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EXCELLENCE OF THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

ILLUSTRATED IN THEIR UNCORRUPTED PRESERVATION, IN THE
NATURE OF THEIR CONTENTS, AND IN THE CHARACTER OF
THEIR INFLUENCE.

PSALM 119:39.—*Thy judgments are good.*

THE original of this psalm is one of the curiosities of Hebrew literature. It belongs to that small class of sacred poetry which is denominated *alphabetical* or *acrostic*. It consists of twenty-two stanzas, corresponding with the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet and arranged in alphabetical order. Each stanza contains eight lines, and each line in the same stanza begins with the same letter. Though the author's name is not prefixed, this psalm is generally ascribed to the inspiration of the royal psalmist of Israel. David is supposed to have written it in the different vicissitudes of his eventful life, and afterwards to have arranged the detached parts in their present order, and given them an acrostic form for the aid of the reader's memory. But however this may be, it is no way doubtful to the pious mind, accustomed to an attentive perusal of this portion of sacred writ, that the author has here furnished a precious treasury of truth, adapted to the Christian's experience in all the variety of the circumstances of his life. If there be any one design, rather than another, apparent throughout the whole, it seems to be to exhibit the practical excellency of the word of God; and though only a small part of what is now comprised in the sacred canon was then written, the commendations here found are certainly not less applicable to the entire bible. There are at least ten different titles here applied to the scriptures; and it is another curious fact respecting this psalm, that some one of these is introduced into almost every verse. Sometimes each of these different terms appears to have its own peculiar signification, and sometimes they appear to be used promiscuously to avoid tautology, or to suit the metrical arrangement.

In our text, we understand the term *judgments* as a general title of the word of God. In discoursing on the passage, we shall consider

it as a declaration of the excellency of the sacred scriptures. "Thy judgments are good."

It may not be unprofitable nor altogether uninteresting, as it is calculated to encourage our confidence in the divine authority of the scriptures, to show, in the *first place*, that they are good as to their *uncorrupted purity*.

Admitting, as I trust all my hearers do, that the bible was given to mankind as the word of God, containing an inspired and authentic revelation of his will, the inquiry sometimes arises, may it not have been since materially corrupted by the hands of men? Has it not, in the lapse of ages and in passing through its numerous transcripts and editions, lost much of the original integrity of the text? These are surely questions of primary importance, and lying near the foundation of all our Christian hopes.

But, in reply, we may observe,

First, That it seems reasonable to suppose, that He who is yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same, after having so graciously regarded the necessity of mankind in *past ages*, as to give a written revelation of his will by the inspiration of his Spirit, would, in his *providential care*, preserve it in such a state of purity as to answer the purposes of a revelation to mankind in all *subsequent* ages. We are not supposing a continual miracle in the case. Nor was this necessary. That Providence that exerts an every-day agency in all human concerns, needs not be diverted from its ordinary course of operation for the accomplishment of that for which we contend. And surely if a sparrow does not fall to the ground by the arrow of the archer, without his permission, the preservation of that *heavenly truth* which his own Spirit has revealed, and which is as "the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold," should not be thought beneath his care. Nay, his own glory and the salvation of his people are intimately connected with the preservation of these *holy doctrines*, and may we not, therefore, believe that heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or tittle shall in any wise fail?

We remark, *secondly*, That the inspired writings have ever been held in the greatest *reverence* by those to whose immediate care they were entrusted, whether *Jews* or *Christians*; and this fact, while it affords another presumptive argument against their corruption, at the same time exhibits one of the means which Divine Providence has actually employed for maintaining their purity. This reverence was the natural offspring of their uniform conviction that all scripture was given by inspiration of God; and it was doubtless heightened by the consideration of the repeated prohibitions against their making any addition or diminution, on pain of forfeiting all the blessings and incurring all the plagues written in these books.

So great was this reverence among the *Jews* for their scriptures, that, as Philo and Josephus inform us, they would incur any torture and even death itself, rather than alter a single letter or point; and we learn from ecclesiastical history that, in *fact*, both *Jews* and *Christians* have often chosen martyrdom in preference to the sacrifice of their

sacred books. Is it not then unreasonable to suppose, that while the scriptures were in such hands there was any *disposition* to corrupt them?

