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LECTURES



ON THE

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DURING THE SESSION OF 1860-1.

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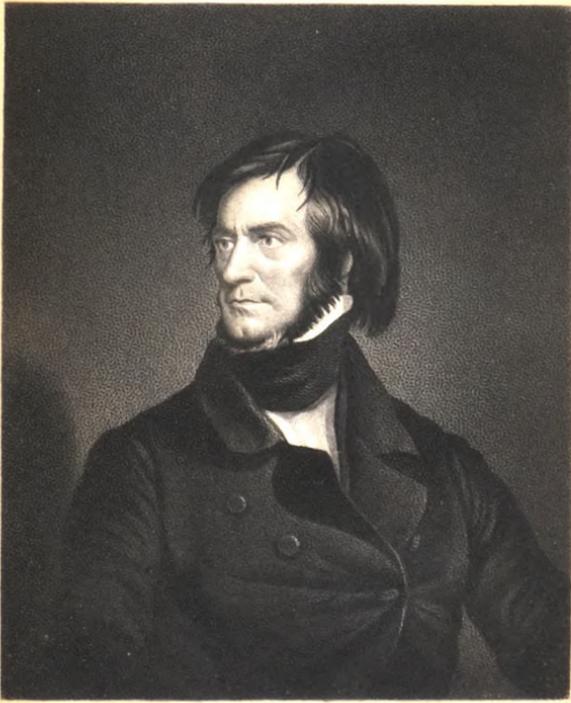
The General Internal Evidence of Christianity.

BY

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## I.

1. As far as we have any knowledge of the past history of our race, independently of the information derived from the volume commonly called the Word of God, portions of that race have always been in possession of portions of that volume. In it are contained by far the most ancient records of mankind. It has preserved for us all that we know of the history of our race, during at least the earlier half of its supposed existence upon earth. In it alone are found any precise ideas of the origin of our race, or any clear and comprehensive statements of its general career and destiny. And it alone furnishes us with complete, categorical, and unalterable directions for the universal guidance of human conduct. For nearly eighteen centuries it has existed in its present form; and the whole of it, as long as it has thus existed—and every part of it, as each part was successively produced, through succeeding generations, from the remotest antiquity—has been accepted by continually increasing numbers of the human race, as the Word of God. At present, it is so accepted by most civilized nations, and in the popular belief of the most enlightened half of the human family.

2. The existence amongst men of a belief in the being of God, has been, perhaps, more general than any other human belief. In what manner it originated, and upon what grounds it has been so universally propagated, are questions upon which men have chosen to dispute; but the fact itself does not admit of being disputed. Upon the hypothesis of what is called natural religion, most questions touching the origin and propagation of this belief, do indeed admit of being solved; for as soon as we allow that religion is natural to man, it follows that it is natural for him to believe in the objects about which religion essentially concerns itself, and therefore in God. Upon the hypothesis of revealed religion, everything is clear at once; since the creation of man by God, with a nature capable of receiving the knowledge of him,

and power to retain, even though it might deface that knowledge : and then the communication of that knowledge by God to man ; explain in the clearest manner, the origin and permanence of a belief so remarkable. Upon any other hypothesis but one of these two, it seems extremely difficult, if not indeed utterly impossible, to account for the existence of any idea of God in the minds of men—much less for the universal prevalence of a belief in his being, and our dependence on him, and accountability to him. The existence of the facts is of immense significance. Our ability to explain them, in some good degree, upon the ground of natural religion—as commonly so called—is a great step taken. Our ability to clear them up perfectly, upon the ground of revealed religion, is a far higher and more important step. Our inability to explain them at all, upon any other ground, seems to conclude the whole matter. It is under the full impression of this utter impotency of infidelity in all its forms, to explain the most common and fundamental of all our religious ideas, and to account for the most universal of our religious beliefs—that passing over the great, but obscure domain of natural religion, we are allowed to come into the presence of a revealed God.

3. The authenticity and the uncorrupted preservation of every part of this volume, are distinct questions, and of fundamental importance. They belong to the domain of another lecture in this course. Upon the first of those questions, it may be observed in general, that the Bible, though in many important senses a single book, is in reality made up of many separate books—each one of which is in fact, and was historically, a distinct treatise. These treatises were composed by a considerable number of different persons, and many centuries elapsed between the composition of the first and the last of them. Who wrote these various treatises—at what times and under what circumstances—how and when they were gathered successively together—distributed under certain general classifications—and at last brought into the condition of a single volume, containing in absolute completeness all the separate parts, and containing nothing else ;—all these are questions, which, so far as they are not settled by the writers themselves, and by the contents of their treatises, have been completely determined by discussions, which, during many centuries, have attended these oracles across the track of ages. Upon the second of the two questions embraced under this head, it may also be stated, in general, that with regard to the text of the Old

Testament scriptures, the state of the whole matter as between the Jews and the Christians; and with regard to the text of the New Testament, the state of the whole matter as between the various Christian sects from the very beginning; and with regard to the text of both testaments, the state of the whole matter as between the receivers and the rejecters of divine revelation—has put the question of the purity of the entire text, and its perfect preservation, in a light extraordinarily clear—and has accumulated an amount of evidence, decisive, out of all comparison touching any other book in the world. So far as these points are important to the present discussion, they must be accepted as settled; and the more numerous and the more difficult they may be supposed to have been, the more important do they become, after being successfully determined, to the argument which is to follow.

4. The authority of this book is a question not necessarily connected with either of the foregoing questions; though it is usually treated as if it were absolutely dependent on both of them. To human reason, its authority might, in many respects, be absolute, even if we knew nothing of its authors—its origin or its preservation; for even in that case it might obviously contain the most precious truth—set in the clearest light. In the same manner and upon similar conditions, its moral influence might be decisive, so far as the influence of what is good and what is beautiful is capable, of itself, of leading captive such souls as ours. And it is undeniable that the gentler, the purer, and the higher classes of human spirits are deeply and permanently affected by the contents of this marvellous book, contemplated only in the manner just stated, in proportion as those contents become familiar to them. Upon such grounds the Christian may well challenge the attention, and claim the reverence of mankind—for a volume capable of producing such effects, in such a manner: but they are so much lower than other grounds on which its authority is asserted, that he does not much insist on these. It is upon the ground of God's absolute authority, that we claim for this book the universal reception and obedience of mankind. We say God has spoken it. It is the direct product of God's intelligence—the immediate utterance of God's authority: as completely so as if we saw and heard him. Its truth is thus ascertained with an infinite certainty, and proclaimed with an infinite authority: and men are, therefore, under an infinite obligation to know, to believe,

and to obey it. Our faith stands, not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. God is infinitely true, and infinitely exalted; so that his communications to us have an infinite authority.

5. Still further. It is by the inspiration and the revelation of God, that the contents of this volume are placed on grounds upon which it claims to be an infallible guide to the faith and obedience of men: just as the veracity and the majesty of God are the final basis of its reception. Precisely as our infinite obligation to receive it at all rests on the latter basis—so our infinite security in receiving it as an infallible guide rests on the former: the manner of its being ascertained to us, as the word of God, being the chief element in one case, and the fact that it is his word in the other. I use both words, inspiration and revelation—for, to me, they convey ideas substantially distinct—yet both of them indispensable. Amongst things known, or that might be known, God has inspired men to record here, such as we are to receive with a divine faith: and amongst things unknown, and incapable of being known, by means merely human, God has revealed some to his servants, and inspired them to record them, as thus revealed. Thus revealed and thus inspired, divine in its infinite sanctions, and divine in its infinite certainty, the word of God comes to us with the simple and sublime utterance—believe and live! A ground and a rule at once of absolute assurance and absolute completeness in all our beliefs and all our obedience, bestowed on us by God. All that we knew, and all that of ourselves we could know, touching our duty and our destiny, has been set before us in a new and a clear light, and with divine authority; while that which, of ourselves, we never could have known, is communicated to us by God, as to its matter with divine authority, and as to its manner with divine certainty. Those ultimate truths upon which all our duties rest—many of which as applicable to our fallen condition we had never known, and many others, in our blindness and perverseness, had greatly obscured—are cleared up with a light from heaven itself; and then between every one and all the duties which flow from it, the authority of God is interposed—thus doubly confirming, establishing, and enforcing all.

6. Upon the supposition that men are not naturally corrupt, averse to what is spiritually good, and incredulous of what is spiritually true, it is not possible to conceive that they should avoid the immediate recognition and joyful reception of such a

communication from God. Yet we see that they everywhere resist, evade, pervert and reject it. It is needful incessantly, not only to instruct them in the faith it reveals, and the duties it enforces—and to recall their forgetful thoughts to the hopes it inspires and the ruin it denounces; but even to array before them the proofs that a message has reached them from above. Of this last description is the particular duty required of me, at this time; and all these preliminary statements, are designed to open the way, and advance us upon a clear and firm position, for its discharge. The question assigned to me, in the programme of this course of lectures, involves a most important and difficult portion of the proofs to which I have just alluded. What is the nature and amount of the evidence afforded us, entirely or mainly, by the Bible itself, that it is the Word of God, in the sense of all the statements I have hitherto made? In what manner can we deduce this grand conclusion from considerations drawn from the contemplation of the contents of the Bible, considered absolutely—or considered relatively to all we know of God, of the universe, and of ourselves? What, in short, is the general nature of that proof for the divine authority of the Scriptures, commonly, though somewhat vaguely called, the internal evidence? In treating this great point I shall omit many things which will be found in most publications which expressly discuss the subject; insert some, which, as far as I know, have been generally overlooked; and distribute the whole in such an order, as appears to me to give to each separate consideration its just weight—and to the whole, taken together, the force of a connected argument. Of course, nothing can be amplified in such a performance as this; and the whole can be considered only an outline—which ought to be complete, so far as its own general conception extends, but every part of which is capable of indefinite expansion and illustration.

