains the fast and fostering friend of science. The devotion of the Christian church in this century to education is one of the notable facts, and it points with pride and satisfaction to its educational institutions.”—*J. G. Holland.*

CHAPTER IV.

DIFFICULTIES AS TO MIRACLES AND TEACHINGS.

IN BUNYAN'S "Pilgrim's Progress," midway between the city of Destruction which Christian must leave and the wicket gate opening into the narrow way where he would enter, there was a certain bad piece of ground called the "Slough of Despond." Into it every pilgrim must go. Some retreated after a few steps, coming out on the same side on which they had entered. Some remained hopelessly fastened in the terrible quagmire and perished there. Some also, went on, went through, and came out safely, nor did the mud cleave to their garments when they stood once more on the firm ground. In like manner, there is a period, more or less definite and continued, in every young man's life, which may be termed the *period of natural scepticism*. It is the time when doubts come up like thick banks of cloud in the eastern horizon from a wintry sea; the time when a young man sees and feels the force of the objections to religion; when he finds grave and serious difficulties in his Bible.

A young man has been tenderly and carefully trained. He has religious parents. He has every advantage of

Sabbath-school and sanctuary. He hears indeed of objections to religion. But they are mainly answered in the books he reads, and in the family conversation to which he listens. He believes his Bible. The men about him who live it and strive to practice it, though imperfect men, are widely different from the noisy profane crowd that he occasionally encounters. He is a believer in religion. He holds fast to his Bible. But there comes a change. He feels the strength, the vigor, the impatience of authority, the natural independence, which is inevitable as the young man takes his place in life. He feels competent to undertake almost any thing. He hears new objections to particular portions of the Bible. It occurs to him that a good deal of his faith in the Scriptures is the result of education. He has taken many things for granted. He is beginning to think that, had he been trained up a Turk, he might have been a Mohammedan ; or educated a Hindu, he might have revered the Shasta. This is all true enough ; and it amounts simply to saying that if a man had been badly trained the results would be likely to be bad. As an argument against a correct religious belief, it is as poor as would be the argument against sound learning that bad text books would tend to make poor scholars. Right views of science are none the less correct because a man was trained up to know them. But our young man is independent, self-reliant, able now to investigate for himself. And he is tempted to think it only fair to

do what sceptics assert is the mark of independence ; that is, to let all *education in religion count for nothing*. And afraid that he may be unduly balanced in favor of the Bible by his education, he leans the other way. Now, he harbors every difficulty. Early training must not solve it. He will meet these things himself. He falls in with some one who suggests that religion, especially as a father and mother believed in it, has had its day ; that it is old, puritanic ; that the march of mind has left it far in the rear ; that it is independent and manly and strong-minded to doubt. Objections to this miracle, to that doctrine, and the other duty get a good deal of force in this state of mind. And the way is prepared for listening to one of those oily-tongued men who affect to pity persons who still hold to the Bible, and still believe in Christianity. "They wish they could," so runs their conversation, "believe in the Bible with the simple faith they had in childhood ; but they regret to say they cannot ! They have very grave doubts ; would like to have them solved ; but have no hope that they ever will be." They tell the young man, " Ah ! when you know more of philosophy, and of the progress of free thought, you will feel differently about your Bible ; and a young man of sense and spirit and originality like yourself, will never be content to believe a thing is true because your mother told you so."

Now in this state of things the appeals of religion are not felt. The young man's faith is more thoroughly

undermined than he himself suspects. He does not exactly disbelieve. But he does not feel sure. He asks himself whether there may not be some mistake ; whether there may not be error in the Bible after all ; whether it may not be true that religious men over-state Christian doctrine. At least one must not be in haste to commit one's self for or against religion. And this is the point at which the scepticism of our day is all directed. It does not ask that a man be a disbeliever, but only an unbeliever ; not that a man deny but only that he should doubt. For if there be such objections to religion, such difficulties in the Bible that its truths are neutralized, it is all that scepticism can expect to gain in an age like this.

I want to put out a helping hand to any young man who has entered in any degree into this Slough of Despond, and who feels embarrassed by the difficulties he finds in his Bible.

There are two ways of meeting these difficulties. One way would be to state each of them at full length and then answer it. But this would require volumes. There is another way. It is Peter's way when he said, "Lord to whom shall we go ; thou hast the words of eternal life." Some were leaving Christ because of their difficulties. Peter stops a moment and bethinks himself. I seem to hear him as he reasons with himself, "Suppose I leave Christ and his doctrine, what shall I gain ? To whom shall I go ? Shall I find no difficulties

in rejecting the miracles and teachings of Jesus? What account can I give of all these evidences of his religion; for these will be prodigious difficulties to me as an unbeliever." And then, turning again to Christ, I seem to hear him say, "Lord, to whom can we go, Thou hast the words of eternal life." To every young man troubled with difficulties in his Bible I say stop, and think a moment as to what would you gain by rejecting the Bible? Are there not prodigious difficulties in taking that position? There are difficulties *with* the Bible; but there are ten-fold more without it. There are difficulties in believing; but there are infinitely more difficulties in the position of the sceptic and even of the doubter. Let a man magnify these difficulties a thousand fold and it would be still true that the difficulties of unbelief are far more formidable.

We shall see this, first, if we name certain Scripture *facts* in which men have found great difficulties.

I name *miracles* as one of them. The Bible certainly contains a narrative of miracles. They are interwoven with the whole texture. It is impossible to believe the Bible and interpret it fairly without believing that miracles have been wrought by God in former ages of the world. Some join issue just here, declaring that miracles are incredible in themselves, and some asserting that a miracle is impossible.

But when a man asserts that a miracle is impossible, he should stop and ask himself if he is aware of what he

assumes ; of the prodigious difficulties he takes upon himself. "Miracles are impossible," he says. *How does he know?* Is he omniscient? Is he omnipresent? Does he know all the things that have transpired or that are now transpiring in this universe? If not, then the thing he does not know may be a miracle. There is a prodigious difficulty in the way of a finite man who would acquire infinite knowledge. And one would think there would be some difficulty in finding a man whose modesty had been so far forgotten as to allow him to make the assumption implied in the statement "a miracle is impossible,"—the assumption of omniscience ; the assumption that one is himself God !

Is it said again, "that if not impossible miracles are very *improbable* ; that the laws of nature are uniform ; that God would not be likely to institute an order of nature and then arbitrarily break through the laws he has established." To all this the reply is instant ; viz., That no one alleges miracles to be common ; that, common, they would cease to be miracles. It is admitted at once, that they are not probable as every day occurrences. Nor is their commonness claimed. But only this ; that at certain periods of time, when they were needed, God thrust in miracles for man's good. In all those great crises of human destiny, in all those eras when a new dispensation was to be inaugurated, when Moses was to be God's instrument in introducing the legal dispensation, when the prophets were to appear

with divine credential, when Jesus was to come from heaven to give testimony of a new way of salvation—at each and all of these points of intense interest, we urge that it is not only probable that God will thrust in his hand of miracle, but without such miracle the world would have been more astonished than with it. For God made man to expect miracle, to demand miracle, and, when the miracle comes in the very hour of greatest need, to believe in it and to magnify the name of the Lord for what he has done. Has God put this expectation of miracle in man, as a deep and vital thing, on purpose to disappoint it? The absence of miracle under such circumstances is far more improbable than its presence.

And here, a word about the laws of nature, to which as has been alleged, “God has bound himself.” But where has he bound himself thereto? Surely no man can show the pledge that God will never override physical law when he shall choose so to do. What is a law of nature? It is God’s usual way of doing things. What is a miracle? God’s unusual way of doing a thing. Is it any more difficult for God to do his will in the one way than in the other? Surely no law binds him to do it in a particular way. For in that case God would be imprisoned in his natural laws. And these laws would be the grave of his omnipotence. Even the silk-worm that spins its own winding sheet, at length bursts through its prison. Is the infinite one entombed in his own world? Besides what are these “laws of nature,”

considered as a restraint upon a being endowed with will ?

It is a law of nature that my arm shall hang down at my side. It weighs just so much avoirdupois weight ; and is attracted by just so much force to the centre of the earth. When I lift my arm I overwork the law of gravity. My will, practically, and within a limited range, suspends the results of law. The law exists. It acts. But I counteract it. A new force, supernaturally, is thrust in. My will is above nature ; is stronger than nature ; is *supernatural*. Now if I can work right over nature, right above her laws, cannot God more also ? If I am not a prisoner of law, is he bound thereby ? If there is a human supernatural, according to which I act above nature, thrusting in a new force, is there any difficulty in believing that there is a divine supernatural which can work *miracles* ? It would be strange that a man having the power of will should never use it by lifting an arm or leg ; and it would be even more strange if God, with the power to work through law or over law, by law or in spite of law, should not, when miracle is called for, work the needed miracle. The real wonder is that miracles are so few ; that God so holds himself to law, *i. e.*, does things so much in similar ways. The entire absence of miracle under these circumstances is the most improbable of things. If God had not, at the fitting time, thrust in his hand and wrought marvellous works for signs, wonders, tokens

unto man, and if the Bible had not contained this record of miracles, the omission would be a greater hindrance to our faith in God and in the Bible, than any other that I know.

That God should perform miracles is, then, not only possible but probable. And he who says that God cannot, or that he will not do it, involves himself in a host of difficulties any one of which is overwhelming.¹ That the Bible should record miracles is only what it professes to do. For, just as ordinary histories record for the most part ordinary facts, so God's word records those extraordinary instances in which divine love and power have spoken in the language of miracle to arouse attention, confirm truth and overthrow the powers of evil. Nor let any man when in his Bible he meets the record of a miracle say, "O, that is a miracle,"—as if a miracle were somehow less credible, and less certain. Who objects to a book on mathematics that it contains figures, or to a book on botany that it describes plants? It was intended to do so. And God's word describes among other things those deeds which men recognize as miraculous. It was intended to do so. Ponder these wondrous works, these mighty miracles. They are not freaks of power. They do not stand up apart. They are a portion of a mighty structure. They have

¹ "I will not believe a miracle."—*Voltaire*.

"I will not believe that water becomes solid in winter, and men walk on it."—*Japanese Prince*.

an appointed and an estimated moral value. As one studies them in their place, they exactly meet the needs of the hour when they were wrought. They exactly fit into the edifice that God is rearing. They are divinely given object-lessons for the instruction of the human race. The moral ends of miracle are the greatest things. For moral ends are final ends.

Again ; there are objections to these facts of the Bible because of their *remoteness*. "They occurred so long ago ; there is so much opportunity for mistake ; they do not come home to us like the things done in these last critical centuries ;" so runs the objection. It is replied, that it is impossible to thrust all events into one century. This nineteenth century cannot spread over more than one hundred years. A man's difficulty on this score with his Bible is a mere impression, and is unworthy of him. And as to the antiquity of the events, of course they are ancient ; that is what the record asserts. And as to the authenticity of the more ancient of them, we have to go back only to Christ's day ; to the time which all allow to be far within the period of authentic and reliable history. *He authenticated* Moses, and David, and Solomon, and Isaiah. He indorsed the Old Testament miracles, reasserting their truthfulness, confirming the most difficult things in Moses' account ; so that now we believe them, not only on Moses' testimony, but on the comparatively modern, and also superhuman testimony of Jesus Christ

himself. There are difficulties, it is said, in the narrative of these ancient events. Well. Be it so. But the difficulties are absolutely insuperable in the way of believing that our Lord Jesus Christ sent men to the Old Testament, saying, "search the Scriptures," when he knew the first pages of Genesis to be false, and the prominent events of creation and early human history to be misstated. It is said, "that even eighteen hundred years is a long while ago, and that since that time there have been opportunities for falsification of facts." The reply is that all the world believes in events recorded hundreds of years before Christ's day by ordinary historians. Those were for the most part ordinary events. But here in the New Testament are extraordinary events, recorded in solemn and authentic documents. Within a few years after the events are said to have occurred, the writers gave names, dates and places; they said that in a certain town just over the hill from Jerusalem, Jesus raised a dead man; and his very name, Lazarus, is mentioned; his sisters' names given; their house specified; the very sepulchre described. They said that yonder, he fed five thousand men in the wilderness: they gave these facts in all this minuteness of detail. Any body could examine the facts. These things were not done in a corner. They were noised abroad. They created intense interest. If there had been any mistake, the able and acute foes of the new religion would have proclaimed it. The Jews said the

miracles were done by Satan. The heathen said they were done by magic. But both admitted that the things were done. And both appealed to our Matthew, Luke, Mark and John, as the historians of the facts. Here are the records in the Bible,—a book existing to-day. The sceptic is just as much bound to account for the book as it now exists, as is the Christian. But the sceptic has the most prodigious difficulties in his way. And if any young man attempts to stand between the two, to stand as a doubter, neither believing nor rejecting, then he is swept by the batteries of both sides. For, whoever is right, the man who is undecided is certainly wrong.

With reference to many a *speculative question* often associated with the discussions of Christianity, nothing is gained but much lost by leaving Christ's teachings. There are the inquiries about the introduction of sin, the transmission of diseased moral natures, of the prevalence and cause of sorrow and death, of how so much suffering can exist either here or hereafter and yet God be good, of the sovereignty of holiness and yet the allowance of sin, of God's all comprehending plan and yet how evil can come in as an ordained part while infinite holiness is unstained, of God's supremacy and man's freedom and so accountability—these are examples of the questions to which I refer.

I am free to confess that on these and kindred subjects there are great difficulties. But will there be less difficulty if we reject the Bible? Did the Bible origi-

nate these questions and will the rejection of the Bible solve them? These questions have been discussed by all thinking men, whether heathens or Jews, whether Mohammedans or Christians, whether Infidels or Believers. Outside of religion they have been debated as earnestly by sceptics, as ever among devout and prayerful men.

He who rejects the Bible is as much bound to account for the origin of evil, as really bound to show how man's free agency and the divine sovereignty can cœexist as is any other man. For, if he is a Deist he holds to a belief in a Sovereign God; and, on inspection of his own powers, he finds himself free. If he is not a Deist, he has other and more formidable difficulties; he leaves doubt for darkness, difficulty for impossibility; he plunges into depths which, fairly considered, would turn the brain of a sane man.

All these inquiries belong really to another domain; they are questions of philosophy. They would rear themselves with the same frowning aspect if the Bible had never been given. Sir William Hamilton has said, "There is no difficulty in religion that has not first emerged in philosophy." Only as we have all been reared among Christian influences, we have heard these questions discussed in their religious bearing, until we associate them with religion itself, and so unconsciously we transfer the difficulties in the one to the charge of the other. This is unfair. Hume spent his life over these

very questions, looking upon them as a philosopher. Let no man present as his reason for the rejection of Christianity those speculative difficulties which undeniably exist, which are as formidable without the Bible as with it, and which, if not completely solved by revelation, are, in not a few respects, relieved and mitigated.

If we reject the explanations of Christ so far as he gave them, what then? To whom shall we go?