Nor do their care and diligence, in guarding against their corruption, appear to have been less remarkable. A distinguished biblical critic justly remarks, that such care and diligence were employed in the preservation of the scriptures as were never exercised in regard to any other books in the world. The *Jewish teachers* are known to have been superstitiously exact about their copies; and learned *Christian divines* have spared no labor in revising, comparing, investigating, and vindicating the sacred text. In regard to the *Old Testament*, what biblical scholar does not know that an almost inconceivable amount of labor was expended by the Jewish doctors for its uncorrupted preservation? A learned Jew affirms that hundreds and thousands of their rabbins, in successive generations, were concerned in what are commonly denominated the labors of the *Masorites*; and many of their writers maintain, that though these labors were not *completed* until the council met at Tiberius, in the beginning of the sixth century of the Christian era, yet they were *commenced* as early as the time of *Ezra*. Among other means which these men adopted for preserving the purity of the text, they established certain rules according to which their scriptures should be transcribed; and to guard against the smallest possible alteration, they even numbered all the verses, words, and titles in each book. Hence the Masora was called "*the hedge of the law*;" and it is easy to perceive how admirably it was calculated to answer the idea of the name it received.

Thirdly. The sacred oracles have been transmitted to us through the hands of *different guardians, whose watchfulness over each other in relation to the common trust reposed in them, was a security for their mutual fidelity.* After the *five books of Moses* were completed, the original was deposited, by divine appointment, and long preserved, in the side of the ark of the covenant, a kind of chest prepared for the purpose. But beside this, there must have been for common use, many copies in the hands of the *Levites*, and still more in the hands of the *people generally*; for the Levites were commanded to teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord had spoken to them by Moses; and the people also were required to study them attentively in their private dwellings, and to teach them diligently to their children. Moreover, as the government of the Jews was a theocracy, and the law of God was the *law of the land*, there must have been other copies in the possession of the *magistrates*, as the standard of all their judicial transactions; and it was expressly enjoined that the *king* should write him a copy of this law in a book out of the autograph of Moses kept in the ark. Thus all classes being entrusted with this portion of the scriptures, they became not only the common guardians of their purity, but each class exerted a salutary influence over the other, and rendered the design of introducing any corruptions—had there existed such a design in any party—utterly impracticable.

Now it has been in *similar* circumstances, or in circumstances, if

possible, *still more favorable* to the preservation of their purity, that all the sacred books have been transmitted to us through the medium of the different *sects* of *Jews* and *Christians* unto the present day. Suppose, for illustration, that an attempt should now be made by an individual, or by any body of men, whether Infidel, Jewish, or Christian, to corrupt the oracles of God; who does not readily perceive that, from the number of copies scattered abroad throughout the church, and the various sects exercising a mutual watch over the movements of each other, and a common jealousy over the movements of the enemies of the truth, such an attempt must necessarily prove unsuccessful? And it is equally obvious, from the history of the church, that difficulties not less insurmountable would have been met in preceding ages.

Had the attempt been made by *Infidels*, it would have been detected either by the Jews or Christians, or by both. Had it been made by the *Jews*, the evil would have been exposed and corrected by the Christians. Or had it been made by the *Christians*, if in regard to the Old Testament, the remedy was with the Jews; or if in regard to the New Testament, the fraud would have been detected and the design frustrated by other Christian sects and by infidels also.

But it may be objected, that during the reigns of the impious kings of the Jews, and the prevalence of idolatry among that people, circumstances were different, and that the inspired books previously written might then have been depraved without difficulty; and it has, indeed, been urged by the enemies of the bible, that the record relative to the discovery of the book of the law in the temple, under the reign of Josiah, affords evidence of such a fact. But without occupying your time with an answer in detail, it will be sufficient to observe, in general, that though Josiah, yet but a youth, had never before seen an entire copy of the law, there might have been, and probably were, many copies scattered throughout the land, in the hands of the pious part of his subjects; and we are fully authorized to suppose that, during the greatest prevalence of idolatry, there were not wanting an adequate number of faithful guardians of the scriptures then extant; for even under the reign of Ahab, than whom none did more for the suppression of true religion and for the establishment of idolatry, the answer of God to Elijah assures us that he had reserved to himself seven thousand men who had not bowed the knee to Baal. These had doubtless retained the holy oracles in their possession; and the testimony that is given of them is a satisfactory evidence of their disposition to preserve them in their purity.