## II.

1. They tell us, on the threshold, that it is not competent for us to prove that God has spoken to us—much less to prove this by any considerations connected with the message itself—until we have first proved that God exists; and, moreover, that we must prove this latter point, not only previously to, but independently of, the former. I could have wished that a separate lecture on the

being and attributes of God had formed a part of this course ; not only as by this means greater completeness would have been given to the whole ; but especially because, in our day, there is a growing infidelity, much of which wickedly baptizes itself into the name of Christ, the fundamental error of which attacks the separate, personal existence of God. As there is none, I may the more properly clear this particular objection—though avoiding, as I needs must, the general argument. To that end, suppose I were to make the same challenge to an argument designed to prove from the work of creation, that the universe has a divine author : and demand that the existence of God, be first and independently proved—before any one shall attempt to prove, that all created things are his handy-work ? Suppose, again, I should interpose a similar challenge, to an argument purporting to prove the existence of God, as the ruler of the universe—or the judge and final rewarder of men, or their merciful benefactor—either from considerations drawn from the general order of nature, or the universal course of providence, or the adaptation of man to the universe ? Is it not obvious that the objection applies in the same manner, and nearly to the same extent, in one case as in another ? They first deny that we can prove the existence of God by any argument, *a priori*. Independently of that, there is his work within us ; and this also they deny. Independently of these two, there is no way in which we can know anything of God, except by the external manifestations he makes of himself. If he had made but one kind of external manifestation of himself—that would be a way, whether of works, or providence, or word, to know him : but if he makes many external manifestations of himself, each is a way as real as any other, and to those capable of comprehending it, as conclusive, both that he is, and what he is. It might just as well be said that the course of providence affords no proof of the being of God, but only an elucidation of his character, after his being had been previously and independently proved. And the same thing might be said of the works of God. We have no more idea—perhaps not so much—how God ought to make a world, or how he ought to govern it—than how he ought to speak to it. In this case, therefore, the word of God may be as real and as legitimate a source of proof of his existence, as either his works or his providence can be : since it is just as certain that if God has spoken, there is a God, as it is that if God creates, or God rules, there is a God :

and it cannot be pretended that it is more difficult to deduce anything whatever concerning God, from a full revelation of himself by words, than by works, or by providence. It is very manifest that a demand that we shall prove the existence of God, previous to and independent of any particular manifestation of himself—might be made with equal propriety of every successive and every conceivable manifestation of himself: the end of which is, that in proving God's existence, we must be deprived of all the manifestations of that existence—that is, in effect, of all the sources of knowledge of his existence—until the existence itself is first proved. This is a round-about, and very silly way to atheism. For let it be considered, that so far as we are concerned, it is the very same thing to say, there is no God at all, as to say God has made no manifestation of himself to us. And again, upon the supposition of our own intelligent existence, which cannot well be denied, it is impossible for us to conceive, that God should not manifest himself to us, if he exists at all: since we know nothing more certainly than that activity is an attribute of all existence that rises above the condition of inert matter; and that it becomes more intense, more exalted, and more comprehensive, with the increasing dignity and power of the existence itself: so that the non-manifestation, to intelligent existences, of an infinite, almighty, and all-pervading activity, is an inconceivable absurdity. And still further, upon the supposition of our having any certain knowledge of anything whatever, which cannot well be denied; the probability at once becomes violent in favor of the existence, and by consequence the manifestation of God. For the most certain thing known to us, is that we do not individually occupy the entire universe—and that exterior to ourselves, there is much beside, and independent of us. It is impossible, in the nature of the case, for us to know, that in that universe exterior to us, one of the things may not be God: so that the non-existence of God is a proposition, which, even if it were true, is wholly incapable of being proved. In such a state of the question—even supposing the probabilities to be capable of being exactly balanced—when considered *a priori*, which is by no means the case—the very slightest presumption which could arise in favor of that which may be proved, at once inclines the scale against that which in its own nature cannot be proved. And, therefore, as there is an utter impossibility of proving the non-existence of God, and very many methods of rendering the fact

of his existence probable, there would, in the case supposed, arise immediately the violent probability already stated. For the purposes of the present argument, therefore, there is manifestly no such necessity, as that which is so constantly urged by infidels, and so generally conceded by Christians: a demand on one side and a concession on the other, equally absurd, and in their result atheistical. For us, let it be supposed, there is a God:—then the question would be, is this his word? Or let it be supposed, for the moment, undetermined whether there is a God or not:—then the question would be in such a position that any proof that this is the word of a God, would in like manner prove that there must be a God. Either way, the question remains the same—do these Scriptures commend themselves to us as a revelation from an infinite, eternal, and unchangeable being? If they do not, there may still be such a being. If they do, there must, of necessity, so far as we are concerned, be such a being.

2. Upon the supposition that there is any God at all, there is no antecedent improbability that he would make a revelation of himself to his rational creatures. On the contrary, as every manifestation of himself is in some sort a revelation of himself, and it has already been shown that it is inconceivable that he and intelligent creatures should exist together without his making manifestations of himself to them; the question would naturally be, rather as to the manner and extent, than the fact of a divine revelation, taking the word in its largest sense. In that sense natural religion, as it is conceived of even by those who reject revealed religion, is an exalted revelation of God. But when we consider the weakness and blindness of our faculties, and the deadness of our moral perceptions, in our present condition, estimating that condition alike by the general history of our race, and the inward experience of each individual person; it is, perhaps, more rational to conclude that the great truths and the profound ideas with which natural religion furnishes us, are more probably the grand outlines which the race has preserved of an outward and primeval revelation, than the discoveries we have made of God, in any subordinate manner, by means of any other kind of manifestation of himself. If to this we add the extraordinary depth and power of our religious nature, even in its most perverted state—and the longing after God,—even false gods—which constitutes the most distinctive peculiarity of man; we cannot easily suppose that great violence is done to the character of God by presuming that

just in such a state of case, there is an infinite probability that he both could and would speak words of instruction, and warning, and comfort to his children—erring, and yet striving to know him. Moreover, we are to remember, that even upon the supposition of atheism, we are not delivered from the violent probability of existing in a future state, and the certainty that so existing we may be eternally degraded and miserable. For atheism being supposed, it is nevertheless certain that we exist here—though no God exists; and it is equally certain, that our race, taken as a whole, is both degraded and miserable—we ourselves being judges. It is, therefore, not only impossible to show that we will not exist hereafter, but it is infinitely probable that we shall—whether there is any God or not; and it is, also, absolutely certain, that so existing, we may be eternally undone. Seeing all this to be so—if we will now suppose that there is a God—an immense probability immediately arises, that he cannot look with indifference upon such a posture of affairs. If we pass into the domain of the great truths of natural religion, the presumption becomes overpowering. And after we have possessed ourselves of such ideas of God, of ourselves, and of all things relating both to him and to ourselves, as the Bible delivers to us—it being, for this argument, perfectly immaterial where the Bible got those ideas; the human mind cannot well resist the conviction, that such a God, in such a contingency, will interpose effectually. I presume, it will hardly be denied, that a perfect and permanent revelation is a possible, and might be an effectual mode of interposition. It is that mode which purports to have been adopted: it is that which—to say no more, the human mind has rested on—as not only probable, but actual. From that point of view, this is the highest testimony which is capable of being given. It is the testimony of human reason—I may add of human nature—to the antecedent probability of a divine revelation.

3. Let us approach more nearly to this wondrous book, and observe in a somewhat general way what its effects upon the human race have been, and what it is in itself. It has made the circuit of the world. Human society, in every stage of development, under every form of administration, and composed of every race of men, has been exhibited to us, with and without the knowledge which this book imparts, with and without the influence it exerts. The results which have been reached on the one hand and on the other, involve the entire mass of human experi-

ence. From the depths of an unknown antiquity its strange accents become audible to man ; and along the entire course of all the generations as they pass, those accents have never been hushed. As an element in the destiny of man, nothing else is more capable of being estimated. Undeniably the influence it has exerted has been immense, and most beneficent. Undeniably that influence has been immense and beneficent, in proportion as it has been simple, absolute and undisturbed. The institutions of Moses have more deeply impressed the human race, than all other institutions except those of Christ ; and the doctrine and precepts which Moses as the servant, and Christ as the Son of God, have delivered to men, are beyond all doubt the most efficacious and the most benign inheritance which man has received. Peace and freedom, and knowledge and civilization, have flourished the most under the shadow of those institutions ; and all that is true, and beautiful, and good has sprung up the most profusely with that doctrine and those precepts. This day, after a struggle so protracted and so vehement—if we will estimate the results of so many centuries and so many conflicts, in their broadest aspect, we shall behold these marvellous oracles sustaining and adorning every institution and every attainment that blesses the earth most richly ; we shall find them affording the chief solace to man under all that crushes and degrades him ; and we shall see them utterly banished or utterly perverted, only where man has lost all hope, or is struggling with despair. This is the great conclusion ; and it is one which cannot be overlooked in any discussion of the origin and authority of this book. But if we will consider more particularly certain remarkable details, the light thrown upon the present argument will appear only the more surprising. As, one by one, the portions of this volume were bestowed upon man, each in its turn was efficacious to produce the particular effect intended by it ;—and then capable, also, of entering into the general mass that went before or that followed after, and of uniting with it in the production of new and more general effects ; and this process, everywhere else unprecedented, was enacted very many times, through very many centuries. Again, as each part was added, the clearness, the abundance, and the overwhelming force of the external evidence, with which it was marshalled in its progress from heaven, bore a remarkable proportion to the amount of the lively oracles already existing ; that evidence being immense in proportion as the portions of the Bible existing were few, and

gradually diminishing as the portions gradually accumulated; until the whole was complete, and extraordinary manifestations of God almost ceased with the last revelation from God. More than that, they who received these communications from God, with simple faith, as they were successively bestowed on them, found the smallest portions of them sufficient as a means of grace and salvation, while no more existed for them: but when the whole had been completed, and the very uttermost part had been bestowed on them, who had received all the rest, and had found the smallest part sufficient—that glorious whole, became forthwith a sealed book in the matter of grace and salvation to those who rejected and crucified the giver of it all! Thus in the very mode of its production we are warned, that these very internal evidences which we seek, are for us, the grand and enduring proof; and that there is a power connected in some mysterious manner with the oracle itself, which being found gives vitality to all, or being lost leaves behind only such influences as belong to the truth of itself.