As with speculative questions so with *practical facts*. There are perplexities about them. But one gains nothing by rejecting Christ's religion on this account. Certain things the Bible finds in the world. It did not make them. It is not responsible for their continuance. It simply records the things it finds to be the actual facts. Who thinks of charging a historian with the crimes he narrates, a writer on jurisprudence with the violations of law which he discusses, or a writer on medicine with the diseases he describes? Common history as well as sacred history records the fact of human guilt. Could a man write a pretended history of a nation who were not sinners, and get our belief that he was describing actual *men*! What, men—a nation of men, and not sinners! No! The world over, men distrust their race. Bars and bolts and heavy safes and careful locks guard property.

Sin is a fact. The denial of Christianity is not the disapproval of human sinfulness. Nay, if the doctrine of Scripture depravity seem at first view to be harsh and

repulsive, think a moment whether the fact is more frightful and awful if surveyed outside the limitations and alleviations of the Biblical presentation. The mass of the world's sin has been actually lessened by the conversion of millions through the Gospel. Christianity has been an elevating power over against this depravity. I can think better of the world with than without the Bible, see less depravity if the Scripture is true than if it is false. For if religion is a delusion or a cheat, then not only do we behold the depravity of wicked men, but the added depravity of good men, who in that case, are miserable pretenders or else are most sadly deceived ; in other words, are either mentally or morally depraved beyond all the rest of mankind. And in addition to all other cheats and shams and lies under which men have groaned, we shall have, if we reject the Bible and take the infidel view, the most stupendous cheat and lie and delusion of Christ's religion. We must have some doctrine of depravity. It must be either the Christian or infidel doctrine, and the infidel doctrine is far more harsh and awful than that of the Bible.

And the sorrow of this world and the other world which men charge against religion is not due to it, but is true in spite of it and in opposition to it. It is often urged that much suffering of conscience is endured by persons who believe in religion but do not actually obey the commands of Christ. This is true. But religion does not ask a man to disobey and so to suffer under an

accusing conscience. Religion asks this man to go on unto "peace in believing." And it is unfair to charge the reproaches of conscience and the agonies of fear and the dread of losing the soul, which some endure in their theoretical belief but their practical rejection of Christianity, to that religion which offers to the penitent calmness of conscience instead of agitation, and love and hope instead of fear and dread. If a man disobeys, and so is made sorrowful, let him complain not of religion but of himself.

But men have felt anguish of soul who were far enough from being influenced, even in opinion, by religion. Men have felt remorse who never heard of Christ or saw a Bible. In mid Africa or on the shores of further India men have had deep soul-sorrow as the conviction has forced itself upon them that they were sinful and depraved; and these men have made efforts almost superhuman to quiet, through worship and penance and sacrifice, the voice of inward reproach. Sceptics have died in sorrow, cursing the hour of their birth; or, where great despair has been absent, there has been sometimes a puerile levity or an insensibility which seemed befitting only to a beast; and the want of all that is comforting and elevating has been more sad than any despair, to the thoughtful beholder.

Did any man ever hear of one who died cursing the religion of Christ because it had led him into sin, because it had defiled and ruined him?—But thousands

have died with bitterest maledictions on the infidelity which destroys both soul and body. And in regard to the dire calamity of death, surely the gain is in the Christian view. Some insist upon associating the ideas of death with those of religion. As they turn instinctively from the thought of the grave's loneliness and corruption, so, since the thoughts are connected to them, they turn also away from religion. Death is indeed a stern *fact*. All must meet it. It comes to the swearing as well as to the praying man. O, in this matter, we are all brethren; and all of us must go down into the dust of death. If there is or is not truth in Christ's religion, this is true, we must all die. But, rejecting Christianity, we refuse the light from beyond which gilds the gates of the grave. And as to the sorrow beyond the grave, religion names it that we may avoid it; discloses the gulf that it may show us how to escape the unending grief and gain the unending joy. Even if it were a thousand fold greater, no man need endure it. Even if it were unjust, he who does right has nothing to fear. The more terrible the future sorrow, the more reason for not being among the wrong-doers against whom it is threatened.

If we leave Christ and his doctrine we shall give the lie to all the best impulses and deepest intuitions of our nature. There are instincts, there are voices from reason and conscience. True our voluntary nature does not always obey them heartily, but the voices are there.

The words may be somewhat indistinct. For the voices of our voluntary nature are louder, and we obey the wrong heart, rather than the right conscience, and therein stands our sin. But the other voices speak; and sometimes the man must listen. "We are immortal," says a voice within us. Guilt may wish it were not so. But the reluctance to admit this inward testimony of men has not availed, and men for the most part believe in a life after death.

This belief the Bible assumes. It does not so much prove it, as take it for an accepted fact. But the doctrine standing in outline only, or perverted by false teaching, is comparatively unimportant. Christianity takes it, develops it grandly, clears it of all error, lifts it up from a dead belief to a living motive and a thrilling hope. It teaches every man how to make his immortality the grandest of blessings.

Now suppose we leave Christ, what then? We fall back upon our general intuitions; definiteness is gone; all influential motive has departed. Is it said that intuition gives us more than the bald and bare fact of immortality? I must deny it. Men rejecting the Bible have widely various beliefs about the kind and character of this immortality. It will not do to trust self; for other people's reasons teach them, as they say, differently; and they may be as keen as we. It will not do to trust others; for how collect the world's opinions and balance them in search of truth? It is

Christ's teaching or none. It is to him we must go that the intuition may become an influential faith.

Another of these great ground principles of human thought and action is this ; that what we do now bears upon all our future. The belief is instinctive. We act and reason upon it daily. Few persons deny it ; and they, only in the matter of religion. All men see how results follow character and deeds. To-day you and I are experiencing partially the result of all former days. It will be so down to the last day of life. It will be so the day after death, the year, the eternity after death, if man continues to be man.

The Bible owns this principle, and carries it out more fully, bids us act daily upon it, and tells us definitely what the result will be of certain courses of action. "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

And now if any man objects to such a result ; if, wishing the doctrine not to be true, he shall throw aside his Bible, what will he gain ? He will not have annihilated this belief in the principle, which all men naturally entertain, whether believers in any religion or in no religion, and which all men act upon in daily life. The Bible indeed extends the application of the principle further than we, unassisted by revelation, can do ; just as the telescope extends our vision deeper into the heavens. The Bible tells us of two future eternal

states. Of the holy joys in one, of the sinful sorrows of the other. And before any man denies these utterances of the Bible let him ask what he will gain by the denial? Thrown back upon the general principle, he must own that; and Christianity simply sheds new light along the old line of man's natural and instinctive conviction of immortality.

If we leave Christ we shall do the greatest violence to our reasons by rejecting the immense amount of testimony which has *convinced thousands of the best minds* of the truthfulness of Christ's religion. Look at the fact that the mass of men who have given deepest and most earnest thought and study to religion for eighteen hundred years have received the religion of Jesus. The men of most knowledge on this subject accept the Bible as God's revealed will. They are intelligent enough to know all common and some uncommon objections, and yet they see where is the overwhelming weight of evidence. That great mass of educated mind which, as presiding over colleges, teaching in seminaries, has made Christianity a specialty, a single undivided object of investigation, is more than satisfied with the evidence for these books of the Bible. Intelligent men have indeed rejected the Bible. But general intelligence is one thing, and the special study of a life-time by thousands of the best educated men of each Christian century is quite another thing. The overwhelming mass of ability and learning has had but one voice.

Here is a stupendous difficulty for the sceptic ; a fact absolutely unaccountable by those who would have men leave Christianity.

It is the same with the *interpretation* which the holy men of all centuries have put upon the doctrines of religion. They are really one in this thing. They differ in explanations. The errors of their times influence their modes of statement. But the deeply religious, the really holy men of all the centuries are one in essential belief.

They all agree as to man's sin and ruin and exposure to God's displeasure ; in redemption by Christ's death ; in salvation only by faith in him ; in the inward change of the Holy Spirit ; in the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ for those who believe ; in the resurrection, the judgment and eternal awards. This is the Christian faith. The mass of devout men since the reformation three centuries ago, hold this as the truth. The mass of *holy* men in the Romish church have held to these verities of our religion. Time was when the Roman church was a simple Gospel church on the banks of the Tiber. In subsequent centuries she was corrupted, not essentially in her creed, but in her rites, in her forms, which overlaid and well nigh, for many, extinguished her creed. And the reformers protested not against her creed, but against the mummeries which to many usurped its place. Her creed to-day is essentially right. Thousands in her communion think only

of the mummeries and forget the creed. But many we believe have thought of the creed and have forgotten the mummeries. She has nurtured holy men. It is the same with that vast body, the *Greek Church*. Some have caught at the deeper truth and held it in spite of the tradition which stands to so many in place of the Gospel. And in those old Syriac churches, older than the churches in Rome or Constantinople, it is the same. The holy, the truly Christian men, those who give noblest evidence of piety, have clung to these few central doctrines of faith; they are one in this interpretation of Christianity. And here is a fact which those would do well to ponder who are tempted to give up our Christian doctrines. These holiest men are in essential agreement. They hold one language about sin's ruin, and Christ's atonement, and the change of grace and the way to heaven. These are truths which they have tested by experience. These are the ground-work of their religion. And these are the pious men, if there have ever been pious men. Leaving Christ, in this matter, where shall we find genuine piety? These holy men, the Edwardses, Paysons, Judsons of America, the Luthers and Calvins of the Protestant churches, the Thomas à Kempis, the Quesnels of the Romish church, the Chrysostoms of the Ancient Greek church, the Jeromes and Gregories of those old Syrian churches, the men who prayed and thought and preached on the hills and in the valleys that had seen Christ and his apostles,

all these holiest men, out of the depth of *one* experience have had *one* faith, and were *one* in their proclamation of the essential facts and doctrines of Christianity. We will not leave these men. To do it would be to leave the united conviction of Christendom.

And, further, to cast off Christ's religion would be to leave all the dearest hopes both of our personal advancement and of the world's moral progress. Intertwined with the facts of Christianity are our dearest affections. So that we must say with Paul, if the facts are not as presented in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, "we are of all men most miserable." We hear men sometimes with flippant tone announcing their belief that Christianity is false. But if that be so, say it sadly, and with tears, as you would tell a loving child of the death of the mother that bore it and nourished it and loved it. Say it as the most sorrowful thing that human lips can utter, that the credentials of Christ—his mighty deeds and more mighty words—are not enough, and so never can God give a proven revelation to man. Say it with mourning, that the perfect purity and elevation and stainlessness of Christ's character in the New Testament is all a mistake; that he did not live, or that if he did, his disciples devised his words and imagined his deeds, and that such deception has led the world's enlightenment, and so that we are all a duped race led by dupes, a race of maniacs led by fools and knaves; and yet that these fools and knaves have

wondrously helped men to be better, and made men holier, and broadened their views, and informed their intellects and enriched their moral natures, and made them to live nobler and more self-denying lives and to die sweeter, holier, happier deaths, looking onward to a still holier state ; and yet that all this is delusion, deception, mistake, imposture ! In striking at Christianity with iconoclastic hand one strikes at humanity as well as its dearest hopes, its sweetest consolations, its best ideals, its strongest impulses, its most praiseworthy charities and moralities. If it must be said at all, say it with bated breath, that Christianity is untrue ; for if untrue, it is the most awful of untruths and we ought at once to weed it out of human literature, out of common language and common life ; we ought to begin with childhood and stop it in its repetition of the Lord's Prayer, to forbid infant lips from ever again uttering the words " Suffer little children to come unto me for of such is the kingdom of heaven ;" we ought to stop the rites of burial and cast out of them the words " I am the resurrection and the life," to tell the mourner, though it will make him twice a mourner, that he has not only lost his friend but his Saviour ; we ought to assure age, though it will tremble all the more to know it, that there is some mistake as to the Bible which has been the staff on which it leaned, and that the Heavenly Father did not say, " I will never leave nor forsake thee," nor Christ promise, " He that believeth in me shall never die."

And as with personal hope, so with the inspirations of genius and the progress of art and of learning; for, the support of Christianity gone, there is for them a mournful future. Before the advent of Christianity, how much of art was too abominable for description. But the single conception of the Virgin and her Child cut in a thousand marbles, painted a thousand times on canvas, in every variety of detail, has revolutionized and elevated art. Nothing blotted out the old ideals until Christianity flooded the realms of painting and statuary with a new and tender beauty. So always through the centuries this religion of Christ is purifying every thing it touches, and is doing it exactly as far and as fast as men take into mind and heart the great facts and doctrines which are its distinction and its glory.

Nor art and literature, but the common impulses of common life, would be ruinously affected if the religion of Christ were left as untrue. All the higher motives that lift men from a merely physical condition would droop.¹ With it would go all higher views of God, of duty, of the nobility of man, of just and humane law; and society must inevitably decline, since the great

¹ That this is not a mere speculation the following quotation from the elder Pliny will show: "The vanity of man, and his insatiable longing after existence have led him to dream of a life after death. A being full of contradictions, he is the most wretched of creatures, since the other creatures have no wants transcending the bounds of their natures. Among these two great evils the best thing God has bestowed on man is *the power to take his own life.*"

teachings of morals which have extorted the world's admiration have been connected with a system called Christianity, which the world now leaves because false ; —and if the one part false how the other true ?

It has been thought by some that we might drop all the miracles and the doctrines that are distinctive, and still have all the impulses and moralities of Christianity. Yes, if moralities are mere outward things, mere wax flowers from milliners' shops, instead of genuine flowers growing on stems and out of seed and soil as God made them to grow. There is a natural belief in immortality. But it is inoperative aside from the light of revelation. And as it has never been efficient apart from the Biblical disclosures, so it never will be for any length of time after the Biblical doctrine of it has been left. For a single generation, possibly for two, if Christianity were discarded, there would remain a little of the Christian sap in Deism ; but it would soon depart. It is doubtful if mere natural religion would live long enough to draw another breath after the going out from it of all that is distinctly Christian in thought and feeling and belief. Says one of the best thinkers and best known educators of our day : “ The course of things if Deism should be the ultimate religion, can be easily foretold. As long as the recollections and influences of Christianity survived its fall, earnest souls would hope on ; they would stay their souls' hunger on the milk drawn from the breasts of their dead mother. But a new age would

toss about in despair. If a sense of sin remain, the life of all noble souls will be an anxious gloomy tragedy. Or if that burden be cast off, then the standard of character will fall and the sense of sin grow faint so that pardon will not be needed, and the utmost frivolity be reached in life and manners.”¹

Nothing, absolutely nothing is given us in return if we surrender either our theoretic belief in Christianity, or our practical obedience to it. What else can do any thing for the deepest yearnings and largest wants of the soul? Giving up Christianity is giving up the thing that ought to be true, just as there ought to be light if there are eyes, and sounds if there are ears, and air if there are lungs. And as the bodily organs are furnished with that on which they can best thrive, so the faculties of mind and heart can best be developed by the religion of Him who came “that men might have life and might have it more abundantly.” For the deepest and most important intuitions man possesses are seized upon by religion and are made clear and influential. The germ of these truths is developed by the Scriptural doctrine, and they are made potent for man’s good. All the difficulties are at least as great without as with the Bible; as great in the germ-truth, as in its form of growth and bud and blossom. And then there is the added difficulty of accounting for this fact; how it is that if

¹ Pres. Woolsey, in “Religion of the Present and the Future.”

