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ARTICLE I.

THE SYMMETRY AND BEAUTY OF GOD'S WITNESSING  
CHURCH.\*

“The King's daughter is all glorious within; her clothing is of wrought gold.”—  
Psalm 45: 13.

In the ordinary ministrations of the pulpit, and meditations of God's people, Christ the Saviour holds, and ought to have, the pre-eminent place; and exhibitions of doctrine respecting his person and work constitute the staple of every evangelical discourse, and the characteristic and leading theme of contemplation and faith to every believer. But there are other themes unfolded in the Scriptures besides those which are immediately conversant with the person and work of the Son of God—themes which indeed derive all their interest from Christ, and concentrate all their light to irradiate his glorious and adorable person, but which do not come into the category

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\* This article was intended for the April number of the Review, but was too late to be inserted. Its publication was promised in the July number, and the appendix written with a view to its appearance then. In the absence of one of the Editors, through some misunderstanding, the publication was again delayed. We make this statement out of regard to the author, and in explanation of our own seeming remissness.

## ARTICLE II.

## A REASONABLE ANSWER TO THE SKEPTIC.\*

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."—1 Peter 3: 15.

The Apostle entertained no doubt that a reason could be given for the Christian's hope. The firm and massive foundations on which that hope rests, he regarded, not only as not recondite or obscure to the believer, but as discernible, at least in outline, to the unbeliever; he thought not of them as enveloped in cloud and mist which only philosophical acumen can penetrate, but as standing forth within the limit of distinct vision, well-defined, clear, luminous, to every eye that is open to behold them. He considered, too, that such reasonable evidence as plain, unlettered men can appreciate, could be by them intelligibly stated to others; and hence exhorts all Christians to be "ready always to give an answer" to any one asking a reason of their hope.

The exhortation is still applicable to all; and, where the resources of cultivated intellect exist not, arguments are still doubtless within reach that may leave without excuse the unbeliever; but to do full justice to this great theme, to bring to bear upon the resisting intellect of a skeptical and luxurious age the momentous truth, that "light has come into the world," to infix in the minds of men the deep conviction that the God of the universe has sent to each of them a message, securing infinite joy to those who, with the heart, receive it, aggravating the woe of those who disregard it—who shall say that this is not a work more needful and more arduous in our times than in any past age?

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\* This article is, for substance, a Discourse delivered by appointment before the Board of Directors of the Theological Seminary at Columbia at its Annual Meeting in May last.

For now it is the foundation of our common faith that is assailed. The variant shades of Christian opinion, the not unimportant, yet still non-essential differences, dividing true believers, which loom up largely in their polemic discourses, but melt away and disappear in their united prayers, hold not now the chief place in public regard; the interest that might otherwise be concentrated upon them, is now merged in that greater and all-comprehensive question: Has God so spoken to men, as that every one who is willing to hear and obey, shall "know" of the oracle that it is from God? This, the great question of all ages, is pre-eminently that of our times. For where, once, the fact of there being in the world a Divine revelation met at least with languid and indolent assent, it is now confronted by bold and bristling infidelity. From the high places of Continental, and even of English literature, there go forth, and are widely circulated and responded to in our own land, such multiform assaults upon the Divine origin of Christianity as no previous age has known. Not only in the always lawless domain of fiction and poetry, but in the severer studies of science, in grave historical, political, and economical disquisitions, in theories of philosophy and morals, the most subtle poison of infidelity is cunningly intermingled; and as, in this age and country, thought is free, its expression unfettered, and its diffusion facile and extensive beyond all precedent, as no artificial barrier can be erected against the progress of opinion, he who is "set for the defence of the Gospel," is likely to find the native disinclination of the heart to welcome it reinforced in every community by cherished skepticism, more or less declared, as to there being any solid reasonable proof of a Divine revelation extant in the world on which may be based the sure and certain hope of immortal life.

Compare, for one moment, the position of the defender of the Christian faith at the time when the Apostle Peter wrote, with that position now. The difference between the two positions is not, by any means, merely the difference between the year 58, and the year 1858, as the interval of time between certain historical facts and the faith that is built upon them; although that is no trifling difference. If the life and death

and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ had taken place within the present century; if we, this day, could point to a multitude of living witnesses, of unquestioned character for intelligence and probity, who saw him "alive after his passion," and were ready to lay down their lives in confirmation of this testimony; would not our answer to an inquiry as to the reason of the hope that is in us, be vastly more simple and direct than it can be now? Would not the question of fact be held within very much narrower compass? Instead of ranging through eighteen centuries, to trace back through their cloudiness the advancing footprints of Christianity, to mark the monuments of her existence piled up all along the pathway; instead of the long process by which we now identify the Christian institutions and influences that live before our eyes, with those which originated on the soil of Palestine near two thousand years ago; instead of staking the whole question of our faith upon the truth and inspiration of a book, which, touching and glancing upon every topic of human thought, presents the broadest mark to hostile scrutiny, and whose every page is a battle-ground of infidelity, ours would be the simple and easy task of referring to those numerous living eye-witnesses, whose testimony to the plain but comprehensive facts on which Christianity is founded, could admit of no reasonable doubt, when taken in connection with what these witnesses were in character and conduct, and with the attestation borne also to *their* words, by attendant miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

But suppose that the interval of time were of no import in this case, and that it were possible to transfer to this generation as vivid an impression of the narrative of our Saviour's life and death and resurrection as attaches to events fresh and recent, still the *credibility* of such a narrative would meet *now*, in the intellectual habitudes of men, obstacles which then it had not to encounter.

For the world, *then*, was credulous, rather than skeptical, as to *miracles*. "Signs and wonders," events so indubitably supernatural that men might reasonably say, "This is the finger of God," were then the expected and admitted attestation to

teachers claiming a Divine commission. Jews could not doubt on such a point; for not only their religion, but all that they gloried in as distinguishing them from the other tribes and families of mankind, was based upon the miraculous in their national history. Gentiles, too, had their prodigies and portents, their prophecies and presages; so strong was their faith in the supernatural, that when, in a certain case, a single cure was effected before their eyes, disconnected from any visible natural cause, they cried out at once, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men," and were ready to recognize Jupiter and Mercury as incarnate before them. But, now, not only is the classic Pantheon swept clean of its occupants, not only are the groves, the streams, the mountain tops, the caves of ocean, dispossessed of their time-honored divinities, but philosophy (so called) coldly looking upon the stable order of the universe, if it does not recognize that order as the only Deity, at least refuses credence to any alleged Divine *manifestation* other than that constant one in nature, and boldly declares a miracle, if not in itself impossible, at least impossible to be reasonably proved.

Hence, instead of the miracles recorded in the New Testament being received as the appropriate and decisive testimony to Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of God, the miraculous element in his history is now appealed to as discrediting that history as a whole; as proving that false which, otherwise, must needs be accepted as true.

For scarcely can a reasonable man deny, that the transcendent, unearthly purity of the character and the teachings of Jesus afford the strongest proof that his history cannot be that of a deceiver, nor yet itself fictitious; (for what false heart could feel the motive, or conjure up the moral elements of such a fiction, whose inventor would indeed be "a greater miracle than its hero?") But when it is found that those teachings and that character cannot be dis severed from their supernatural accompaniment, when it is found that miracle is inseparably intertwined with the whole texture of that history, his claims, otherwise irresistible, as a truthful teacher and man, are coldly disallowed and repudiated, on account of that con-

nection with the supernatural which, in the first Christian age, was the very culmination of their proof.

In that age, moreover, whilst, among Gentiles, there was no pre-disposition to deny that there might be *oracles from God*, the Jewish world reposed in full faith upon their sacred books as a veritable Divine revelation. To him who asked *then* for a reason of the Christian hope, an answer might be given by comparing what the Old Testament, acknowledged to be a Divine Book, had foretold of the Messiah, with the recent history of Jesus of Nazareth. That history came to many a reflecting mind as the solution of an inquiry often and earnestly agitated before, "Of whom speaketh the *prophet* this?" The Apostle Peter himself, after appealing, in proof that Christianity was no "cunningly devised fable," to what his own eyes had seen and his own ears had heard on the Mount of Transfiguration, yet adds, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy."

It is easy to see what vantage-ground the first teachers of Christianity had in the previous firm faith of their Hebrew hearers in the reality of Divine oracles, when they made the announcement—"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these latter days spoken unto us by his Son."

But *now*, when the reasonable ground of Christian hope is asked for by one whose moral convictions are not in harmony with the Christian doctrine, in whose heart it finds no welcome, the inspiration of the Scriptures, instead of being assumed, is the very thing to be proved; it is to be proved to those who, lightly passing by the independent credentials of Christianity, hold her to answer for her life to the correctness of every word and letter of the Old Testament, more assailable, as more remote; it is to be proved, too, in the face of objections, many of the most plausible and specious of which had positively no existence in the minds of men until the present century.

For hundreds and thousands of years, no one had dreamed of any discordance between the declarations of the Bible and the demonstrations of science. From age to age, the rising and the setting sun, the four corners of that extended plain,

the earth, the over-arching sky, gemmed with its greater and its lesser lights, ordained simply to *rule our day and night*, were to men, not only as they are now, optical, apparent truth, the natural language of poetry and of common life, but they were also, what they are not now, and never can be again, matters of scientific truth. With unfaltering faith, like that of our own childhood, generation after generation had read the first chapter of Genesis, no thought visiting their minds of proof that might be dug out of the bowels of the earth, assigning to it an earlier date, by thousands or millions of years, than that which was, or seemed to be, plain on the face of the sacred record. But *now*, the discoveries, or the imaginings, of scientific explorers bring a cloud over many a holy text which once stood forth clear and unquestioned, insinuating into the unguarded soul the fatal thought, that that Book on which all heavenly hope is based, may not, after all, be absolutely relied on as true.

How shall this state of things be met by those who are "set for the defence of the Gospel?" Shall we attempt to stop the march of science? As well think to "dam the Nile with bulrushes." Shall the theologian refuse to seek out the works of God? Shall he count science an enemy? Shall he, at the risk of being himself reckoned a fossil, sedulously ignore geology, or any other science that may wear, at the time, an ominous front toward the Christian faith?

It is a weak thing to turn and twist the language of the Bible in forced accommodation to each "new-hatched, unfledged" theory, the offspring of research yet incomplete. But there is one thing weaker than this, more treacherous to the cause which all good men desire to defend; and that is to imagine, that, in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth, in the domain of nature, explored to its utmost recesses, something may possibly be found *true* which shall render faith in the Bible unreasonable. Let all such unworthy dread be forever renounced. What seek we but truth? Let scientific investigation have the widest scope; let it range unfettered through earth and sea and sky; let it ascend to the stars and go down to the depths; let it explore

all nature, interrogate all time; and when, after many vagaries and many a plausible hypothesis discarded, it reaches its firm and final conclusions, these, if we may judge the future by the past, shall but the better teach us how to read that Book—from the same hand that has left its impress on all the riches of visible nature—which unveils to the exploring eye the everlasting glories of the world to come.

The Christian's hope is founded on the fact, that the Scriptures contain a revelation from God. The Author of Christianity himself said, "My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me." The historical fact, that He died upon the Cross could reveal to us nothing of its deep meaning, could avail nothing to us as a foundation for immortal hope, if it stood separate from that truth of which only God could assure us, that "Christ died for our sins; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood;" who is "the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Only as a revelation from God can Christianity inspire hope; and only as a faithful, an infallible transcript of that revelation, can the Scriptures supply to us a sure foundation on which to build *our* hopes. For if the rays of heavenly light may possibly have been refracted by the medium through which they come to our eyes; if, in the writings of prophets and apostles, it may be that human imaginings adulterate the verities of God, we must ourselves be inspired, in order to determine what is revealed in the sacred writings. The Bible, as an *infallible record of a revelation from God*, is the only sure foundation for Christian hope. What proof, now, that it is such a record, are we ready to give to him who asks "a reason of the hope that is in us?" What proof can we give adequate to so great a hope, commensurate with so vast an expectation, as that "this pleasing, anxious being," this life, so dear and precious to each, shall not fall at last like a raindrop into the ocean and disappear, but, ruled by a far different destiny, shall blaze forth into a heavenly star, and mingle with the brightness of the firmament forever—Oh, what proof, what reason can we give, adequate to a hope like this?

"If any man will do His will, he shall *know* of the doctrine,

whether it be of God." The humblest believer can state his own conviction, the response of his own heart to that Book as Divine, which all good men revere; he can testify with what authority and sanctity it speaks to his soul, bringing with it its own evidence, immaculate and inseparable holiness and truth shining by their own light; he can tell what fulfilment of heavenly promise has been by himself experienced, what prayer answered, what evil passions hushed to rest, what good affections nurtured, what right action prompted, what strong and everlasting consolation ministered, by faith in that Gospel which proffers rest to the soul; and this testimony of an honest witness, borne out by a corresponding life, may well make the skeptic uneasy in his skepticism.

But an answer distinct from this, an answer that does not so much suspend the faith of one upon the convictions of another, is evidently contemplated by the Bible itself; else why that array of miraculous attestation lavished upon Christianity in its incipency, if all these evidences were soon to be obsolete, no longer to be reproduced as grounds of human conviction?

In this age, whose intellectual habitude it is to take nothing for granted, to count every subject of thought, in spite of any rescript of the past, still an open question, and ever to demand proof palpable and multiform in proportion to the magnitude of the things to be proved; in this age, if the Christian hope is to be reasonably evinced to those who possess it not, as something more than a pleasing illusion, a fond imagination, there must be given a plain, distinct answer to the ever-recurring question, "How know you that the Bible contains an infallible record of a revelation from God?"

We may answer this question from a single passage of the history of Jesus—(Luke 24: 44, 49.)—"And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me. \* \* \* And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

Is this true history? Did Jesus of Nazareth ever live? Did

he utter these words? Or were they simply attributed to him by some dealer in fiction?

The New Testament, the Christian institutions and influences now extant in the world, are *facts*. Can these facts be *reasonably* accounted for on any other supposition than the truthfulness of that history of Jesus, which has been most surely believed by all Christians from that day to this?

On this question, large and comprehensive, though but preliminary, let the skeptical inquirer after truth concentrate all his faculties. No claim is here laid on the credulity of any; the question is simply as to *reasonable proof*. When every searching test which reason invokes in all similar inquiries has been applied to this, and it is found impossible *reasonably* to believe the story of Christ a fable, and all the purest goodness the world has ever seen due to the belief of a lie, then, from this brief record of St. Luke, one step, and that a direct one, takes us to the conclusion, that the Bible contains *an infallible record of a revelation from God*. For here our Saviour lays his hand, as it were, at once upon the Old Testament and the New, recognizing the Divine element of prophecy as pervading "the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms," (demonstrably identical with the Old Testament that we have now,) and, at the same time, assuring to his Apostles, prominent writers of the then future New Testament, the Holy Spirit promised by the Father, the "power from on high," needful to make them infallible teachers of Christian truth.

Here, then, in a compact form, we have the answer as to the foundation of Christian hope. Upon the truthfulness of a simple, artless narrative, impossible to be reasonably discredited, upon the truthfulness of Christ, the strongest voucher conceivable, do we base our belief in the Bible, as pervaded by a supernatural element, rendering it an infallible record of a revelation from God, in which is "promised" to the true believer "eternal life."

But now the skeptic, evading that direct testimony to the facts of Christianity which no criticism upon the Old Testament can touch, boldly affirms that the Scriptures, especially of the Old Testament, plainly betray their human origin, inas-

much as they again and again state as *fact* what science has proved to be *not fact*. "Can that (it is asked) be taken as the Word of God, which bears on its face the demonstrably erroneous opinions of men? If the Bible be not *true*, it certainly cannot be *inspired*."

To this a reply is sometimes made, which really imperils the cause which it seeks to defend. The radical error lies in a groundless assumption—disowned, moreover, and repudiated by every page of the Scriptures, namely this: that the presence of a Divine, necessarily excludes a human element in the sacred writings.

Whoever takes up this notion cannot himself read these writings intelligently without continual misgivings as to their Divine authority. On one page, he finds an Evangelist declaring that he had bestowed some care upon his history—had (as the original word implies) "exactly traced every thing from the first." On another page, he finds an Apostle asking that a "cloak left at Troas" may be brought to him. If, from an inspired writing, all use of the natural faculties, all thoughts suggested by the circumstances and feelings of the writer, are necessarily excluded, the Gospel of St. Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of St. Paul, the Psalms of David, cannot be inspired.

But on what ground is a theory of inspiration held with which scarcely a page in the Bible is found to harmonize? The only philosophical mode of attaining a correct theory of inspiration is by a thorough analysis of writings known to be inspired. Instead of imagining what it may be, we thus see what it is. With this guide, what otherwise might seem exceptions to inspiration, become to us instructive examples of its working. Then we see how a human element pervades the Bible, no more excluding, or interfering with the Divine, than the humanity of our Saviour excludes his Divinity. Then we see what use the Holy Spirit has made of the *natural faculties*, and the religious *experiences* of men; and we also see with what continual *accommodation to human modes of thought* Divine instruction has been given.

Our Saviour expressly taught his disciples, that supernatural stimulus to the *natural faculty of memory*, "bringing all things to their remembrance" which he had said, was as truly characteristic of the Divine Comforter, as that influence which should give to the exalted and entranced spirit visions of "things to come." The Book of Psalms largely records *human experiences*, by no means peculiar to inspired men, ("Out of the depths have I cried unto thee:" "verily, God hath heard me," &c.); but was not a record so precious, so instinct to all ages with spiritual life, worthy to be prompted and presided over by the Spirit of God? Was it not thus an inspired record?

The Apostle Paul (1 Cor. chap. 1st) says, "I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius." Presently he corrects himself: "I baptized also the household of Stephanas." Then he adds, more cautiously, "Besides, I *know not* whether I baptized any other." How clearly upon the face of this statement appears the natural movement of his own mind! Yet was not the record of this worthy to be prompted by inspiration, when, to show to all ages, how small a matter it is to baptize, compared with preaching the Gospel, the Apostle's forgetting how many of the Corinthians he had baptized, is far more forceful and significant than any thing he could have remembered? Nor is the "cloak left at Troas" without value, as a voucher for the authenticity of the letter which alludes to it.

That *accommodation* to human modes of thought pervades the Scriptures, cannot be denied; and why should any imagine this fact inconsistent with their inspiration, which, in truth, but proves their adaptation to the purposes of an inspired book? "God is a Spirit;" yet his eyes, his ear, his voice, his hand, his outstretched arm, are again and again spoken of; and how else could we attain so vivid apprehension of the Divine existence?

Now if this accommodated language is used in respect to that *spiritual truth* which the Scriptures were expressly given to reveal, much more should we expect to find it characterizing their incidental allusions to *natural objects*. We find, in

fact, that the language of the sacred writers as to "heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is," is just the popular language of their time; the only language which would not have been hopelessly perplexing to those to whom they wrote. Of this, that very phrase, *heaven and earth, and the sea*, is sufficient illustration. It bears the impress of an age, when the sea was not thought of as merely filling up a slight depression of the earth's surface. Sky, and land, and sea, was then a natural enumeration. Modern astronomy, indeed, does not speak thus. But sciences then unborn, not to be born till centuries upon centuries later in the world's history, did not (who could think they would?) mould the Mosaic narrative into a shape which would have made it an insoluble enigma to long-succeeding generations.

Is it reasonable to expect in the Bible a revelation of any human science? One book certainly could not contain them all. How many books, or rather libraries, might suffice for this, can only be determined when the limit of human knowledge is reached.

If the Bible could not reveal all human science, why should it reveal any? How could a selection be made, when all sciences are held together by a common bond? If it should reveal the true system of astronomy, could it consistently mix up with this the crude notions of ancient times as to geography? If it teach astronomy and geography, why not chemistry and other sciences?

Very little consideration will suffice to show the absurdity of expecting to find in the Bible a revelation of any human science whatever. Now, if not containing, in explicit terms, such a revelation, its language had (as some have piously, but ineffectually tried to prove,) anticipated and shadowed forth sciences far in the future, it would have been, in just that degree, a perplexing mystery, if not, indeed, a fatal obstruction through all intervening time. Men could not have believed that God had sent them a message to guide them to heaven, until they had first believed, not on demonstration, but testimony, and that, too, ever growing dim as it receded into

antiquity, that what to them seemed "the sure and firm-set earth,"—a plain, spread out at rest beneath the vaulted sky—was, in fact, a revolving globe, whirled ever with amazing velocity through space.

What then remained but that God's wisdom should make the Bible exactly what we find it, a book which, in its incidental allusions to the visible world, and to all subjects aside from the purposes for which it was given, accommodates its phrase to apparent, not scientific truth, and bears to remotest ages no slight or valueless internal vouchers of its authenticity, in its thus faithfully reflecting, in this respect, the prevalent ideas of the times when it it was written.

Is this inconsistent with its character as an infallible record of a Divine revelation? This is a momentous question; let us bring it at once to a decisive test.

Our Saviour said of the Father, "He maketh his *sun to rise* on the evil and on the good." He said also, "The wind bloweth *where it listeth*." But the sun only appears to rise; and the wind, apparently so spontaneous and free, in the language of poetry, "a chartered libertine," is, in truth, as obedient a slave to natural law, as any other agent in nature.

Is now the truth which our Saviour here taught concerning the impartial beneficence of God, and concerning regeneration by the Holy Spirit, obscured to any mind, however imbued with modern science, by its connection with the language, not of science, but of poetry and common life? If not, then, throughout the Scriptures the same connection may most harmlessly, most wisely, subsist between spiritual truth and language as to natural objects, accommodated to human apprehension, expressive of apparent, not scientific truth.

In this respect, the Bible is, in fact, just what it might reasonably be expected to be. All those objections to it, so current in our times, because it does not state scientific truth, fall to the ground at once, when it is seen how absurd is the expectation that it would. We may be well satisfied that all the conditions and purposes of a revelation from God to guide men to heaven are fully met, whilst yet, instead of anticipating

the discoveries of human science, it speaks of "things seen and temporal," in the only language intelligible to those to whom the revelation was originally made.

The Bible may be illustrated by advancing science; but it can never be made to speak in scientific phrase. Astronomy may give new intensity to the Psalmist's words—"The heavens declare the glory of God;" geology, establishing that interpretation (older than herself) of the first chapter of Genesis, which recognizes there the date, not of the earth, but of man's appearance upon it, may liberate us from that terrible incubus, the idea of six thousand years as the whole past period of the visible creation; but both astronomy and geology ought by this time to have taught men not to seek in, or force into, the Bible, the specific language of science. Chemistry may demonstrate the human body to be composed of the same substances that are found in the earth on which we tread; but the nearest approximation to this in the Bible is that simple but picturesque language, interpreted to us by chemistry, but intelligible and vivid whilst chemistry was unknown, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground."

Indeed, if we would feel the beauty and sublimity of much of the Scripture imagery, instead of forcing it into harmony with modern science, we must, for the time, leave that science altogether out of view; we must look up to the zenith for God's throne; like the ancient Hebrews, we must think of the earth as a plain, "founded upon the seas, established upon the floods," the beams of its chambers laid in the waters; we must think of the starry sky as a solid arch, a spherical roof, a dome, so resting upon the extremities of the earth, that when God "shakes terribly the earth," he shall shake the heavens also—*shake the stars out of the sky*—cause them to fall to the earth, "even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind;" we must think of *such* a heaven, folded up as a vesture, departing "as a scroll when it is rolled together."

In view of language like this continually recurring in the sacred writings, the question which the defender of their inspiration has to meet is: Does the human element which they

obviously contain—does the accommodation to human modes of thought which undeniably pervades them—adulterate in any degree the truth concerning the soul and its destinies, which they reveal from God? The answer is plain. If it does not in the case of Him to whom alone the Spirit was given *without measure*—if He could speak of the sun rising, of the wind blowing *at its will*—it surely does not in the case of those whose most decisive claim on our faith rests on His testimony to them, as guided by the same Spirit.

To all theories that would make it the test of an inspired writer that he should know every thing, (as if inspiration were identical with omniscience) we need but oppose the fact that, even as to spiritual truth, revelation has its progress and its limit. Whilst John the Baptist—than whom no greater prophet had previously appeared—was exceeded by the least in the kingdom of heaven, that Apostle, who more largely and systematically than any other has expounded the Christian doctrine, expressly says—“We know in part, we prophesy in part: Now we see through a glass, darkly.”

Is it not enough that the Bible is an infallible guide to that heaven where all shall be unclouded day? Is it not enough that it is just what the Holy Spirit intended that it should be? Does it not even exalt and aggrandize our estimate of that truth by which the soul is assured of endless happy existence, truth that soars above the stars and transcends the limits of time, when we find that, magnificent and sublime as are the disclosures of human science, they still are not found worthy of a place by the side of the Gospel in a revelation from God?

Faith in the Bible, as an infallible record of a Divine revelation, necessarily precedes the reception of its doctrines. Let this faith die out of the mind of a single generation, and what power could there be in the preaching of the Gospel? All the characteristic teachings of Christianity are based simply on Divine testimony. No one believes the doctrine of the Atonement, or of the Trinity, or of the resurrection of the dead, except as he believes that God has revealed as fact, what, otherwise, man could never know.

To bring the reasonable evidence of this Divine revelation

into clear, unclouded light, to disembarrass it of all obstructions, to show it, as it is, impregnable to all assaults, a rock of adamant on which to build immortal hopes, is a work to which the exigencies of our times give peculiar prominence. It is a work which pre-supposes that *profound study of the Bible*, to initiate which is the highest purpose of a *Theological Seminary*. Who can measure the value to the Church of God and to the dearest interests of human society, of an Institution, which sends forth workmen needing not to be ashamed, strong in that intense conviction of truth which springs only from the personal grapple with its difficulties, prepared to set forth the Gospel in all the plenitude of its Divine credentials, in all the majesty and sanctity of a revelation from God; nor yet with cold, unfeeling hearts, as if all were but a demonstration to the intellect, but in genial sympathy with humanity, as those privileged to bring "healing to the broken-hearted, and recovering of sight to the blind," commissioned, in a sinful, sorrowing world, where delight is never perfect and death never out of view, to bear the messages of *heavenly mercy*, and to enkindle in human souls the light of *immortal hope*; speaking to their fellow-men, in the name of God, not to gain "dominion over their faith," but to be "helpers of their joy," not with austere and arrogant dogmatism, but giving "a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear"—that gentleness of true affection toward men, that deep-felt reverence toward God, which become an office at once so benevolent and so sacred.

What holier ambition than to be thus an ambassador for Christ! Higher than all earthly dignities, purer than all earthly joy, is the aspiration after the *true ideal* of the Christian minister—portrayed, as it has been, by no common hand, and worthy to live always in memory: "He had eyes lifted up to heaven, the best of books in his hand, the law of truth was written upon his lips, the world was behind his back; he stood as if he pleaded with men, and a crown of gold did hang over his head."