4. As we enter somewhat more into the contents of the Scriptures, seeking for proof of their origin, we are struck at once with the miraculous character of the pretensions everywhere set up throughout the whole volume, and the multiplied forms in which a divine power is claimed to be exercised. There is one aspect in which this whole department of proof constitutes the subject of another lecture. The reality of the working of miracles, as a fact historically proved, together with the significance of that fact, and its conclusive value in establishing the divine mission of those who performed them, and by consequence, the divine truth of their message. All that falls into another discourse. But there is another aspect of the subject which appertains to this argument. Upon the supposition, that a divine revelation is made, the most obvious proof of the divine mission of him who makes it is, that he should work miracles; as, indeed, the Scripture declares that “signs and wonders and mighty deeds” are the appropriate evidence of a messenger from God. Now what we have to notice is, how from the beginning, this great necessity is silently accepted by the writers of holy Scripture—and how abounding is the proof thus furnished by them, that, of a truth, God was with them—with them, too, in this divine plenitude, not merely as using this miraculous power as a general proof, but in the very method of its use, illustrating as well the nature and object as the reality

of their mission. So remarkable and so comprehensive is this miraculous method, that every attribute of God, and every one of his revealed purposes, and multitudes of the most precious truths taught to us, might be set in a clear light, and distinctly enforced by the miracles recorded in his holy word; so that besides their value as divine interpositions for a collateral but fundamental end, they constitute besides, a full revelation of himself. And again, a careful consideration will show, that all the miracles recorded in the Scriptures have a general bearing upon the great scope of the Scriptures themselves, and are in unison with the grand conception running through them all. They are all miracles subordinate to one stupendous miracle, most glorious of all—the miracle of God incarnate to save sinners! And in this manner they constitute a divine and perpetual commentary upon the plan of salvation. Now upon the supposition of no God, and by consequence no revelation, I would fain know how these glorious ideas, in this exalted concatenation, and marvellous fulness and familiarity, get into the minds of these particular men, and no other men in the universe? And upon the supposition of a God, and an attempt to test the claims of a supposed revelation upon its own subject matter, I would fain know how such things are possible to a succession of minds left to their ordinary operations?

5. Next, perhaps, to what has just been suggested, the most obvious peculiarity of the Bible is the confident claim of its writers to the possession of prophetic knowledge. This subject, in the fundamental nature of it, constitutes, like the subject of miracles, the field of a separate lecture in this course; that is, the demonstration of the fact, that the Scriptures abound with true prophecies, and the illustration and significance and value of that fact, in establishing their divine origin. In their most general bearing even, the argument from miracles, and that from prophecy, belong to the general subject of internal evidence; but their full and separate treatment, precludes the propriety in relation to the latter, as I have before stated in regard to the former, of anything more than an incidental notice here. Considered in this manner, the whole subject of prophecy as it presents itself throughout the Scriptures, and as it is interwoven with almost every portion of them, gives to them a character most striking and exalted. As it is impossible for us to conceive how the future can develop itself before our unaided faculties in a manner similar to that in which the past is present to our minds; so it is

equally inconceivable how we could entirely conceal the past as the whole future is concealed, so as to exhibit the same ignorance of all we do know, as of all we do not know. But the cognitions of God, as to all the future and all the past, are precisely of the same nature. And, therefore, while that fact establishes his omniscience, and by consequence his Godhead, it renders it inconceivable to us, that he should converse freely and familiarly with us, and not exhibit, in general, the same familiarity with all the future, as with all the past. As far as we can comprehend, this is one of the exigencies of an extended revelation from God—one of its absolute conditions. And we find the writers of the Bible accepting in its fulness this controlling truth; and the inherent power of it is exhibited throughout its pages. Not to insist only on their express prophecies, of which the number is so great, and the character so remarkable, all that they say, and all that they do, is said and done as fully in the sense of what is to come as in the sense of what is already gone. It is to be observed, at the same time, that all this sublime familiarity with all that is in profound darkness to the most exalted human intelligence, is exhibited in such a manner as neither to take away the contingency of second causes, nor to interfere with the freedom of human actions, nor to put it in the power of devils or wicked men to defeat what is declared beforehand, nor to diminish the grounds or the necessity of a perpetual faith on the part of the children of God. And we must add, that the whole compass of this prophetic intelligence, which pervades the Scriptures, whether it manifests itself in direct predictions, or whether it animates the types, and symbols, and ceremonies, or whether it impregnates the general current of the divine word, all terminates in the same ruling conception and all struggles towards the same infinite object. Salvation for lost sinners, and the person, the work, and the glory of their divine Redeemer—these are the ideas which control all the rest. Surely, in the general compass and intimate structure of the Scriptures, considered from this point of view, there is a depth of knowledge of that which man knows not, and there is an awful skill in the manner of its use, and there is, at once, an infinite breadth and an intense concentration of superhuman conceptions to a superhuman end, the whole of which is utterly beyond anything of which we feel ourselves to be capable. It is the high and fair, as well as the irresistible conclusion of human reason, that this is not our work.

6. There is another and a distinct mode in which the vast intelligence which pervades the Bible is so manifested, that from the successive points reached by the human race, it may be subjected to an estimate more and more rigorous. What is here alluded to will be clearly perceived from this statement, namely, that the general tenor of the Bible, as well as all its special assertions, exactly accord with what the profoundest learning shows to be the actual state of the universe, as well as with what the deepest and largest experience establishes, as the actual course of nature. The sum of all human experience as to the results of all human conduct, may be found better expressed in many of the earliest portions of this book, than we are able to express them now, after so many additional centuries of progress and observation; and the results of all knowledge, in every department of our researches into the state of the universe, are assumed as already clear and known, thousands of years before our researches commenced. Whoever wrote this book, knew more than we know now on these mysterious subjects, and knew it distinctly, when we knew nothing. And they have used their surprising knowledge in such a manner, that we are only able to perceive they had it, as we ourselves gradually attain some insight into the same vast subjects; and they have uttered it in that form which seems to imply continually, and which indeed very often openly declares, that it is not their personal cognitions which they are uttering, but the intimations of a divine intelligence, the whole extent of which is not comprehended by themselves. All this is infinitely remarkable. And yet it will be most deeply felt to be true by those who are the most conversant with the progress of human knowledge, taken in its very widest sense. In the whole circle of the sciences, every department of human investigation, in its first stages, has been alleged to contain positive evidence of the mistakes or misstatements of the Bible; and the instances are not rare, in which this precocious rejoicing against the truth, has been met by unhappy attempts on the part of the friends of God's word, to make it accord with the false teachings of infidel and pretentious philosophy. In the end, when patient research had elicited the whole truth, and calm reason had reduced all the results to their true order and value, the ignorant infidel was found to have perverted nature, and the ignorant Christian to have misconstrued God; and without one single exception, the final and perfect conclusion has been to con-

firm and exalt the all-pervading intelligence of the written word ! How wild would be the scream of the infidel philosophers, if, from the whole sum of human experience, or the whole range of human investigation, they could extort one clear, established, and deliberate contradiction of these strange oracles, which have come down to us from the remotest, and, as they would have us believe, amongst the least enlightened ages !—Now it has been held that the adaptation of man to the universe in which he dwells, and of which he forms so small a part, is so exact and astonishing, as to afford a powerful argument for the being of God ; and this is conceded by most of those who reject the Scriptures. But it appears to me, that the same argument assumes its most powerful and comprehensive form, when it shows, as it easily can, that the adaptation of the Bible, in the general sense herein signified, both to man and to the universe, is far more precise and complete, than the adaptation of man and the universe to each other.

7. There is one more suggestion, founded upon the general consideration of the contents of the Bible, too important to be omitted. The fact that there is a divine superintendence over all human affairs, and that this superintendence is infinite in its power and moral in its character, is one of those universal beliefs of the human race, which, like the belief in the mere existence of God, seems almost as natural to man, as his physical, his rational, or his moral conformation. There is no great difficulty in deducing this belief in a clear and rational manner, as one of the necessary and ultimate truths, of what is called natural religion ; and this has been commonly done, even by those who had not the advantage of a divine revelation, or who rejected it. Now the suggestion here is this, namely, that the silent but sublime order, movement, and control of all things, which we observe, which we believe in, and which we call providence, perfectly accords, both as to its reality and its course, with the statements and the principles of the Word of God, in which its cause, its development and its end, are perfectly explained. The moral government of the world, as exhibited in the whole course of history, and as stated in the Scriptures, appears to be precisely identical. God's providence and his word set forth precisely the same system of things. Those eternal truths which underlie his providence, are fully expounded only in his word. Those principles of government which control the one, are explained in the

other. The same difficulties, the same exceptions, belong to both. The same remedies are resorted to in both. The same progress, the same development, occur in both. Now, however simple and universal may be the belief in this providence, it is only after long and large observation that we are able to deduce, from innumerable examples, scattered over many ages, and exhibiting the most multiplied conditions, the general laws which regulate its course. This is the real difficulty; and its solution involves the whole mass of human experience, and all the powers of human reason. In attempting this, we stand upon an elevation from which we look back upon the entire course of human events, and with the entire labors of the human mind poured out to aid us: and after all we succeed but doubtfully in our task. Then we turn to these oracles, and we find men in the earliest ages of the world—without any of those helps which constitute the greater part of our strength—uttering our profoundest conclusions, as simple verities, most familiar to them;—clearing up our doubts and difficulties, and correcting our errors, even without an effort; and explaining to us, not only the facts whose significance was often so obscure, and the nature of those laws whose very existence it had cost us so much to establish, but also the grand system and design, into which these facts and laws enter as means to an end. They look forward, thousands of years, and see most clearly, what we can only perceive most dimly, as we look back over the same track of time. And what they see so clearly, and we so dimly, are things, which so far as we can comprehend, we could not have seen at all, if we had been placed at the beginning, instead of the end, of those long ages, whose events are the very elements of all our conclusions. The only possible explanation seems to be the one which they constantly offer to us. Their miraculous power, their prophetic knowledge, their vast intelligence touching the condition of the universe, and now their profound acquaintance with the principles of its moral administration; all—all is divine. They spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. This explains all.