Christianity is false, it can so singularly, powerfully, beautifully take up and develop these germ-truths in the mind and these most blessed hopes in the heart, and thus purify, elevate and ennoble the man who believes and practices it.

CHAPTER V.

DIFFICULTIES FROM GEOLOGY.

IT has come to be believed by many persons that there is a direct conflict between Genesis and Geology ; that the Scriptural account of the creation of the world and of man is entirely at variance with the results of the best modern scientific study. And there has been not a little doubt awakened in the minds of many young men as to the accuracy of the Scriptures on this particular subject. It is believed that these difficulties, stated so often in newspaper and magazine, in popular lecture and scientific volume, are the result of the ignorance of some scientists as to the actual teachings of revelation ; and also of the equal ignorance of some Biblical scholars as to the actual teachings of science. There is undue haste on the part of some men of large but exclusive acquaintance with science, to denounce the Scripture story ; and equal haste on the part of some friends of the Bible to denounce science as atheistic. Crude theories in the interpretation of the book of nature or of the book of revelation are often at blame for the apparent antagonism of things in which, rightly understood, there must be unity.

Our best Biblical scholars who have a fair knowledge of scientific facts gladly welcome any light that science gives to religion, acknowledge gratefully their indebtedness for the past, and express their fervent hope and belief that more light is to come from every department of human knowledge in aid of the study of that book which they hold more and more firmly to be the attested Word of God. "All knowledge," said Cicero, "is of use to the orator." And every student of the Scriptures will say the same about the interpretation of that volume. And, on the other hand, the geologists are indebted, as some of them gladly and reverently own, to the Biblical story for the wonderful help it furnishes toward the explanation of the facts which they cull from the natural world. Truths never disagree when you get at them and bring them together. The outer court of nature and the inner court of revelation were built by one hand; and the architect and builder is divine.

I propose that we read together the *first chapter of Genesis* in the light of modern science. To do this, it will be necessary to ask, first, what the author of that chapter really teaches us about the origin of nature and of man; to inquire next as to the settled facts of science as substantially agreed upon by the best modern authorities in the scientific world; and then to note the points of agreement between the two.

1. Of the Mosaic record. At the outset it should

be very carefully remembered that the *methods* of science and of revelation are entirely different. One goes backward, the other forward. One starts with facts and asks the cause. The other starts with a great First Cause and then speaks of the facts as they proceed from his creative hand. In the arithmetics we used to study, there were examples in which now one factor and now another was wanting. If one was gone, it was sought by multiplication; if the other, the answer was sought by division. In like manner the methods of science and revelation are exactly opposite. Compare them at any point, until the problem is solved, and they may not agree. But in the end, when the grand result is reached—as it is not yet—the two methods, the reverse of each other, like multiplication and division, are mutual proofs of the correctness alike of science and of religion; of the book of Nature and the book of God.

Then, too, the *language* of the Bible is popular, while the language of science claims to be exact. The popular language is just as true for its own purposes as that of science. It states facts as they appear to be. When I say “the sun rises and sets,” I speak optical, but not scientific truth; and the man must want to quarrel with me who would convict me of falsehood because I speak of sunrise and sunset. I could not be understood in a popular lecture if I used any other phrase, though other terms might be more scientific. Moses does the same. Indeed, no other way was pos-

sible. If he had used the scientific terms of Egypt—and they were the only scientific terms with which he was familiar—they would be false terms to-day. If God had inspired him to use *our* scientific terms, Moses himself and all those who have lived during thirty centuries could not have understood him. If he had spoken in the language of the science of twenty centuries to come, his words would have been riddles to us, as well as to all former generations. It is not the object of the Bible to teach science but religion. Its references to the facts which are now called scientific are few, and given only in popular language. And the facts are named only in their religious bearing.

In studying this first chapter of Genesis, we must not forget that it does not fix *any time* for the creation of the matter out of which the earth was formed. We have two verses in which the origin of the *substance* of the earth is named. Moses is careful not to say whether the heavens and the earth were created six thousand or six million years ago. He says, "In the beginning." The time is expressly indefinite. If the geologist can show proof that the creation occurred a thousand millions of years ago, Moses in the first two verses of Genesis does not contradict him. No age or date is given. It had a beginning. It was not eternal. It had a Creator. God created it.¹ That is all these two

¹ Moses uses a word signifying *created* in the first verse of Genesis. Afterwards, as in the fourteenth, he uses another

opening verses say about it. What millions of centuries were passed in chaos before the world was finally fitted up for this race of ours in the last six days' work, no man can ever know ; for God has nowhere told us. Nor is this interpretation of the two opening verses of Genesis any thing new. Justin Martyr, and Basil, and Origen, who were among the fathers of the Christian church, over fourteen hundred years ago, gave this interpretation. All the best modern commentators say the same thing. Lange, Stewart, Murphy, Conant and others, all agree that the opening verses of Genesis describe the creation of the original matter out of which the earth was subsequently through vast convulsions fitted up, shaped and formed anew, for the abode of the pre-adamite creations, and at length, for man.

And as the period of chaos is indefinite, so is the length of each of these six "day-periods," of Moses. It cannot be proved that they were days of twenty-four hours each. It is certain that the sun had not shone upon the world to make the first of them such days. The writer Moses is a prophet. He elsewhere uses the term "day," just as we do, to describe any period which had a beginning and an end. Any limited time in which a thing was commenced and finished is "a day." The whole six days work in the first chapter is described in the second chapter as the work of "one day;" the word signifying *fashioned* or *shaped*, as out of materials already created.

writer thus using the word as we do both in the definite and the indefinite sense. A Christian pastor said to his congregation these words "I bring you as a text for *to-day* the words, 'Behold now is the accepted time : Behold now is the *day* of salvation.'" In one part of the sentence the pastor used the word "day," to denote a particular Sabbath, a day of twenty-four hours ; in the other part of the sentence he used the same word to signify a day-period covering now eighteen hundred years, and to cover, it may be, centuries more—a day, or a period in which God will receive returning sinners to salvation. So Moses uses the word "day." When he talks of the "tenth day of the month Nisan," we know that he means a day of twenty-four hours. When he talks of a day of creation we can see that he is not so limited. It may cover thousands of years. It is of *periods* in which God began and finished certain parts of the creation, that he speaks.

Nor must we forget that Moses describes creation *optically, i. e.*, as it would have appeared to an eye witness on the earth.¹ God made these things to pass be-

¹ Is not this also the fair and honest way of interpreting the passage about the sun and moon as standing still, which is incorporated, evidently from a poetic composition or ode, into the Book of Joshua? It is optical language. Says the great astronomer Kepler, "The only thing that Joshua prayed for was that the mountains might not intercept the sun from him. Besides it had been *unreasonable to think* of astronomy or of the errors of sight; for if any one had told him that the sun could not really move in the valley of Ajalon but *only in*

fore him. Some have supposed that he was permitted to behold an inspired vision of these creative scenes. He describes them as a man would have done had he been there. Such a man would have seen the actual things exactly as Moses was permitted to see the vision of them. In the Midian desert it may be, on six successive week days followed by a Sabbath,—each of these week-days beginning and closing with “the evening and morning,” which made the one literal day of twenty-four hours—on these literal days, God may have allowed the vision of those vast day-periods, in the great characteristics of each, to pass before the mind of Moses. No human eye saw the actual creation. But Moses is to see the vision of it, as if he had been the eye-witness of the earth’s wondrous changes under the creative hand of God.

And thus the account of creation, declaring as it does God’s glory, was to be transmitted, through the leader of the chosen people, to the entire world. He *relation to sense*, would not Joshua have answered that his one wish was to have the *day prolonged by any means whatsoever*.” That the Jews understood the language not scientifically, but phenomenally, is also plain from the words of Josephus, “That the *length of the day* did then increase is told in the books laid up in the temple.” The Samaritan copy of Joshua says, “the day was prolonged at his prayer.” Similarly Dr. Chalmers says, “I accept it in the popular sense, having no doubt that to all intents and purposes of that day’s history, the sun and moon did stand still; the one over Gibeon and the other over Ajalon.” To those in the conflict it so seemed, and a Hebrew poet put it into verse, and a Hebrew historian quotes a stanza of the poem.

sees at first the elements, created indeed, but still in wildest chaos. There was dim light. It was not sunlight but nebulous light. It endured for a time and then came darkness. The first day of Moses' vision, corresponding it may be to the first *great day-period* of God's creative work, was ended. Next, the mists are partially lifted. The beholder would have seen vast masses of cloud, or portions of the firmament above the earth. It was the second day. Then comes the dry land, followed by herbage vast and gigantic; growing, not by sunlight, but in the steaming heats of the earth now cooled down so far as to allow of plants and trees, which were afterwards to be turned into coal for man's use. It was the third day. Next, Moses sees for the first time the light of the sun shining clearly on the earth. That sun might have existed for untold millions of years. But through the mists and the murky atmosphere of the world, its rays had never before pierced. Now it appears in the heavens, the appointed ruler of the day. Then come into view the huge monsters of the deep, and the fowls of the air, the vast dynasties of the fish, and the beast and the bird. Last of all, at the close of the sixth great day-period, comes *man*, created in the image of God. Such is the order in the first chapter of Genesis. It is the spectacle of creation as vouchsafed to Moses. It was not intended to be scientific. It was the general order, described by the *characteristic of each great period*. Nor is it needed that we

understand each day-period of creation as exactly matching the prophetic period of the inspired vision. The general object is to describe the creation, as it would have appeared to an observer had there been one present to watch the earth as God was preparing it for the abode of man.¹

Turn now from the book of Revelation to the book of Nature, and let us ask, next, what does science, and especially the science of geology—the science of the rocks—say about this same creation.

Here, too, a few preliminary words are needed. One is, that the science of geology is yet in its infancy. It is not a hundred years old. Instead of making the boldest assertions of any of the sciences, and so drawing down upon itself their condemnation, it should be modest. It is also to be remembered that geology has changed its fundamental theories again and again. A book that was an authority twenty years ago, is no authority to-day in geology. The next twenty years may witness greater changes. New facts are discovered. But new theories are made even faster than new facts

¹ "The seven days are not literal days of twenty-four hours, nor yet seven *definite* historical periods. But as the seven seals, vials, trumpets of John's Revelation represented human history by a typical representation of each of its grand divisions without any one of them being chronologically defined, so these seven days of Moses represent in a dramatic or typical form the changes at creation, each grand feature being boldly sketched out in one scenic representation *characteristic* of that period."
—*Primeval Man Unveiled*.

are obtained. Nearly every leading geologist has abandoned his own most startling theories, and some have gone through a dozen of them. Lyell has discarded his former views about the age of the world, and the time of man's appearance on it.¹ Huxley, who had claimed millions of years for the earth, under the telling blows of Sir William Thompson, the first mathematician of Europe, has just been compelled to own that the claims of geologists about the tremendous age of the earth are not proved. It is the same with the age of man on the earth. Huxley thinks that as star dust is the material out of which the earth was formed, so there is a *physical basis* for all plant, animal and human life. Agassiz denounces Darwin's theory of "natural selection." And then in turn is denounced by the whole scientific world for insisting upon the *moral* unity of the race and yet holding that man sprang not from one centre but from several centres—not from one human pair but from more than half a dozen human pairs.² Herbert Spencer denounces all the rest of the scientists, deeming his theory about force sufficient to account for the world as it is, and for the origin of the human race; while Miller, Dana, and Guyot—names that equal any—hold most zealously to the theory of one human

¹ "The life of this eminent man is a history of retracted opinions."—*Recent Origin of Man*; Southall.

² "A few years since the preponderating opinion was in favor of multiple centres. Now (1875), it is in favor of a single origin."—*Recent Origin of Man*.

pair, and on scientific grounds indorse the Scripture statements as to the origin of the race.

The scientists are not agreed in their theories. They agree only on some general facts. What are these facts?

Modern science now almost universally adopts the doctrine that the earth was first of all in a fluid, gaseous or nebulous state. This gaseous mass was intensely heated. Somehow motion was communicated to the mass. This brought out heat; and this heat was attended with a feeble light—scientific men call it *cosmical light*, to distinguish it from *sun-light*.¹ Thus, without intending so to do, the scientists exactly describe the first of the Mosaic days of creation.

Next came, according to modern scientists, the huge rocks called *Primary*,² the granites and the different in-

¹ "How could there be light before the sun?" So cried Voltaire, and a thousand voices have echoed the question. And this objection has probably done more to unsettle the minds of young men in past generations than any other difficulty of the Bible. Those who believed in revelation had no other reply than to ask men to wait. The waiting has been richly rewarded. For now no respectably informed man ventures the question. Humboldt's words about *cosmical light* are well known. He claims the existence of light "which is a similitude of the dazzling light of the sun. The existence of this illuminating power we discover also among the other orbs." And Proctor, in writing of a late solar eclipse says, "We recognize the existence of envelope after envelope around the sun until our earth is reached and overpast."

² Nomenclature has been cast and recast so many times and on so many different systems that no one of them may be followed exclusively. Twenty years ago, naming them accord-

redients of granite. They settled as the boiling mass slowly cooled down, and are the natural basis of all the rest. No animal or vegetable life is ever found in them.

Then came the deposit called Secondary, the sandstones, the slates, and some of the limestones. Huge vegetables that could only grow in a steaming air, and without direct sunlight, appeared. These were followed by the carboniferous periods, when these vegetable forests were turned to coal by means of some tremendous change, through fire or water. Then came periods when vast sea-monsters, and huge birds roamed through the oceans and the airs.

And these ages were followed by convulsions in which those monstrous creations were destroyed and their remains are found to-day embalmed in the rocks. But during all this time no man appeared. Ages seem to have gone by in which the earth was cooled down so that it could be inhabited by vast birds, the fossil remains of which are often found, but no single species of which now exists. Those fishes, those beasts, those birds, were like and yet were unlike those now living. But not one of them could have lived an instant in our

ing to their supposed order of strata, the division of the rocks was into Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary; next, with regard to the appearance of life, it was into Azoic, Paleozoic and Mesozoic, etc. Subsequently the nomenclature made popular in America by Lyell was employed. But he has himself reconstructed his vocabulary, at least as to the Pliocene and Post-pliocene ages.

air ; nor could one of our living creatures have existed a moment in their atmosphere. No more in those untold periods could man have lived on the earth.¹ Those beings in the old geologic ages were not the fathers in *lineal* descent of any beast or bird or fish now on the earth. "There is," says Dana, "no lineal series through creation." Those were the ancestors of these only in that, at each successive creation and destruction, God kept the type ; but the new creation was usually nearer the perfect type than the one it replaced. Always it is in one of the four forms of Mollusca, Radiata, Articulata or Vertebrata.