But what though the sacred page had been then profaned and the truth of God falsified? Was not the Spirit of prophecy, the same Spirit that originally dictated that truth, continued in the church by a succession of prophets until the canon of the Hebrew scriptures was completed; and what better security than this do we need for the restoration of the text, if it had received injury from the hands of men? But there is an other consideration, that ought forever to settle the question respecting the purity of the books of the Old Testament, as far down as the Christian era. Our Lord Jesus Christ in all the charges that he

brought against the Jews, never intimated that they had corrupted the word of God. He did indeed accuse them of making the law of none effect by their traditions, but not of depraving the law itself. His silence, therefore, on a point of such vital importance, and especially while publicly reading and expounding the scriptures in their synagogues, affords a just ground of inference, that they had not therein exposed themselves to censure; and, moreover, he and his inspired apostles by referring their hearers, without any qualification or caution, to the Old Testament as the oracles of God, and declaring that all scripture was given by inspiration of God, gave positive testimony in favor of their uncorrupted integrity.

But again, it may be objected that there was a time subsequent to this, when the evil might have occurred. It may be thought that during the dark ages of the church, when by a solemn decree of the Roman hierarchy the laity were prohibited the use of the bible, that then the circumstances which we have represented as a security for the preservation of the integrity of the scriptures did not exist, and that consequently corruptions might then have been introduced by an unprincipled and profligate clergy. To this we reply, 1st, That the Old Testament was safely guarded by the Jews; 2d, That had the New Testament been altered, it would have been made to sanction the errors that then prevailed in the Roman Catholic church; whereas, it *now* explicitly condemns them; 3d, That previous to this there was a schism between the Eastern and the Western churches, which rendered any such fraudulent attempt by one party impossible, without detection and exposure by the other—and that, in fact, the copies of the bible in the East and West now agree; 4, That throughout that long reign of moral darkness that overspread the church, there were scattered over Europe thousands of faithful witnesses of the truth, and not *less faithful guardians of the scriptures*, among the Paulicians, the Vallenses, and the Waldenses.

Of the holy and excellent character of these people, even their enemies in the communion of the hierarchy have borne decisive testimony. Of their attention to the word of God, also, they speak particularly. One of their cruel persecutors says, “they frequently read the holy scriptures, and in their preaching cited the words of Christ and his apostles.” Another says, that he had seen peasants among them who could recite the book of Job by memory; and several others who could perfectly repeat the whole *New Testament*. A third writer, an enemy too, in speaking of one of the valleys where they dwelt, says, “they can all read and write, and you can scarce find a boy among them who cannot give you an intelligent account of the faith which they profess.” He adds, “in this, indeed, they resemble their brethren of the *other valleys*.” Here, then, was a refuge for the bible, and another security against any designs of the catholic clergy.

But to bring our investigations in this branch of our discourse to a close, we remark,

Fourthly, That the result of the stupendous labors of biblical critics in late years, perfectly harmonizes with the considerations that have

already been adduced. After an incalculable amount of time and treasure expended by the most learned theologians of Europe in collecting and comparing all the ancient manuscript copies that could be found in every part of the world, (some of which are upwards of twelve hundred years old,) it has been found that there are no other discrepancies between them and our present editions of the bible, than such as would accidentally and unavoidably occur.

A late learned author observes, "that the very *worst* manuscript extant would not pervert *one article of our faith*, or destroy *one moral precept*. The general uniformity, therefore, of the manuscripts which are dispersed through all the countries of Christendom, and in so great a variety of languages, is truly astonishing, and demonstrates both the veneration in which the scriptures have uniformly been held and the singular care which was taken in transcribing them; and so far are the various readings contained in these manuscripts from being hostile to the uncorrupted preservation of the inspired books, (as some sceptics have boldly affirmed, and as some timid Christians have apprehended,) that they afford us, on the contrary, a most convincing proof that they exist at present, in all *essential* points, precisely the same, as they were when they left the hands of their authors."

Other considerations, leading to the same conclusion, might be derived from ancient versions, and from the voluminous amount of quotations in early Christian writers, but we have already occupied too much of your time on the subject, and therefore proceed,

II. In the *second place*, to notice very briefly, some of the *contents* of the bible, illustrative of the proposition in our text. Yes, my hearers, this holy volume is good as to the truths it contains, the doctrines it teaches, and the difficulties it solves. The oracles of reason and philosophy have failed to satisfy the anxious inquiries of the human mind in matters of infinito moment. But what they have failed to do, revelation has accomplished. Here is the true light; a light emanating from the third heavens to irradiate the darkness of this lower world; a lamp hung out from the skies to enlighten our way thither. The subject is copious and affords an opportunity for much detail, but as this is ground more frequently trod, it will be sufficient, on the present occasion, merely to glance at a few particulars. The bible, then, we may specify, decides on the claims of the gods that have swarmed like summer insects, in the mythologies of the heathen, and *teaches us to whom alone divine worship should be paid*. It would seem from the multiplicity of deities acknowledged by some of the idolatrous nations, that there had been a competition among them, which could enumerate the most. An ancient Grecian author computes the number at 30,000; and in Hindostan the number is estimated at not less than *three hundred and thirty millions!* The kind of creature or thing, whether in heaven or earth, can hardly be named, that has not received in some form or other, the adoration of men; so that there are acknowledged, gods innumerable, both celestial and terrestrial. But the bible leaves us in no doubt to whom we should render our homage. It assures us, "though there be that are *called* gods, whether in heaven or in earth,

(as there be gods many and lords many,") that to us there is but one God, of whom are all things; and by ascribing to him every conceivable perfection in an infinite degree, shows us why he alone is *entitled* to our homage, why his name *alone* is *Jehovah*, and why he will not give his glory to *another*.

It teaches us also, as might reasonably be expected of an infinite Being, that he is a God of unsearchable mysteries. It assures us, that in the unity of the Godhead there are Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; to each of whom belong all the names, attributes, works, and worship of the true God.

It instructs us in the doctrine, agitated but undecided by the heathen, of an *all-wise, superintending Providence*—a Providence so *general*, that it extends its dominion, not only abroad over all the face of the earth, but up through all the splendid galaxy of the heavens—so *particular*, that the very hairs of our heads are *numbered*. It quiets the *anxieties*, engendered alike by atheism and polytheism, and bids us to rejoice because the Lord God omnipotent reigneth—to cast our cares upon him, for he *careth* for us.

But the bible not only reveals the *true God* to man, in his being, his perfections, and government, but also *reveals man to himself*, in his origin, his character, and condition, and acquaints him with his duties and his destination. Without the supposition to which unaided reason was sometimes driven, of his being the workmanship of Demiurge, a malevolent deity, and without raising a shadow of impeachment against the goodness of his Creator, it accounts for his moral degradation and his numberless sufferings, by teaching us that, after being created in the image of God and made happy in his communion, he voluntarily apostatized, and by so doing not only involved himself in sin and misery, but, according to the uniform analogy of Providence, entailed the corruption of his nature and the curse of his disobedience on his posterity. It describes mankind in all the extent of the turpitude of their degeneracy. It decides the question on which, after all their arguments, the greatest masters of reason still doubted—the question of the *immortality of the soul*; and reveals the kindred doctrine of which they knew nothing—the doctrine of the *resurrection of the body*. It discloses to our view, in the midst of the assembled universe, the great white throne of *future judgment*, and assures us of an eternal state of *retribution*, according to the deeds done in the body.

But to man as a *sinner*, these disclosures *alone* would only add to the sorrows, that previously burdened his heart. Thanks to God, these are not *all*. The bible, while, by bringing the sinner under the scrutiny of a law whose requirements are as broad as its character is holy, and in view of a tribunal whose retributions are as terrible as they are just; while it thus constrains him to cry out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" at the same time exhibits a *scheme of grace* so consolatory, and a plan of *redemption* so complete, as to demand from him the rapturous exclamation, "O the breadth and the length, the depth and the height of the love of Christ that passeth knowledge!" Yes, it answers to the sa-

tisfaction of the anxious and agitated sinner, the all-important question. "How shall man be just with God?" It assures him that "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." The necessity of an *atonement* has been implied in all the sacrifices and penances that have ever been practised, from the apostacy to the present day; but in the bible only do we find an atonement that affords any rational ground of hope towards God. Here the vicarious sufferer is *human*, that sin may be punished in the same nature in which it is committed; and *divine*, both that he may have the right to make an offering of himself, and that his dignity may give sufficient value to his sufferings. Here is the only sin-offering with which the Lord is pleased. Hence the bible bids him that would bathe the sacrificial knife in the blood of his offspring, to desist, and "behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and him that would torture or immolate his own body, to appease his gods, "Do thyself no harm—believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Yes, it proclaims to all, as a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by him—not only to save them from the goadings of a guilty conscience in this life, and from the pains of hell for ever, but to advance them to the adoption of children in the family of God while here, and afterwards to introduce them into his *presence*, where is fulness of joy, and at his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore.

As a preparation for that state of pure and perfect bliss, the scriptures declare the necessity of the *regeneration* and *sanctification* of our nature, by the agency of the Holy Spirit. They moreover inculcate and exemplify a perfect system of morals, both personal and relative—morals far exceeding any thing that the mind of man in his fallen state ever could have conceived. They carry the authority of their precepts to the conscience, and sum them up in these all-comprehensive injunctions, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself"—and "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." These precepts, in addition to their divine authority and legal sanctions, are enforced in all their details by evangelical motives—by motives derived from the amazing love of God in Christ Jesus.

Such, briefly, are some of the contents of this inspired volume. Blessed book! Who would not say, "Thy judgments are good! more are they to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold." Who, in the benevolence they inculcate, would not give his money and his influence to send them to all the benighted abodes of his fellow men?

III. Need we further evidence of the excellence of the bible? Look, in the *third place*, at its *effects*. It is one of its own maxims, that the "tree is known by its fruit. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." Now apply this principle to the history of the bible, and the result will be calculated alike to increase our conviction of its excellence, and to enkindle our zeal in its

circulation. But where shall we begin? It would require volumes to do justice to the subject.

Did our limits allow, we might trace its effects on *literature*. We might show that whenever Christianity was propagated among barbarous nations, the knowledge of letters was at the same time introduced. We might show, that as the reading of the scriptures is essential to Christianity, and as these were long confined to the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, the knowledge of those languages was necessarily preserved in the church, and thereby the study of the ancient classics also promoted. That during the dark ages, literature, so far as it existed, was almost confined to the *biblical* scholars, and but for them would have perished. That since the revival of letters, multitudes who have blessed the world by their learning, and some of whom were among its brightest luminaries, were educated for the services of the church, and but for the scriptures would have remained unknowing and unknown. We might mention its effect on the common people in Christian countries, as wherever the bible is received, an ability to read its contents is deemed indispensable. We might mention, also, that thousands and hundreds of thousands of the children of the poor, rescued from utter ignorance by Sabbath schools, are taught to read that they may become acquainted with the bible; and thus be fitted for usefulness in society, as well as for happiness in heaven.

Can its effects on *civil government* be questioned? It teaches magistrates that they are the ministers of God, appointed to be a "terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well." It teaches the people to regard their authority as "the ordinance of God, not only for fear, but for conscience sake." Hence insurrections and massacres have been much less frequent in protestant Christian, than in heathen and infidel countries. It has infused its moral, humane, and benevolent spirit into the laws and institutions of states and kingdoms. It has given additional security of their respective rights to all classes of the community. It has softened the rigors of war, and when its principles shall be universally adopted, will utterly exterminate this devourer of nations from the earth. In proportion as it has obtained in the world, it has taught its *real* disciples to regard all of human kind as their brethren, and it will ultimately cut every spear in sunder, and burn every war-chariot in fire. Yes, under its influence, accompanied by the power of the Spirit, the time will come when the earth shall no longer exhibit scenes of blood and carnage—"when nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks—when nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they *learn war any more*, but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig-tree, and none shall make them afraid; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

But it is on the *social*, the *moral*, and *religious* interests of mankind, that the scriptures exert their most benign influence. Need we evidence? Look at facts. The exposure of deformed or illegitimate *infants*—of *aged* and helpless *parents*, and the cruelties practised by the superior on the inferior orders of society, in many heathen countries, both in ancient and modern times, are matters of public notoriety. Several years since

we were told, that at least eighteen thousand infants were annually destroyed in China; and ten thousand every month in the single province of Bengal in India. The horrid sports and gladiatorial exhibitions, too, practised in ancient Rome, in the midst of all her boasted refinement and philosophy, are well known. Europe, by these means, is supposed to have sometimes lost twenty or thirty thousand lives in a month. But who does not know that wherever the holy bible has gained dominion, these and all like abominations have been done away, and the remembrance of them contemplated with horror. Nor has the effect been merely negative.

Christian communities have not only ceased to do evil, but learned to do well. In the benevolent spirit of the bible, how many asylums have they erected for the children of want and wretchedness—for widows and orphans—for the friendless and the helpless. How many hospitals for the sick and the maimed—the halt and the blind—the idiot and the maniac.

What kind of misery have they not attempted to relieve? or what species of crime have they not attempted to reform?

These institutions and efforts of benevolence originated from the *bible*; and in vain do we look for their existence where *its* influence is unknown.

In the rites and forms of religious worship, its effects are not less obvious. Where, in the worship of the God of the bible, do you find such scenes as have been exhibited in the impure and the bloody superstitions of Africa and India, or such as historians and travellers have reported of all pagan nations, both ancient and modern?—scenes too often described to need a repetition. Beside rites the most obscene, penances the most severe, and self-immolations the most shocking and innumerable, it is a well attested fact that, in every part of the world, the blood of human victims has smoked on the idolatrous altars of the heathen. But wherever the bible has extended its empire, “the altars and the gods have fallen together in the dust.” Instead of the abominations of paganism, it has established the worship of Jehovah “in the beauty of holiness.” It declares in all his temples, “God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

Need we allude more particularly to its effects on individuals? Here, indeed, its divine efficacy is immediately and gloriously displayed. When attended with the power of the Spirit, it urges home upon the inner man the resistless claims of the Almighty. It arrests the sinner in his career of crime, penetrates him with a sense of guilt, subdues him to the dominion of grace, and brings back his soul to God. Without regard to distinction or rank, it has carried its redeeming authority alike into palaces and cottages, and brought kings and peasants to sit together at the Savior's feet. Throughout every grade of character, from the self-righteous Pharisee to the extortionate publican—from the heartless Stoic to the licentious Epicurean, it has multiplied its disciples, and made them one in humility, in holiness, and in happiness. “How many thousands,” says one, “have felt its power, rejoiced in its influence, and under its dictates been constrained to devote themselves to the glory and praise of God. Burdened with guilt, incapable of finding relief

from human resources, the mind has *here* found peace unspeakable, in beholding that sacrifice which alone could atone for transgression. Here the hard and impenitent heart has been softened, the impetuous passions restrained, the ferocious temper subdued, powerful prejudices conquered, ignorance dispelled, and the obstacles to real happiness removed. Here the Christian, looking around on the glories and blandishments of this world, has been enabled, with a noble contempt, to despise them all for Christ. Here death itself, the king of terrors, has lost its sting; and the soul, with a holy magnanimity, has borne up in the agonies of a dying hour, and sweetly sung itself away to everlasting bliss." Such, my hearers, are some of the effects of the book of God.

Let me now say, in a brief review of the whole subject,

1. *With what confidence we may consult the sacred word.*

Time, that often effects such mighty changes in men and things, has effected no important change in the scriptures. He who at first gave them by inspiration of his Spirit, pure as their divine source, has graciously handed them down uncorrupted, still the infallible rule of faith. And who can but admire the wisdom and goodness of Providence displayed in the means by which they have been transmitted through so many generations, and in the midst of so many enemies, without the possibility of any essential corruption or alteration! Here, too, we see how that diversity of sentiment and of sect, which is often, in manifold ignorance, urged as an objection against Christianity, has been made to subserve an important purpose by creating and sustaining a successful guardianship over the standard by which every sect and sentiment is to be tried. Partly, at least, as the consequence of all this diversity, we now resort to the Law and the Testimony, in every question of faith or practice, with a confidence, as to the authoritative decision of heaven, no less firm than if we lived in the age of inspiration and listened at the lips of the Seer. No change has occurred to diminish an iota the import of the apostolic assurance, that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

2. *What a debt of gratitude do we owe to God for the inestimable gift of his holy word.* On all the ground we have gone over, at every step we have taken, we have found cause for thanksgiving. All that authorizes our commendation of the sacred volume; all that enhances its value in our estimation; all that constitutes its excellence—its doctrines—its revelations, holy, heavenly, divine—its promises, exceeding great and precious—the influence it exerts, renewing, transforming, elevating—the consolations it imparts, meeting the necessities of our case in the sorrows of this life, and opening the rapturous prospect of glory ineffable in the life to come: all conspire to lay a claim to our gratitude which no ingenuous heart can resist. Think how much you owe to the instrumentality of the Bible in your personal condition, in your domestic and social relations, and in the condition of your country exalted immeasurably above the condition of any Popish, Mohammedan, or Pagan country; and let the reflection inspire you with becoming sentiments of gratitude and praise to the Author of the Bible.

Again: Permit me, affectionately, but earnestly and solemnly, to ask, *Do you believe and obey the Bible, according to its unquestionable claims? Are you daily becoming wiser and better, holier and happier, in the use of it?* These are interrogatories of personal, universal, and eternal importance. Admit them at the door of your conscience, and dismiss them not, I conjure you, till you are prepared to answer them, when you must meet them again, at the bar of God. This appeal is made without respect of persons—to the high and the low, to rulers and the ruled, to the learned and ignorant; to the rich and the poor; to all the scriptures are equally adapted—to all are equally addressed—to all are equally important,—and let each remember that he must give account for himself in this matter to God. In view of all that is excellent in the book of God, of all that has been done for its uncorrupted transmission for your use—of all the time, treasure, and toil that are now expended for its universal diffusion—and of the anxieties that the waking nations begin to manifest to receive and read it, what can you expect will become of you, if you neglect its great salvation!

Finally: *The view that has been taken of the sacred word is adapted to inspire us with zeal in promoting its circulation among the destitute.*

As we value the uncorrupted purity in which it has been preserved; the unequaled doctrines it contains; the literature it promotes; the authority it confers on magistrates; the rights it secures to subjects; the support it gives to government; the amelioration it effects in the state of society; the simplicity and spirituality it promotes in the worship of God; the morality it produces among all the classes of the community; and the redemption it brings to the immortal soul of the sinner,—we are called upon, as men, as scholars, as citizens, as philanthropists, and as Christians, to contribute our aid in the distribution of the bible.

Do you fear to entrust your money in this cause? Who but the God of the bible gave you your money? What are you but stewards of him? Who but the God of the bible gives prosperity or honesty to your debtors, or those entrusted with your money? Who but the God of the bible controls the elements where your property is? Who but the God of the bible gives you success in your trades, your merchandise, or your professions? All issues are in his hands, and hence the solution of the enigma, “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.” Can you, then, obey the precept and believe the promise, “Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt receive it again after many days?” “Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty.” But why urge a consideration so much addressed to selfishness? May I not rather appeal to a more noble principle, to your benevolence? Is it not enough to remind you of the wants and woes of the world? Look over the map of the world—see how widely these wants and woes are spread—and remember that the bible affords the only remedy.