8. If we enter now somewhat more into particulars, we shall find this volume to consist of sixty-six separate books, one of which (the book of Psalms) contains no less than one hundred and fifty distinct compositions; and, probably, if we were to analyze the contents of the entire volume, we should find that it contains many hundreds of perfectly distinct and separate treatises,

having no other connection with each other than that they treat of the same general matters, or were composed by the same persons. These various compositions occupied a period of fifteen or sixteen centuries in their production; and profess to cover, historically and prophetically, the whole period of man's existence upon this earth. They embrace every kind of writing, every sort of information, and every imaginable subject. History, government, laws, institutions, manners, customs, opinions, education, morals, religion, philosophy, discourses of every description, poetry in all its departments, biography, epistolary correspondence, everything from the most familiar discourse up to the most abstract and sublime meditations; the whole circle of the sciences furnishes nothing that is not alluded to—the utmost compass of human society and human interests exhibits nothing that is not in some way brought to notice, and every aspect under which human nature has ever presented itself is distinctly stated and considered. The principal persons who were engaged in the composition of these various treatises, may, perhaps, be stated at about thirty; but the number would be greatly increased by adding all who produced portions embraced now under more general divisions. These authors were from every rank in life. Dictators, kings, rulers in a free commonwealth, judges, magistrates, lawgivers, generals, priests, private citizens, scholars, artisans, farmers, shepherds, soldiers, fishermen, tax-gatherers; and they appear to have been persons of every sort of temperament from the most gentle to the most perverse, and of every sort of endowment from the most exalted to the most unpretending, and of every time of life from earliest manhood to extreme old age, and of every grade of attainment from unlettered simplicity to boundless knowledge, and of every condition from the deepest wretchedness up to the most consummate human felicity. Yet all these men, through all these centuries, treating of all these subjects, so wrote, that although they have been subjected to the fiercest scrutiny during more than seventeen centuries since the last of them died, it has been found impossible to detect the smallest solecism in the entire productions of all of them put together, or the smallest discrepancy of fact, of principle, or even of opinion of any one of them from any other throughout their voluminous writings. Every one agrees in all things with every one of the rest. Still more, every one agrees with all that has since been discovered of the condition of the universe, of the course of nature, and of the order of Providence.

And further still, every one seems to have been endowed with those sublime gifts, that awful intelligence, and that superhuman insight, which are fully expressed by saying they were inspired, and which are utterly incomprehensible if they were not. It may be said without hesitation, that if any one of the more extended treatises which compose the Bible, had existed alone, and had not claimed to be divine, it would have immortalized any age or race that produced it. And it is absolutely certain, that if the whole were now totally lost, the whole human family combined could not reproduce it if left to themselves.

9. Taking another step towards the interior of our subject, we find upon every attempt to make ourselves acquainted with the contents of the Bible, a deeper and deeper impression that it is wholly different from all other books. If we peruse any portion of it, in connection with any portion of any other book, we are struck with something about it, though we may not be exactly aware what it is, which places it so entirely by itself, that no part of it can be incorporated with any other book, nor can any part of any other book be incorporated with it, without our being able, instantly, to perceive the vast difference. The more we enlarge the compass of this impression, and endeavor to take in the whole spirit which pervades the Bible, in like manner as a general spirit pervades every other book; the more fixed becomes our conviction, that this is immeasurably different from everything else. All this difference is on the side of the Bible; it is a difference which exalts while it isolates it. There is a gravity, a concentration, a weight in all its utterances, and at the same time a solemnity, an earnestness, and a pathos; a profound manifestation, that he who speaks has a transcendent right to be heard, and that he who hearkens has an immense interest in giving heed; a way of putting everything, a significance in everything that is put, a power pervading the whole; and as the result of all, an impression upon us, wholly different from that produced by anything else; and which the deeper and more habitual it becomes, is the more favorable to it, and, in all respects, the more beneficial to ourselves. It is in the nature of a kind of general testimony of the human soul, vague, perhaps, and instinctive, of its recognition of the felt presence of a divine intelligence, not fully comprehended, but yet really perceived. As we advance from this wide view to a more intimate, yet still general consideration, no matter where we begin or what we take up, the former impression is not only sus

tained, but deepened. If we will carefully examine the ceremonial system of the ancient dispensation, which, perhaps, of all parts of the Bible men might be inclined to consider the most barren for us; we shall find a monument of skill and power, which, considered as a mere human device, is wholly inexplicable. If we will consider the book of Psalms, what infidel critics tell us it is, namely, only a compilation of the religious odes of a rude people; it becomes at once an incomprehensible marvel how such a people, using so narrow a speech, and in compositions so evanescent, should have succeeded in combining the expression of the most abstract and exalted truths with the whole range of our religious emotions, in a manner which all the rest of mankind, before and since, have been unable to approach. If we will study what we call the Ten Commandments, and reflect that the very earliest lawgiver of our race, in the very dawn of knowledge, has succeeded in reducing to four general propositions the summary of all our duty to God, and to six others the summary of all our duty to each other; and that he has done this in such a manner that both the temporal and spiritual interests of mankind, from his day to ours, may be exactly measured by their adherence to, or their rejection of his simple and sublime definitions (not only, —but so as, in fact,) in some sort to exhaust the two most difficult parts of knowledge, namely, that which teaches us the practical direction of our own conduct and that which regulates the public administration of human society;—we shall perhaps not err very much if we believe his explicit declaration, that it was not he, but God, who made this summary. And if, passing from the Old Testament into the New, we study deeply the central object of that whole book—Jesus of Nazareth—and get an adequate idea of his person, his character, and his work as set forth throughout all the Scriptures; I do not see but that it is far more rational to admit, with all the writers of the book, that the entire conception they all had of the Son of God, was divinely communicated to them, than to suppose that any one of them could have originated and developed such a conception, much less that all of them could have wrought upon that glorious composition, each in a manner working out what the rest had left unfinished, and that the perfect work should have been what we now behold it. The entire idea of Jesus of Nazareth, taken as a whole, is as much superhuman as the alleged manner of his birth; and the working out of that idea is as miraculous as the incarnation. The subject matter of his

instructions, too, is as great a wonder as the mighty signs with which he enforced them. Considering Christ as a mere man, and remembering who and what he was as such—the Lord's Prayer as a model of all devotion, and the sermon on the mount as a model of all discourse, both uttered like all his instructions, off-hand, and as the occasion arose, are infinitely more difficult of satisfactory explanation than any alleged interposition of God, in the manner, and for the ends stated in the Scriptures. And the very manner of his instruction has in it that which, as much by its unapproachable difficulties as by its amazing power, stamps it as superhuman. Let any man attempt to speak in parables; nay, to produce one single parable; nay, to find one, out of the Bible, in the whole compass of human literature; nay, to compare what are so called, in other parts of the Bible, few as they are even there, with those uttered habitually, incessantly, by Christ. Those great, simple, luminous, and yet wholly inimitable expositions, not of duties merely, or mainly even, but of fundamental, and most generally of before unknown or unregarded truths, whose habitual use constituted the distinctive peculiarity of Christ's manner, and was felt by those around him to impart to it a character and a power altogether divine. Well and truly might they say, "Never man spake like this man." Clear and faithful was that testimony, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

10. The writers of this volume contemplated from another point of view, are worthy of a most careful study. They furnish, in their own persons, not only the first, but the most faithfully developed examples, of what the system they have given to us really is, and what it can do. As this is true of the whole of them, we may illustrate the point by the example of that class of them, which is the latest, and perhaps the most familiar to us—the Apostles of the Lord Jesus. Now it is needless to urge that these men must have sincerely believed all they have told us, to be true, and must have been thoroughly in earnest in all they did: because all this if not unmistakably certain of itself, is, at least, not often questioned. What I insist on is, not only that it is infinitely more rational to receive the whole matter precisely as they state it, than to suppose they might have been under the influence of some strange delusion; but that, taking human nature as it is, there is an utter impossibility that the state of case exhibited by them, ever should have occurred or been so ex-

hibited, except upon the supposition that their statements are absolutely true; while, on the other hand, supposing them to be true, everything is not only fully accounted for, but natural, and in a manner inevitable. It is as inconsistent with the operations of the human mind and the exercises of the human soul, that a deluded person should speak and act as they have done, as it is that an open impostor should have done so. The manner in which a man who believes he is under a divine influence—but really is not—speaks and acts, is as radically different from that in which one speaks and acts, who really is under such an influence, as the manner of one is who merely pretends to speak and act as taught of God. Delusion is as distinct from reality as imposture is; and to deny this, is not only to outrage our own intimate perception of truth, and unsettle the foundations of knowledge, but is, in fact, to render atheism the only refuge from superstition. On the other hand, the possibility of a divine influence upon the mind and heart of man, is just as supposable as the possibility of a divine influence upon his body, or upon any other part of the physical universe; and the reality of its occurrence is as capable of being established, by its own distinctive proofs, in the one case as in the other; and the supposition of its presence will explain and establish, or will confute and overthrow, an alleged state of facts in the one case as completely as in the other; for in point of ultimate truth we know no more about the nature of matter than of spirit, nor any more of God's fundamental action—whether direct or indirect—with the former than with the latter. Taking the whole case precisely as it stands, the simple verity of the alleged facts, in the case of any one of the Apostles, is the only supposition that does not leave the whole subject in appalling darkness; and, when we add, one after another, all the individual cases distinctly recorded and explained in the Scriptures as illustrating the nature and operation of the religious system therein revealed, any other supposition becomes transcendently absurd. A succession of impostors, or a succession of fanatics could neither be, nor do, nor say, after the manner set forth in the Bible. The inward experience which those writers develop, was beyond being feigned, nay, even beyond being imagined; so that its bare statement verifies its actual occurrence. The manner of its occurrence, as stated by themselves, is the only comprehensible mode in which it could have occurred, and is fully sufficient to account for it. The truth