Then came another vast convulsion. The temperature fell. The continents were buried beneath the sea. And vast fields and even mountains of ice were formed over the face of the desolated world. This was followed by the drift period, so called, when, this whole

¹ " In the distant past, not a trace of man's presence has been found. He is " of yesterday." While the stone volume has preserved for us the slight impressions of the Annelid and the foot-trail of perished Molluscs in the soft mud over which they crawled ; while it has restored to us in perfect shape the delicately-constructed many-lensed eye of the Trilobite, and has kept exact record of the death struggles of fishes on the sands of olden seas ; while it has delineated, on carboniferous columns, fern-leaves exquisitely delicate in structure as the finest species of modern times ; and while the rain-drops of long bygone ages have left imprints which reveal to us the course which even the wind followed ; not a trace of man is visible. Only at the close does he appear ; science finds him where the Scriptures placed him, and sees in him the crown which continuous type had long foreshadowed."—*Fraser*.

North American continent submerged, the great icebergs floated from the north-west, dropping from their bases those vast mountains of gravel and those vast boulders which are found all over the continent to-day. Says Humboldt "the Alps were beneath the ocean." Says Lyell, "All land has been under water." "The highest mountains," says Tenny, "have been the ocean bottom." And then came the last great act before man. These continents were all lifted out of the sea, and the waters drained into the rivers and gathered into the present oceans. And at length on the last of these great day-periods, man was created.

Such is substantially the course of creation as our scientists now hold it. A few of these points are still disputed. But these conclusions are all but universally held, and are as certain as any scientific facts can ever be.

And just here a few words, thirdly, as to the general agreement of the record in the Bible and the record in the rocks.

First, all science says that there was originally a *Creator*. Even Darwin, often called an atheist, says, "life was originally breathed by the *Creator* into a few forms or into one. Owen says that "law is only secondary cause," but he holds that law is guided by the intelligence of the Creator. Herbert Spencer leaves a place for God as the author of force. While Agassiz, Hitchcock, Dana and Guyot all insist that science no less than

revelation declares those grandest of words, "*In the beginning, God!*"

Secondly, all science declares that originally the earth was chaotic, sunless ; its vast boiling, surging masses of melted rocks, surrounded by clouds of steam and mist, were lit at first not by sunlight but by cosmical light. Exactly so says Moses. A hundred years ago men said, "Moses is surely wrong in not making the sun to shine upon the earth until the fourth day." But no carefully-read man now makes that objection. The huge forests, which now are turned to coal, grew then in the steaming atmosphere as they could not have grown in the sun's light. Astronomers, geologists and chemists all agree that there was light before the direct rays of the sun touched the earth. How strikingly is Moses vindicated, or rather God, who spake through Moses, in the sacred narrative.

"Let there be *light*," was said on the first day. "Let the *sun* rule the day," was said on the fourth day.

Thirdly, all science agrees that the lowest strata, the rocks first formed, have no vegetable and animal remains. The granites are before the vegetable and animal forms in the order of creation. And so, too, Moses does not mention them in his version until after he had seen the creation of the substance of the world.

Fourthly, science, with almost entire agreement, declares that there have been successive eras of creation. Vast forests existed. Then subsequently they were

destroyed. Vast sea monsters existed. And these also ceased to be, and another race of them were created to exist in new conditions, and these too, in turn, have been destroyed, and new ones again created.¹ No less than twenty-seven of these distinct creations and destructions are insisted upon by some of our best geologists.² Professor Owen claims that some species survived across these tremendous convulsions. But Agassiz, and with him the great mass of more careful scientists, insist upon it that these eras have come and gone. Agassiz says "there was a succession of beings on the surface of the earth. But the *fishes of one age are not the descendants of those in the former geological age.* There is no parental descent among them. God has

¹ The more pronounced of the defenders of the Darwinian form of the development theory do not of course admit this conclusion. But others of them would see every where a superintendence of God, and such a combination of circumstances as needs only the divine touch at the ripe hour. Some Christian thinkers are ready to admit that if the missing links of proof, confessed by the leading advocates of the development theory to be now wanting, should ever be found, there will still be place for these eras of creative power. Of vast changes in which the great mass of existing life was destroyed, all naturalists speak; but as to the suddenness of them, the sharp ending of their epochs, some stand in doubt. The *type* is unchanged. We have the same great ideas, the four great foundation-plans of animal life. All existing and all extinct creatures are or were molluscus, radiated, vertebrated or articulated. The type never changes in the successive eras of creation. Related in form, they are not related in descent.

² Alcide D'Orbigny, and C. H. Hickcock are quoted by Southall in his "*Recent Origin of Man.*"

created all the types of animals that have passed away, to introduce man upon our globe." How wondrously is this in accordance with the chapter in which God is said to have made the fishes and made the birds and made the beasts and then made man.¹

Fifthly, the general *order* of creation is another remarkable fact. The order of the scientists is in outline—we could not expect agreement in detail, for science is not yet perfect—is in outline, that of revelation. There is steady progress from chaos up through primary rocks, then on and up through secondary rocks with traces of vegetable life; thence upward still by new creations unto the mammal age and then into the highest created forms of the mammal age,² when man himself appears.

Sixthly, science also teaches of the classification of plants according to their "seed" and "kind," or structure. The Linnæan system had obtained for years a place in the scientific world. But it was felt after all

¹ "There is not an existing stratum in the body of the earth, there is not an existing species of plants or animals which cannot be traced back to a time when it had no place in the world. The forms of organic life had *a beginning in time.*"—*Lyell.*

"Species appear suddenly and disappear suddenly."—*Agassiz.*

² The waters were repeopled with beings which were not repetitions of the forms just exterminated, but original conceptions; and yet not *fundamentally* different, but united to the old by such identity of the fundamental plan as to convince us that the intelligence which brought death to all terrestrial existence continued to prosecute his own unchanged purpose through all succeeding epochs.—*Winchell.*

that a classification by flowers was incorrect. And to-day the botanists of the world have gone on to their new classification, which is only the old classification in the first chapter of Genesis. "Let the earth bring forth the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree after his kind whose seed is in itself." "This new trophy of science," is only an old laurel from the wreath woven so many years ago by Moses.

Seventhly, science puts vegetation before animal life. Scripture likewise, in describing the day-periods, places the plant kingdom before the animal; and here again the two records agree.

Eighthly, science puts man as the last of the beings that has appeared on the globe. He did not appear until the close of these tremendous convulsions by which the earth was shaped. Revelation makes man appear at the close of the sixth great period.

But when was that? When did he appear on our earth? No man can tell us. The Scripture on this point is silent. We have no definite chronology in Genesis, but *only historic periods in their general order*. Attempts have been made to ascertain the age of man from a purely historic basis; but this method is clearly unreliable when taken alone. For the Hebrew method and the Samaritan method and the Septuagint method are widely divergent. In one, the period from Adam to the flood is sixteen hundred years, in another thirteen hundred years, in another it is more than two thou-

sand years. In the period between Adam and Christ they differ by fifteen hundred years. What wonder that we have different systems of chronology by men like Ussher, Hales and Poole and Bunsen, none of them agreeing in the age of the human race. The system which, until within a single generation, has obtained most widely, is that of Ussher, which places the creation six thousand years ago. But the Scriptures say nothing about six thousand years. And if the time of Ussher should even be doubled, there is nothing to prevent it in the Mosaic record. The tables of genealogy in the Bible were constructed to show the descent of Christ from Adam. And the word "generations," is plainly used in the older Scriptures with the same indefiniteness as the word "day"—a usage found also in the New Testament, and common also in our own century and language. "The extreme uncertainty," says Dr. Hodge, "attending all attempts to determine the chronology of the Bible, is sufficiently evidenced by the fact that one hundred and eighty different calculations have been made by Jewish and Christian authors of the length of the period between Adam and Christ. The longest make it six thousand nine hundred and eighty-four years, the shortest three thousand four hundred and eighty-three years. If the facts of science or of history should ultimately make it necessary to admit that eight or ten thousand years have elapsed since the creation of man, there is nothing in the Bible

in the way of such concession. *The Scriptures do not teach us how long men have existed on the earth.*"

It is well known that on the subject of man's age on earth the geologists have taken the lead of all other scientists in demanding that we extend into an almost immeasurable past the time of man's appearance. Wallace talks of "ten thousand centuries," and supposes "a time when man possessed no powers of speech nor those moral feelings which now distinguish the race." Others think two hundred thousand years enough. There was also much talk about pottery found at the mouth of the Nile, which, reckoning in a certain way as to the deposits annually made by the river mud, was thought to be twelve thousand years old. But since that day, at a greater depth, in the same deposit, Sir R. Stephenson found a brick bearing on it the stamp of a modern ruler of Egypt. And more recently it has been proved that the said piece of pottery is of *Roman* origin. Of the so-called fossils at Natchez on the Mississippi, said at first to prove man's existence one hundred thousand years ago, Sir Charles Lyell, an advocate for the longest times, declares, "it is allowable to suspend our judgment as to its high antiquity." So, too, it is of bones in European caves, and of Swiss dwellings submerged in lakes, and of arrow heads and flint hatchets which have been found mixed with bones of extinct species of animals, and with human bones. Lyell says, they "were probably not coeval." And some of the most eminent

geologists declare, in the words of one of them, "It cannot be proved that these remains may not have been washed up, drifted and reassorted from earlier deposits dating back at the utmost but a few thousand years."

It is the same with the immense age claimed for the Egyptian Pyramids and other monuments—viz., seventeen thousand years before Christ. Recent discoveries have effectually banished the old illusions. Champollion declares "no Egyptian monument is really older than two thousand two hundred years before Christ." Wilkinson decides that "Egypt has nothing older than a century or so before Abraham's day."

But if geologists have demanded immense periods for the past history of the race, and have been followed by a few orientalists, their claims have been disputed strenuously by another class of scientists. Astronomers, with Sir W. Thompson at their head, while desiring to extend the period further than Ussher and the mere historians, have dealt severe blows at the geologists; for they have proved that, not many thousand years ago, such was the temperature of the earth, that man could not have lived upon it. It is then a settled thing that the sciences cannot determine accurately the period of existence of man on earth.

The historians generally favor the shorter, the geologists the longer, and the astronomers the middle ground. The general drift, however, of scientific and philosophic thought inclines to the extension of the period

of man's existence by a few thousand years. If the development theory should at length be shown to have a scientific basis, if even that particular form of it which is called the Darwinian theory should be accepted—a theory less brilliant and less popular than that of the “vestiges,” which it supplanted, only in turn, as we believe, like it to sink out of sight—it would not be necessary to reconstruct a single verse of Genesis. If more than one *physical* origin for man is ever proved, nothing in the Bible can be alleged against it. *Moral unity for our race* is all that is really required. The doctrine of “diverse origins for man,” was defended by a theologian on theological grounds and as a necessity of interpretation more than two hundred years ago. If it should ever be proved that, before Adam, there were creatures having man's physical form, and that at length it pleased God, in Eden, to take this being, whose body centuries before had been “formed out of the dust of the earth,” and, then and there, to breathe into him a higher kind of life in which he became endowed with new capacities for moral character, with a new sense of right and wrong, with an immortal and responsible soul—all this would not be in any necessary conflict with the Scripture story. For nothing is said as to how long a time elapsed between the formation of man as a creature of mere body with an animal life in it, and the subsequent inbreathing of a responsible and immortal spirit by which the race became what we see

it to-day. It would, in that case, be just as true that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth ;" just as true "that by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin." In that case, the moral unity of the race, taught as a historical fact by Moses, and by Christ, and also incorporated doctrinally with the teaching of Paul, could be held and defended just as firmly, though on other grounds, as Christians hold and defend this fact and this doctrine to-day.

Indeed, in so recent and authoritative a work as Lange on Genesis, we have a note of the translator which reads thus : "this does not exclude the idea that the *human physical* was connected with the previous nature or natures, and was *brought out of them* ; that is, that *it* was 'made of the earth,' in the widest signification of the term ; he having an earthly as well as a heavenly origin." Without adopting any one of these theories, nay more, holding that the time is not ripe nor the evidence all in for a careful verdict about any one of them, a Christian may rejoice that no truth will ever displace that of the Scripture record ; that, positive as to some statements, the Bible is purposely left elastic and uncommitted about many a minor question. The agreement is clear of the two records as to a Creator, and as to one race. Equally clear is the statement that only a few thousand years since man did not exist, and as to that other fact, that the time will come when this earth

will be no longer his abode. Says Sir W. Thompson : “ Within a finite period the earth must have been, and within a finite period to come the earth must again be, unfit for the habitation of man. There is a process of events toward a state infinitely different from the present.” Who can fail to recall, in listening to such testimony from scientific lips, those words of the Scriptures, “ The elements shall melt, and the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” “ Heaven and earth shall pass away.”

Science, again, declares that men are *a race*. This is regarded as proven by bodily structure, by human language, and by mental and moral likeness. Says Owen : “ Men form one species, and differences are but indicative of varieties.” Max Müller declares “ language has one common source.” And above all other proofs is that of mental and moral science ; showing as it does the capacity of man, and man alone, for faith ; the ability for moral ideas ; the powers for knowing God and duty ; for loving the pure and seeking the heavenly. For, no matter what theory of man's origin be adopted, this at least all grant, that man's soul to-day is not an ape soul, or a swine soul, but a human soul—a soul capable of faith in the unseen, capable of love to God as “ our Father in heaven.” And here Scripture comes in, declaring that “ through faith”—faith in testimony being a human characteristic—“ we understand that the worlds were made,” and that “ God hath made of one

blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth.”

And thus young men are taught to hold fast to their confidence in the Bible. Scientific theories for a time may oppose the statements of it. A fact here and there may as yet appear strange. Wait a little. Let the men who run their theories against Biblical facts have time enough, and they will be compelled to alter their theories. The *settled facts* are so many illustrations of Scripture truth. Let no man be afraid of Scripture ; no more let him be afraid of science. God’s handwriting is never contradicting when truly read.

And we can also see that we have each our duty as members of the race of men out of which Christ came. Adam has sinned. The taint comes on us. We inherit it, as we do diseased bodies ; as we do the liability to physical death. But after all we are voluntary in yielding to any sin ; for *any* sin is a sin “after the similitude of Adam’s transgression.” And so we are responsible for being sinners before God. But as we receive taint from Adam through the race bond, so we receive gracious offers through Christ, the second Adam. Here, too, it is our voluntary act to believe, and to accept the Holy Spirit, whereby we are recreated in the image of God. Paradise can be regained. The race-bond in Jesus Christ is the hope of the world.