which regulated and sustained those wondrous exercises, was wholly beyond the bounds of merely human knowledge, and is moreover, of itself, when known, wholly incompetent to produce such results; so that its revelation to them, and its being attended by the power of God, constitute the very heart of the case. And their own conduct, both before and after God's alleged dealings with them in a way of enlightening, regenerating and inspiring them, together with all the other outward facts of the whole case, as made in the Bible, constitute one perpetual and illustrious commentary on the divine truth revealed, the divine Spirit revealing it, and the divine Saviour therein revealed. The purest and wisest of mankind have sighed for the feeblest rays of that light, which these impostors or fanatics poured forth so gloriously; and which they used, in their mad profusion, only to establish a system, for which, in this world, they suffered the loss of all things, and which reveals for the world to come, nothing more certainly, than that all their delusions will be extinguished in endless night, and all their impostures be visited with the curse of God! It is easier for an enlightened mind to reject the system of the universe explained to us by philosophers, and to believe, that its great laws so painfully discovered by them are only preconceptions of their own minds, and its sublime order and power so clearly illustrated by those laws, nothing more than grand exhibitions of some of the possibilities of things; than for a renewed heart to reject the system of divine grace, of which the Apostles of the Lord are the greatest and last inspired teachers, and to believe that the clear and precious truth they have revealed, is not real in itself, divine in its origin, and infinite in its eternal sanctions.

11. We may now consider the contents of the Bible in a more systematic manner—especially as they explain the actual condition of our race, as they account for it, and as they propose a remedy for it. They declare our present estate to be one both of sin and misery; an estate of alienation from God and rebellion against him, in which we lie under his wrath and curse. They add, that the danger of our condition is equal to its corruption and its wretchedness, and reveal in the clearest manner a future and endless state of being, in which we are exposed to infinite woe. According to their teachings, sin is the original cause of all suffering and sorrow; and it is of its very nature to become more and more aggravated continually, and therefore to produce

greater and greater misery forever ; and it is of the very nature of God to hate and to punish all sin, precisely in proportion to its demerits—that is, in a manner infinitely just. But remarkable as all this account is, two particulars are added, if possible more remarkable still. The first is, that this was not the original condition of our race, but that we were created at first in the image of God and enjoyed his favor ; a glorious and blessed condition which was forfeited and lost by sin. The second is, that God in his infinite mercy has provided for us a complete salvation from sin and misery, both in this world and the next, and that it is the object of the Scriptures to bring to light the life and immortality offered to us in this new form. In one word, we have lost the image of God in which we were created ; we must recover it, or perish ; here is a perfect mode of recovery, revealed from heaven. I repeat that all this is infinitely remarkable. There is no part of it whose bare conception can be accounted for so naturally—if indeed at all—as by admitting its simple verity ; no part of it within the reach of our knowledge, which the mere statement of would not show to be false, if indeed it was false. But, perhaps, the most remarkable part of the whole case is that the moment these wonderful declarations are made known to us, we perceive in the facts they contain a perfect explanation of the profoundest movements of our own inner life, and a complete solution of all the moral phenomena exhibited by our race. So far as the range of our personal knowledge extends, we see ourselves and all men to be precisely in the condition which the Scriptures describe ; yet neither they nor we comprehended exactly what that condition was, until the depths of our own natures were thus explored for us. And beyond the range of our absolute knowledge, both in the dim past and the unknown future, these revelations of our origin and destiny, these solemn accounts of our fall and recovery, come to us in a way which accords with our deepest instincts, our saddest experience, our profoundest necessities, our most exalted aspirations, and our most ardent hopes. We desire to be happy, and yet are miserable. We see the excellence and the beauty of goodness, and yet live in sin. We feel that we were once better off ; not always as we now are ; not willing to be so forever. Even while we love and practice what is evil, we feel that our sins are a burden and our pollution a shame unto us. The ruins of a better nature are still visible in the wreck which we have become, and the germ of a new and glorious life seems still

to exist amidst the death which reigns within us. Though we shun and dread God, we sigh as we think of his lost image. Weak, and blind, and impotent, and perverse, and corrupt as we are, there still lingers in us a sense of God's infinite excellence and God's infinite love. Now I am not pretending to argue how much of this, or any of it, is in us in a state of nature wholly destitute of all knowledge of a divine revelation; but I am arguing that the revelation we have received, finds or makes these impressions within us, to this argument it is wholly immaterial which, and that they furnish the highest and most conclusive evidence of which the case admits, that the revealed facts to which they are so strangely responsive, are true. If they are true, there is an end of the argument; for it is demonstrably certain their discovery and statement must have been superhuman. And now we must observe how absolute and crushing the proof becomes, upon the admission that any one single human soul was ever restored, truly and actually, to the lost image of God, according to that general system revealed in the Bible, and which purports to be able thus to restore all souls. We must absolutely deny that one single case ever occurred; or we must absolutely admit the divine origin of the Scriptures. One single well-defined footprint, on the strand of a desolate continent, might prove that a man had been there, as conclusively as if all the other men in the world were to testify that they saw him there. Nay, how fierce would be the infidel joy and triumph, if the smallest fragment of a human skeleton could be discovered in one of those strata of the earth's crust, which geologists choose to call pre-Adamite?

12. We may penetrate still more deeply into our own nature, and into the remedy proposed for its recovery, in order to perceive the special relevancy, as we have already seen the general agreement, of the one to the other. The Scriptures do not intimate that God proposes to create absolutely, and for the first time, a religious nature in us. On the other hand, the deepest, the most enduring, and the most pervading part of man's nature, even in his fallen state, is the religious part of it. He will do without everything, sooner than without a religion; his religious capabilities can be more exalted and more perverted than all his other capabilities combined; and his whole history is more impressed and controlled by the development of religious ideas than all others united. A sense of our dependence and of our accountability, is

the deepest and the most universal moral sentiment that finds lodgment in the soul of man. Our capacity to perceive that there exists in things, that distinction which we express by saying some are true and some are false, is the foundation of our rational nature and of our ability to obtain knowledge; while our capacity to perceive that there exists in things that further distinction which we express by saying that some are good and some are bad, is the foundation of our moral nature, and of our ability to obtain happiness. Truth, which it is natural to man to perceive, to seek, and to love, is our only guide and rule, in the one case and in the other. In our fallen state, we do not lose our capacity to perceive that such distinctions really exist, for then we should be no longer either rational or moral creatures; but what we lose is the capacity to perceive with clearness and certainty what particular things are true, and to choose with constancy and fervor the particular things that are good; and this by reason of our rational and moral nature, and especially the latter, having become depraved. Now the whole plan of recovery revealed in the Scriptures, assumes as existing in man, this precise state of case, and addresses itself to it. This is our present spiritual condition as clearly exhibited by our researches into our own souls, and by our observation of all other human beings; and this is the condition which the Bible explicitly declares to be that for which it has revealed a perfect remedy. To regenerate this fallen and depraved nature, is its great design. Its grand, central idea is a divine Saviour, redeeming a race of rational, moral, dependent, accountable, and alas! fallen and depraved creatures. It declares our dependence, and points us to our creator and benefactor. It proclaims our accountability, and reveals to us our eternal lawgiver and judge. It recognizes our rational faculties, and addresses to them ten thousand arguments, ten thousand proofs. It exalts our moral capabilities and spreads before us every good and pure and glorious thing that heaven itself can furnish, and every fearful evil that even hell unfolds. It declares with intense precision all the greatness, and the guiltiness of our sins, and sets before us in the divine Word, a perfect rule, at once, of our duty and our condemnation. And then, in the infinite grace of God, and his infinite compassion for creatures at once so ruined, so depraved, and so helpless, and yet so capacious of his exalted service and his eternal enjoyment, he crowns all by the unspeakable gift of his only-begotten Son.

The grand problem of the universe, the awful paradox of the Scriptures themselves, God's hatred of sin and God's love for sinners, is solved on Calvary! And men can comprehend all this, and all that is involved in it, and believe that God is not in it all?

13. The exact manner in which the Bible proposes to accomplish our salvation, to apply the remedy it reveals for our recovery, personally to men, is the next point to which the argument conducts us, in its inward movement. The general proposition of the Scriptures is, that man is in a fallen and ruined condition, by reason of the introduction of sin into the world: the particular mode of his ruin is, that he has lost the image of God in which he was created, and incurred all the effects and consequences of that loss. The most general statement of the remedy proposed is, that he must be restored to the lost image of God. In a more particular manner it is set forth, that the infinite beneficence of God, is the particular attribute of his nature that prompts the whole divine movement to save sinners, and that essentially pervades it all. The eternal love of God the Father, is at the basis of our personal salvation. The incarnation, obedience and sacrifice of the Son, are the practical outworking of that divine love. The Holy Ghost, in his entire work upon our hearts, accomplishes in us the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and complete redemption proclaimed in the Scriptures. Those Scriptures are the efficacious instrumentality used by the Holy Ghost in the entire work wrought in us. Summarily, this is the mode of recovery, both in itself, and in its application to us, which these Scriptures proclaim to be divine in its origin and its efficacy. Assuredly it is a remedy which involves in it, and which makes full account of, the nature of man as we know it to be, and the nature of God as the Bible reveals that nature to us. As far as we can comprehend, we are out of the reach of any remedy, except one which shall act upon our rational and moral nature, by means of truth. And yet there is no truth known to us, except in the Bible, that has any tendency even, to recover us; and the truth there made known to us, cannot do it, except as it is connected with the love of the Father, the sacrifice of the Son, and the work of the Spirit. This truth, and no other, can do it: and this can do it, precisely in the relations pointed out in the Bible, and not otherwise. And those relations involve not only God's purpose, and the mode of accomplishing it, namely, the exercise of his infinite beneficence and that through the particular

plan of salvation revealed: but also, the very mode in which God exists, in an ineffable union of three persons, in one divine essence, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost uniting in the infinite grace which saves sinners, and in the work whereby that is effected. Concerning this remedy and the mode of its application, the Scriptures add two associated, but very distinct propositions, upon both of which they continually insist. The first is, that this is a true, an efficacious, and a divine method of restoring fallen and depraved men to the lost image of God. The second is, that there is no other method of doing this, that is either true, efficacious, or divine. And upon these two propositions they appeal to the universal experience of the human race. And we accept the appeal, and hesitate not to pronounce it absolutely conclusive and overwhelming. Whoever rejects this mode of recovery, no matter what other mode he may substitute, proves the universal truth of the second proposition, to wit, that there is no other effectual mode; for he does not recover the lost image of God, but remains in the pollution, and under the curse of sin. Nothing concerning the human race is more indubitable, than that a pure heart and a pure life are not natural to man, and are not attainable by any method ever attempted except that revealed in the Word of God. On the other hand, whoever accepts the mode of recovery pointed out in that Word, establishes the universal truth of the first proposition, to wit, that this is an effectual mode, for whoever is born again, is restored to the lost image of God, and is pure in heart and life, precisely in proportion to the simplicity and the fervor of his faith in Christ Jesus. And this also, is the sum of all human testimony that bears upon the point: the sum of all outward testimony to the lives of Christ's true followers; the sum of all the inward testimony of their own hearts. Untedly, the proof covers the whole of human experience, and establishes—if that experience can establish anything at all—that sinners must perish without the Bible, but that, by means of it, they may be saved. Unless, therefore, men are both lost and saved, whether God will or not, which it is mere folly as well as blasphemy to suppose; the Bible must be attended with divine efficiency and divine authority.

14. Let us carry this a little deeper. The light which reveals all things else, also makes itself manifest. He who is blind, neither sees the light, nor that which the light reveals. But if there were in the light a power to restore sight to the blind, or if

it could be so used as to produce that effect, the blind thus restored, could then know that there was light before he saw it, and that it revealed to such as had sight all that he now beholds. Surely the Scriptures teach with sufficient plainness the moral blindness of men in their natural state; and just as plainly their ability to see light in the light of God, when he has opened their eyes and shown them wondrous things out of his word. It is scarcely less dishonoring to Christ, than it is absurd in itself, for us to argue in such a manner as to favor the impression, that the state of our own minds and hearts has very little to do with the effects which God's truth produces upon us. So far otherwise is the fact, that every divine truth, however it may appear to the natural man to be foolishness, is, to the renewed heart, not only clear in what it reveals, but clear, also, in that it is itself revealed. Clear in that it is revealed; for Christ's sheep know his voice and follow him, but the voice of strangers they do not know. Clear also as to what is revealed; for they who obey the commandment of God have his express promise, that they shall know the doctrine whether it be of him. Spiritual discernment is as real an endowment of the new creature as any other; and a sense that our sins are pardoned, may be shed abroad in our hearts, most truly and divinely, and in perfect consonance with every law of our being. The assurance that God is our God, though grounded in a different manner, may be as well and as thoroughly grounded as the assurance that our earthly father is our father. Can a man go in and out, with his parent or his child, for years together, and still remain in doubt whose accents they are which fall upon his heart, and whose presence it is that blesses him? And is there nothing in the voice of the Saviour of sinners, and nothing in his presence to beget within us any deep convictions, any profound assurance? The denial of unregenerate men, that they experience any inward conviction of the divine truth of God's word, or that they see in the blessed Lord either form or comeliness, is proof only that the carnal heart is not subject to the law of God, and that men given over to strong delusion may believe lies, that they may be damned. Practically, our security against religious error and delusion is found to lie, not in the superiority of our faculties, nor in the extent or thoroughness of our general attainments even on religious subjects, but in the soundness and vitality of our faith, that is, in the thoroughness of our union with Christ; and, by consequence, the completeness of our restoration to the

image of God. How often does the true believer smile at infidel cavils, which once seemed to him most formidable, or turn away with pity or disgust from suggestions of unbelief, which, however powerful they may have once appeared, now seem to be only wicked or absurd? The inward process by which such effects are produced is analogous to that which occurs to every human mind as it becomes deeply imbued with the truths of any department of knowledge: only in the latter case men are naturally competent to begin and carry on the work of themselves, while in the former they must be subject to a supernatural change at its inception, and to a divine power during its progress. Still an analogy exists. For even by culture such a change is wrought in us, that we perceive at once that any new truth does or does not belong to any part of knowledge with which we are familiar, and are able to assign to it its position and value. The soul which is renewed at all, is renewed by that Spirit which has inspired all revealed truth; and is renewed by the instrumentality of that very truth so revealed, and which is to constitute the nourishment of its new life. Upon these conditions, it is impossible but that the human soul should find in the Word of God a perpetual and self-evidencing light; and that in very near proportion to its own deliverance from sin. Taking our nature as it is, all this is in exact accordance with what is obliged to occur if the Scriptures be true. But it is precisely what does occur, and that continually, supposing that they who say they believe the Word of God, tell the truth when they say so. It is inevitable, therefore, that the Scriptures must be true, or all who say they believe they are true, must be liars. Which latter supposition, besides being wholly incredible, is incapable of being established, even if it were true, seeing that no man can know what passes in another's heart better than himself.

15. Another step taken in the same general direction brings us, face to face, with the great question of the testimony of the Holy Ghost, as that question is stated in the Scriptures, and as it is exhibited in the experience of the human soul. Taking the argument drawn from the declarations of God's word on one hand, and the inner life of man on the other, it exhibits three very distinct stages, at each of which it appears to be conclusive; and at the close of all three, overwhelming. In the first place, the Scriptures represent to us with the greatest precision the actual state of the human soul; and then call upon us to examine ourselves

carefully and habitually, and see if its representations are not precisely true: and this is done concerning every state of every soul, from the darkest and deepest pollution, up through every shade of change, to that peace which passeth all understanding. What we assert is, that all this is done with invariable accuracy, and that the doing of it involves a superhuman insight into the nature and operations of the human soul. In the second place, they declare to us the effects which each particular divine truth, and also the whole taken together, are fitted to produce, and when received into the soul, actually do produce upon every one of those infinitely varied states, and upon the soul itself when in any one of them. And then, also, they call upon us to make trial, and see if these things are not so. And as often as we make the trial, we find that they are so; and that herein is a superhuman power, as before a superhuman insight in these divine oracles, or in some mysterious way, along with them. Of these two points, what this occasion allowed, has been already said. But there is a third; for the Scriptures plainly assert the existence and operation of a distinct and divine agent, even the Holy Ghost, eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son, which Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. Of the three that bear record both in heaven and upon earth, we are expressly assured that the Spirit is one. This is the Spirit of life, by whose work it is, that spiritual life is imparted to us: the Spirit of truth, whose office it is to lead us into all truth: the Holy Spirit, who, in the development of that new life, and through that blessed truth, and by his own divine light and power, makes us holy, and thus fits us for the service and enjoyment of God. Because we are the sons of God, he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts. Sent forth as our Comforter—his testimony is of Jesus Christ—and the crowning proof to us of his glorification at the right hand of God. This is one of the incontrovertible points of the mystery of godliness—that God who was manifest in the flesh—is justified in the Spirit. It is he, by whose inspiration all Scripture was given—whose testimony is explicitly of Jesus Christ, who is the sum of all revelation, and whose finished work in us, is the very final cause of our salvation;—it is he that beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God; children of God in his work—through that truth—by that Saviour. Such is the exalted height to which the Scriptures carry this doctrine; and they exhort all true believers to seek for, and to cherish this

earnest of our inheritance, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption. But for the purposes of this argument, there is no occasion to discuss the point exclusively at so high a level. According to the declarations of God, if the Bible is his word, there is a true and real sense in which Jesus Christ is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and in which the Spirit of God is poured out upon all flesh; and the testimony of all Scripture is, that this light of God is not different from, but is coincident with the light which shines in his holy word; and that this Spirit of God is poured out, not in disregard, but in confirmation of that word of life. Now, according to the universal faith of the church of Christ, every part of the effectual calling of his disciples is by the Word and Spirit of God;—and even those who never truly become his disciples, are subject to many common operations of the Spirit under the truth communicated to them. But upon the theory of the Bible, all these operations thus produced, prove the glorification of Jesus;—and, by inevitable consequence, the divine authority of his mission, and the divine truth of his word! It is the fact that such an agent as the Spirit bears any testimony whatever to the souls of men, rather than the particular character of the testimony borne to each individual person, which, upon the conditions stated, makes the proof so crushing. If there be such a witness, and if he testifies at all, it is immaterial to the argument whether the result of his dealings with our souls is despair or peace, agony or glory. Every work of the Spirit, therefore, is a testimony to the divine word; and every new testimony which the Spirit adds to his own work accomplished, or his own pleadings rejected, is a new proof accumulated. When we consider the universality of the influences of the Spirit, general and special, under the gospel dispensation, and the intimate nature of the proof by which their existence in us is ascertained, to wit, our own personal consciousness, it is impossible to estimate the magnitude of the folly and guilt which lead men to persist in their obstinate unbelief, and their voluntary ignorance of God.