We are prepared, by the thoughts already presented, to welcome the Scriptural idea of the “new heavens, and

new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Vast have been the convulsions of the old earth both through flood and fire. But the floods shall come no more. The next great convulsion is to be, according to God's word, by fire. The earth and the things in it are to be burned up. Then every mark of man's sin shall be obliterated. Every trace of evil shall be destroyed. And the purified earth is to be visited by a higher form of life than ever before. Steadily has the earth gone on. Fit only for coarser and lower forms of life in the old geologic six day-periods, it has been now for a few years the home of sinful man. Beyond the great day of God, it shall be reformed and remodeled, and become the spot that holy souls from heaven shall love to visit. Thank God that the old world—now the type of hollowness and deceit, so that worldliness is another name for sinfulness—is to be so changed as to become an outlying borderland of God's holy heaven!

CHAPTER VI.

DIFFICULTIES FROM ASTRONOMY.

A YOUNG MAN states to the writer his belief as follows. "I believe in a God who has a general superintendence over the affairs of the world. I believe in the immortality of the human soul. I believe that what a man does here affects generally his condition after death. Any thing farther than this I doubt."

Urged to tell why he doubted, the reply was that, substantially, of thousands. "God seems too great to concern himself minutely about our human affairs. It is too much to believe that he who has the care of the whole universe will condescend to notice all the thoughts of a being so insignificant to him as a single and separate man : too much to believe that he will hear him pray and do any thing because he prays that he would not have done just as soon if the man had kept silent : too much to believe that this infinite God had such a care for this world—a mere dot among the starry worlds, a mere grain of sand in a corner of his universe—as to give his Son to die for those dwelling upon it, whole nations of whom are but as the invisible dust in the balance."

And when this argument is pressed at night and out under the vast canopy of the winter heavens, with unnumbered worlds in view, and when it is remembered that new telescopes and larger glasses are multiplying these worlds, each as worthy, so far as we can see, to be visited by a Saviour, each as worthy of the divine care and providence as our world, the impression, to some minds, grows stronger, that we must not be too definite in our belief about the minute care and providence of God. "Is not a man's creed best when it is briefest; when he ventures only on a mere outline belief as to God, the soul and the future life?" So say some. Others feel it. And they hold to Christianity but loosely, because of the starry worlds, and the planetary spaces and the vastness of the universe.

It is believed that these doubts are without foundation; that the vastness of the universe confirms faith rather than suggests doubts, when carefully considered; that, since God is no where general in ordering the stars but every where special in the realms of astronomy, the inference is in favor not of a general and outline creed, but of a special and distinct and Christian belief. David's song, "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" was not the minor strain of doubt, but the song of holy wonder

and thankful praise. Others might doubt ; but he must believe and adore and pray.

Look at the *minuteness of the arrangements* in the starry sky. The first impression is vastness. World upon world, sun upon sun, system upon system, crowd each other to the very verge of space. But where is the verge of space? Through the best telescopes, counting a little patch of worlds in the distant star dust where they are sown with only average thickness on the sky, and then multiplying the whole horizon by that star patch, astronomers count billions of stars. And when larger tubes shall be pointed against the sky, it is believed that the number now known will be but a mere fraction of those then to be seen. Figures get to be meaningless as we try to number the stars. The universe is immensity. Think, too, of the spaces through which these worlds are distributed. Our world spins its annual round of two hundred million miles, and never gets within thirty million miles of a neighbor star. Our sun has for its nearest neighbor sun a star forty-six million miles away. And if this is nearness in the skies, what is distance? Looking only on this vastness we are abashed and confounded ; and we are almost ready to say that God's care can be nothing beyond general over the worlds, and especially over man the minute insect here in a mere outpost of the universe. But then, this temporary feeling yields in a single moment to our firmer and calmer reason.

For surely all this immensity tells of an infinite God. It is exactly what might be expected of him. It scatters atheism, driving it beyond the stars. There must be a God of immensity, when the universe, the work of his hands, is so immense.

Now mark the fact that this God of immensity is *great in the minuteness of his arrangements*. These planets are racing through the sky at the rate of thousands of miles each moment. But see how carefully God keeps time on this race course. Jupiter never gets in at his goal at any given point, a moment too late or a moment too soon. One mistake of a second here, would wrench the system past all computation. The most unwieldy of the stars comes exactly to time. Turning from the evening sky the astronomer said, "God is a mathematician." And as the *motions* are exact, and timed to the millionth of a second, so the *masses* are arranged and guarded with the minutest care. God stands with scales more exact than those of the goldsmith, and weighs out to each planet its grains of sand, never one too many to Jupiter or one too few to Uranus. A handful of dust in the wrong place would upset the machinery of the heavens. God is minute as well as vast in his universe. If his lines and angles stretch across the universe, the measurement is exact. Nothing is simply and only general. Every thing is carefully poised and specially considered. God has its vastness, because he has the minuteness of the

universe in his hand. What, then, is the religious inference from these heavens? Is it that God is simply a general God, who has made only the cast-iron frame of the machinery, and has left the exact fitting of each cog of every wheel pretty much to itself; that he is to be believed in as having only a *general* care for mankind, who in turn are to have only a general faith in his existence, a general idea of religious duties, which duties are only the general doing of things that are about right? Nay! Nay! Is not the inference in favor of the special belief in a God ever near, who hears prayer, who has cared for man, and who reveals the moral glory of his grace in Jesus Christ even as the glory of wisdom and power are displayed in these radiant worlds above us. The stars do not say Christ. But they tell of a minuteness of God's care for worlds, that is exactly matched in God's care for the souls of men.

The young man whose doubt I am discussing argued in a very similar style from the revelations of the *microscope*. And since the reasoning—that from the immensity of minute things, as in astronomy from the immensity of great things—is very similar, the answer to it is found in the same line of thought.

The microscope is simply the inverted telescope. That looked among the mighty orbs, this looks down on the minutest things which God has made. It discovers insects so small that twenty-seven millions of them would make but a single inch. It finds vast families of

various kinds of them in the cavities of a common grain of sand. In each drop of stagnant water is a world of animate beings who have as much room in proportion to their size as have the whales in the Pacific ocean. In a single leaf it finds swarms of insect life grazing as cattle on a hill-side. It finds a down on the butterfly's wing every fringe of which is so exact, that human art in its nicest and evenest productions is only clumsy and bungling. God has finished off and elaborated the wing of an insect that lives only a single day. Surely no man can doubt God's minuteness in his care for man, after seeing through the microscope, what he does for beings lower than man. If the telescope humbles us, when we invert it in the microscope it exalts us. Little in one view, we are large in the other. Shall God care for the polish on the beetle's wing and have no care for an immortal soul? Doing nothing slightly, but all things well in nature, has he no concern for the greater as well as for the lesser things of man's life? I can better understand Christ's splendid example of a special providence in the numbering of a hair and the falling of a sparrow, when I see what God does down among the living insect world as the microscope reveals his handy work.

Then, too, when we think of the myriad races lower than ourselves, is man quite so contemptible a being? Compared with God, man is feeble. But compared with the insect, he is almost a God. His world is small

among the starry worlds, but it is vast as compared with the world of the insects that live in a sand grain. If God has guided the instinct of those minute beings so that each does his appropriate work, will he refuse to hear a man's earnest prayer for guidance in doing a work that involves the eternal interest of a priceless soul? If he has cared so much for their bodies that they may be saved to fulfil their destiny, will he have no plan of salvation for man's soul, that the highest and noblest being that walks the earth may not through sin be utterly ruined?

Then, too, these manifestations of God in nature, so far from awaking doubt, prepare us to believe in his manifestation in *humanity*. In the midnight sky he reveals his skill and his power. He does not launch worlds into space as boys throw their snow balls into the air from the mere feeling of sport, and the exuberance of power. He has the motive of *revealing* before intelligent beings his wisdom and his might. But why stop there? Why skill and might displayed, and all else hidden? Ah; but mere things will not show the deeper perfections of God. Yet being God, he must desire to display these movings and motions of his heart. He can only do this to man *through man*. Yet a *mere* man cannot show it. He himself must then be incarnate in man, God manifest in flesh. Grant me this only, that the worlds of the midnight sky were not made in sport; that their maker God, desired to reveal

himself in these, that only a part of his nature could shine in them, while he himself could be enshrined in man, his image—and the inference is clear that he may, that he probably will come among us as Immanuel, “*God with us.*” The stars do not hinder me, as I study them; they help me to believe that, manifesting his glory and power in them, he will also manifest himself in a human form. They prepare me to accept the great fact that Jesus is the God-man—who came to show us the beating of his heart even as these stars show us the working of his hands.

Again; turning from the works themselves to the attributes of God as indicated by them, doubt is lessened rather than increased. “He is so great that he has greater things to do than to notice each man,” says the objector. But is that the true inference from the fact? Why not state it thus: He is so great, that, doing all things else, he can also notice each man. He is great at condescension. He is great in providing for the things that men would call trifles. In this universe the smallest things are the hinges on which turn the gravest events. Any trivial thing not carefully worked, the least accident in a trifle, may unhinge every broadest plan. An insect of an hour may inflict a fatal sting upon an emperor; and his death may destroy a nation and change the map of a continent. A God every where or a God nowhere is the alternative. He must have every event in his control, or he will loose the reins, and

cannot govern his world. He must, then, care for man. And if he have any care, it must extend even to man's *thoughts* ; for these are the sources of his acts. And so because he is God and therefore cannot be ignorant even if he would about any minutest thing, and because if ignorant of the lesser, he could not govern the greater, we feel sure of the Christian doctrine which teaches that God is near man, watches every deed, marks every purpose, and will bring every thought into judgment whether it be good or whether it be evil. Surely there is no general care for man that is not first special, no general providence that is not particular ; no superintendence for the whole earth, that does not take in every particle of its dust ; no watchfulness over any man's soul which does not include the minutest things that touch his mortal and his immortal life.

And as we reason from God's works in the starry skies to his nature, and to the manifestations of himself he will be likely to exhibit on other fields, so we reason from *man* and from his capacities for understanding something of the divine ways and works. The stars are mere masses of matter. They do not know themselves. They do not know God. They do not know man. But man knows them ; and looking on them can thank God for them. They have no likeness to God. God is their Creator, not their Father. God is Father only to souls. Shall he have such interest in those stars that know not any thing, and only a general outline care

for a human soul, which alone can know of his works? Is there no evidence that God loves to be appreciated in his world? Did he not make man his highest work to understand and interpret the other works of his hands? One soul is worth more than all the stars of the skies. Those stars are burning out. Year by year astronomers discover a star on fire. It burns on its months and then vanishes—a token of what God says is to be done with our earth at the final day.

But souls do not cease to be. They have an immortality. God has done so much in endowing them already, that we should be surprised if he did not do more. We have seen why he who reveals his power and glory in the stars, should also reveal himself in humanity; why God should manifest himself in Jesus Christ. But this spiritual nature of man carries us further. The great thing about a man is not his *avoir-dupois*. The mind makes the man; the soul stamps him as of worth. Shall God reveal his thought in the stars, and shall he refrain from revealing it likewise in man's realm of thought *i. e.* the *literature of the world*? Shall men reveal their thought in books; and shall God have no Book? Shall his thought shine in every department except that where man's thoughts shine brightest? Is it not of all things most reasonable; nay so reasonable as to be absolutely certain, that God will reveal himself in a book, a Bible, a revelation in human

thought and language about himself. There must be a Bible, a book of God, given through men, and having a *divine* inspiration, as all the great works of human genius have a human inspiration in them.

A few years ago astronomers said that there were strange perturbations in the motions of certain planets. What was the trouble? Some one suggested that if a planet existed between two of those already known it would account for the disturbance. The disturbance was carefully calculated and the position of the supposed planet ascertained, and when they pointed the iron tube at the spot, there stood the waiting star. There was need for it; and so the star itself was there.

I reason in the spiritual astronomy of religion in the same way. I find a deep want. Here is a God whose notice of me is exact and minute. He will require of me a strict account at the last day. But I cannot do the duties of this life without some knowledge of the life to come. If that life takes on any complexion from this, I must in some way know about that coming life. No one but the eternal God can tell me certainly about that future world, what it is; how to escape its terrors, if it has terrors; how to gain its joys, if it has joys. I must have, not the inspiration of human genius, but the divine inspiration of God's thought in my human language; in other words I must have an inspired Bible to teach me of the future and so of the present. If I do not know about that life, I cannot in this world get

ready for the future. I do not go upon the journey of a week without preparing for it. Can I go the eternal journey without making any special preparation in this life? How can I know in what way to prepare for a journey so solemn, and on which I may start so suddenly? If there be a God with any care for me, he will tell me. He will not leave me to be tossed on the ocean of human guesses. He will give me my directions and instructions. And so I reason with heart and head that there must be a Bible; just as, to those astronomers there must be a star. The need of it is the proof of it.

We may go further. Man has deeper needs than those requiring direction. He needs *redemption* from the guilt and bondage of sin. The stars are guided in their courses by one whose skill provides for every inch of their course and every second of their time. Their every want is supplied. A thousand influences would draw each of them from its orbit. But God provides for them that they dash not off their track to ruin. Unlike them, we can and do turn away from our appointed duty. But shall we think that the God who would rescue a star from its ruin, could look on and see men lost in sin, and make no effort at their salvation? I see him give Jesus Christ. I see Jesus Christ dying, the just for the unjust, that we may be saved. And I feel that he who cares so closely for the stars in their orbits, and who holds them to their course, is doing all this

work of redemption for man, his child, the being with an immortal soul—doing it because it is like him to do it ; like him *here* to show his heart, as *there* in the sky to show the wonders of his hand.

In short, I am compelled to feel that he who has so garnished the evening sky, so carefully settled the paths of the stars, so timed each planet, and weighed to a grain of sand each orb, who is never general but always special in his care for every thing great and for every thing small, is a God who has not left me any poor general outline creed in the infinite matter of religion. He is—thanks be to his name, as becomes him, and as becomes man, his child—especially careful and exact, especially full and explicit in telling me what to believe and what to do in religion, and how to gain a holy heaven. The stars do not make me doubt. They help my faith. They intimate, they more than intimate a Bible which teaches me all I need to know.

Thank God that we are not left to any man's guesses in religion. I ask you, young men, to come to no uncertain science in this matter of religion. God is our authority here. The clear doctrines of his Word shine out in the moral as do these stars in the natural firmament. Nay, these stars are only for the eye. But God's truth is for the soul. We can prove it to the intellect. That is well. But, young men, the God of those heavens and of this Bible, asks your hearts. He has worlds enough. But he wants appreciative and loving

souls. He stamped its radiant glory upon these overhanging heavens. The vast spaces of the ether blue were the groundwork on which he wrought out the pattern, so brilliant, so gorgeous, for the gaze of the worlds. He has another firmament, higher, grander than this of the evening sky. Souls are the stars stud- ding that firmament. They have a peculiar lustre. Com- ing into existence at first, as the world was created, in chaos, the Spirit of God, which changed that old earth- chaos into the orderly and beautiful world where we dwell, has called these souls "out of nature's dark- ness into his marvellous light." They are destined for the higher firmament of heaven. They are to be at- length stars, not for man's gaze, as are these evening orbs ; but they are for God's delight, for the garniture of his own heaven.

God wants hearts. He can take the weakest and most guilty, if it be freely given to him, and out of it he can make an orb the radiance of which shall shine when these "heavens are rolled together as a scroll and the elements shall melt with the fervent heat."

CHAPTER VII.

DIFFICULTIES ABOUT HISTORIC FACTS.

VISITORS at the White Mountains are taken to see that great natural curiosity which is known as the "Old Man of the Mountain," or "The Profile." On the front of a lofty cliff, hundreds of feet above him, the traveller is shown a great stone face with its gigantic features sharply cut against the morning or the evening sky. But the perfection of the resemblance is discerned only when the spectator takes his stand on a specified spot. Seen half a mile in either direction nothing is visible on the mountain side save a rugged mass of uninteresting rock. Everything depends upon the right approach and the correct position of the man himself as he comes to the study of this great natural wonder. What if it be the same with other things ; with wonders in the *moral* as well as in the physical world ? What if it be a very especial need when a young man comes to his Bible, that he should approach it in a peculiar way and occupy a certain definite position.

We have seen that the book which we call the Bible is a peculiar book ; that its claims are unlike any other volume in existence ; that it is a great moral wonder.

Is it then out of analogy that it should demand a peculiar mood of mind, a certain suitable state of intellect and heart, in those who approach it? The poetic mood is needed for the poem. The philosophic mood is needed for the study of the volume on philosophy. The scientist claims that a peculiarly calm and patient mood is needed by him who would come aright to the great problems of science; that, not the poetic spirit, nor the philosophic spirit, nor yet the theologic spirit, can be any substitute for this mood. And he is right. By all means, the scientific spirit for the scientific problem. So, too, the philosopher, devoted to the broadest inquiries, insists that there can be no substitute for the philosophic spirit, if one would study the volumes of Leibnitz or Descartes, of Hamilton or Hiecock. And he is right. Are we then out of analogy when we insist that here, in the study of the great moral problems of the Bible, there is needed a definite mood, a certain reverent and devout tone of mind; and that neither the scientific or the philosophic spirit can be substituted for this obvious and necessary requirement. Everything depends upon the position of the beholder in looking up to this great moral wonder of a Divine Revelation. For the Bible is not made for the scientist as such, nor for the philosopher or poet as such, but for them all as men with moral wants, and for all other men, young and old, as *moral beings*. For it is not our scientific or philosophical capacities, but our moral capacities that are to

be awake and receptive as we come to the Book the grand object of which is moral teaching.

And yet, I can understand how it is that exceedingly shrewd men, overlooking this very necessary condition, should make such sad work when they come to the more wonderful facts of the Scriptures. They are puzzled, confounded and led on to infidelity by their wrong ways of approaching these things. They would come to "the feeding of the five thousand," or to any other miracle of the Bible, just as they would come to any alleged fact on the purely natural plane of common things. But that miracle does not profess to be a common fact, nor to have been wrought down in the plane of nature. It refuses to be questioned by the agriculturist, by the chemist, or by any man either of vulgar or of learned curiosity. It was not wrought for wonder-seekers. It declines to let the philosopher talk to it of "laws of nature," and of fixed principles. It is its own principle. It is a physical fact with a moral meaning, and coming in under moral laws, in a system higher than nature. It is a moral doctrine incarnate in a physical fact. No man has any right to consider it out of *moral connections*. It is to be studied only in its relations to the Christ who performed it, to the time when it occurred, to the place it filled, to the truth it taught, to its bearing on the development of the Messiah's plan and aim, and above all, to the niche it was to fill in the great temple which God through Christ was building

for the reverent worship of reverent men. To put these moral connections aside and out of sight in judging of "the feeding of the five thousand," is to ignore all the reasons that made the miracle a possibility, and all the conditions furnished by its author to us for our investigation of the meaning the character and the reality of the event itself. There are men who come as scientists with a profound reverence for "nature," and little for God, ready to refer any thing to *it*, but receiving the suggestion to refer any thing to *him* with the shrug of impatient and irreverent unbelief. And these men, in this mood, would apply their methods to the miracles of the Bible! Nothing can be more absurd, unless it be the proposition of those who with a confusion of terms which would be amusing if the theme were not so serious, propose to ascertain "the scientific value of prayer;" as if anybody ever thought it had a scientific value; as if any Christian thinker had ever dreamed of measuring moral values by physical standards; as if one could ask of his grocer a bushel of right or a peck of wrong, of his tailor a yard of truth or of error, or leave with his apothecary an order for the chemical analysis of a man's love for his child and the likelihood of a father to grant his child's petition! Christianity requires tests. Men are "to prove all things." But it suggests there is a proper way to do it. It says, put your crucible and scalpel where they belong in nature. Study your laws whether of the physical world or of the mental world,

in the obvious and appropriate ways that are open to you. And when you come to religious facts come also in appropriate ways, and seek moral truth by moral methods. We object to the claim of any set of men, that we are to take their methods, excellent elsewhere, in the study of the miracles. For the miracles are not mere phenomena, mere freaks of power for vulgar curiosity or for scientific and philosophic inquiry. They are parts of a mighty moral system. And they are not to be approached except from this point of advance. They are to be studied with reference to moral ends ; and this neither the scientist nor the philosopher, as such, proposes to do. The miracles are for man as a moral being.

And the same is true of many an incident of the Old and New Testament which is not miraculous, but which nevertheless is very strange, and it may be almost absurd when seen alone. But when studied in its place and seen as an object-lesson of God for the moral teaching of men, it becomes not only credible but instructive ; not only probable but morally certain, as an event needed for its moral impression at the very point of time, at the very place, and in the very circumstances described. So that if there had not been some such event occurring in the process of the divine tuition of the race, we should have wondered more than we wonder now ; the absence of such events being more remarkable than their presence in human history. Considered simply as a method of healing human bodies how absurd

the "raising of the serpent in the wilderness." But seen in the setting of the story, seen as God meant it to be seen, as a teaching and a prophecy of Christ's uplifting on the cross; seen as a renewing of the primal promise given after the primal sin; as the palpable objective demonstration of the great moral fact of an atoner and an atonement; seen as a lesson set to the whole world as to the place and the value of faith, the incident is not only redeemed from littleness, but it shines in such grandeur that its light is thrown across all the separating centuries. The entire language of the religious world has been colored thereby, and men everywhere have been led to associate the idea of the lifting up of Christ with the lifting up of the brazen serpent. Nay; the Great Teacher himself has interpreted for us the prophecy, has explained the object-lesson of God. He has said, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the son of man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life."

I would have every young man who approaches the Bible come to it with the true idea of *God's method of revelation* in his mind. For this is the key to the volume. That method is easily gathered from even a general perusal. God's method is to *reveal himself to mankind through a particular race, the Hebrews; and this revelation, he will have to culminate in a particular person, Jesus Christ.*

The Hebrew race were fitted to become the medium of this revelation by certain peculiarities.

One of these peculiarities was their *capacity for moral ideas*. True of all Oriental as compared with the Occidental nations, this capacity to receive and express such truths was pre-eminently a Hebrew trait. They were quick beyond any nation of the olden time, in what may be called religious receptivity. They were spiritual symbolists. They thought in figures and talked in metaphors. They went down naturally to the spiritual base of things. It was not poetry, but religious instinct and the moral insight which made them see in all things the broad shadow of God's thoughts. They saw him everywhere. And he was uttering to them spiritual truths where others saw nothing but bald bare physical facts. To the Hebrew mind material things were shadowy and fleeting; their main use being to remind man of the spiritual world so near, so potent, so helpful. This physical world was the world of the dying; the other world, overshadowing this, was the world of the living. The real world was the world of God and angels and souls, of love and of hate, of duty and of destiny; of heaven and of hell. Outward things were just the images seen in a mirror—not the realities, but only representations of the realities. And so every thing in Palestine was a shadow, a type, a semblance, a prophecy of some moral fact; a representation of some deep religious idea. Each object was bursting with moral mean-

ings, and the whole world was alive with God's thoughts revealed unto man through temporal objects.

This religious idealism shows itself in all the Old Testament story. The Biblical history is unlike every other on this very account. Says Stanley: "Every incident and every word of a narrative is fraught with a double meaning, and earthly and spiritual things are put over against each other—hardly to be seen in the English version, but in the original clearly intended." Take the promise on the strength of which the Hebrews went out of Egypt and became a nation. It reads, literally rendered, that they should come to "a land of rest." To *us* there would be just this meaning; that after being vexed in slavery, they should come to a land where there was no task-master. But that was the very least of all the things which it meant to them. The physical was the mere alphabet for the spiritual idea. So to a child the mere letters of the word "men," take the attention. He says to himself that the first letter has three lines with curves and so it is "m;" that the letter curved at the top is "e;" and the last with two lines and curves in it is "n;" and that all together they spell the *word* "men." But a full grown man seeing that word on the page, does not stop upon the letters as letters; still less upon the word as a word. There is a *thought* in it for him. He grasps at once the idea of a broad race of mankind with unity in their diversity, with their social, their political, their moral relations.

The ancient Hebrew went through no lengthened process of logical deduction. No idea had he of reasoning by analogy. He did the thing instinctively. He did not set up the outward object and extract laboriously the metaphor, and then mechanically apply it to moral truths. To him the two were one. If either led it was the spiritual.¹ And when Moses gave the promise of "a land of rest," every Hebrew mind went backward to "God's rest," at the close of creation, and took up the idea of "Sabbath rest," that is of heaven itself, the serene abode of God. Nor backward only, but forward the word carried every one of them. "Rest," was not to them simply a state of bodily repose. The word was broad enough to denote God's smile, favor, blessing, in every form of political and spiritual enjoyment. It meant to them the best of earth and the best of heaven. They seized on the moral idea of the physical fact. And this was their great characteristic

¹ In this fact may be found the removal of a difficulty which some have felt as to "Solomon's Song." It has seemed to them too *sensuous*, as it sets forth the ecstasy of religious feeling under the allegory of a bride and a bridegroom. It may be too warm for our cooler occidental tastes. But the Bible is for the Eastern as well as the Western nations. A distinguished English orientalist has declared that, whereas once the book of "Solomon's Song," was to him a great trial on ground above named, his residence in the East, and his notice of the fact that the religious ideas of the people found constant expression through nuptial figures, had removed from his mind all his former feeling.

as a race, and the leading element of that national feeling which fitted them to be a peculiar people.

And here is the answer to the question pressed so often upon the young man who keeps his faith in the Bible, as to why such prominence is given to the Hebrew history. God selected the best instrument for his purpose. The plan of revealing himself through men once chosen, this was the race foremost in moral capacity; the nation who not only, by inheriting the traditions of the best ancestry, but by their natural constitution of mind, were best fitted to do his work in this thing.

And there was also to be a distinct moral lesson in the *development* of the Hebrew nation. Born in the wilderness, the nation had a unique training for their mission. Nothing like it before or since in human history. The escaped tribes go out of Egypt under circumstances without a parallel, and for a journey that was as singular as was their mission peculiar. Why that long journey of forty weary years? Some will hasten to say that it was for the sins of the people. But then the sins usually named as the reason for this journey were not committed until after the journey had begun, and there were indications at the outset that the journey was to be long, tedious and difficult. The course taken at the very commencement led them away from Palestine. The Land of Promise was but a little distance, had they gone in the direct way. There were

fewer obstacles. They would have met no foes. Most of the brief journey would have been through a region of country desolate enough now, but then watered by "the river of Egypt," and connected by a grand system of canals with the Mediterranean. Had they taken this the natural and direct course, forty days, instead of forty years, would have sufficed for the journey. But they go away south-east towards the desert, rather than up north-east towards the fruitful plains of Southern Palestine.

There is a reason for this thing. May it not be found in the *teaching* God would give that people? He would leave such a stamp upon that race by his communications to them in this wilderness, that all through human history they should be "a peculiar people." Such laws he would impose upon them that no contact with any other race should ever entirely obliterate the impression. Left in Egypt, this teaching could not have been given. No more could it, had they gone at once into Palestine. They must be separated from heathen nations for a time. They must be under direct tuition. On the one hand, they must be purged from the defilement of Egyptian ideas, on the other, special revelations must be given, and special discipline be received. The wilderness was their university, and God was their teacher. They were to cease to be tribes and become a nation. It was their period of childhood,—the period when what is learned abides; when a single year tells on a life-time.

The most magnificent ritual the world ever saw was introduced, every rite of which was eloquent with the truths of the coming Gospel. New ideas as to God, his holiness, his justice and his mercy, were put before this people. Every minutest thing, even down to the fringe on a priest's garment, was significant, while the grand feasts and festivals, the appointed sacrifices, the more marked celebrations of the nation were intended to make them acquainted with ideas to which all other Oriental nations were utter strangers. Nor by laws alone, but by providences often miraculous, did God give them teaching. But the providences would have been of little worth for this end aside from the laws. Ordinary and extraordinary observances, days of atonement and of passover and years of Jubilee, all were to make them familiar with the root-ideas of the Gospel time. It was designed to indoctrinate a people in religion as never before. They were to be directly trained of God with no contamination from any surrounding nation. Taught of heaven, apart from all that could hinder the force of that teaching, and under the most favorable circumstances for that end that can be imagined, they spent those years in the wilderness.

And this teaching was not alone for the Hebrew nation. It was the human race that was in the eye of God. The tuition of the wilderness was to be written out. It was to be a story for the world's study. And so it has been. For Mahometan and Jew and Christian

alike have pondered it. Thousands who know nothing of general history, know of the wilderness wandering. Thousands who could not give a connected story of the battles of their own land, can tell of the battle fields and camping stations of the Hebrew host on the way from Egypt to Canaan. And when any young man is pressed with the objection that "too much space is occupied in the Bible by the story of an old race which has now lost its importance in human history," let him be ready to reply that such an objection shows not only narrowness of view but an entire mistake as to God's plan of using that Hebrew race in their historical development as the medium of his revelation to mankind. Seen in its true relation, seen as an intentional lesson-paper for the world, the old story of that peculiar nationality is not a Hebrew idyl, nor a scrap of antiquity to be preserved by those curious and careful about the olden time. It is for us as well as for them; a thing of to-day in meaning though of yesterday in fact. Its minuteness is not trivial, but intentionally careful. Its incidents are not accidents, but they are put into the record to be pondered, as they have actually been, by the most thoughtful and advanced souls of the race in their search after God's will.

Nor, again, can we overlook the *geographical* position of this Hebrew race. The land of Canaan stood out fronting other lands. It was a part of Asia, and yet was separated from it by a distinct geological formation

that is without a parallel on the globe. In some convulsion of the crust of the earth, there has been formed a depression running north and south, so that the great Jordan valley lies a thousand feet, in some places, below the Mediterranean ; thus cutting off Palestine from its own continent and thrusting it forth into the presence of the world. Along its eastern shore stretched the "great and wide sea," the Mediterranean, with its Joppa the oldest, and its Tyre the grandest sea-port of the ancient civilization. Waves that washed Europe on the one side and Africa on the other came dashing in upon the long sea-beaches of Palestine. It was central to the commerce of the world. It invited the ships of every clime to bring their treasures for exchange upon those fruitful shores. That grand old sea gives us the means of making accurate the division between ancient and modern history. For if modern history is the history of lands washed by the hoarse surges of the stormy Atlantic, then we may define ancient history as the history of the lands washed by the white surges of the blue and beautiful Mediterranean. But if Palestine stood fronting the sea and inviting its commerce, no less was the situation propitious on the landward view. If ships brought commerce over the sun-lit waves of the Mediterranean to her western coasts, the caravan, rich in treasures, on its way from Arabia and the lands of the more distant Orient, must pass through her eastern gates, and over the Jordan valley and up and into

Palestine, on its way to the wealthy cities of Smyrna and Ephesus, in Asia Minor.

So, too, on the south lay Egypt, the most fertile land on earth; and north lay Assyria and Babylonia, prodigal of gold and gems, boasting of mineral as Egypt of agricultural wealth. In the rivalries of trade or the fiercer rivalries of war, this land of Palestine was directly on the highway between the two. None could pass east of it, for there was the pathless desert. They must go directly through for trade. They must march their armies directly across the plains in time of war. In days of peace—and Solomon saw that “the empire was peace,”—the heaviest tolls might be exacted and were gladly paid. Hence the immense revenues of Solomon. Hence the riches that built the Jerusalem temple. In time of war—and this was nearly all the time—between the vast northern power and the vast southern kingdom, it was policy in the Jewish nation to take part with neither, but to furnish, at a regular commercial price, supplies to both. So that in a strict neutrality in war, and in a careful trade with the contestants, the advantages to them were nearly as great as those of peace. The great cities were back upon the spine of hills which runs up and down the land. And the Egyptian armies seeking their Assyrian foe, or the Assyrian hosts seeking their hereditary enemy of Egypt, always attempted to pass at the foot of these hills and between them and the sea. There were two plains along the sea-shore, vary-

ing from one to twenty-five miles in width and thrice that length from north to south. Both of them led into a vast valley-plain of twenty by thirty miles running directly across the country from east to west, the great plain of Esdraelon, the battle-field of the world. On this field armies of every ancient and of nearly every modern nation have met in deadly conflict. It has been trod by Babylonian armies under Nebuchadnezzar, by Assyrian armies under Sennacherib, by Jewish armies under Gideon and Saul, by Egyptian hosts under Necho, by Moslem hordes under Saladin, by crusaders from Spain and Portugal, from Germany and Italy, by English troops under Smith, and, less than a hundred years ago, by Frenchmen carrying the imperial eagles under the personal leadership of Napoleon I. of France. The world's history has been written in blood on this plain of Esdraelon, in Palestine. Those great conquerors whose disastrous fame has filled up with sickening fullness the records of human history, have all seen that Palestine was geographically the pivot of empire, and that the Esdraelon plain was the great field the winning or the losing of which carried with it all they hoped or all they feared. To this plain they have come either in person or by their armies. Here came the Persian Cyrus, the man whose rise to power is the most wonderful exploit in history; that Nebuchadnezzar who when he died left behind him "more buildings reared by his hands than any man who ever stood on this planet;"

that Macedonian conqueror who wept for other worlds to subdue ; that Roman Cæsar who by his vast hordes overran Palestine, giving imperial names to her cities and to her beautiful inland sea ; that Richard of England whose fame is world-wide ; that Godfrey, at once the pride of Europe and the boast of his own France ; that great emperor Frederick Barbarossa, whose ashes are buried in the ruins of the old Christian temple at Tyre, near by this plain where he fought so nobly ;—these are some of the men who have seen in Palestine the very central spot of geographical position, the possession of which in their day was essential to their plans of empire.

And when any young man hears a sneer thrown at Palestine as if it were never of any importance, as if it had always been an out-of-the-way land, and had no right to such an eminence in the Bible, let him recall the fact that it has been coveted more than the gold of Ophir and the mines of Goleonda by the great conquerors, statesmen, rulers of the world. And instead of heeding the sneer, let him pity the man whose knowledge of the history of the human race leads him to undervalue the importance of the land which geographically was the most important land of any on earth to the older nations. Let him recall also the fact that when the older nations faded out and their lands were occupied by newer peoples, there was still the same ambition to possess Palestine. Assyria and Egypt, broken and retired from the stage, there arose west of Palestine,

two empires, one that of Greece, the other that of Rome. Both coveted the east, the far east. Between them and that far east stood Palestine. It was necessary to their project of universal empire to gain a foothold in Palestine and make it their base of operations. They came, a vast host, marching across Asia Minor, and whitening the Mediterranean with their vast fleets of transports. They effected a landing in Palestine. But when they attempted to advance inward, they were met by the hosts of the far east who swarmed in upon the plain of Esdraelon from over the Jordan and gave them battle. In a hundred fights the Greek and the Roman had a sort of success. They occupied, partially, and for a very brief time, the country, holding it in military duress. But in the end both were routed, and retired discomfited from the land. They had dashed against this rock and their dreams of universal empire were rudely broken. And then, too, when other centuries had come and gone, and the Holy Land was the possession of the Moslem of the east, there went forth a cry through the west of lamentation because the crescent instead of the cross held Jerusalem. The cry of lamentation became one of angry warfare, and the crusades were organized. It was the whole west warring against the whole east. It was a continent rising against a continent for the possession of a strip of land not larger than the State of New Hampshire, but which had been for long centuries not only the best known but

also the most coveted land on earth. The last blow ever struck by the crusaders was vainly given on a little eminence of the Esdraelon plain, a few hundred feet only from the spot where Jesus uttered the "Sermon on the Mount." And from that hour the victory of the east has been secured, and the Moslem has held Palestine in his merciless grasp. And as with religious wars so with those prompted purely by ambition. Napoleon in the fullness of his lust for power craved the mastery of the east. He saw the worth of Palestine as the only possible base for further conquests. And he must try his hand at the task only to find his dream of eastern empire melt away on these shores where others before him had met a similar fate.

And thus God's choice of Palestine as a home for his people, as a place second to none in all the old world in its geographical importance, has been endorsed by the world's statesmen and warriors. It was no secluded spot. It fronted the continents. It took the eye of the world. All done there was done for the gaze of the race. And God's wisdom selected not only the people so keenly receptive of moral ideas, but the land for them to inhabit, that his purpose might be accomplished of giving to the race through them, as they dwelt in this central position, a revelation of his will.

The *historic* position of the Hebrew race in their home at Palestine is worthy of study as showing another feature of God's plan. There were centuries before

them. There have been centuries after them. But had they appeared sooner or later in the calendar of historic time, they would have utterly failed in their mission. Back of them were the two great historic peoples of Babylonia and Egypt, but both were waning when the Hebrews appeared. After them the Romans were the world's masters. Parallel with them was the Assyrian empire in the days of its strength. A few centuries earlier the documents of Moses would have been impossible. A few centuries later the necessary tuition of the Hebrews in the arts of Egypt, could not have been had. Their geographical position was not more striking as they fronted the continents than was their historical position as they stood conspicuous in the world's thought. They took from the wisdom of Egypt all that was valuable, just as Plato took his philosophy from the old city of On near the banks of the Nile. But Plato and the Greeks developed what they took in one way, and Moses and the Hebrew hosts in another. From Egypt came ideas of agriculture and the arts of embroidery and of letters for writing; the knowledge of the astronomy by which the Hebrews fixed their numerous festivals, and the history by which Egypt became the second as Palestine the first of the Sacred Lands. And they left behind them in Egypt a moral impression, which was, in part at least, a revival of the more ancient Egyptian faith in the eternity of God and the immortality of man. From Pharaoh's reluctant lips they forced a confession of par-

tial faith in Jehovah as God. When settled in Palestine their distinct belief was known to all the nations, and obtained respectful recognition. Hiram, king of Tyre, a hundred miles from Jerusalem, sent workmen to Solomon to assist in building the Temple on Moriah. Cyrus gave a decree which shows that Hebrew ideas had penetrated the Persian mind, and that the enslaved race were masters in the realm of ideas of their captors. And so, in war and in peace, in victory and in captivity, now by voluntary and now again by involuntary teaching, the Hebrew ideas were slowly but surely working their way among the nations, and thus carrying forward the divine plan. And as God was ordering their historic position, so he was arranging the nations to receive the influence they were to exert. Parallel with them, during an important part of their history, was the Medo-Persian power under which flourished those sects nearest in religious belief to the Hebrews of any known to history. One of them, the world-famed "Magi," sent its deputation to Palestine at the birth of Christ. And when Jewish history culminated in the advent of Jesus, God had ready the one great empire of Rome, then the mistress of the world. Thus it was that the unity of peoples in one sovereignty made them, willing or unwilling, God's messengers to spread speedily the story of the cross over the inhabited earth.

And here, too, we find the reason for those peculiar *incidents* which appear in the Scriptures. These inci-

dents are intended to be *object-lessons*. Mere words would be forgotten. But facts with a moral meaning in them would be remembered. We cannot imagine any better way, or, indeed, any other way, in which God could teach the primitive tribes and nations. A fact, a striking occurrence, a phenomenon singularly unlike any other, which these olden nations would at once connect with the finger of God, was surely the most impressive, most natural form of moral teaching and the one most to be expected. If Hebrew history were without its examples of striking incidents used as divine object-lessons, we should have wondered at it. Their absence would try our faith more than their presence. To a people apt in receiving this kind of teaching, God gave these object-lessons ;—and the fact that they were accepted so readily, confirms our faith in the wisdom that selected the method.

Take the story of the first man's first sin. The whole series of circumstances, seem to be contrived for their moral impression. No need, so far as man's actual fall was concerned, of the events which took place in the garden, of the serpent's agency, of the sword at the gate. But the occurrences were to be for the world's teaching. The garden not only does symbolize, but was intended, as we know by Christ's use of the word Paradise, to symbolize the state of happy holiness, the fullness of which is heaven. And sin was to be made loathsome and foul ; and temptation to be seen as stealthy and

mean, a crouching serpent with slimy tongue and insinuating motion and beautiful form, to charm and then destroy men. And the historic fact of Satan's temptation through words that seemed not his own but the serpent's words, is not only named by our Lord long centuries afterward, but the moral teaching of it is enforced by him when he says, "Ye are of your father the Devil. He was a *liar* from the beginning." The whole series of facts was to be rehearsed in the earliest centuries by the patriarchs and thus handed down through the generations, until written language came to the rescue of an oral tradition, and Moses must put the story on the imperishable pages of Revelation.

And the flood is in the same line of object-teaching. It taught the world of the sin of attempting to do without God. And no less was the deliverance given to Noah a designed instance of palpable teaching. For it has so stamped our whole mode of thought that, in the religious language of the world, *the ark* is the symbol of salvation. So, too, we can understand the overthrow of Sodom only when we see it as God's teaching of retribution. In the pathway of the great caravans, on the world's broadest highway, situated where its destruction would be as conspicuous as its wickedness had been notorious, sure to be the theme of remark as an example of divine wrath in its singular overthrow, in its doom first by fire and next by burial in the sea the mists of which are a perpetual reminder of the "smoke of her

torment," that old city, living in story though long dead in fact, has stood out on the sacred page as a solemn warning, the lurid light of which has caught the eye and alarmed the wickedness of all generations of men. And, in after ages the deserved destruction of the wicked Canaanites who were usurpers in Palestine, who had abundant opportunity to repent and to leave the land, but who made the approach of the Israelites a pretext for a war in direct defence of idolatry—this destruction, so often condemned, is to be seen in the same light. It is no isolated event to be judged by ordinary rules. The nations that then existed and that were to be born needed to understand that denying God and attempting to thwart his will was sure to bring ruin. And so, all through the prophets, we hear those iron tongued men ring out the threat that as God destroyed the nations in Canaan so he would destroy the Jews, if they walked not in his ways.¹

But probably, the incident in the Bible which the young man will hear most earnestly denounced is that

¹ As to Psalms which contain prayers for the destruction of David's enemies, it must be remembered that he was not a private man wishing for private vengeance, but a king, and as such the rightful head of authority and the executive whose duty it was to punish evil doers. And, above all, he was, before the surrounding nations, the representative of the Jehovah worship. Hence the enmity of idolatrous princes was directed not only against his throne, but against his God and his religion. See the fifty-eighth Psalm, where we have in the eleventh verse an explanation of the malediction in the tenth verse.

concerning the proposed sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham. Though the act was not done, and was not intended to be done, yet there stands the command. The objector urges that such a command, though God intended at the last moment to stay the fatal knife, must have been an outrage on the moral sense of Abraham and of the whole world; that it seems a blur upon the moral character of God himself for him to order the death of a child at a father's hands. It is true that the popular answer vindicates God from blame. It is true that we are to look at the "whole transaction, the command and the counter-command; and that Abraham afterwards saw the scope and compass of it which cleared up every difficulty."¹ But is it enough that we simply clear God and his servant Abraham from blame? This would leave the matter in its negative aspect. It would perhaps excuse, but would it justify the transaction? Nor does it tell us the deep reason for this command, so unusual; nor does it give us any hint as to why the story is so prominently recorded in God's Word. There must have been some great reason, lying back of all this, for allowing such a transaction as the attempted offering of a son in human sacrifice by the hand of a father who was the most righteous of all the men in his day.

Now what if we have here *God's object-lesson in redemption*—the "preaching of the Gospel." What if the full justification of the transaction, not only to the

¹ "Moral Difficulties of the Bible."—*Hessey*.

Patriarch's moral sense but to that of the whole world, is to be found in that which it was intended to teach men of God's love in its method of saving them, by the sacrifice of the only-begotten Son. Put it thus: There had come to Adam, in the garden, the primal promise, hard after the primal sin. It was no general declaration of a redemption, but the special promise of a Redeemer. This promised Redeemer was the one object of all the ancient faith. The belief in his coming was the one article in the creed of the "youthful world's grey fathers." Further on in history, the mass of the race had lost out the belief in the promise, and so were doing "only evil." God sent Noah, who, in the very form of deliverance granted his household, preached the Gospel in a figure—the ark being not only a type of salvation, but of its method by special Divine interference for those who believe and obey. Years go by. The faith in the promise is again almost lost. There is needed once more—this time for all the centuries—a *great palpable object-lesson* that shall stand up and out and take the eye of the world. But who should give this lesson if not this man Abraham, "the father of the faithful?" He was to set the world a lesson of human faith in obeying a divine command. Why not also a lesson as to the Divine Fatherhood, as it was to show itself in making sacrifice for human redemption? Can any other way be imagined so awful, so tender, so impressive as that of a father giving up his only son!

Now, what if God, the atoning idea ever present in his thought and ever craving expression, took this man Abraham as it were at his word. What if he appoints to him such a lofty proclamation of this fact as was allotted to no other "preacher of righteousness." Abraham shall, in a sense, represent God. He shall show what God's love is like. He shall help prepare the world for the Calvary scene. Through this father's devotion of his son to death and through his receiving of Isaac "from the dead, from whence he received him in a figure," there was set forth, as nearly as could be done by any human transaction, the great fact of God's gift of the Divine Son to die and to rise from the grave for human redemption. And so this whole scene is to be judged not at all by our ordinary rules of moral judgment as to right and wrong. And if we fail to see how as a merely human transaction we can quite justify it, we are happily delivered from all difficulty when we see in it a divinely-ordained setting forth of the great redemptive fact. That it has been looked upon generally through the Christian centuries as our greatest illustration of that fact, is no small evidence that it was *intended* so to be regarded by God. And thus it was a prophetic scene; a great objective *representation* to those who lived before the Messiah's day. Only thus can we understand this transaction, or justify it, or admire it. The Messianic idea is the key to many an event in the Old Testament. And nowhere do we more

need it, and nowhere, when seen, is it more instructive than in this great object-lesson of redemption which is here furnished to the world.

And a young man's difficulties are removed and his faith is established by noticing what may be called the *timing* of the miracles and "wonderful works" of the Scriptures. This thing grows on one who studies the volume. The miracles are no longer a confused jumble of strange events. Each takes its place; its *own* place; and it is seen that it could not have come in at any other time. No two of these miracles can change places. The flood does its work at its own epoch. Abraham's attempted sacrifice is the event for that hour, and for no other. No Old Testament miracle could have occurred in New Testament times. Those that appear somewhat alike are so only in appearance. The New Testament miracles are exactly ordered as to the point where they occurred. They are progressive. The "raising of Lazarus," could not change places with the "turning of the water into wine," except by an entire destruction not only of the Gospel story but also of the harmony of Christ's own character. He could not, being the Christ he is, have inverted this order, if he would be understood by men. Embosomed in a family known only in the social circles of a Galilean province, it was exactly fit that his first miracle should be the *consecration of domestic life*. But the grand resurrection miracle was best done near Jerusalem, just when all

teaching and all miracle were culminating at the close of his ministry.

And this element of time is to be noticed in an event mid-way between the two just named—the transfiguration. It grew out of a want that did not exist either at the outset or at the close of Christ's earthly life. It was needed alike by the state of mind in which the immediate disciples found themselves, and of the scheme of his own life as shown by what preceded and followed the event. He had just told them of his coming death. It surprised them more than all his miracles. Eight long weary days they pondered the strange fact so unlikely if he were really "the Christ." He told them that they might also have to lay down their own lives. They think of him as failing, of his mission as ending in defeat and of their own utter loss as those embarked in a ruined cause. Never was their faith so low. In this condition they fail utterly to do the mighty works they had performed so easily a month before. He takes a part of them up Tabor; or, it may be, a spur of Hermon. They are weak in faith in him as "the one sent of God." But in the Tabor manifestation they see at once *who Christ is!* The heavenly glory is about him. They can doubt no more. The conversation of the denizens of the other world is about that death which these disciples thought so shameful, but which now is so glorious. Their faith needed a palpable object-lesson. Tabor gives it. They accept his death, per-

haps also their own, as an event connected with the eternal glory. And how much the transfiguration meant to the world at large as the completion of its idea of Christ! He had shown his power over nature, in stilling the tempest, in feeding the hungry thousands; over man's body by healing his diseases, by giving sight to the blind and tongues to the dumb; over man's soul by forgiving sins; over the lower world of evil spirits by casting out demons from those who had been allowed to receive that peculiar visitation. But there remained one other department in which there was need that he should show his sovereignty. Had he power over the world of holy souls? Was heaven also allegiant to him? Would it acknowledge him? Would those who do God's will in the highest places of the universe, the most select spirits, come at *his* bidding as demons had gone at his command? See! The heavens open. Moses the greatest of lawgivers, and Elias the greatest of prophets, who for centuries had been serving in heaven, *came at his word!* When works are done that show power over nature the world thinks, though incorrectly, of physical might. When works are done that show power over the world of evil souls, men can say that Satan has them in allegiance. But none save God himself can command the allegiance of the holy, and have them obey. More striking was the Bethany miracle. More impressive to the general sense of the world was the resurrection of our Lord himself. But no event of all his event-

ful life so exhibits his power, his majesty, his glory, as does this obedience of the souls so long disembodied, so long serving in the interior service of heaven ; the souls standing nearest the Great White Throne.

And it will help a young man's faith if he will see the *setting* of these miracles and these wonders in their moral teaching. In the miracles of Jesus this is very evident. The feeding of the five thousand grew out of three things which occurred together at that very point. There was, first, the multitude physically hungry. Ordinarily they could have gone to the city and bought bread. So too, they were hungry for truth. One of those movements, inexplicable except by the theory that God's spirit sometimes moves peculiarly on men's souls, was in progress. Truth had impressed, but not yet done its whole work in conversion. Should the process be stopped in the soul for want of a few loaves ? So, too, there was a lingering doubt about him in their minds. He meets at once the physical, the intellectual and the moral want of these men.

And, more, he is shown to the world, when the event goes upon the Gospel page, as the master of nature, able to perfect in an instant its processes ; and at the same time, while so great, he is also shown as caring for man's "daily bread." And yet the fitness of miracle to teaching, and of them both to the idea of Christ which the world was to receive is not more striking in this than in the case of every miracle of the Bible.

And the miracles, especially of Jesus, are not merely accompanied with teaching, but they have *a meaning in themselves*. They are not separate wonders but orderly facts in the development of Christ's doctrine. Hence their prominence. They stand right out. They strike the eye. They are not only signs and evidences of Christ's authority, but divine object-lessons, to which our Lord appeals. He told men that, if they were doubtful about his words, there were his works. If they did not understand the one they could the other. He did not look upon his miracles as merely physical facts. They had moral relations. And so too the Apostles regarded them. The resurrection of their Master was the great miracle—so great that, if true, there could be no objection to the other and lesser miracles which they proclaimed every where. It is to them no pretty fable, no beautiful myth. In their way of telling it, it was *a fact with a moral meaning*. It carried with itself the whole moral system of Christian facts and doctrines. And when the lesson of each miracle is seen it is no excrescence to the growth of the fair tree of revelation. Its teaching is the most miraculous thing about any miracle. No miracle was simply a "sign" in the physical world. It was chiefly a "wonder" in the moral realm. The miracles carried with them an eloquence most convincing. Their light went out through all the earth and their words to the end of the world. There is no speech nor language where their voice is

not heard. They are stars in the moral heavens that declare the glory of God and show his handy-work.

The miracles have not only moral ends, but they are themselves teachings. There is the marrow of some Gospel doctrine in every miracle of Jesus. A miracle is a doctrine incarnate. And the old-time miracles, in the destruction of Sodom, in the crossing of the Red Sea, in the healing by a look at the lifted serpent, in the descending manna, in the divided Jordan, in the thrown-down walls of Jericho,—what are these but God's great object-teachings, even if no word be uttered in explanation ?

And only as one sees the grand setting of these miracles, their place, time, order, purpose, in God's great unfolding of his redemptive plan, do these things that, all alone, to merely the philosophic or scientific eye, appear like blemishes, become beauties ; these hindrances helps ; these difficulties of faith its best arguments and supports. The key-stone of the arch standing alone would be an impossibility. But then it does not stand alone. It is to be seen in its place with other stones. And in the temple of God's revealed will these miracles are no hindrance to the use, and no excrescence upon the beauty of the structure, when one shall rightly come to see and to hear and to worship with reverent heart. They have their place. There would be here a weakened arch and there an unfilled niche without them. Not one can be spared. There is no blemish as of a

single useless thing. Nothing can be added, without harm, nothing taken away without loss. Each thing was in the plan of the structure as drawn by the architect. And the architect and the builder were one. So that each thing adds in its own way to the strength or to the beauty of the edifice which God has reared. It is a structure the foundation of which is his truth, and its top-stone his praise.

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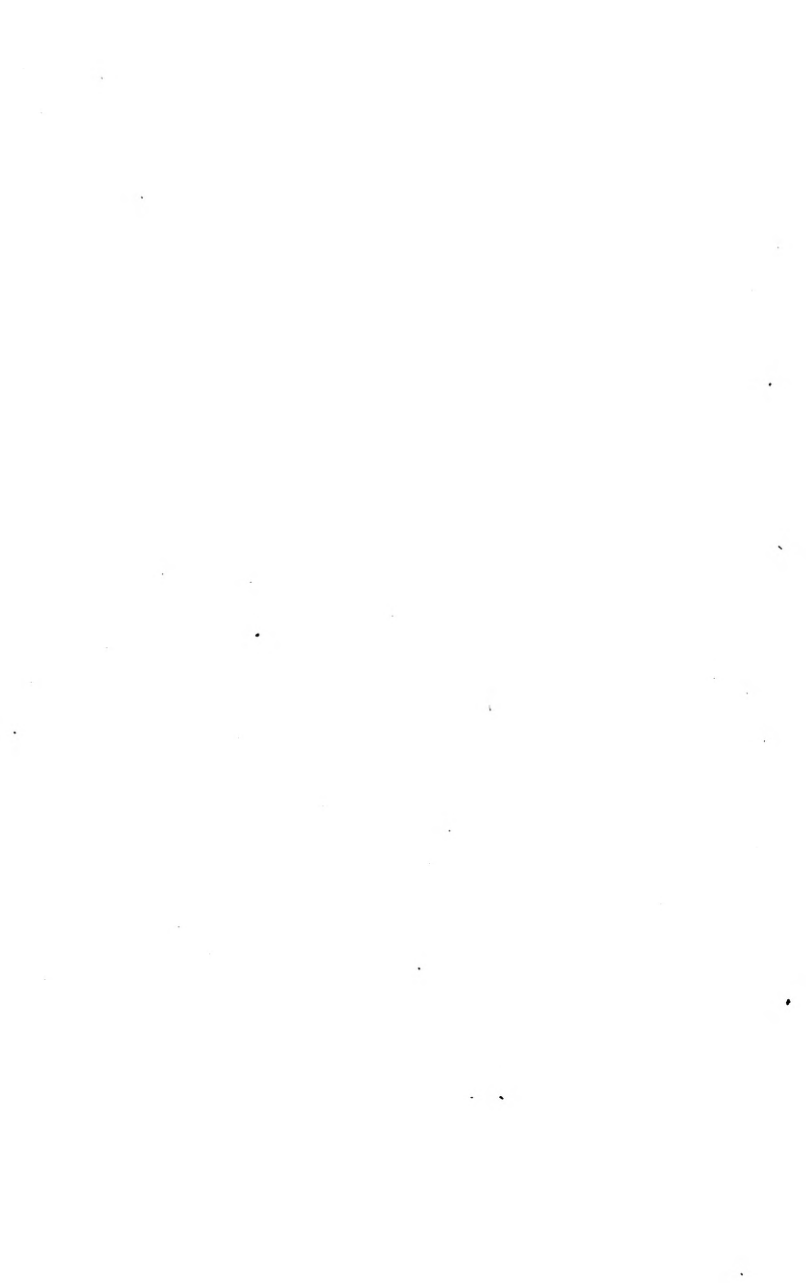
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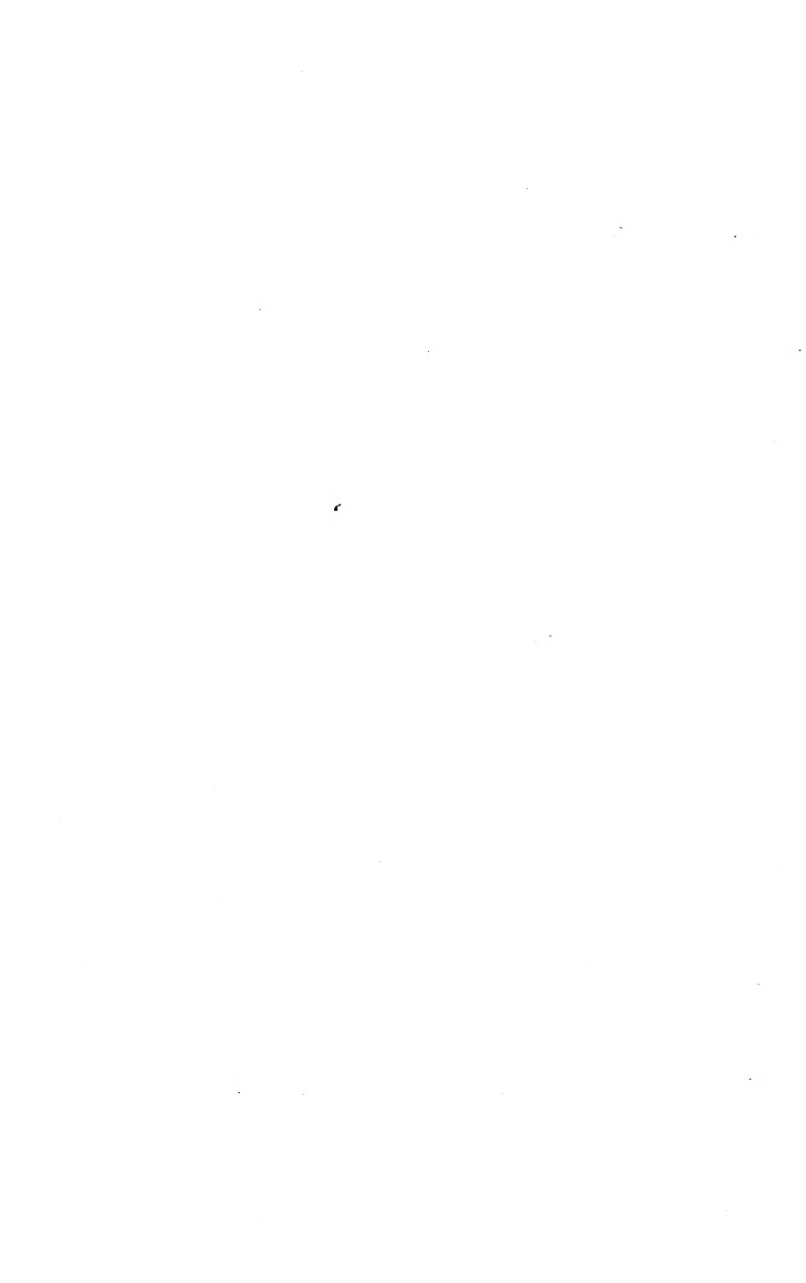
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