16. There is another view, wider perhaps, if not so intense, of these revelations of God, which lies too immediately in the general course we are taking, to be overlooked. The great truths which are peculiar to the Bible, and which distinguish the system it inculcates from every other, are all universal truths, worthy, not only of universal acceptance, but capable of universal application. The Jewish people, on the other hand, through whom we

have received these truths, were the most peculiar people that ever existed as a separate community; the very last people from the midst of whom we should expect to obtain a spiritual code, fitted for the human race, and a moral teacher qualified in all respects to regenerate mankind. Yet out of the bosom of this people have come the Bible and the Saviour; he, one of themselves; it, their very civil code, and the very cause of all their national peculiarities. Yet he, and it, and the salvation which he wrought out, and it proclaims, are divinely fitted to become, and assuredly predestinated to become, the Bible, the salvation, and the Saviour of all the kindreds of the earth! By a development as wonderful as it is glorious, each Jewish peculiarity is found to contain the germ of some all-pervading truth. From the heart of a system which seen by itself, and considered as final, seems to be the narrowest of all, springs forth another system, capacious as the race of mankind, and boundless as their eternal being. The mode in which the system of the Old Testament emerges into the system of the New, is as marvellous as the contents of either of the two. To the Jew, the idea of a brotherhood, perfect but strictly Jewish, expands for the Christian, into a brotherhood still more tender and intimate, which embraces the whole family of man. To the Jew, the idea of a glorious God ruling over men from the very height of heaven, to the Christian becomes the idea of that same infinite God, made manifest in the flesh, and becoming God with us. The law came by Moses, and the open vision by the prophets; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. Yet so came, that of all the law and all the prophets, he destroyed nothing, but fulfilled, accomplished, supplemented all, and made all glorious in its grace and in its truth. Whosoever is descended from Abraham, comes to be translated into, whosoever is born of the Spirit; and every promise to the seed of the father of the faithful terminates in the Saviour of the world, and inures to the benefit of every penitent sinner. Whosoever will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved: this is the sublime consummation. Suited to all—open to all—the Word of the God of all—able to save the souls of all! Every barrier of race, and clime, and condition, is broken over: every national and every individual peculiarity falls to the ground: the book of God becomes also the book of the human race. No nation had ever abandoned its own religion to receive that of another people; but now all nations embrace, instead of their own, the religion, which at first seemed

only suited to the most peculiar of all people, but which, when fully manifested of God, may satisfy and supply, while it may redeem and sanctify every soul of man! In accomplishing this great development, this divine transformation, the Son of God came to his own, and his own received him not. Their insane cry was, we have no king but Cæsar;—not Christ, but Barabbas: let his blood be upon us, and upon our children! It was a fearful part of the great scheme to be wrought out for the redemption of man: and God took them at their word. Peeled, scattered, and sifted throughout the world—the curse of that innocent blood has cleaved to them, and rulers, fiercer than Cæsar, have robbed and murdered them. Jerusalem, after eighteen centuries of desolation, is still trodden down; and Israel still awaits in stubborn grief, that fulness of the Gentiles, until which, blindness in part is happened to her. Yet how signal is God's mercy, that even in circumstances of such atrocious guilt, that blindness of Israel should be only in part; and what a marvel of divine wisdom is the use which God has made of his ancient people in all their wanderings—to the furtherance of the great design they had set about to frustrate? They have attested in every land, and through every age, the precious and fundamental truths, accepted by them as revealed in their own Scriptures. They have, in like manner, by their miraculous preservation, carried everywhere the report of those glorious truths they rejected, and illustrated in some degree their nature and their power. And they have continually confirmed, in their wondrous estate, the reality of those predictions, and the force of those promises, yet unfulfilled, which constitute so large a part of the oracles of God. Standing upon such an elevation, and surveying such prodigious proofs, the unbelief of the present age is not a whit less surprising than that of those who personally beheld the glory of the Word made flesh, even as the glory of the only-begotten of the Father.

17. The fact is never to be lost sight of, that the religious system developed in the Scriptures—that system which in its perfect form we call the religion of Jesus—professes to be, not a doctrine merely, but also a power, a paramount and irresistible moral power. It claims to be the power of God unto salvation; and upon that ground challenges the judgment of mankind. From the very first, it has aimed at the exclusion of all error, the removal of all evil, the extirpation of all sin. From the point we have reached, we are able to estimate this force, as it has been

exerted through many centuries and in an immense variety of positions; and to determine, with accuracy, both its nature and its effects, both its interior organization, and its outward operation. Let us begin with the latter.—We have seen this religion of Jesus in conflict with Judaism, after the glory had passed from Moses to Messiah: the struggle of a real with a ceremonial righteousness: the idea of God in types and symbols, perishing before the idea of God incarnate. We have seen it in conflict with ancient heathenism: all the gods enshrined in the Pantheon, and all the gods supported and adored by the triumphant Cæsars, lords many and gods many, dethroned by the true and living God. We have seen it in conflict with the false prophet of Mecca: the fierce, licentious and warlike religion of the East, after a struggle so protracted and so vehement, withering away before our eyes, even as this pure, gentle, and peaceful system culminates more gloriously. We have seen it in conflict with the Man of Sin: the Bride of the Lord pining for twelve hundred and sixty years under the rank and ferocious apostasy of the middle ages, meek and undismayed through centuries of despair, victorious at last, only because the very gates of hell could not prevail against her. We have seen it in conflict with every form of error from within, and every mode of opposition from without: superstition, heresy, idolatry, skepticism, oppression, persecution, seduction, corruption, everywhere confronting all, everywhere resisting all, precisely in proportion to its own vital purity, as determined by the open Bible which it has borne aloft throughout the earth.—And now, in these last days, one wide and universal conflict is waged with every error and every sin, throughout the whole world: and the banner which is the emblem of divine love, still rises higher and higher, and floats more and more broadly over the host of the redeemed: and still from the undaunted array, the loud battle-cry of centuries is lifted up more audibly, glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men! In how many aspects, and through how many ages, has the same sublime spectacle been exhibited! God manifest in the flesh, redeeming, reclaiming, reconquering rebellious man! Truth united with goodness, subduing, saving sinners! Grace abounding, grace triumphant! As we survey this ceaseless, and as it might seem, endless struggle, there is one truth constantly obvious, one conception infinitely remarkable, which, justly weighed, ought to be decisive. It is of the nature of all human passions to subside,

at last. All human excitements pass away. All human interests decay. All human institutions perish. What is great and good, along with what is little and vile, hastens to a common oblivion—is swept into an undistinguished ruin. New passions, new excitements, new interests, new institutions, follow each other ceaselessly, each springing up from the decaying mass of the old, which return no more forever. There is no restored empire amongst men. There is no restored philosophy, that has ever risen from the dead to lead men captive a second time. There is no restored superstition, that has ever recovered a lost dominion over the human soul. How immeasurably different from this universal law of all human things, has been the force which has manifested itself throughout the whole career of Christianity? With an unutterable tenacity, its divine truths cleave to man, and stimulate him more and more. With a divine vigor they recur and recur again. With an immortal freshness, they recover from every stroke, and shake off every incumbrance, and purge themselves anew, from generation to generation. One immense portion of the work of God's church in the world, has been to recover portions of her own heritage wrested from her by violence, and to teach, a second time, nations and races amongst whom her memorial had been obscured, or utterly put out. And that which happens to nothing else, is that in which her main hope and strength lie; the continual revival in her own bosom, of her own primeval spirit, the constant recurrence of the living power, through which all her conquests have been won. This grand peculiarity, and all the wonderful effects which flow from it, the one and the other distinguishing the Christian religion from all human things, admits only of that explanation which the Scriptures themselves give. It is Immanuel! God is with us! This explains all!

18. And now, as to the intimate nature of this divine power, with which the religion of Jesus claims to be pregnant. The Bible exhibits to us a most wonderful climax with relation to this subject. In the first place, it reveals to us, absolutely, the spiritual system of the universe, with particular reference to our own position in that vast and glorious system. In it, and nowhere else, we are clearly instructed in the nature, the attributes, and the purposes of God; the origin, the nature, and the destiny of man; our relations to time and earth, to God and eternity. In the second place, the Scriptures, declaring our present fallen and

depraved condition, have not left us to deduce for ourselves, a spiritual system for the regulation of our faith and practice, from the sublime truths thus revealed to us by God. But they set before us in the clearest manner, and as deduced by God himself, all the beliefs and all the conduct, which become such creatures as we are, occupying such a position, in such a system, and possessing such a revelation. In the third place, they do not leave us, even there, without all further guidance and support, to receive and obey these divine teachings, and live; or reject them and perish. They superadd an unspeakable gift, a Saviour, not only revealed to us, but bestowed on us. Not a teacher only, not a guide, a pattern, a benefactor, a friend, only; but a divine Saviour from our sins. Surely the wildest urgency could demand no more! Ultimate and fundamental truth, all revealed: all faith, and all practice infallibly deduced therefrom, and set before us: an almighty Saviour superadded! But God has given more. In the fourth place, to crown all, a divine and infinite agent, the Holy Ghost, covenanted in the blood of Jesus Christ, is revealed to us, as the potential author, at once of our salvation, and of the whole revelation by which it is promoted. The eternal Spirit, who inspired the Word of God, who applies to us the salvation of Christ, and who inclines and enables us to believe and obey, is, so to speak, the vicar of Jesus Christ, in this sublime work of reconstructing the moral universe. Now, according to the theory of divine revelation, this climax exhibits to us, some idea of that living power which the Scriptures proclaim. If we consider, in their order, the stages of this climax, we may also have some idea of the manner in which and the extent to which the human soul is influenced by that power. Those great and fundamental truths which lie at the foundation of revealed religion, are accepted in a certain sense, by the great mass of men, in all countries in which the gospel has had free course; and the result is manifest in the great superiority of all nations and races, which are even nominally Christian, over all others. As we rise a step higher and observe those portions of our race, which make some serious endeavor to regulate their lives by the general precepts of the Christian religion, we shall perceive a still more marked amelioration of the moral, and it may be added, the intellectual condition of man. At the next elevation, we pass to that condition, in which men openly profess to obey the Lord Jesus, and look to him as the fountain of their blessings and the

end of their hopes; and here we observe a still more decided advance upon the natural, and, but for the gospel of God, the universal condition of our race. All these are stages through which multitudes of individual persons scattered through all ages and races, and through which, also, many communities, as such, have passed. They are degrees in our convictions, phases in our spiritual progress, points of development in our religious life. But the crowning work is the power of the Holy Ghost within us; and as that is experienced in the fulness of its divine efficacy, whether in an individual, a generation, or a race, there is exhibited the consummation, at once, of the work of grace, and of the overwhelming demonstration. In whatever sense moral truth, resting on the veracity of God and enforced by his infinite majesty, can affect the human understanding; in whatever degree the human soul can be influenced by motives, or impressed with the idea of responsibility, or controlled by the sense of duty, all directed to objects which are infinite and eternal; whatever efficacy abides in the work of a divine Saviour crucified for us, and thereby made to us, the power of God and the wisdom of God; whatever reality is found in that new, and spiritual life, unto which men are born again, by the demonstration and the power of the Holy Ghost: just to the whole extent of all these sublime forces, set to work and sustained by the unsearchable riches of divine grace, is it possible for us to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, of the love of Christ, and to be filled with all the fulness of God!

19. Here then we reach a point where the argument terminates, as an outward one, upon the certainty of our knowledge; and as an inward one, upon the truth of our consciousness. If the knowledge of anything exterior to ourselves can be said to be certain, then it is certain that multitudes of human beings have been born again; for there is no other fact outward as to us, established by an amount of testimony so great, so various, and so conclusive. But if men have been born again, then it is certain that the Bible is true and is divine; for in it alone is that great fact developed to mankind, and through it alone is there provided for us a power adequate to that supernatural change. Again, if human consciousness is true, and its testimony faithful as to what passes within us, then, also, it is certain that multitudes of men have been born again. For we cannot know anything whatever concerning our inner life, more certainly than we can know

whether or not we are spiritually dead. But, as it has been already shown, if men have been born again, then the Bible is true and divine. If, however, we cannot be certain of anything exterior to ourselves, nor yet certain of anything that passes within us, then it is wholly immaterial, and wholly incapable of being determined, whether the Bible, or anything else, be either true or false; or, indeed, whether there is such a distinction in things as we call true and false; or, in short, whether even our state of mental uncertainty is itself real. We are, upon this hypothesis, reduced to a condition of utter imbecility. Upon whatever principle man is held to be, either rational or accountable, it can be shown, that if anything is certain, it is certain that the Scriptures are true and of divine authority. If every principle upon which man's rational and moral nature can be vindicated, is overturned, everything after that ceases to be of any more consequence to us than to the beasts that perish. So the most rigorous logic conducts us to the grand result which all experience has established, that in the degree we trust God, we exalt man; and in the degree we reject God, we debase man. And there we may safely leave the argument.

### III.

1. I have now endeavored, in a simple and direct manner, under many successive propositions, all tending to one general and certain conclusion, to trace the course of an argument whose result seems to me to be absolute and unavoidable. What we know concerning ourselves—what we know of God, of the order of providence, of the course of nature, and of the state of the universe, appears to be absolutely inconsistent with the idea, that the contents of the volume which we call the Holy Scriptures could possibly have been of less than divine origin. On the other hand, those contents, whether considered absolutely, or considered relatively, to our knowledge on all the great topics just alluded to, seem, beyond all question, to have sprung, as they profess to have sprung, from the bosom of God, and to be invested with infinite claims upon our faith and obedience. The question at issue is one of awful solemnity and terrible magnitude. Our happiness in this world, and our blessedness throughout eternity, are involved in our making a right decision of it, and then in acting rightly upon that decision. If we reject God, we are undone. But it is

of little worth, that we accept him in name, and take no heed to his commands; nay, even that our minds perceive his truth, while our hearts turn away from him.

2. It is by these very Scriptures that we are first and chiefly taught how to know God, and how to accept of him. Then let us take his blessed revelation into our hands, and, if the image may be endured, let us feel, even as he who is blind feels the person and the face, until, by little and little, the conviction grows into his soul, that the lineaments are lovely, and then that they are familiar, and at last that they are most precious. Thus, if we will begin, even in our blindness, to handle the Word of Life, it will grow upon us with a gentle and yet mighty power, until our very weakness is made strength, and our very darkness made light. Let us sit down at the feet of Jesus and learn of him. Though his words be strange to us at first, they will, more and more, find a lodgment and a response within us. They alone, but they fully, can divide between the very joints and marrow—the very soul and spirit of man. That lone, wayfaring man, may appear to us without form or comeliness; and his solemn and tender words may sound strange to us amidst the din of life. Nevertheless, let us turn and follow him. As we walk by his side, we shall see above that crown of thorns a diadem of eternal glory; we shall feel those words, which once we understood not, burn within us, as though celestial fire had fallen upon our souls; his favor will become life unto us,—his loving-kindness better than life! O taste and see that the Lord is good!

3. Nay, is it not wise and comely in us to go deeply into an inquiry upon which there is for us so much at stake? Let us then open our minds freely to the instructions of this marvellous record. Let us examine carefully its wondrous statements. It professes to contain the true solution of all those immense problems over which our spirit lingers so anxiously; those terrible paradoxes before which our highest reason has so often recoiled. It comes to us with the acclamations of many generations, and proclaiming itself a messenger from heaven. This much, at least, we are sure of, that if it can teach us what it professes to reveal, it can teach us what none besides ever knew, or if they knew, ever revealed. Let us then calmly, but earnestly, scrutinize its claims, and master its contents. At first, it may seem hard to be understood. A new method is opened before us, and new matter continually rises to view. Many things incomprehensible, many wonderful,

many we can hardly credit, many we are ready to cavil over, many we feel prepared to reject, many almost hateful to us. Still there arises a strange fascination from it, and a marvellous power seems to be somehow involved in it. Let us not strive against that fascination, nor resist that power. If they are of the earth, they will soon show themselves earthy; if they are from the Lord of glory, they can conduct us nowhere but to light and peace. Let us examine once more even that which we comprehend the most fully: there is more in it than we have yet observed, something forever new, something forever beyond what we had yet noticed. If it were wholly of man, a small part of the labor we have bestowed upon it, would have made us perfectly master of it all; would have exposed to us perhaps many weaknesses, many errors; would have, assuredly, elevated us to something like a level with its noblest portions. Let us be just to ourselves, and to it. Let us confess that the more familiar we become with its exalted spirit, the more clearly do we perceive the immense distance at which it is elevated above us. Let us acknowledge that if we are wise unto salvation, it is in its wisdom we have become so; and that we have found at last that which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, even thy word, O Lord, which is settled in heaven, forever! Paul, when he exclaimed in the midst of the sublimest meditations, that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ; and Simon Peter, when answering for the twelve, he told the Lord, that because he had the words of eternal life, they were sure he was the Christ, the Son of the living God; and the woman of Sychar at Jacob's well, when Jesus told her, I am he, and she believed, because he knew all her outward and all her inner life: all gave utterance, in different forms, to the common experience of the human soul, and to various aspects of the grand principle on which its conviction rests, that God's word is truth.

4. A final step brings us to the bottom of a subject so full of grandeur in itself, and of such fearful import to fallen men. Let us take that step, and receive into our hearts this heaven-descended truth. Let us uncover the depths of our inward being before its searching light and its mighty power. Let us open widely to it, those strange hearts so full, at the same moment, of weakness and of strength, so desperately wicked, and yet capacious of eternal life. Our profoundest desire is, for inward peace, and yet we are the victims of a ceaseless inward struggle.

Our deepest conviction is that we are impure, and yet we shrink with horror from the thought of abiding so forever. There are necessities in our hearts which nothing human can supply; passions, which nothing human can either satisfy or control; desires, which nothing human can either subdue or gratify; powers, which nothing human can either adequately excite or occupy. And oh! there are sorrows, deep sorrows, which will not be assuaged; wounds, which, if the balm that is in Gilead cannot heal, must fester forevermore; sins far beyond the reach of all skill but that of the great physician of souls. Will you risk that skill, my brother? Will you ask him to remember Calvary, and then to pity you? This is his proposal, which has gone out into all the world, and the sound thereof to every creature: Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. And this is the response of that innumerable company, who received his truth in the love of it: Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, forever and ever."

5. No doubt it is the duty of all the disciples of Christ to use their utmost endeavors to spread the everlasting gospel over the earth, and, by every means in their power, enforce its claims upon every creature. Nor, indeed, is it possible for them to avoid feeling the deepest interest in this great labor of love. Still, however, we must not imagine that their interest, or, if the expression is allowable, the interest of their master, in the result, bears any assignable proportion to that of those who are ready, in their daring wickedness, or childish ignorance, to despise the communications of God's grace. Nor must we allow ourselves to suppose, for a moment, that the smallest uncertainty as to the grand event—much less the least danger to the cause of God's truth—or the ultimate triumph of Christ's kingdom, can arise from all the folly, the ignorance, the unbelief, and the impiety of all who reject the divine Redeemer. Whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, yet shall they be made to know assuredly that God has sent his messengers into their midst. The word that has gone forth out of the mouth of God shall not return unto him void, but shall accomplish that which he pleases, and shall prosper in that whereto he sent it. Heaven and earth

may pass away ; but not one jot nor one tittle of all that God has uttered shall pass away, till all is fulfilled. The stone which was cut out without hands, shall not only break in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver and the gold, but shall become a great mountain, and fill the whole earth. Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken ; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder !