

THE PEOPLE'S BIBLE BY JOSEPH PARKER: PREFACE AND INTRODUCTION

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Up to this point an endeavour has been made to prepare the mind for the study of the still higher mysteries. Assuming this to have been in a measure successful, the book proceeds thus:

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The whole of the above argument, instead of being based on the assumption that there is a God, raises the inquiry, Here is a Universe, - here is a Society, - here is a Book, - how are they to be accounted for? Hence the practical rather than the metaphysical tone of the reasoning. The first verse in Genesis suggests this discussion. Instead, however, of placing this discussion formally under a given chapter and verse, I have thought it better to regard it as arising from the whole spirit and structure of the Bible, as, in my opinion, it unquestionably does. My hope is that the mere chapter-and-verse method of proof will be increasingly distrusted and discarded, and that it will be replaced by such a conception of the genius and temper of the whole Bible as to render at least the narrowest forms of heresy simply impossible.

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1. PREFACE.

THIS is not a Bible Commentary in the usual sense of that term. It is a pastor's commentary upon such portions of Holy Scripture as are of obvious and immediate importance to the growth of the soul in Divine wisdom, and is, therefore, not intended to take the place of the verbal and critical commentaries which so ably represent the latest phases of Christian erudition. Instead of going minutely through any book verse by verse, the first object will be to discover its governing idea or principal purpose, and to make that clear by taking out of the book, say twelve, twenty, or thirty instances most strikingly illustrative of the writer's intention. For example, some such order as the following (always held to be variable of course) may be adopted : -

GENESIS: A book of Beginnings: the beginning of Creation; the beginning of Humanity; the beginning of Family life; the beginning of Disobedience; a kind of daybreak book; a wondrous dawn; an hour of revelation and vision. To get hold of this idea is to get a thorough insight into the book of Genesis.

EXODUS: Phases of Providence: in leadership, in national deliverances, in organisation, in codified human life, in all the mystery of human training and discipline, showing how the tabernacle of God is with men upon earth: a refuge, a judgment, a symbol. To master this idea is to seize the very spirit of the book of Exodus.

LEVITICUS: Religious Mechanics: the Mechanics of Sin-reckoning; the Mechanics of Sacrifice; the Mechanics of Intercession; the Mechanics of Purification; the higher meaning of all these intricate and costly formalities; the unprofitableness of bodily exercise; the revelation and development of true Sacrifice.

So with all the other books. We must discover the genius or purpose of each book, and elucidate and magnify it by the strongest illustrative instances. As for detail, it is abundantly and satisfactorily treated in critical commentaries devoted to the study of language, custom, antiquity, and science. The purpose of the People's Bible is pastoral; it aims so to bring all readers under the moral sovereignty of the sacred Book as to arm them against temptation, enrich them with solid comfort, and fortify them with the wisdom of God.

We assume an immense responsibility in claiming that any book is a final and authoritative standard in faith and morals. We place the book itself in an awful position. We separate it from all other books; we make sceptical criticism a profane offence, and devout obedience an essential element of spiritual character. The mind has simply to receive, the will has simply to obey, the heart has simply to trust. The book is to us verily as God himself. Are we, in nineteenth-century light, to stand by such a position, or to abandon it?' Is the Bible still to stand alone, and to demand the obeisance of all other books; is the dream-book to stand in the harvest-fields of literature and to receive the homage of the bending sheaves? In reply, I would rather avail myself of the limited responsibility of a personal testimony, than even appear to involve others by the use of terms often difficult or impossible to fix in rigid definition. At the risk of a verbal paradox, I will embolden myself to say that the older I grow the more inspired the Bible seems to become. You know my meaning. The book enlarges like a heightening sky. You also know my meaning when I say that there is only one book in the world which can prove the inspiration of the Bible, and that is the Bible itself. Possibly in our early reading of the Scriptures we put ourselves into a false relation to the book by taking with us some preconceived notion or theory of inspiration, and trying to make the Bible exactly fit our

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mechanical orthodoxy. This was like timing the sun by our chronometers, instead of timing our chronometers by the sun. What wonder if we have lost much by this process? What wonder if the supposed orthodoxy has originated the real scepticism? Inspiration, like its Author, is a term which has no equivalent in other words, and therefore can have no complete theory. Strange as it may appear, there are some words which lexicography cannot break up into explanatory syllables, and amongst them the word Inspiration holds a foremost place. We must feel some meanings, as blind men feel the morning light. Illustrations of inspiration we can have; also reverent suggestions respecting it; also such confirmations as arise from coincidence, unity, purpose, and issue, - here, indeed, is the most inviting and productive field of devout and even intellectual research; but to say authoritatively where Inspiration begins, where it ends, how it operates, what it involves, where it separates itself from genius, how it burned for brief day in shepherd or king, fisherman or tentmaker, and then was withdrawn to heaven, nevermore to glow upon earth, would be to have the very inspiration which is said to have completed itself in revelation. The Bible addresses every aspect and every necessity of my nature; it is my own biography; I seem to have read it in some other world; we are old friends; the breathing of Eternity is in us both, and we have happened together, to our mutual joy, on this rough shore of time. I never know how great a Book it is until I try to do without it, then the heart aches; then the eyes are put out with the great tears of grief; then the house is no home of mine then life sinks under an infinite load of weariness. In great moods of moral exultation I cannot stoop to the unworthy fray of intellectual encounter, to compare theories, to discuss contradictory scepticisms, and to institute comparisons between the cleverness which baffles me and the faith which impels me to service.

But has Inspiration really ceased out of the Church? Is the Holy Spirit but a term in ancient theology? Is he not the abiding Paraclete? Jesus Christ distinctly promised that the Paraclete should abide "for ever," and can he be in the heart without inspiring the whole range of the mind? I have no doubt as to the continuance of Inspiration in the Church, for it seems to me to be the one gift which must, of gracious necessity, abide for ever the gift, indeed, without which the Church could not exist. But the gift is not always to be used in one direction. There are inspired readers as certainly as there are inspired writers. "There is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding," in the deep and true reading of the Word. I am not alarmed by the perils which must instantly suggest themselves to apprehensive minds, though some of those perils, viewed from unequal distances, are unquestionably portentous in outline. The gift of inspired reading is the gift of the whole believing and suppliant Church. There is no inspired class in the Church, Divinely marked off for special reverence and remuneration; indeed, it seems to me that the so-called priests are the only uninspired followers - the mere craftsmen and pensioners - of the Church; they are "shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind." You need not, therefore, fear that I am pointing to a priestly class. The kind of inspiration I mean can be had for the asking by all humble souls. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" The proof of such inspiration will be found less in intellectual splendour than in spiritual docility and child-like obedience; we shall be unconscious of the shining of our face, but shall know that in our hearts there is a great softness of love, a holy yearning after our Father's perfectness; we shall be most inspired when we are most teachable; we may be sure that the purpose of the Holy Spirit is being accomplished within us when we say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth," and ask him, beside whom are the two anointed ones, not to withhold his revelation from babe-like souls. Verily, Inspiration hath not ceased. Let us pray for an inspired ministry: in other words, that all ministers may be blessed with a double portion of the Holy Spirit. This is our protection against priestism. This will sanctify every man, body, soul,

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and spirit, and make the whole Church the living temple of the Holy Ghost. When ministers are Divinely inspired their public reading of the Scriptures will be an exposition; every accent will be as a tongue of fire, and every emphasis will give new hints of meaning. The inspired writers wait for inspired readers. How the Holy Book leaps, so to say, in recognition of the sacred touch and the loving glance! Inspired reading gives us a Bible which cannot be taken from us; not a mechanical Bible, which cunning hands can disjoint; not an artificial Bible, which relies upon scattered proof-texts; - but a living revelation: a voice which awakens faithful echoes in the heart; a self-attesting book; its own mystery and its own lamp; without beginning or end; an infinite surprise: an infinite benediction. Have no fear that the Ark of the Testimony will be taken. We lose our inspiration when we lose our Faith, and then we are the subjects of irrational panic. Rather say, "Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth, ... for Pharaoh, king of Egypt, is but a noise." Theories and dogmas, propositions and controversies, orthodoxies and heterodoxies, come and go, but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever, "surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea."

One word as to the highest qualification alike of a commentator and a reader. I have the more confidence in pointing out this qualification, for the reason that the profoundest of Biblical scholars will be the first to maintain its supremacy. Without that qualification we must for ever stand as strangers outside the Bible, but with it the soul may speak, as it were, face to face with God. The critical expositor has his well-defined field of service within whose lines he can render incalculable help to the cause of Christ, yet this wide field rather increases than diminishes the area within which the meek and lowly spirit, the broken and humble heart, can read the deepest meaning of the Divine word. With a theology so vast, so sublime, yet so practical, calling us to all that is mysterious and ghostly in adoration, summoning the soul into the inmost sanctuary of the Invisible God - without a shape on which to rest the affrighted eye, or a line on which to lay the trembling hand; calling us onward and upward through a silence that makes our very breathing a conscious trespass, and through a light from which our very purity shrinks in shame, - with a theology so practical as to search our hidden life as with fire, to test our standards and balances, to bring our words to judgment, and to track our daily course with the criticism of God, - with a theology demanding personal incarnation in fellowship and service, charging us with the sacred trust of representing Christ to a hostile world, and constantly charging us to prove- the reality of our faith by the sincerity of our love, - with such a theology handed to us by inspired penmen for exposition and exemplification, who does not see that high above all other qualifications - even prophecy, tongues, mysteries, and all knowledge - must stand in holy isolation and solitary privilege the PURE HEART that alone can see God!

3. PRAYER FOR WISDOM.

Father of spirits, we can never see thee; but in our hearts we feel thy touch, a touch of humbled almightiness and a nearness as of light. We love thee more than we can ever tell. We go out after thee as if by right, and as if by sweet necessity. Every morning come to us before the sun rises, and every night watch us till the stars die out. Make all things remind us of thy presence, all beauty, all light, all music, all action; then our life will be large and our inheritance will be infinite wealth. We feel that we have not yet begun to live. Now and then a great throb of life makes us feel somewhat of our possibilities; yea, even as if we had begun our immortality and set our feet on heaven's land. Then we fall back, and sin, and lie, and long for that which is wholly forbidden. Oh, the torture of this wild contradiction! We are mad with agony that cannot be borne. Our cheeks burn with shame hotter than any fire of our kindling. Then we would that some Lazarus might be sent with cooling water from the brooks above to stay the infinite torment, but no human answer comes to the crying of our pain. We now come to thyself, for with thee is all the mercy of the Cross. "God be merciful unto us, sinners," and give us the sweet peace which follows Divine pardon. Blessed Saviour, thy fragrant name makes the whole Bible smell as a garden of rare flowers; to-day we open the Book, that we may walk with thee and hear thy voice and see the wonders which are hidden in the little letter. We would not go a step without thee, for then verily we would go out of the garden into the bare wilderness. Tell us all the meaning of this sacred writing. Make Moses breathe like a living teacher, that he may hold us by the enchantment of thy own name. May the old book become the very newest of writing, because the inspiring Spirit inspires us who read it. Carry forward our knowledge into wisdom, for knowledge puffeth up and kills like a letter which is not understood. Holy One, now hear us. Trinity in heaven, dwell in our hearts as in temples made ready for the holy presence, and may we live so well that we may seem to have lived long. We want to nestle in thy bosom. We want to touch thee. We want - oh, thou knowest all; why should we not take refuge in all-speaking silence? Amen.

3. INTRODUCTORY.

We are just about to open the Bible, and to fix our eyes upon the very miracle of books. It is a great occasion - a critical hour, full of possibilities beyond present imagining, and big with issues which the day of judgment can alone disclose. My conviction deepens that the Bible is the most modern of books, that is to say, it is the history of the very time which is passing over us; it contains every man's biography; it is full of the passion and tragedy, the love and sacrifice, which we know to be the substantial history of the day. The morning newspaper, apparently so fresh and novel, is but a reprint of Moses and the prophets, with some slight difference in incident and colour, but with no difference whatever of moral substance and meaning. So fully persuaded am I of all that is meant by this view that I am prepared to risk the claim for inspiration on the part of the Bible upon it. The Bible is proving its inspiration by the facts which make up both our spiritual experience and our exterior history, or if it is not actually and obviously doing so, it is under- mining that claim and hastening its doom as a mere superstition. It is of small consequence to me to know who wrote the Bible, when it was written, what has become of the manuscripts or under what circumstances the book was determined as to shape, size, and limits. Here it is: it is a book, and a book with a history, and for my purpose it is enough to find out what the book actually says to my life, my heart, my conscience, and all my higher faculties, and to judge it, not by some official standard, but by the recognised and most solemn facts which make up human history. That is my ground, and I claim for it the sanction of reason. The Bible asks for no privilege in the matter of judgment: its bold appeal is to the highest court of immediate fact and experience. Even in its deepest mysteries, it is mysteriously human and in no sense superstitiously Divine. My purpose is to make all this clear, and so make the Bible doubly ours, not something held because an irresponsible authority has charged it upon us, but because we have at last a book which knows us, puts our thoughts into words, fills up our need, -and teaches us the only prayers which even God can answer. No book can stand upon its mere venerableness except for literary purposes, that is, as a curiosity or a book of academical exercise and test. What- ever rules living men must itself be living, and whatever rules them profoundly and lastingly must have corresponding depth and durableness in itself.

Let us agree as to the spirit in which we must enter upon those sacred studies. We must rid our minds of all prejudice, and let the book have ample opportunity to make its own impression. We cannot mistake the music of truth. If we rashly begin high up amongst the wordless mysteries, we shall certainly be dazed, and probably be filled with the spirit of unbelief. We must begin on the ground we know - the moral ground, the region of standards, equities, and obligations, and go on from point to point until we enter the upper regions where silence is better than speech. 'I must ask you, even in our first Studies, to be very quiet for a long time, to avoid mental effervescence and the impetuosity of that rude cleverness which rushes to conclusions, and always misses principal meanings. "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We must, indeed, judge the book in some degree by the spirit which it demands on the part of its readers. If for a moment it can tolerate irreverence, it is no book of God's. It must devour the frivolous man, yea, even with fire unquench- able, and cast into outer darkness the man who would pry with mental jauntiness into its secret. There need not be any ostentation about the repulse, as if arising from mere pride or vindicating an arbitrary superiority; the repulse must come without show of pique, come as from eternity, and overwhelm with unnameable and immeasurable force. The Bible has no revelation to make to unbiblical minds. It will only speak to the lowly and the helpless, the contrite and the sore in heart. Oh, but this book can be so dumb and can look so blank! It will spread no table for mere daintiness of taste, but will find a whole festival for thorough and

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expectant hunger. If we come in any other spirit, let us go away at once, that we may escape the pain of humiliation and disappointment; there is really nothing for us in the Bible; it was never meant for us; as well go into the unexplored wilderness to find our father's house, or dig in the earth to find the gate of heaven. "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law." Thou who didst write the book for man, prepare man to read the book; give him the sensitive heart, the apt mind, and the obedient and most loyal will; then shall the book hold all things true, and be unto the soul as the very library of God.

This day I seem to begin my life work, the very thing that expresses my supreme purpose and highest hope, A holy fire glows in my expanding heart as I dwell upon the holy task and all its endless issues. The translation of the Bible which we need from time to time is not a merely grammatical exercise, or a discussion of various readings and ancient authorities. Grammar we must have if we are to have speech, but the grammar being settled, the higher translation has yet to begin. What is that higher translation? It is such a rendering of the Divine Word as will meet all human need, elevate all human desire, and sanctify all human endeavour; such a rendering as will show that everything has been provided for in the Bible that human life can ever need or hope for. If we are asked. Why not lecture upon modern events? the answer is that there are no modern events to lecture upon in any sense which supersedes the Bible. As well try to make a new earth as to make a new book: we make new fields, new gardens, new crops, but the earth abideth the same for ever; and that is precisely what we do with books - they all grow upon the old soil of the Bible; they look new, they are superficially new, they are bought and sold as new; but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever, and man's work is but the labour of a brief day. How much farther have we got than Adam and Eve, man and woman, strength and beauty, the temptation and the sin, the felt nakedness and the sheepskin covering? Not an inch. Cain still lives in Cainism. The world is still bringing deluges upon its own sinful head. Abram is still going forth in quest of a land flowing with milk and honey. Yea, old Eden still blooms, and men are trying to pass the guarding fire and live again as if by force of arms amid its trees and rivers and haunts of green beauty and softness. How to get back to that garden is the problem of all time and the despair of all ambition. There are some who try to be modern and even original, by reading Tennyson in the pulpit in preference to Isaiah, but in doing so they receive no encouragement from Tennyson himself. These small madneses are not wholly inexplicable; they have a look of cleverness, and they minister, without the vulgarity of seeming to do so, to the vanity of the madman himself. But there is no durability in such tricks. A month kills them, or six months at the most drags them into contempt. Isaiah waits, and Isaiah calmly comes to the front again, comes with the stately peace of eternal right. On this conviction I shall endeavour to found myself in carrying out my life-work in this Bible. Nor will it be any strain upon me so to act, for I see everything in the Bible - all law in the Pentateuch, all history in the prophets, all music in the Psalms, all imaginative literature in the parables, all dream and hope and Divinely ordered tumult in the grand Apocalypse. God forbid we should ever accept the sophism that the Bible is a text-book for preachers, and nothing more: it is the people's book: it belongs to the human heart in all days and places. Just in proportion as this can be made clear will the Bible regain its primacy in literature, and secure the homage of an admiring and grateful world. Its protectors will be innumerable - the poor man, the working man, the sorrowing man, the suffering woman, the little child, these will lay down their lives for it, and think the sacrifice too small.

Thus the Bible, like its Author, is not the I WAS, but the I AM - the Immediate, the Present, the Ever-Now; quite a contradiction in mere words, but a perfect consistency in highest life and thought.

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It is indeed pitiable, something quite absurdly vain, to hear a certain kind, of people making out by lame violence, which they mistake for forcible reasoning, that the Bible is an old-world book, a rag out of fashion, not a garment fit for this day's wearing. Some knavish preachers are not ashamed to do this: they have lived on the dear old book, it has kept them and their families in food and lodging these last thirty years, and yet they have nothing good to say about it; they like better the last book which they do not understand, or the last novel, which is as hemlock or cruel strychnine to the soul. Thieves they be, knaves with pulpit robes reluctantly thrown over their thievish breasts. Beware of them. They are clever liars, swindlers who look too innocent to be quite guiltless, hirelings who hunger for the pelf. Nay, the black indictment does not end there. They are killers of men; bandits who thrust weapons into souls and slay the young, the unsuspecting, and the frank. I could respect, in some grim way, the vulgar infidel who blasphemes openly and on purpose, and rejoices in his pitiful bellowing, mistaking the very blatancy for courage; but the man in the pulpit who insults the Bible on which he lives, and wriggles out of the professions by which he climbed to the pulpit he dishonours, I charge with worse crimes than those which blackened Barabbas or damned Iscariot. I call for men who will honour the Bible, men of all-seeing purity of heart, men who deliver the messages of God with the tenderness of Christ.

More Bible is what is wanted; fuller reading of the book itself, and a much freer application of it to the facts of daily life. I have not hesitated to say that life itself is the deepest and truest comment upon the Bible, and that in the Bible absolutely everything is to be found in germ and outline. The Bible must be dashed out of the hand of the priest, and put into the hands of the people. I will not have it that the Bible is a mystery book in the sense of being only accessible by experts; it is the people's book, as the firmament is the people's firmament and the air is the people's air. Of course the scientific man has his own view of the sky and his own way of examining the air, yet the poorest dunce may look up into the solemn heights and the meanest drudge drink in the living air. Many people could make more of the sky itself than of a learned lecture upon it, and a mountain breeze could be appreciated when a chemical analysis would be misunderstood. It is so with the Bible. Let the people themselves read "Moses and the prophets," not send for a priest to read for them, but sit down to the sacred task and spell out its infinite thought. Men who can help us to do this - not do this for us - are our true friends. They are the ministers of Christ, and our servants for Christ's sake. They know the true use of the Bible, and prove the inspiration of the book by showing how all life responds to its voice and confirms its moral demands. When they fail to do this they fall from their high vocation and grieve the Spirit of God.

4. INSPIRATION

ACCORDING to the teaching of both Testaments, a few men seem to have been Divinely inspired either to speak, or to put into a written form, what was communicated to them as the truth of God. This inspiration was, we are led to believe, accorded to but a few, not one of whom, however, so far as we can learn, ever brought moral discredit upon his solemn and august vocation. Some of them had been even profligate in iniquity before their inspiration; but having spoken the word of God, they appear to have been purified as by a holy fire. That their number was but small is rather an argument in favour of their claim than otherwise, when we consider what is evident in all the highest energy and form of life known amongst ourselves. Few men, for example, have been inspired (qualified) to write the intermediate bible of civilisation - that exciting and often tragical book which interposes between the volume of nature and the volume of spiritual testimony. There are but few historians, few poets, few aphorists. Yet the few do not speak for themselves alone: they represent human nature, and establish their right to supremacy and homage in proportion as they speak not the jargon of a class, but the universal language of humanity. Inspiration does not separate David and Paul from the human race: it lifts the human race to a high pinnacle of honour and expectation. The Divine inspiration of one man presupposes a corresponding degree of Divine inspiration (actual or possible) in all other men. Few, indeed, may have been inspired to speak the Word, but all have been inspired to feel it. Is inspiration, as commonly understood, given to but a few? So is wealth, so is poetry, so is courage, so is art, so is wisdom. The key of the chamber is given to one keeper, but the chamber itself is to be opened for the entrance of the whole world. "Why should David or Paul have been more inspired than I am?" is a peevish inquiry, wanting as much in reason as in dignity, and finding its natural completion in the profane inquiry - "Why is God more Divine than I am?" It is the kind of question which vexes human life with the most pitiful discontent. It brings with it a brood worthy of itself. Why should Homer have been more poetical? Why should Plato have been more philosophical? Why should Euclid have been more mathematical? It will be answered that their supremacy is held only until a higher genius can successfully dispute it, and that Moses and John should be allowed to hold theirs on the same condition. Be it so! Where do Moses and John deprecate a challenge of their personal supremacy? Yet common justice will insist that if the inspiration of the Biblical writers be challenged, the rival inspiration must cover the whole of the original ground, for it must be borne in mind that not only do the Biblical writers touch upon some subjects which may be treated by ordinary sagacity and learning, but they distinctly touch subjects which are connected with the innermost life and secret of the universe. It will not be enough, then, to limit the competition to the production of felicitous proverbs or artistic parables; there must be a moral purity, an intellectual grasp, a spiritual insight and sympathy, which shall so combine as to represent the same mastery and familiarity in relation to the invisible and supernatural which are to be found in the inspired Testaments. Then will arise a farther question. Supposing something like an equality in the breadth and tone of the rival revelations, we must know in what direction they respectively move in affecting the practical life of mankind. Does the one move towards reverie, self-content, spiritual isolation? Does the other impel in the direction of philanthropy, sacrifice, worship? These are inquiries which can be definitively settled.

But the complaint is not so much that a few writers should have claimed Divine inspiration as that their authority should bind the religious faith of all men through all time. It is the idea of apparent despotism in doctrine that is strongly resented. Is the grievance substantial or imaginary? It should be observed that the Bible opens its revelation without any preliminary contract with the reader either as to a limit of faith or a degree of authority. The believers in inspiration may possibly have

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themselves to charge with a grave mistake upon this important point, for it might be supposed by anyone who has attended to the controversy without carefully reading the Bible itself that the book has upon its very forefront a distinct statement of its Divine inspiration and authority, which must be accepted without question or murmur. Nothing can be farther from the fact. As to a formal claim of inspiration, there is no more of it in the opening of Genesis than there is in the opening of the Metamorphosis. Were the Bible put into the hands of a scholarly and critical pagan without one word of introduction or comment, he would be a long time in discovering any tittle of a formal claim on the part of the book to be considered inspired and authoritative. He would at once be struck by the loftiness and firmness of its tone, and might be led so far as to say, "This man could not have spoken more boldly had the very gods themselves addressed him from the heavens"; or he might attribute the boldness to the quality of a language peculiar for pomp and sublimity; but he would not be either humbled or embarrassed by a preliminary demand for the surrender of his judgment or his life. The inspiration of the Bible grows upon a man much as a consciousness of his own intellectual and spiritual life grows upon him. This higher consciousness is often sudden in its development. It would seem that in a moment - preceded, it may be, by a long, though more or less unconscious, preparation - an initial lifetime is thrown off and a new spiritual citizenship is established. In this way the slave of dictionaries sometimes rises into a master of languages, the slow cipherer into a philosophical arithmetician, and the cautious student of politics into a sagacious statesman. The line of separation is invisible, almost imaginary, yet it divides experiences that are most diverse. In some such way the Bible has suddenly elevated itself from a school book to a revelation, and men have felt that they could not set it again in the rank of common writings without a sense of serious moral loss. They have not foreseen the result of their reading. At first they yielded to a merely literary fascination; by-and-by moral sympathy was touched in some degree; curiosity was excited; then came wonder, and after wonder came uncertainty, like a keen pain in the heart; then came a sentence like this to test the faith and to ripen the strange experience into Christian joy: "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"; and with that sentence came a responsibility which put the reader into a new and solemn relation to the book.

If the Bible is Divinely inspired, it follows that it is Divinely authoritative. Inspiration and authority must stand or fall together. Consider what it is that is professedly revealed. What is it? It is not history; it is not cosmogony; it is not ethnology; it is not even a code of morals. It is worthwhile, then, to pause a moment, that we may get the full emphasis of the answer. The supreme revelation that is made in the Bible is the revelation of God. Everything else belongs to the region of detail. The Divine personality is the vital and all-embracing revelation. Creation may suggest it, the curious interweaving and combination of daily events may point towards it as towards a possibility, but the Bible distinctly reveals it as the secret of all things. But the Bible, having made this revelation, cannot stop there. The term God includes all other terms. It is not a high symbol in abstract reasoning, or the almost aerial line which the metaphysician is content to begin with: it is the all-controlling factor in regions visible and invisible - it is this, or it is nothing. The moment, therefore, that the question of Divine Fatherhood or Rulership is raised, all the great questions covered by the term humanity are raised along with it, and by their very urgency they may easily create a clamour unfavourable to the consideration of their most important bearings. It is better, therefore, to reason downward from the quiet and solemn heights of the Divine personality than to struggle upwards through all the controversy and bewilderment of human interests. If the Bible declares the true idea of God, it must presumptively give the true doctrine of human nature. God must be self-declared. Man has no instruments that can measure the Divine power, or search out the Divine wisdom. But how is God to grant a revelation of himself? Christian theology answers, - By the inspiration of chosen men who shall be his instruments for this special purpose. Instantly that

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inspiration becomes thus individualised a great difficulty arises - the very difficulty which has been pointed out in the Divine incarnation: we look at the Divine mystery through the human medium, and instead of fixing the mind upon the inspiring Spirit, we fix it upon the inspired man.

It is thus that loss is incurred and that disadvantage is inflicted upon the subjects of inspiration. To speak, for example, of the inspiration of David, is to limit a Divine quantity by a human personality; and the danger (almost inevitable) is that the mind be fixed upon the term David rather than upon the term inspiration. We must enlarge the minor term if we can; and how is this to be done but by speaking, not of the inspiration of Moses or David, Ezekiel, or John, but of the inspiration of humanity, the individuals themselves being nothing but the points of contact at which a Divine action is set up? Much is gained by this elimination of the personal element. Inspiration is greater than personality. Instead of speaking of the authority of Paul, we are to speak of the authority of truth: Paul may, indeed, have been chosen as the medium of utterance, but the utterer is God. It is mere peevishness, or perhaps defiance, which chafes at the authority of a man; that is not the question at all; assent is sought to the proposition that the eternal authority of God has been declared through human instrumentality. In what other way could it have been declared? Is there any other way so free from the vulgarity of sensationalism, so rational, so philosophical, so ennobling, so sublime? No homage is offered to Moses, to David, or to Paul. The Bible, in all its Divine elements, would be unimpaired were the names of its human penmen removed. Yet those names are of peculiar value in humanising a volume which requires softening shadows to mitigate its unique glories. The writers never obtrude their personal dignity; they never conceal their personal weaknesses; the word of the Lord is a burden to them, and is often accepted with hesitation and mis-giving. But what if there be slips or other faults in the work of the inspired men? In one sense, so much the better; in the sense, for example, that these are imperfections which actually beget confidence - superficial imperfections which give all the advantage of contrast to work that is known to be solid and enduring. The musician is limited by his instrument. Though he may have ravished a world by his strains, he could be almost angry with the instrument which has failed to express the still finer tones which madden him with indescribable joy. In the matter of inspiration the Almighty proposed to dwell in houses of clay; what wonder if they were unequal to such a Presence?

We have said that the Divine inspiration of one man presupposes a corresponding degree of Divine inspiration (actual or possible) in all other men. The inspiration of speech presupposes the inspiration of hearing, true listening being much more than an exercise of a merely physical function. If few men know how to speak, fewer still know how to listen. Men are preoccupied; voices of prejudice, interest, self-worship, never cease to besiege the ear of the soul: add to these a drowsiness hardly distinguishable from a temptation, and a persistent appeal from the whole external estate of life, and the difficulty of spiritual hearing will be no longer a mystery. The universal inspiration comes through a quickening and sanctifying action upon the moral sense of mankind. The one thing which that moral sense never did accomplish is the discovery of God. In its most exalted and energetic moods it got no farther than an inscription to the Unknown Power, - a long way, too, - a sublime distance, verily, - still not a Bible, but a marble slab.

That the Biblical revelation of God does not instantly satisfy every mind, and bring into unanimity the religious sentiment of the world, is a self-destructive argument as applied against the doctrine of Divine inspiration. It proves too much. Where is there unanimity upon any subject which challenges alike the intellectual and moral attention of mankind? Not only so; the Bible itself anticipates the very difficulty, and mourns with pathetic lamentation that the disclosure of God has been received with incredulity or resentment. If it be suggested that such a revelation should have been given as

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would at once, by its copiousness and brilliance, have established itself in the confidence of the world, the suggestion proceeds in forgetfulness of the fact that that very confidence itself has been warped and vitiated, and is no longer the simple and honest love which is the secret of spiritual sympathy and interpretation. How to recover the idea of God was the problem. The Bible distinctly undertakes its solution, and in so doing claims authoritatively to be known, not as a volume of history, a code of morals, a treatise on philosophy, but as the one written Book of God.

Inspiration had at the very outset to encounter the difficulty of language, inasmuch as there was no speech common to the whole world. The world has a common hearty a common nature, a common instinct, but not a common tongue. Even in the same language words constantly vary in expressiveness and value: not only does time change their application and their limits, but they actually convey different meanings to different minds; and there is not always an interpreter at hand to draw the line of exact signification and prevent confusion and controversy. A word may not seem precisely the same thing to any two men, though it may be well known to both of them in a rough sense, which may suffice for ordinary purposes. How to express an eternal quantity through a mutable language! This is in another form the precise difficulty of the Incarnation, for what flesh is to spirit speech is to thought. The difficulty has never been wholly overcome - certainly not in the Incarnation, for Jesus Christ was despised and rejected of men; and certainly not in the Bible, for it has provoked more controversy, fiercer and bitterer too, than any other book in all literature. It should be noted, too, that the very objections which from the beginning have been urged against Christ have also been pressed against the Bible - objections relating to form, to structure, to origin, to apparent contradiction, and to manifest insufficiency to meet the demands of the situation. In both cases human expectation was set at naught, and something was offered which could not but mortify the pride of the receiver. We must, then, go beyond forms, symbols, and measurable quantities, and find the meaning of inspiration in elevation and purity of thought, in the scrupulousness and magnanimity of moral instinct, in the ennobling and all-hoping charity by which our best life is distinguished, and ceasing all pedantic strife about mere words, must cast ourselves with reverence and holy joy upon the eternal Word.

So far we have looked at inspiration as a doctrine; if we are to estimate its value as a fact we must get at least a general notion of the principal characteristics of the particular book on behalf of which inspiration is claimed. In this and the succeeding chapter we shall move within what may be called extra-theological limits, for a purpose which will be disclosed as we proceed. At the outset, we must strongly deny that any man could a priori have told the proper scope and tone of a book Divinely inspired. It is one thing to have the book, and to reason backwards; it is another to be called upon, in its absence, to say exactly what an inspired revelation should be. We have to found an opinion upon a particular book, and it will be entirely for the book itself to prove its own inspiration. The Bible must do what every other book must do, that is to say, it must make its own place in the world; let it prove its inspiration by inspiring its readers; let it show its heavenliness by the amount of heaven which it sets up on earth; if it fail by these tests, any attempt to uphold it by organised authority is absurd and hopeless. The object of this chapter is to gather into one view three or four marked characteristics of the book, simply regarded as a literary composition, and to ask the reader to assign them some value in the argument. At first, we open the Bible for critical, and not for theological purposes, and at once we encounter the difficulty arising from a profusion of peculiar and startling characteristics.

1. The Bible is undoubtedly marked by a wonderful reserve of power. Its writers nowhere betray any sign of exhaustion, nor do they display the slightest wish to make the most of their materials in a

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literary point of view. There are single chapters which any writer could easily have elaborated into a volume. The rule seems to have been to say everything in the fewest possible words. The Bible abounds in indications, brief, vivid, and multitudinous, and is, hence, pre-eminently a text-book. We wonder that the writers do not say more, yet we feel that even in their brevity they have said more than any other men have ever said. They have marvellous skill in perspective. They excite the greatest expectations, and then teach the readers whom they have thus almost frenzied that such expectations are to be held as a discipline, and not to be pushed to a premature fulfilment. The great ambition of other sacred books seems to be to do everything: they put a key into every lock, under every enigma they write at least a conjectural answer, they determine the attitudes and services proper to every hour of the day, and whatever intellectual energy they have is apparently expressible in letter and symbol. They resemble the finite in an ambitious determination to represent the infinite, whereas the Bible represents the infinite in a condescending endeavour to find expression in the finite. The Bible is a perpetual beginning, rich in its immediate satisfactions, but richer still in its promises. Through every revelation there is a hint of another revelation yet to come. The Bible has a wonderful firmament, out of which the light comes, and the rain, and from which the key of heaven may at any moment drop. Its earth is very legible; its firmament is an eternal mystery. Is this, then, the kind of book which is presumably worthy of a high origin? In this reserve of power has it any resemblance to the book of physical nature? In Bashan are there not more acorns than oaks? Under quiet exteriors are there any fierce energies? Is there anywhere a sign of exhaustion, as if the creation were almost equal to the Creator? Completeness may be a sign of weakness. Omnipotence has no final line. When the artist says that he can add nothing further to his picture, he confesses the limitation of his power: the attainment of his ideal is the signature of his weakness. The Bible is full of gaps, of unfinished pictures, of jagged and broken outlines; in the artistic sense of the word there is no perfection - the question is whether there is sufficient astronomic force to overcome all surface inequalities, and to secure the velocity which is rest and the friction which is light. The theologian must determine this, rather than the critic.

2. The Bible grapples with the highest subjects which can engage the attention of mankind. A professedly inspired book treating of mere trifles, or of points which are but of secondary interest, would have been the very cruelty of irony. The Bible advances instantly to the highest lines of spiritual inquiry: God, creation, invisible worlds, sin, death, immortality, are its familiar themes. But more important than the fact of its grappling with such subjects is its peculiar method of treating them. Its approach, so to speak, is invariably from the higher side: the Bible reveals, it does not suggest; it declares[^] it does not investigate; all the surprise is on the side of the reader, never on the side of the writer. Looked at in the light of presumptive inspiration, this is precisely the proper result. If God has spoken at all, he must have spoken positively and authoritatively. The tone of the Bible is emphatically immodest and exaggerated if it is the tone of mere inquirers or speculators; on the other hand, it is the only tone (so far as we can judge) that befits the supremacy and condescension of God. The imperative mood, which is seemly in a king, is brusque in an equal and impertinent in an inferior. This is the mood of the Bible. Though its subjects are innumerable there is no incertitude in its statement of any one of them; more, indeed, might have been stated as it appears to our impatience, but more may mean less, as excess of height is equivalent to darkness. The Bible tone is such as befits inspiration, but it is an obvious and fatal mistake if it is vox et proeterea nihil. Even ordinary men may secure respect when they speak subjunctively, but when they speak imperatively they become ridiculous and contemptible. It is not difficult to distinguish between a bray and a roar.

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The precision and weight of the lone will be seen to be the more remarkable when the peculiarity of the revelation is considered. The Bible seems to have a line without a limit. In nature, we seem to be bounded by the horizon; yet who has measured its diameter, or laid his hand upon the sky line? We move towards it, yet we never get away from the centre. It is the same with the Divine revelation. Its sky line recedes as we advance. The limit is visible yet unapproachable. We can get to the end of the chapters, yet we never get to the end of the book. The Bible combines a wide liberty with a conspicuous and sacred law of trespass. Its words of promise are rich in incentive and solace; thus: - "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"; "We know in part, and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away"; "It doth not yet appear what we shall be"; "Hereafter ye shall see"; "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." By such words (were there no other) the Bible separates itself from all other books which claim to convey such sacred communications.

3. Not only does the Bible grapple with the greatest subjects, and pronounce upon them with dogmatic precision and emphasis; it so discloses its subjects as to demand the interest of all nations through all time. The Bible insists upon being the Book of the whole world. It does this, too, in a very wonderful manner. At first it makes no claim as to circulation. By-and-by it becomes a book of much importance to a particular people. Farther on, its language increases in copiousness and boldness. Finally, it declares its leaves to be for the healing of the nations. The change of tone as between the Old Testament and the New is one of the most remarkable phenomena in all literature. There is a steady, though often imperceptible, movement from the local to the universal: in the Old Testament there is an antiquity which makes one solemn; so gigantic, so silent, so irreparable, are the ruins of empire, ritual, and fortune; there we find the thick moss, the biting canker, the seal of death; and all this strangely interspersed with beauty which must live for ever: in the New Testament there is all the stir of modern life - enterprise, revolution, progress. Men are moving from land to land, speaking in all languages, publishing one Name, and bearing one grim symbol. Is such a movement in keeping with the presumptive inspiration of the book? The Old Testament having reached the height of sublimity, what eminence remained for the new? After thunder and pomp, resounding trumpets and tramp of mailed men, there came gentleness and beauty, purity and nobleness, pardon and love. Is such a line of development in keeping with the presumptive inspiration of the book? What could be more daring than to displace a soldier by a missionary? This is an anti-climax in history, unless, indeed, it be "the foolishness of God."

Looking at great breadths of history, it is evident that the believers in the Abesta, the Veda, and even the Koran, have not been careful to create a system of world-wide propagation of their respective faiths. Little beyond a military spasm in the case of the last of them has been attempted in this direction. But the believers in the Bible have been impelled to translate it into all languages and to send it into all regions. The Bible has, as a mere matter of fact, forced its way where no other book has ever gone; and as for the variety of intellect which it has interested in its fortunes, no other writing can bear comparison with it. The coldest and the most ardent temperaments have alike sought to extend its influence: the richest learning and the most splendid eloquence have felt honoured in its service, and the most valorous men have hazarded their lives to publish its contents in hostile lands. They have done this because of the effect of Bible teaching upon their hearts; necessity was laid upon them, and out of this necessity came their highest joy. Such facts, which can be verified without trouble, show how true it is that the Bible so discloses its subjects as to claim the homage of all nations through all time. This consideration is evidently of some value as a practical test of the presumptive inspiration of the book. If nature be recalled as a witness, we shall be told

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that universality characterises all the great gifts of God, and therefore will probably mark any revelation which professes to have been indited by his Spirit.

4. The Bible contains the most startling proposition as to the destruction of sin. In some respects this is its supreme peculiarity. The action which the Bible proposes is infinitely more remarkable on the Divine side than on the human. How to take sin out of the world is the problem. Let the mind dwell upon the terms for a moment that their import may be felt. How is sin to be met, overcome, ultimately and for ever destroyed? By a poor human struggle? By self-ablution? By self-mutilation? Is sin to be taken away only by taking away the sinner? What originality would there be in so obvious and coarse a method? The question is how to save the man and destroy the sin, and the answer to an inquiry so vital cannot but be waited for with anxious impatience! In the midst of speculative debate upon the point, the Bible comes forward with this startling answer: God himself will die, the just for the unjust! If this be not the supreme blasphemy, it is the very Gospel of God! One or other it certainly is. It is not an answer that can be spoken of with indifference. As a human suggestion it is utter madness. It is salvation that is contemplated in the terms of the inquiry, but how can salvation come by death? Observe, this immediate argument does not touch the theology of the proposition; it is wholly concerned with the mere facts which lie upon the very surface of the inquiry, the most tragical of which is the proposition that the just should die for the unjust, and that by the shedding of blood should come the remission of sins. It is enough, in this connection, that we merely point it out, with the humble confession, indeed, that if it be not the most awful of all irony, and therefore the most sinful of all sins, it is the most affecting doctrine that ever appealed to the human heart! There it is, however, and the student must deal with it. If he gives it the go-by, he instantly disqualifies himself for this high investigation; he flees from difficulty, and becomes a mere trifler in controversy. If he takes it up seriously, he may possibly find that it gives articulateness to emotions that have long troubled his own heart with a kind of pleasurable pain - the pain of suffering and death, that he might make a way for the pardon and restoration of his own sinning child. The child may never have measured his own sin until he has seen the agony of his father's wounded love. But here we are touching points beyond our argument. This, suffice it now to say, is a mystery not to be illuminated by words - any heart that has suffered much through the sinfulness of others will catch some far-off hint of its meaning; for the rest, there is no interpretation possible to us.

5. The Bible is marked by a marvellous combination of sublimity and condescension alike as to subject and to method of treatment. There are heights from which descent would seem to be impossible, and there are familiarities which are apparently too minute and common to permit of return to the highest dignity. Yet the return, in both directions, is made with an ease which, even in a literary point of view, is undoubtedly wonderful, as if the heights and the depths were in reality but one plane to the invisible and ruling Spirit. If astronomic motion smooths the mountainous and rugged surface of earth, what if spiritual velocity make one line of things which to us are high and low, sublime and approachable? What a book is the Bible in the mere matter of variety of contents! Everything seems to be in it: poem, narrative, music, friendship, personal news, national intelligence, judgment, battle, prayer, song, anathema, and benediction. The bush is common enough, but what of the fire which makes the shepherd turn aside? The bread is such as has been used at supper, yet presently it will become the body of Christ! Paul is almost in heaven, yet in the very height of his anticipations he asks for his parchments and his cloak, and he knows exactly where both were left. Whole pages are taken up with obscure names, and more is told of a genealogy than of the day of judgment. Stories are half told, and the night falls before we can tell where the victory lay. Where is there anything to correspond with this? Not in any book, certainly, but in actual life there is the self-same thing over again without the loss of one line. If the sun could print for us what he sees on any

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day in the year, he would print a second edition of the Bible. We should have it all over again, including perhaps something even of creation itself, with its light, its ascending and descending waters, its trees bringing forth each after its kind, its sunny day, its starry night; but the humanity would be the same, still more vividly - family life, love, fear, envy, covetousness, magnanimity; chosen people and alien lands temples warm with the fire of the Lord, and houses of vain and corrupt idolatry; the noise of war and the song of peace; shepherds keeping their flocks, and soldiers listening for the foe; David in the wilderness and Jonah on the sea; weird dreams, spectral hands on the wall, baffled magicians, and truth-telling prophets; psalms for which no music is good enough, and proverbs that glisten with wit. All these, and more, we should have on every or any day in the year if the sun could but print as well as shine! This is just the Bible. It is a page torn out of the great volume of human life, only torn by the hand of God, and annotated by his Spirit. What is the daily newspaper but a revised translation of the Bible, often, indeed, with God left out in the spelling, though he cannot be left out in reality? Take to-morrow's paper in one hand and the Bible in the other, and see if the paper be not full of repetitions and if there be not something like an echo in all its utterances.

Other indications might be made, but these will do in the meantime, as indicating at least a basis of judgment. Here is a book which is marked by a wonderful reserve of power, which grapples with the greatest subjects which can engage the attention of mankind, which so grapples with them as to demand (under sanctions, too) the attention of all men through all time, which offers the most startling proposition for the removal of sin, and which is marked by a marvellous combination of sublimity and condescension, alike as to subject and to method of treatment. Is such a book, judging by these characteristics, likely to sustain any claim to be an inspired and authoritative revelation of the will of God? We only ask for a prima facie case. If such a case be granted, probably a careful and honest perusal of the Bible will follow, and this will be something gained.

5. THE SPIRITUAL ORGAN.

"ANY tyro can see the facts for himself if he is provided with those not rare articles a nettle and a microscope." These words are Mr. Huxley's. But why the microscope? Suppose the "tyro" should be provided with "a nettle" only? These inquiries point in a direction which materialists are unwilling to pursue in all its bearings and applications. The introduction of the microscope is an admission that even the keenest eyes cannot see certain substances, forms, and movements without the aid of optical instruments. Great store is to be set by this admission, for it requires in material investigation precisely what is demanded in spiritual inquiry. Suppose that one of Mr. Huxley's students should insist upon examining the nettle without the aid of the microscope, and should declare that he is unable to verify Mr. Huxley's observations? Mr. Huxley would properly reply that the inner structure and life of the nettle could not be seen by the naked eye, for they are microscopically "discerned." Common-sense would confirm the justness of this answer, and hold the student disentitled to pronounce any opinion upon the question. Now this is precisely what St. Paul does in treating the subject of spiritual investigation; he says that such an investigation cannot be conducted without an organ of which the microscope is a good emblem: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" - the student without the microscope cannot fully or scientifically examine the plant, neither can any inquirer discern and understand "the things of the Spirit of God," without a spiritual organ adapted to the difficulty of the investigation.

It will be remembered that Mr. Huxley desiderated for the ear something equivalent in service to the use of the microscope; thus: "The wonderful noon-day silence of a tropical forest is, after all, due only to the dulness of our hearing; and could our ears catch the murmurs of these tiny Maelstroms as they whirl in the innumerable myriads of living cells which constitute each tree, we should be stunned as with the roar of a great city." If Mr. Huxley could discover an instrument which could do for the ear what the microscope does for the eye, he would be entitled to claim attention to it, and to insist that no judgment respecting the air of a tropical forest was of any scientific value that was not formed by the aid of such instrument. This, again, is precisely the ground taken in the Bible; thus: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" - "They have ears to hear and hear not." There is hearing and hearing. Let two men listen to the same music; the one shall be held as by a spell, and the other shall become weary and impatient: to the one man the music is a revelation, to the other is a mere noise. In such a case whose judgment would be taken in valuing the music? An artist judging the controversy would say, This is not ordinary music; it is rich in unusual combinations; it cannot be received by the untrained or unsympathetic ear; it can be discerned only by the very spirit of music itself. Such an explanation would be allowed as valid and satisfactory, and the opposing opinion, formed without natural or scientific capability, would be held to be impertinent and worthless. It is just so that St. Paul talks upon Christian subjects. He insists that spiritual things must be compared with spiritual; that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; that such things are actually foolishness unto the natural man, so much so that he can neither receive them nor understand them, for they are spiritually discerned: he also explains why the Gospel is not seen with equal clearness by all men. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them"; and as to his own knowledge of the Gospel, St. Paul says, "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." So steadfastly does he stand to it that a spiritual microscope or organ is needed. He allows natural wit, sagacity, penetration, no place in this investigation: the gift is special; the power

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comes down from God. It will, of course, be easy to deny St. Paul's authority, but mere denial amounts to nothing. In his turn St. Paul might deny the authority of the musical interpreter, and treat with contempt every canon by which painting or eloquence is judged. If we cannot see the organism of a nettle without a microscope, can we see "the things of the Spirit of God" without special illumination? A man who will not give an opinion upon the exact structure of a grass blade without the help of a microscope ought to be the last man to deny the need of a spiritual organon for the interpretation of spiritual realities. Mr. Huxley will reply that the results of microscopic inquiry are self-illustrative and self-proving; but that is a mere accident of the case, arising from the fact that the thing examined is itself visible: but when did a microscope reveal a thought, or follow all the excitement of a passion? Yet thought and passion are susceptible of intellectual and moral analysis. Men understand each other by common sympathies. The mere mathematician does not understand the poet. Silence and speech may be mutual mysteries. Strangers who never saw each other may prove to be kindred in soul. Call it sympathy, affinity, spiritual faculty, or what you may, there is the fact that some kind of organon is needed for the fullest interpretation of all life that is marked by depth and richness. St. Paul gives this fact its spiritual application, or its application to the study of spiritual questions; he says there is a witness of the Spirit - a Divine shining in the heart - a birth - without which no man can see the kingdom of God. What is there unreasonable in this view, or improbable? What if religion itself be the instrument through which we read the things of the Spirit of God?

Another illustration supplied by science itself will point in the same direction. There are two shining surfaces afar off; they are both equally bright: viewed by the naked eye, there is no difference between them. Now examine them through the polariscope, and the one will show itself to be fire, and the other merely a reflection - not one spark of fire or ray of light in it! So much for the medium of observation. Yet when Christianity teaches that a special organ is needed for the interpretation of spiritual things, the materialist demurs and objects. Science itself being witness, the most piercing eye needs microscopic help; yet science is occasionally unjust enough to deny to others what is indispensable to itself. St. John attributes spiritual knowledge to "an unction from the Holy One," and St. Paul teaches the same doctrine in words very clear and strong: "Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen it, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him" (Isa. lxiv. 4), ... "but God hath revealed it unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. ii. 10). Such words show that the difficulty of spiritual interpretation was felt long before modern scientists propounded their non-spiritual theories, and they show also that the difficulty was met in the only practicable way, namely, by requiring a spiritual organ for the interpretation of spiritual personalities and doctrines. Christian thinkers might have been troubled if no provision had been made for the treatment of this materialistic objection, for then it would have seemed as if "the whole armour of God" was short of one weapon; but the folly was answered before the fool had spoken, that no one might imagine he had gotten an advantage against God.

It may be difficult to express in one word the nature of this spiritual organ, impossible, indeed, unless we go to Jesus Christ, who came to reveal the Father. He will give us the universal term. In the Old Testament we have hints, broken and scattered lights, of which we can make little that is complete and final, but in the sayings of Jesus and the writings which grew out of them we find terms which cover all things. In the New Testament there is one answer to all the great questions which excite human thinking; thus: What is God? God is love. What is the greatest commandment? Thou shalt love. To whom will God reveal himself? "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him." Love is the universal language - the child knows

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it, and the savage; it blesses earth, and is the very heavenliness of heaven. Not only so; it is the secret of all success, as it is the inspiration of all labour. And more still, it is not only true of Jesus that manifestation follows love; it is equally true of all ordinary things, and therefore presumptively true of spiritual illumination and progress. It may be helpful to the main argument to dwell upon this thought for a moment. To whom will any earnest man most unreservedly manifest himself? To a friend or to an enemy? To a cold critic or a sympathetic listener? Let two of his acquaintances or even kinsfolk be equally intelligent and honest, yet let one of them excel the other in tenderness or appreciativeness, in that one indescribable element which expresses itself in welcome and hospitality - not the welcome of ceremony, or the hospitality of bread - and to which of them will he manifest most of his inner life? He will in effect use the words of Jesus Christ, "I will manifest myself to him that loveth me." This is the testimony of universal experience. To whom will nature reveal itself - the sea, the hill, the light? To the clown or to the poet? The poet gets something out of "the meanest flower that blows." Appreciation creates for itself new heavens and a new earth. The wise listener hears music in the wind, the stream, and the twitter of unfamed birds. What does the clown hear, or the sordid man? Noises without order, tongues unknown and uninterpreted. Nature says precisely what Jesus Christ says - "I will manifest myself to him that loveth me." Illustrations are afforded by every aspect of life. We get out of nature and art what we ourselves bring to them. The Royal Academy is a show of coloured canvas, or a church of lofty and sacred genius, according to the capacity, the sympathy, or the reverence of the observer; any dog may see the canvas, but only a painter or a poet can see the picture. We have here, then, a continuance of the same reasonableness that marked the use of instruments, and in addition we have a tender graciousness expressed in the fact that the organ is a simple and universal faculty, which every man holds as part of his very manhood, and which he can exercise under all possible conditions of life.

A remarkable expression, in harmony with this interpretation of love, is used by St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"; enmity is set in opposition to love, and carnality in opposition to spiritual-mindedness. The carnal mind is not only enmity against godliness, or some modification or form of religion; it is enmity against God - the controversy is not with a fraction, but with the whole number. But the carnal mind! is not that a remarkable contradiction in terms? Not in terms only, but also in actual life, for the anomaly is known to every observer of human nature. Mind may be so overpowered by the gratification of animal appetites as to become the minor quantity in manhood, the body so overgrown as almost to have absorbed the soul. Where this is the case the very idea of God is repugnant, because that idea necessitates government, discipline, responsibility, all of which, again, are founded upon absolute and infinite holiness. Such a mind is at perpetual enmity against God: it is not subject to the law of God (carrying the ideas of government, discipline, and responsibility), neither indeed can be; "They that are in the flesh cannot please God" - "The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." More than the gratification of bodily appetites is involved in being "in the flesh" or having "the carnal mind." Self-gratification is a wide term; it is interchangeable with self-trust, self-sufficiency, self-completeness, or self-idolatry. Such selfhood always exists to the exclusion of spirituality; it is enmity against God, and, properly understood, it is enmity against human nature and against society. The reasonableness of this ought to be acknowledged by scientists even of the most irreligious class, for the moment they touch any medium or instrument of observation they acknowledge their own incompleteness, and their consequent need of help. The self-satisfied mind is enmity against science as much as against religion. It declares its own sufficiency, and by so much it declines offers of illumination or advancement. St. Paul, therefore, was stating a universal truth when he said that "the carnal mind is enmity against God." Docility is one of the first conditions of improvement, but docility and self-

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sufficiency are incompatible; there is a controversy between them, and according to the settlement of that contention will be the spirit and character of the future man.

From these observations it will be seen that in declining the leadership of the materialists we justify ourselves by denying their qualification to judge spiritual questions. Intellectual vigour as applied in one direction accounts for nothing in such qualification: "Having eyes, they see not; having ears, they hear not; and having hearts, they do not understand." Among them that are born of women there may not have appeared men of greater intellectual capacity, but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than their chief or king. Evidently so, for it is a higher kingdom altogether, involving destinies and conferring advantages which cannot be described in comparative terms. The great error which scientists have committed is having, as such, taken upon themselves to give any opinion upon spiritual subjects; and religious men would commit a similar error if, as such, they undertook to pronounce judgment upon purely scientific questions. A man who has familiarised himself with the organism of a nettle is not therefore entitled to give an opinion upon the inspiration of the Bible, any more than is a man who can compose a sermon therefore qualified to criticise a painting. Scientists, too, may avail themselves of the very questionable advantage of supposing themselves able to ignore religion, whereas religious men are bound by their very loyalty to the Christian faith to encourage and applaud the progress of science, and to turn such progress into an occasion of religious thankfulness. Scientists have at present the charm of novelty, almost romance, whilst religious thinkers are reposing upon truths ripened and mellowed by centuries, yet capable of adaptation to the demands of current experience and progress. Controversy between science and religion is wholly out of place, and was not begun by religion. Science, falsely so called, and vain philosophy have been consistently condemned by Christian apostles, but the very terms show reverence for what is true and solid both in the one and in the other. Probably that controversy will not be allayed until the relationships (as distinguished from the dogmas) of religion and science be adjusted. Science marks but a single province of human inquiry, and (not impossibly) is as at present pursued limited to one section of one world; religion, on the other hand, touches the whole circle of human life, and rules the spirit and habitudes of all worlds. To compare the universal with the limited is to be unjust to both, and to exalt the limited above the universal is to replace the sun with a private lamp. Religion and science has each its peculiar mystery; and if the one is to be avoided or discredited on account of its difficulties, the other must fall by the rigour of the same law.

In his "Synthetic Philosophy (First Principles)" Mr. Herbert Spencer concludes an elaborate and able chapter on ultimate religious ideas with a remarkable suggestion bearing upon this argument. Having expounded a good many theories, and shown the insufficiency of a good many hypotheses, he says, "Thus the mystery which all religions recognise turns out to be a far more transcendent mystery than any of them suspect - not a relative, but an absolute mystery. ... The Power which the universe manifests to us is utterly inscrutable." In a theologian this tone would have been regarded as dogmatic; certainly its modesty is well hidden by its decisive vigour. But is the doctrine true? So far as the Bible is concerned, it is not true that the absolute inscrutableness of the Power was unsuspected. On the contrary, it is affirmed in manifold terms, and specially declared by Jesus Christ. "No man knoweth the Father save the Son"; "No man hath seen God at any time"; "No man can see God and live." A recollection of such sentences would have modified the breadth of the foregoing assertion, and brought down its argumentative value to its proper nothingness. We have already pointed out that this is a question of revelation; the inscrutableness is granted ("Who can find out God, or know the Almighty unto perfection?"), but the distinct revelation is also affirmed by Jesus Christ, and that affirmation has created for itself too great an influence in the world to be simply ignored. At the risk of re-traversing a few steps, it may be well to recall the emphasis of that

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affirmation, "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"; "No man knoweth the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him"; "I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world"; "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father"; "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also." With declarations such as these before us, identified with a name upon which a Church is founded, and supported by a character whose purity and beneficence have excited the wonder of the world, is it fair on the part of any philosopher to dwell upon the inscrutableness of God as if no revelation had at all events been professed? If Mr. Herbert Spencer had never heard of the Christian faith, he could only have stopped where he has done so; but with that faith before him, he was bound to respect it, at least on intellectual grounds. We insist that it be remembered that Mr. Herbert Spencer has not treated the Christian argument, considered as an anticipation of his own theory, and that therefore the paganism of his logic should not be taken for more than it is worth.

Looking at the whole ground thus traversed, two convictions have been strengthened by the anti-Christian argument: -

First, that the theoretical exclusion of the spiritual element, instead of diminishing the mystery of human life, greatly and painfully increases it. Viewing the whole question as lying within the province of reason, it is to us easier to believe that behind all visible things there is an infinite and eternal Spirit than to believe that all things are self-existent, self-dependent, and wholly material. Our opinion upon this point has been clearly expressed by the author just quoted – "The atheistic theory is not only absolutely unthinkable, but even if it were thinkable, would not be a solution: the assertion that the universe is self-existent does not really carry us a step beyond the cognition of its present existence, and so leaves us with a mere restatement of the mystery." Reason itself is more satisfied with the theory of an independent origin and a supreme rule than with the theory of no origin and no supremacy. If any man could make good a proposition to give us a doctrine of the universe without mystery, and that would satisfy all the inquiries of reason, he would come into the discussion with immense advantage; but instead of such a proposition, we are invited to accept a theory which treats a part as if it were the whole, and offers no answer to the wonder and the sorrow of human life. If the Bible were removed from civilisation, it would leave more mystery behind it than it would take away, with this difference, too: that whilst without it we should have mystery cold, dark, and despairing, with it we have mystery relieved by light and accompanied by the most pathetic and comforting promises. It cannot be too constantly remembered that the Bible itself fully recognises its own mysteries, and never once asks to be accepted on the ground that it removes every difficulty from human thinking, and renders it impossible for the human intellect to confound itself by impious speculation. From beginning to end there is mystery in the Bible, but is it not just such mystery as the awfulness of eternity might be supposed to throw upon the narrow and troubled way of time? Is not a man a mystery to a child? And being such, is his existence to be denied or his superiority to be questioned? The child himself is a mystery, and the man is but a continuation of the same difficulty. There is a mystery that is natural and proper, even necessary, so to say; and there may be a mystery which is simply arbitrary, or a mystery to those only who refuse to avail themselves of proffered light. Is there any monotony so intolerable as life would be without mystery? Every day brings its own secret, and the surprise of the coming hour is often its keenest joy. Properly understood, it may be that mystery is but the longer word for mercy. We are drawn forward by the mighty and often gracious power of the unknown. What is beyond the next curve on the road? May not to-morrow open our prison door? By such questioning is melancholy kept at bay, and weakness preserved from despair. All our life is set in mystery, from the cradle to the grave: education, enterprise, art, wit, poetry, music, are all caught in the same cloud, a cloud often dark,

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yet with fringes of light and rents through which the blue is seen. Reduce the universe to a self-existent, self-ruling, and self-terminating machine, and still there will remain the mysteries: How came it to be? By what means is it kept together? How did we come into it? What is the final appeal of right against wrong? And what is there, if anything, beyond death? Materialism is deficient in compass: it cannot comprehend the whole case: its analysis of a leaf is admirable, but it is lost amidst the secrets of the heart - it creates more mysteries than it removes, and in the long run it aggravates itself into the greatest mystery of all.

Second, the non-spiritual argument has strengthened the conviction that any creed which discourages the pure aspirations or destroys the honourable hopes of mankind is presumptively untrue. It will not be denied that in the human heart there is a "pleasing hope, a fond desire, a longing after immortality." This aspiration brings the most elevating and chastening influences to bear upon human thinking and human activity, and is, on that account, likely to be the expression of a profound spiritual reality. Its extinction would not only leave a great void in the heart; it would also remove encouragements and restraints which are needful to the highest development of strength and the most healthful discipline of character. Granted that goodness should be valued and pursued for its own sake, yet goodness itself is impaired alike in quality and in quantity by being withdrawn from the infinite relationships and bearings which are recognised by Christianity; it is degraded within measurable and even variable limits, and is in danger of being treated with cunning manipulation and used for selfish purposes. Not only so; immunities are granted to vice, so long as it is wily enough to escape the clutches of the law, by assuring the vicious man that when he has played out his last trick he is as well off as the man who has vainly troubled himself with a conscience, seeing that they both pass into everlasting darkness and silence. If in the common affairs of life men are moved by hope, it is but a fuller application of the same law which is found in the influence of Christian aspiration, the one being the limited, the other the unlimited term. Besides this, any doctrine that promises the universal establishment of righteousness - which asserts the coming of judgment upon every form of evil, and the raising up of every virtue that has been trampled upon - commends itself to the understanding and the conscience of man as a doctrine that is presumptively true. It is, in fact, the one doctrine that is needed as the inspiration of honest men and the defence of all holy and generous interests. Under its authority and consolation men can wait hopefully, and whilst they are waiting they can urge the judgments of God upon the attention of evil-doers. Withdraw this doctrine, and it is impossible to deny that a great loss has been inflicted upon the human family, a loss which must be the more keenly felt because all the arrangements of civilised society have been pointed in the very direction of its truthfulness, that is to say, society has been aiming, in all its encouragements of virtue and all its repressions of vice, to generate a social religion, and establish a commonwealth in which reprobacy shall be reduced to a minimum. But these local attempts have been founded upon what appeared to be a universal authority, and have drawn their sanctions from it. Deny that authority or impair it, and you loosen the bonds of social organisation, and discourage every hope of perfect union and world-wide peace. Christian doctrine cannot be simply ignored or banished. It has wrought itself too thoroughly into the living tissue of society to be removed without necessitating the most intricate and serious consequences. Not only will there be required a reconstruction of society as it exists in Christendom, but every man who has been moved by Christian aspiration will, so to speak, have to divest himself of his old consciousness, and start his whole life from a new centre; in a word, he will have to give the lie to himself, and put to silence all the voices of his own nature which have hitherto been to him as the echoes of the voice of God.

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With that wonderful completeness which we have pointed out as belonging to the Bible, the very ground of scientists, so far as they dwell upon the materiality and limitations of human life, has been anticipated in the pages of revelation. It was not reserved for the microscope to find out man's weakness, or to teach him to look to the plants of the field for types of his frailty and perishableness. It might be supposed, from much that has passed under our review, that not until quite recently was it known that there is a protoplasm common to man and to the fading grass; a quotation or two will show how mistaken would be this supposition: "As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more"; "He cometh forth as a flower, and is cut down;"; "We all do fade as a leaf." The Bible does not leave man without humiliation as to the tenure of earthly life: The Lord "knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust"; "He remembered that they were but flesh; a wind that passeth away, and cometh not again"; "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Humiliation enough, long before Mr. Huxley came "with those not rare articles a nettle and a microscope." On the other hand, the Bible never fails to magnify the inner and better life of man, thus: "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"; "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour"; "As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"; "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is"; "We know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

Dr. Tyndall, whose writings cannot be read without the highest advantage, does, indeed, allow that something more than pure materialism is needed to meet the whole circle of human want. With great beauty, he says: "The circle of human nature is not complete without the arc of feeling and emotion. The lilies of the field have a value for us beyond their botanical ones - a certain lightening of the heart accompanies the declaration that 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.' The sound of the village bell which comes mellowed from the valley to the traveller upon the hill has a value beyond its acoustical one. The setting sun, when it mantles with the bloom of roses the Alpine snows, has a value beyond its optical one. Round about the intellect sweeps the horizon of emotions from which all our noblest impulses are derived." Yet, in the face of these admissions. Dr. Tyndall would, unless we greatly misinterpret his meaning, take special care to exclude theology as a possible help to the full satisfaction of human nature. It is not to the theologian, but the poet, that he extends the hand of welcome: "I think the poet will have a great part to play in the future of the world. To him it is given for a long time to come to fill those stores which the recession of the theologic tide has left exposed; to him, when he rightly understands his mission and does not flinch from the tonic discipline which it assuredly demands, we have a right to look for that heightening and brightening of life which so many of us need. He ought to be the interpreter of that power which, as

'Jehovah, Jove, or Lord,'

has hitherto filled and strengthened the human heart." Such an admission has meaning in it, and hope, notwithstanding the dislike, latent rather than fully expressed, of theological study and suggestion. There are not wanting men, whose intellectual power Dr. Tyndall himself would be the first to recognise and honour, who believe that the "Poet" has already come with the "interpretation," and the solace. What if they be right? Dr. Tyndall is longing for a poet; other men, whom he would call great and good, think that in Jesus Christ they have found the "Interpreter" of that power which has been named "Jehovah, Jove, or Lord." Certainly Jesus called him by the name

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of Father, and spoke much of his love and care. No tenderer words were ever spoken; no deeper words ever challenged intellectual attention; and as for noble deeds, his life is full of them. What the "poet" can do more than Jesus did in the interpretation of God, we cannot even imagine. When he blessed little children, and gave lost women a new beginning of life; when he brought the prodigal home, and delivered the poor from the spoiler; and did all this as the will of his Father, - it is not to be wondered at that some bruised and despairing hearts should have taken him as their Poet, their Teacher, and their Lord. It seemed as if he was the very Refuge which men needed, and a very present help in time of trouble. His voice always sounded as if it might have been God's own; there was so much pathos in it, so much real lovingkindness, and such a sounding of something far off and unknown. Possibly, too, those outcast women may have seen further than some proud thinkers, and have known through their very sin and its mortal pain more of Christ's real nature than could ever be known by self-righteousness and supposed infallibility. Shall we, then, cast off this Man thoughtlessly, and bear our sorrow in darkness, until a poet come with new songs and unheard rhythms? The question is serious enough, and much may depend upon the answer. We believe that poets will come generation after generation until the end of time, but we have no hope that any of them will call God by a tenderer name than Father, or propose a higher obedience than purity and love.

6. PRAYER FOR SPECIAL DIRECTION AND COMFORT.

Almighty God, teach us thy greatness through thy goodness, lest we be affrighted, and become as men in whom there is no strength. We would see thy glory, but our eyes could not bear the light; may we therefore see thy mercy, and become accustomed to the milder glory. Show us that thy pity is great, that thy love itself is glorious, and thus, little by little, as we are able to bear it, do thou continue and complete the revelation of thyself to our wondering and grateful hearts. Thou dost grow upon us like an increasing light; continue so to do until there be in us no darkness at all, our whole life beautiful with the presence of thy glory, cleansed and purified by the fire of thy righteousness.

We bless thee for thy great care over us: our bones are thine; thou dost set them down one by one in thy record book: the very hairs of our head are all numbered; thou dost count our steps and hedge about our way, and with manifold defences and innumerable ministries dost thou train us in this ever-wonderful life. We cannot tell what to-morrow may bring forth; therefore dost thou call upon us to crowd our energy into the present moment, and make it hot with noble and strenuous endeavour to be good and to do right. Help us to dismiss to-morrow from our thoughts; may it have no place in our dreamings; may we be men of to-day, urgent and rapid as those who are upon the king's business.

Thou hast given us houses to dwell in; thou dost spread our table morning, noon, and night; a hundred springs of joy and comfort thou dost cause to burst forth around us. Thou dost keep the roof upon our head, even when the storm breaks upon it with utmost fury. Behold, thou dost kindle our fire; thy hand is round about the light of our lamp. We therefore still bless thee with new hymns and ever-enlarging and heightening songs; yea, our whole life would become one swelling psalm, rising unto heaven, expressing our daily love, our continual and inviolable trust. By the grace of God we are what we are. Thou didst fill up the pit into which our feet had well nigh fallen. Thou didst bring down the high places which made us fear - behold, thou didst smite the mighty archers of Kedar, and make those who boasted themselves therein as hirelings who had but a year to live. Thou rulest the ragings of the sea; thou makest stars that fit the darkness of the night; thou dost cause thy chariot wheels to become eyes, fierce amid their brightness, to all pursuing enemies; thou dost find a path for us in the wilderness, and rivers break out in unexpected places. Thou art worthy to receive from us glory and power and majesty and riches; hear the ascriptions of our burning gratitude and return the same into our hearts as heavenly benedictions.

We bless thee that we are here, for this is none other than the house of God and the gate of heaven. We know the language of the place; it has become as our native tongue by its familiar tenderness. Behold, here we meet a great cloud of witnesses, the sainted and honoured dead who are round about the throne, and are looking on with eyes that never tire nor sleep. The Lord grant unto us all the power and inspiration of the most sacred memories that gather around the holy place! We remember our sin, but in the presence of thy grace it is as nothing. Where sin abounds grace doth much more abound. Thou dost cause life to overflow death, and immortality thou dost cause to outshine all the mean lustre of this present moment. So thou dost meet our sin with the infinite grace that is in Christ Jesus. The blood of Jesus Christ, thy Son, cleanseth from all sin. We leave our burden at the Cross; we shall never find it more.

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Hear the hearts that are full of prayer, that cannot utter their desires because of the vehemency of their secret emotion. Hear the parent who wonders where the wanderer is, and would offer him a thousand welcomes if he would return. Hear the mother who must live in her sighs, because she dare not put them into speech, so keen and poignant her yearnings after those who are out of the way. Hear thou the unuttered desires of the penitent, the man who would return if he could find some secret door by which to come stealthily into his father's dishonoured house; find such a way for him thyself, this very day, and make this the birthday of his soul, the beginning of a blessed immortality. Hear us for our loved ones who are sick, mighty Physician, tender Nurse, go into all our sick chambers, and by the brightness of thy presence bring healing to the souls that must soon quit their tenements of clay.

The Lord look upon the old man tottering over his staff and looking into his grave; the Lord's own fingers touch the cheek of the babe cooing and crowing in his cradle; the Lord's eyes be for good upon the bent old woman, who has seen the measure of her time and longs for the city of rest! The Lord break the bones of every evil man and turn his counsel into night and confusion and trouble, and bring him thereby not to ruin, but to contrition! The Lord unsettle the foundations of every iniquitous throne; the Lord baffle the decrees and the counsels of every wicked empire and prosper every man that endeavours to do good with simplicity and earnestness!

The Lord hear us in these things! We are always in his arms; may he now draw us still more closely to his heart! Amen.

7. THE UNKNOWABLE GOD.

"God is great, and we know him not." - Job xxxvi. 26.

GOD - Unknown, Unknowable; even so, yet not the less the one Reality, and the one Energy of the universe. What it is possible to know it must be possible to explain, to put into an equal number of words, which, being all set together, sum themselves into the exact measure of the thing that is known. What can be known can of course be contained by the faculty which knows it. The vessel is of necessity larger than its contents. It, then, any faculty of mine knows God, that faculty contains God, and is in that sense larger than God, which is impossible and absurd. Whatever I can know is, by the very fact that I can know it, less than I am; bigger, it may be, as to mere size in length and breadth, a huge disc that glares with light, or a globe flying fast, yet with speed that can be set down in so many ciphers or lines of ciphers on a child's slate, so clearly that we can say: It is so much an hour the great wings fly, and not one mile more. What is that but mere bigness, an appeal to our easily excited wonder, a Size that shakes our pride and bids us mind our ways, or a weight may fall upon us from the sky? It is nothing but infinitised mud, nothing but an ascertainable quantity and intensity of fire - a wide and high stair leading to nothing!

Unknown - Unknowable. Thanks. I am tired of the Known and the Knowable, tired of saying this star is fifty millions of miles in circumference, that star is ninety millions of miles farther off than the moon, and yonder planet is five million times larger than the earth. It is mere gossip in polysyllables, getting importance by hugeness, something that would never be named in inches, and that owes its fame to the word millions. It is so that men want to make a mouthful of God! A great mouthful, no doubt, say even to the extent of super-millions squared and cubed into a whole slateful of ciphers, but pronounceable in words! Failing this, they suppose they have destroyed him by saying he is Unknowable and Unknown. It makes me glad to think he is! That any One or any Thing should be unknowable and should yet invite and stimulate inquiry is educationally most hopeful. O soul of mine, there are grand times in store for thee! I cannot rattle my staff against the world's boundary wall, and say, The End! - Poor staff! It thrusts itself into a cloud; it goes over the edge; it is like to be pulled out of my hand by gravitation from another centre stronger than the earth's core, a gravitation that pulls even the earth itself and keeps it from reeling and falling. Yes, prying staff, thou canst touch nothing but a most ghostly emptiness. Soul of man, if thou wouldst truly see - see the Boundless, see the Possible, see God - go into the dark when and where the darkness is thickest. That is the mighty and solemn sanctuary of vision. The light is vulgar in some uses. It shows the mean and vexing detail of space and life with too gross a palpableness, and frets the sensitiveness of the eyes. I must find the healing darkness that has never been measured off into millions and paraded as a nameable quantity of surprise and mystery. Deus absconditus. God hideth himself, oftenest in the light; he touches the soul in the gloom and vastness of night, and the soul, being true in its intent and wish, answers the touch without a shudder or a blush. It is even so that God comes to me. He does not come through man's high argument, a flash of human wit, a sudden and audacious answer to an infinite enigma, or a toil-some reply to some high mental challenge. His path is through the pathless darkness - without a footprint to show where he stepped; through the forest of the night he comes; and when he comes the brightness is all within! My God - unknown and unknowable - cannot be chained as a Prisoner of logic, or delivered into the custody of a theological proposition, or figured into literal art. Shame be the portion of those who have given him a setting within the points of the compass, who have robed him in cloth of their own weaving, and surnamed him at the bidding of their cold and narrow fancy! For myself, I know that I cannot know him, that I

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have a joy wider than knowledge, a conception that domes itself above my best thinking, as the sky domes itself in infinite pomp and lustre above the earth whose beauty it creates. God! God! God! best defined when undefined; a Fire that may not be touched; a Life too great for shape or image; a Love for which there is no equal name. Who is he? God. What is he? God. Of whom begotten? God. He is at once the question and the answer, the self-balance, the All.

We have tried to build our way up to him by using many words with some cunning and skill. We have thought to tempt him into our cognition by the free use of flattering adjectives. Surely, said we, he will pour his heart's wine into the golden goblets which we hold to catch the sacred stream. We have called him Creator, Sovereign, Father; then Infinite Creator, Eternal Sovereign, Gracious Father, as if we could build up our word-bricks to heaven and surprise the Unknown and the Un-knowable in his solitude, and look upon him face to face. We have come near to blasphemy herein. What wonder had we been thrust through with a dart! We have thought our Yesterday roomy enough to hold God's Eternity, and have offered him with every show of abounding sufficiency the hospitality of our ever-changing words as a medium of revelation. Our words! Words that come and go like unstable fashions. Words that die of very age; words that cannot be accepted unanimously in all their suggestions and relations even by two men. Into these words we have invited God, and because he cannot come into them but as a devouring fire, we have stood back in offence and unbelief. God! God! God! ever hidden, ever present, ever distant, ever near; a Ghost, a Breath, making the knees knock in terror, ripping open a grave at the very feet of our pleasure, a mocking laugh at the feast, filling all space like the light, yet leaving room for all his creatures; a Terror, a Hope - Undefinable, Unknowable, Irresistible, Immeasurable. God is a Spirit!

Undefinable, Unknown, Unknowable, Invisible, Incomprehensible, grim negatives, emptinesses that deceive us by their vast hollowness, and nothing more, are these surly words. The wrong word is to blame for the wrong conclusion. We have chosen the very worst word in our haste, and have needlessly humbled ourselves in doing so. We have made a wall of the word when we might have made it into six wings, twain to cover the face, twain to cover the feet, and twain with which to fly. Instead of Unknowable, Invisible, Incomprehensible, say Super-knowable, Super-visible, Super-comprehensible, and at once the right point of view is reached and the mystery is made luminous. From the Unknowable I turn away humiliated and discouraged; from the Super-knowable I return humbled, yet inspired. The Unknowable says: Fool, why bruise thy knuckles in knocking at the final granite as if it were a door that could be opened? The Super-knowable says: There is something larger than thy intelligence; a Secret, a Force, a Beginning, a God! Evermore is the difficulty in the lame word and not in the solemn truth. We make no progress in religion whilst we keep to our crippled feet; in its higher aspects and questionings it is not a road to walk upon, it is an open firmament to fly in. Alas for his progress who mistakes crutches for wings! Yet this absurdity has so recommended itself to our coldness as to win the name of prudence, sobriety, and self-suppression. We have lost the broad and mighty pinions that found their way to heaven's gate, and the eye of burning love that looked steadfastly into the sacred cloud. We have now taken to walking, and our lame feet pick their uncertain way over such stones as Unknown, Unknowable, Invisible, Incomprehensible, and we finish our toilsome journey exactly where we began it. Enthusiasm sees God. Love sees God. Fire sees God. But we have escaped the revealing, because sympathetic, fire, and have built our prudent religion upon the sand. On the sand! Think of it! So we go to it, and walk around it, and measure it, and break it up into propositions, and placard it on church walls, and fight about it with infinite clamour and some spitefulness. My soul, amid all Unknowableness, Incomprehensibleness, and other vain and pompous nothings, hold fast to the faith that thou canst

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know God, and yet know nothing merely about him; know him by love and pureness, and not know about him by intellectual art or theological craft.

Invisible! This is what the Bible itself says. The invisibleness of God is not a scientific discovery; it is a Biblical revelation; it is a part of the Bible. "No man hath seen God at any time" - "No man can see God and live." This is the difficulty of all life, and the higher the life the higher the difficulty. No man can see himself and live! He can see his incarnation, but his very self - the pulse that makes him a man - he has never seen, he can never see! Anatomy says it has never found the soul, and adds, "Therefore there is no soul." The reasoning o'erleaps itself and takes away its own life by rude violence. Has anatomy found Genius? Has the surgical knife opened the chamber in which Music sings and seen the Singer? Or has anatomy laid its finger upon Imagination and held it up, saying, "Behold, the mighty wizard"? But if there is no soul, simply because anatomy has never found one, then there is no genius, no music, no imagination, no chivalry, no honour, no sympathy, because the surgeon's knife has failed to come upon them in wounding and hacking the human frame! Anatomise the dead poet and the dead ass, and you will find as much genius in the one as in the other; therefore there is no genius! Who that valued his life would set his foot on such a bridge as that rickety "therefore"? But some men will venture upon any bridge that seems to lead away from God; a very simple anatomy will find the reason; it is because "they DO NOT like to retain God in their hearts" - it is not because of intellectual superiority, but because of moral distaste. An internal cancer accounts for this invincible aversion.

Unknown; Unknowable; truly, yet not on that account unusable and unprofitable. That is a vital distinction. The master of science humbly avows that he has not a theory of magnetism; does he therefore ignore it, or decline to inquire into its uses? Does he reverently write its name with a big M, and run away from it shaken and whitened by a great fear? Verily he is no such fool. He actually uses what he does not understand. I will accept his example and bring it to bear upon the religious life. I do not scientifically know God; the solemn term does not come within the analysis which is available to me; God is great, and I know him not: yet the term has its practical uses in life, and into those broad and obvious uses all men may inquire. What part does the God of the Bible play in the life of the man who accepts him and obeys him with all the inspiration and diligence of love? Any creed that does not come down easily into the daily life to purify and direct it is by so much imperfect and useless. I cannot read the Bible without seeing that God (as there revealed) has ever moved his believers in the direction of courage and sacrifice. These two terms are multitudinous, involving others of kindred quality, and spreading themselves over the whole space of the upper life. In the direction of courage, not mere animal courage, for then the argument might be matched by gods many, yet still gods, though their names be spelt without capitals; but moral courage, noble heroism, fierce rebuke of personal and national corruption, sublime and pathetic judgment of all good and all evil. The God-idea made mean men valiant soldier-prophets; it broadened the piping voice of the timid inquirer into the thunder of the national teacher and leader; for brass it brought gold, and for iron silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron; instead of the thorn it brought up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier the myrtle-tree, and it made the bush burn with fire. Wherever the God-idea took complete possession of the mind every faculty was lifted up to a new capacity, and borne on to heroic attempts and conquests. The saints who received it subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions; quenched the violence of fire, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Any idea that so inspired in man life and hope is to be examined with reverent care. The quality of the courage determines its value, and the value of the idea which excited and sustained it. What is true of the courage is true also of the sacrifice which has ever followed the acceptance of

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the God-idea. Not the showy and fanatical sacrifice of mere blood-letting; many a Juggernaut, great and small, drinks the blood of his devotees; but spiritual discipline, self-renunciation, the esteeming of others better than one's self, such a suppression of the self-thought as to amount to an obliteration of every motive and purpose that can be measured by any single personality, such are the practical uses of the God-idea. It is not a barren sentiment. It is not a coloured vapour or a scented incense, lulling the brain into partial stupor or agitating it with mocking dreams: it arouses courage; it necessitates self-sacrifice; it touches the imagination as with fire; it gives a wide and solemn outlook to the whole nature; it gives a deeper tone to every thought; it sanctifies the universe; it makes heaven possible. Unknown - Unknowable. Yes, but not therefore unusable or unprofitable.

Say this God was dreamed by human genius. Be it so. Make him a creature of fancy. What then? The man who made, or dreamed, or otherwise projected such a God must be the author of some other work of equal or approximate importance. Produce it! That is the sensible reply to so bold a blasphemy. Singular if man has made a Jehovah and then has taken to the drudgery of making oil paintings, and ink poems, and huts to live in. Where is the congruity? A man says he kindled the sun, and when asked for his proof he strikes a match which the wind blows out! Is the evidence sufficient? Or a man says that he has covered the earth with all the green and gold of summer, and, when challenged to prove it, he produces a wax flower which melts in his hands! Is the proof convincing? The God of the Bible calls for the production of other gods - gods wooden, gods stony, gods ill-bred, gods well-shaped, and done up skilfully for market uses; from his heavens he laughs at them, and from his high throne he holds them in derision. He is not afraid of competitive gods. They try to climb to his sublimity, and only get high enough to break their necks in a sharp fall. Again and again I demand that the second effort of human genius bear some obvious relation to the first. The sculptor accepts the challenge, so does the painter, so does the musician; why should the Jehovah-dreamer be an exception to the common rule of confirmation and proof? We wait for the evidence. We insist upon having it; and, that we may not waste our time in idle expectancy, we will meanwhile call upon God, saying, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven!"

8. PRAYER.

O THOU who didst never begin and who canst never end, All in all, more than heart can dream or tongue can tell, we are now about to speak of thee, and to tell the nothing that we know. Thou canst make our hearts burn within us; that burning shall be the purification of our souls and the chief comfort of our lives. Come to us, not in terror, but in love, not in the wrath which shakes the universe, but in the pity which saves the world. We have heard the crashing of thy thunder and would never hear it anymore; henceforward do thou mercifully be unto us as the silent dew or the quiet light, and our souls shall live in thy forbearance. Jesus, save us! Jesus, cleanse us! Blood of the Lamb, take our sins away! God of gods and Lord of lords, by the showing of thyself make the universe look small and make our life a throb of thine own eternity. Deliver us from mistaken notions concerning thyself, and let us see all thy love in Christ Jesus thy dear Son. Surely thou art our heart's perplexity by reason of thy mystery, and our heart's supreme delight by reason of thy continual grace. "We know that we have wronged thee by our mistaken views of thy character, yet dost thou gently correct us by many revelations of power and grace. Continue thy holy ministry in our hearts until all dross is burnt away and there is left only the fine gold of true wisdom. O Christ, cleanse us I Holy Spirit, make us like unto God himself! Amen.

9. GOD AS PERSONALLY REALISED, AN APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE: THE PERSONAL GOD.

"The Lord God, even my God." - 1 Chron. xxviii 20.

EVERY man has what practically amounts to a god of his own. That is to say, he has a conception of God which no other mind has seized, and that conception forms the living centre of his personal religion. There are several gods in Christendom which I have renounced, and against which every honest man should, from any point of view, inveigh with strong indignation. Three examples occur to me at this moment (1) There is a god that specifically foreordains so many people to be saved and so many to be lost; this god calls upon all men to be saved, well knowing that the call will neither be heard nor answered, because of an arbitrary decree which he himself has issued. This god I abhor and renounce, and I treat his power with scorn and defiance. No such god could ever secure my confidence or tempt me into other than mocking prayer. (2) Then there is another god; in many respects the exact contrary of this. He is infinitely soft; he is "all tears"; he is constantly mispending his love and complaining of the daily waste; his life is a tumultuous sentiment, rushing like an unbanked river into any swamp that will receive it and turn it into fetid and barren greenness. This god I pity and avoid. There is further (3) a kind of gentleman-god who is the refined and respectable patron of a certain type of churches. He never attends any other place of worship; he is nothing if not genteel; he submits himself sabbatically to the mild encomiums of sundry feeble persons who use him for professional purposes and never make any vulgar or exciting allusions to him.

My God is wholly unlike these three idols. Were there but these three to choose from, I should in very deed be a godless man. My heart goes out towards another God, about whom I will say what little I can, the most being less than nothing, and the highest love being but dead coldness when spoken in the words of man. What I know about this God I have learned solely from the Son of the carpenter. He seemed to be a long time in saying anything about God. The first time he spoke of him, except by way of quotation, he did not call him God, or Lord, or Most High, or Eternal; he called him "your Father which is in heaven"! Not that he disavowed the more solemn name, for the next time he turned to the topic he said "God's throne." After long companionship with the Son of the carpenter, and even much loving intimacy with his most secret heart, I have come to know something about this Father who has a throne, and this God who is a Father.

Intellectually my God is as unthinkable as mathematically the horizon is immeasurable. We can lay one end of the tape upon the earth, but we cannot lay the other end on the horizon, yet the horizon is visible, and is just – yonder! But because God is unthinkable it does not follow that he is not to be thought about. The fatal mistake of some thinkers seems to lie just there. The unthinkable is not something contrary to thought, but is something above thought, as the immeasurable is not a quantity which disproves figures, but exceeds them. Astronomy gives us a universe whose orbit is so stupendous that any section of any circle ever measured by mathematics appears upon its circumference as merely a straight line. An unthinkable universe, yet objectively here, undeniable, most palpable, and not wholly without use! I like to think about it until thought falls into a dream, and the dream is too grand for words and becomes a dumbly religious amazement. If I think only of my own parish, I become small; of my own country only, a selfish patriot; of the universe, I heighten with the infinite idea. This experience has its inexpressible counterpart in religion. I am incomplete and restless without God. I grope for him in a great darkness, and my heart is pained with bitter crying and a very agony of desire. You must give me a God, or I will create one. Idolatry is

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philosophical; in its most tragic bloodiness it is but the desperation of a life that is nearly Divine. The God and Father of Jesus Christ fills me with ineffable satisfaction, not that he falls wholly within the lines of my intellectual capacity but is as the sun which fills the earth with its glory and yet holds in reserve infinitely more than the earth can receive. It is open to others to call this phantasy on my part. I might call it phantasy, too, and endeavour to quench it, but that I am the better for it, coming out of the enrapturing reverie as I do with a sacred contempt for all meanness and a burning desire to help and bless all other human life. Such a phantasy is not without substance, and therefore is no phantasy, though seeming to be such to men whose intellectual guests are always less than themselves. If it perished like a cloud, I might value it at the price of a cloud, but so long as it constrains me to do good, to think nobly, to give generously, and to suffer patiently, I must encourage it, though it be called by no other name than phantasy.

Another thought. It is a mistake to suppose that knowledge comes to us solely through what are known as intellectual processes. Some things we know intuitively, some sympathetically, some experimentally. Some knowledge is, so to say, startled into us by sudden distress or sudden joy. No image or super-scription of reasoning is upon it, yet it rules us like a revelation, and it is consciously at the peril of a great loss that we refuse it place and utterance in our life. As human education is something both before school and after it - the school being merely a bracket in the opening of youth - so knowledge, in its highest reach and quality, comes before reasoning and continues after it, without any law or measure which science has yet determined. I put it down, therefore, as one line in my creed that man's knowledge is not the product or issue of his intellect alone.

The most powerful - may I not say the most tremendous? - hold which God has upon me is in a moral direction. He is in very deed a holy God. He cannot look upon sin with the least degree of allowance. He gives me a final standard of right and wrong. If I could get rid of this God, I could easily get rid of all inconvenient morality. He will not allow me to yield to the temptation of circumstances, or to pit one suggestion against another in any argument whose conclusions would fraudulently enrich me, or separate my individual benefit from the security and completeness of the broad commonwealth. There is a law of righteousness in his mouth, a sword of justice is in his hand, and the whole royalty of his throne is set against all selfishness and corruption. This is my God. He is the continual torment of my sin, and the continual hope of my penitence. I am a better man with him than I could possibly be without him, and that is a test which no false religion can bear. Without him my morality would be a calculation, a public attitude, or a social investment; it might often have the semblance of the rarest virtue, and for all purposes of casual criticism might successfully float through the passing hour: but a vital and invincible morality it would not be; it would not wear well; any unequal strain might break it, and show the inner craft of an artificial exterior.

These two aspects of God give me all that I need in the way of intellectual speculation and moral rest. My mind is filled with the grandeur of the conception, and its highest moods are promised an ever-enlarging delight and satisfaction. On the other hand, I find the rest which every mind must ardently desire when looking at the collisions and tumults of all time. I feel that the end is not yet, and that my judgment would be as a word spoken out of season. More than this, I am assured that the world must be more to its Maker than ever it can be to me, and therefore that if he can keep the sunny roof over its stormy scenes, it would be imbecility and impiety on my part to complain of its inequalities and misadventures. I rest in the almightiness of God, and my patience is ennobled into a religion by the confidence that all things are working together by measures and compensations which must result in universal contentment and rest. Again and again, therefore, I am shown that

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my creed is not a phantasm, but a reality, not a dream which pleases one set of my powers, but a discipline that puts upon me great strains and summons me to gracious labours.

This Unthinkable and Holy God I humbly receive from Jesus Christ, the Son of the carpenter. "He only hath revealed him." He claims that he came from the bosom of the Father, and my experience of his grand and ever-ennobling teaching confirms the probability of his having done so. More than this: so far as the human intellect can go, Jesus Christ is not, in his word and works, distinguishable from God. Whether beyond the point attainable by the mind any inequality discovers itself we cannot now know. To my mind Jesus Christ is one with God. His words are unfathomable in meaning, though direct and immediate in the holy uses of comfort and illumination. More and more do I grow in the conviction that any God that cannot be made immediately available by the very simplest descriptions or definitions is neither the Father nor the Saviour of men. Though he be great, yet must he have respect unto the lowly; to the lowly he must accommodate himself in his revelations, and in no wise must he shut himself up as the monopoly of professional interpretation or sacerdotal pretension. These conditions are all realised in the God of Jesus Christ. God is love. God is light. God is life. God is a Spirit. God is Father. No other God ever admitted of such easy translation into the speech of men. This is MY God.

10. GOD, THE ONLY SUFFICIENT AND SATISFYING EXPLANATION OF ALL THINGS

IF you ask me how I know that there is a God, if I tell you in reply that the Bible says so, you may very well be dissatisfied with the answer. You would indeed be entitled to say, "That may be so, but who gave the Bible authority to say anything of the kind?" I should be reasoning in a circle if I should find that there was a God because the Bible said so, and that there was a revelation because God had inspired it. That would be wholly a circular movement, altogether inadequate, and wholly mocking and unsatisfactory. As a Christian teacher, I set forth no such plea. I do not begin at a metaphysical point at all. The method of argument which I shall apply to the whole line of Christian evidence in this discourse is this: Here are certain facts; account for them. In other words, here is a lock; open it. Instead of saying, "There is a God; go out and prove it," I will say, "Here are certain facts, ten thousand strong; account for them." Instead of saying that there is a Providence watching over us all, I will say, "Here is my life - you know it: strange mysterious, tumultuous, many-coloured: comedy having its laugh cut short by sudden tragedy, tragedy startled into momentary relaxation by unexpected comedy: diversity of temper, engagement, habitude, destiny - here are the facts; account for, them." Instead of saying to you, "There is a book which is inspired," I shall say nothing of the kind. I shall, as a literary surveyor, go over the book and report upon it to you. I will tell you what the book is, in its contents, in its spirit, in its history, in its purpose, and I shall ask you to account for it. So I am not going to ask any favour of any man. I am not going even to ask you to admit a metaphysical axiom, saying, "Let it be granted, so and so "; I shall take the facts, you shall find them, and I will pile them up one on the top of another, and ask you what the next step is.

Now this is the purely scientific method. We begin with facts, and we ask for the explanation - no man can object to that. You can leave them unaccounted for? No, not as a scientific man. Unaccounted for! Any fool could do that, but you are a man of knowledge. You can go up to a certain point and then wheel round and leave the explanation unattempted? No. Let the vulgar do that. Let men of science be fearless. The challenge of the Nazarene called Christ was, "Knock, ask, seek; batter the door till it opens." That is my Leader, my fearless, chivalrous Master. I will bind you, therefore, to be scientific right through and through; you shall not cease when you like; you shall not shut up the school when you think it time to go, but you shall keep it open as long as there is a single ray of light in the western sky. The spirit of the age says, "Prove all things, push the scientific inquiry to its utmost extent, be deterred by nothing, ask and demand the answer." I accept the challenge, and I ask, if you have gathered the facts together, how do you account for them? How does the sun come to shine? How do men come to different lots and destinies in life? How comes it that there is no man who has seen the wind? Why has no cunning hand made a glass that can show to-morrow? You see I am dealing strictly with facts. I have botanists, geologists, astronomers, sociologists, and a whole host of others running to every point of the compass to bring in facts. I am waiting till they get them all completed, and when they are complete, I shall say, "Account for them." That, I take it, is practical.

10.1 HOW IS THE UNIVERSE TO BE ACCOUNTED FOR?

Now, as a mere matter of fact, some persons have ventured to say, "The facts of the universe, its coherence, magnitude, colour, light, beauty, proportion, harmony, utility - the facts of the universe, put them under what names you please, are to be accounted for by the doctrine, In the beginning, God." Do I take the answer, finally, simply, because it happens to have been given? Nothing of the

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sort. A certain kind of mind might say, "If we say that God made all things, the question will arise, Who made God?" So be it: it is a very proper question; push it, urge it, repeat it, and get an answer if you can. Do you think I am to be frightened, as a Christian teacher, by the suggestion that if I say God made all things, somebody will say, Who made God? It is a grand question; repeat it, urge it, vehemently and wisely, when you have got the reply, make it known.

But there is a way of treating the suggestion which seems to me to be rational, and most practical. You say God made all things, that God is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, merciful, wise, and kind beyond all human conceptions of his attributes. Do I believe you because you say so, or because the Bible says so? No. What do I do? I try whether the answer covers the question, and does so satisfactorily. You have been abroad, and you have somehow lost your key, and you cannot open the lock under which all your travelling possessions are. A friend says, "Here is a bunch of keys for you." You can take three courses in reference to that bunch of keys. You can say, "Where does the whitesmith live, what is his name, and how came he to be a whitesmith, that made those keys?" That would be a very philosophical inquiry to make. Or you may say, "By what authority did any man presume to make a bunch of keys? Who gave him liberty to do so?" That would be a magnificent assertion of the independence of the human mind. Or you can try the keys. That would be most humbling, but very common sense. I propose to try the key; if it fits, I will keep it. I am simply dealing with the suggestion now as a suggestion. Does Omnipotence even seem to account for creation? Does Providence even seem to account for what is seen in daily life? Does Infinite Love even seem to account for the sparing of many who have outraged all obligation and honour? Is there anything in life - anything of injustice, disparity, inequality - to justify the suggestion that there must be a final judgment and an allotment of rewards and punishments? I confess that the suggestion is equal to the occasion, and that no other suggestion, theory, hypothesis, or conjecture - I am treating it simply under these categories, you observe - so completely covers the whole case as the doctrine that in the beginning, God - and that God creates, rules, sustains, and redeems. I therefore take your suggestion, and say, "Better than any other it accounts for the facts."

Suppose it should be objected that this suggestion still leaves a good many inquiries to be answered, what then? So does science. It is not as if anyone theory accounted for everything. The scientific man comes to a point at which he says, "I stop there." The religious man comes to a point at which he says the same thing, the difference being that the scientific man has explained nothing, accounted for nothing, beyond the most visible and limited line. The religious man suggests a Father, a Ruler, a Sovereign, and has found it somewhere written, that is yet to be tested, that what we know not now we shall know hereafter. Taking the two suggestions simply as such, I say the one is larger than the other - deeper, grander; touches points in my life left untouched by the other, and therefore by so much it is worthy of further investigation.

Take this same illustration of the lock and key. Do I say I believe that this key will open the lock because I have been told it will? Certainly not; that would be foolish reasoning indeed. I put the key into the lock and turn it, and thus my faith stands upon fact. This is exactly what I do with the suggestion, In the beginning, God. I retain my manhood, what I call my independence - no book is allowed to take this from me; every book that is good addresses these facts in me, consults and honours them, and therefore I open the book, called pre-eminently The Book, and it says, "In the beginning, God." I take the suggestion as a rational man; in the first place it is only a suggestion: by-and-by it may grow into a revelation.

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I have a great and cunningly contrived lock called the universe, and the question is how to open it. I cannot tell. It is a grand lock, and I should like to open it. The Bible says, "I can give you the key of that lock." Then I say, "You are a bold book, and boldness is an attribute of truth." Do I stop there and say I believe there is a key because I have read a book which says there is one? Verily, no. I say to the book, whatever its name may be, "Where is the key?" When the Bible says, "The key is God, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, righteous, merciful, holy, just, brighter than the light, more patient than motherhood, more pitiful than fatherhood, full of compassion, and most longsuffering," I take the key, I press it into the lock, I find that it opens the lock, wholly and easily - what do I do? I kiss the book, I love it, I call it God's book, I meditate therein day and night. Have you a better reason? Let me have it: I will try it exactly in the same way - only it must cover all the ground, it must be available night and day, it must not be subject to climatic changes, it must not succumb to atmospheric effects, it must keep time on the Alps, and keep time in the valleys - must that, suggestion of yours. I wait for it. It shall be treated with the profoundest respect.

10.2 MAY NOT THE BIBLE BE SUPERCEDED

But suppose it should be further said, "That may be the happiest intellectual suggestion yet given; it may be the brightest intellectual guess which even genius in its most inspiring and elated moods has suggested. But it may be only an intellectual suggestion, and its originality may be one day eclipsed." Very good; I anticipate that objection, thus: If this book gave me only an intellectual idea of the construction and government of the universe, I dare not accept any intellectual answer as final. Intellect is never self-complete. If it were only a clever guess - the cleverest guess - I should suspect it on account of its very ability. How then am I seconded and backed in use of this key? I will tell you. The Bible does not allow itself to be thus easily non-suited in the court of human investigation, by the suggestion that it is very clever, a very brilliant reply, a magnificent guess, and nothing more. The answer of the Bible is not a merely intellectual success. What kind of God does the Bible bring to open the lock of the universe? A moral God - a God who lays a moral claim upon me - a God who is pained by my intellectual admiration of him, if it be limited within its own lines - a God that makes my intellectual assent to his being an aggravation of my blasphemy if I rest there. This is a wondrous key: it is a key which says, "You must keep me, night and day, and never go anywhere without me, and you must only do that which is right, pure, true, honourable, and just." It is not a successful intellectual reply, that, that God is the key that fits the universe; here is a moral God, a God that says, "You must do justly and love mercy - be true, upright, honourable, sincere, holy." There is no intellectual answer that I could not wriggle out of. Here is a moral enclosure that keeps me within a prison, from which I cannot escape argumentatively: an enclosure which becomes the widest liberty if I accept it sympathetically. Thus the intellectual satisfaction is magnified into moral service, and the command is. Thou shalt love the key. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. So that, you see, what was at first an intellectual answer to an intellectual difficulty grows into a moral suggestion with a supreme claim upon everything that makes you a man. Completeness is the test of the highest logic.

Why, then, have we not seen God? Because you can never see anything that is really great. No man can see God and live. No man can see life; you can see its effects. Why, no man ever paints the sun. He does try his brush upon the meaner moon - he may paint sunlight - solar effects - but what man ever took acreage enough of canvas to paint that great white wheel the sun? No man hath seen God; no man hath seen himself! Life always comes in incarnations. It takes a garment within which it conceals itself, and from within which it performs its wonders. You kiss your child's cheek; you cannot kiss its soul. "I have," says one man, "gone up and down the earth with scientific weapons

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and instruments, and I cannot find God anywhere. In fact, I have taken the human body to pieces, and I cannot find the soul; therefore there is no soul." My reasoning would be, "You cannot find the soul, and therefore presumptively there is a soul to be found." So differently do we view the same things. Thus, if you cannot find the soul, no more can you find intelligence; therefore there is no intelligence. Beautiful logic; very rapid. True, I have taken a man to pieces, and I can find no soul in him. Very good; dissect Shakespeare from head to foot, and find the genius in him. You cannot; therefore there is no genius. A short and easy method with the poet. I will take this organ to pieces, great stops, little stops, all sorts of pipes and reeds and flutes, and I will fill the floor of this church with them, and say, "You call that a musical instrument; will you be kind enough to point out where the music is?" Take the bellows to pieces to find the air, take the man to pieces to find the soul, dissect the universe to find God. Your methods are wrong; your whole scheme of genius is out of joint.

10.3 WHY HAVE WE NOT SEEN GOD?

Why have we not seen God? Let me ask you with what instruments could you have looked at him - what instruments have you equal to the inquiry and investigation? "We have eyes." Are you sure of that? "Quite sure of that." Is there anything in that drop of water trembling on that pin point? "Nothing in the world." I tell you there is a whole busy population in there. You say that is impossible. But you have eyes? "Yes." Use them. "I do, and there is nothing in that drop of water." Now take this glass. Through the microscope you see all that large busy energetic population, and you lay down the glass, saying that you never could have thought it. Why have you not seen God? Have you seen the wind? No. There is no wind. You must admit that reasoning. You have not seen it; therefore there is none; reasoning is proof triumphant. You have not seen it. You are up early in the morning, and you are out all day; you live and work in the open air; you have not seen the wind; therefore there is none. Magnificent - as reasoning. There is a piece of iron; here is something in my hand towards which that piece of iron runs; you see the iron coming; see? I cannot see the magnetism between what is in my hand and the iron which is drawn, but it is the invisible that is doing it.

Having all these facts before me, it becomes easy for me to believe the words. No man hath seen God at any time; no man can see God and live. Why cannot I see God? I cannot see my own thought. Why cannot I see God? I cannot see a single motive that impels me. When, therefore, the preacher tells me that the invisible is the greatest, I say, I know that it is so down here in my own little life, at all events. Therefore it is not unlikely to be so in the higher liberties and spaces of the universe. You are travelling across the sea. What is there between you and the Atlantic Ocean? A plank an inch thick. Why don't you take a knife and cut that plank in two, and go into the sea? You could do it; physically yes, morally no. What keeps you back? The invisible. What do you mean by the invisible? Reason, reflection, sense of the value of life, consciousness of the responsibility- these things that have never been seen, that are altogether intangible and imponderable; these are the mighty forces that hold you back as an inviolable leash. Knowing these facts, when the Christian teacher says to me, "It is so on a larger scale; all things are under the Divine government of an invisible Being," I answer it is not unlikely to be so, seeing that within my own sphere of action the invisible is supreme.

I feel, therefore, in this introductory discourse - understand that it is merely introductory - that I am standing on the most solid ground when I occupy the position with which I began namely, here is the universe, large, radiant, complete, harmonic, grand; account for it. I have listened to all the various

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reasons which have been given. How far is the reason good? I have not treated any one of the answers higher than that; I have taken them simply in an intellectual way. No answer so completely covers the whole case, no answer leaves so little to be explained, no answer brings so profound and gracious a comfort to my mind and heart as the answer, "In the beginning, God." When a fuller answer comes I will accept it.

I have not seen God, but God was manifest in the flesh, just as my thought was. There is nothing mysterious in that. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us; so was your motive. There is nothing crushingly and blindingly mysterious in the suggestion that the Word, Thought, the Logos, was made flesh. So must it be with every Logos, with every high thought, with every poet's dream. It must find a Bethlehem where it shall be born, and the stars must lead to it. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him. Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed. We are obliged to do that in the lower ranks and lines of life. Oh that we might do it in the higher ranges and the nobler studies of the universe!

10.4 TWO WAYS OF PROCEEDING IN RELIGIOUS ENQUIRY

We have seen that there are two ways of proceeding about this great proposition that there is a God. The first and unsatisfactory one is to endeavour intellectually to prove it, which has never been done, and never can be done, so far as I see at present. The second method is to say, Here are certain things round about us - facts, realities - which we cannot deny, and about whose existence there is no dispute; account for them. We have adopted the second method in this argument.

When the algebraist says, "Let x equal the unknown quantity," I could interrupt him, and say, "First prove the x," but that would be a very foolish interruption. I allow him to use his x, and I await the solution which comes from his use of that symbolic letter. Well, I say, allow me to say, "Let God equal the unknown quantity," and you wait till I have carried that assumption through the whole universe so far as it is accessible to us. When I hand in my solution it will be time for you to examine and criticise it. Here is the universe - vast, radiant, marvellous in combinations and processes. Here is my life, many-coloured, swift in movement, rapid in its combinations - tragical, comical, wondrous life. Account for these things. And the Christian teacher says he has endeavoured to account for them, and that no word so completely meets all the necessities of the case, so completely answers all difficulties, relieves all mysteries, as the word God. He says, "If I leave that word unspoken, I leave everything loose, incoherent, self-contradictory. If I pronounce that word with the reverence and love of the heart, I find a centre into which all things are gathered up, in which all things are fastened, out of which all things radiate with precision and utility and dignity. I find in God, personal, ever present, all-loving, the best solution of the things that are round about me, and all the things which constitute myself." Now we cannot allow him to escape with that answer only. We must go a little further into his conception of this term God. If it be a term only, then one term may be answered by another. We must take his term to pieces, and by a careful and just analysis, we may find what it comprehends and involves.

10.5 DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF GOD

What do you mean when you say "God"? A thousand things. No two men mean the same thing when they say "God," and the mischief is that there should be persons who suppose that all men should mean exactly the same thing when they use the greatest terms that are in human speech. You mean the same thing when you say "clock," when you say "door," or "road," or "river." These

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are little terms, and they fall within simple and easy meanings. But when you say "child," what do you mean? "Man," what is the limit? "God " ... ? You must not insist upon men caging the infinite, or laying bars of iron upon the immeasurable. There is a function which imagination alone can discharge - high, reverent, self-restrained, chastened but ever vigilant and urgent imagination. One man says, "When I think of God, I think of the sum total of being, the life fount out of which all living streams flow. He is not to be expressed or defined in words; he is spirit acting on spirit, the wondrous mighty All; he is to be thought about rather than spoken of. I worship him in silence; I look up, but do not speak; the mean words of man do but debase and vulgarise the infinite." His exhortation to me is, "Stand under that conception as thou dost stand under the firmament, and take what is given thee of spiritual light and warmth and rain, and be dumb."

Now, this is a man in whose religion there is no detail; he is religious in the gross. If you begin to make propositions to him, you insult his veneration. He would as soon think of parcelling out the firmament into private acres as of dividing and sub-dividing the infinite thought into small theological propositions. In support of such a view there is very much to be said. It ennobles and dignifies the mind; it silences many vain and foolish speeches; it kills the sectarianism which is built upon peculiar interpretations or audacious guesses; it is religion in the gross, a grand silence, an eloquent speechlessness. It is a look that prays; it is an attitude that worships. The Church wants none of book or man called priest or teacher. It stands outside of all these things, overwhelmed by the vastness of its own conception, trembling, speechless, before the wordless Infinite.

Another man says, "When I think of God, I think of him as a person, as a magnified man, an infinite extension of myself. I can lay hold of him in no other way. I could not join the thinking of that man whom you have just described. I must have a concrete, personal, individual God. When I think of such a God, I think of myself infinitised. I am a germ, he the full fruition. For example, if you ask me to define heaven, how can I do it but by glorifying the earth? I cannot create a new universe; I can but multiply that which is round about me. So if you ask me to define heaven, I will go to the garden on a summer day, when the flowers are most beautiful and fragrant; I will say. Multiply that sight by infinitude, and you have paradise. I will go into a place where the music is most transporting and ravishing, where you have musical instruments of all sorts, touched by fingers of magic, by fingers of fire, and I will say. Listen; multiply that by infinitude, and you have heaven. So when I think of God, I say. Find a man at his best, purest, and noblest estate; find a man of the highest genius and the fullest inspiration; invest him with all possible attributes of excellence. When you have done so, multiply him by infinity, and you begin to get my notion of God."

This is a simpler conception than the first; yet it is warranted by the whole letter and spirit of Holy Scripture. It is warranted, however, only as a convenience and help to the human understanding. It is a figurative representation of an otherwise incomprehensible fact. When God condescends to be called a person, it is an act of incarnation on his part, a miraculous conception, a new and daily humiliation of his majesty. The word person can never express the idea God. Yet it is a needful term, as indicating the very least that God can make himself. If the theologian contents himself by saying, "God is a person; turn over the page and go over to the next lesson," he is a fool. God is a person. He calls himself such that I may get hold of him; he tabernacles himself in this short word that I may speak to him. It is a word I would not give up; it is needful to my conception of the Divine nature. It signifies individuality as distinguished from immensity, a living and loving heart as distinguished from indifference and the sublimity of immovableness. It means Father, There the human heart rests.

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But if you ask me what I personally mean by God, I mean neither of these two things alone. I mean more. I am a Christian teacher. As such I have a special revelation on which I rely. He is God beyond all knowledge, merciful and gracious, patient even unto longsuffering, watching us with an eye never closed in sleep, caring for us with all care, redeeming us with blood, training us for a grand and abiding hereafter. He is more than God, more than God and Father. He is to me the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. So that, as a Christian thinker, I go to Christ for the interpretation of God, and for the uses which are to be made of that interpretation. I leave the realm of speculation, I come out of the cloud, I sit down beside Jesus, and say to him, "Show me the Father by showing me thyself. Let me lay my hand upon his heart by laying it upon thine."

Now, if I go to Jesus Christ for my interpretation, and the uses that are to be made of that interpretation, what shall I find? I shall find a Man who was constantly and essentially godly. The one thing which Jesus Christ wished to do in his life, in his youth, was his Father's business. When he last spoke, that night when the mortal terror seized his life, he wanted to do his Father's will. That is godliness. At twelve he says, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" At midnight he said, "Not my will, but thine be done." That is the way to prove God - to live in him, to be ruled by him, to breathe his spirit. Mark the infinite reasonableness of this. Given such a God as Jesus Christ revealed, he must be the supreme thought of the mind and the all-absorbing joy of the soul.

Religion thus judged is not a duty. No man can be religious as a mere obligation if he would be religious in the Christian sense. Religion must not be something upon a man; it must be something in a man, that shall become the man himself. Hard at first, becoming more easy and gladsome as the days roll on. His music must be this: "I delight to do thy will, O God. My delight is in the law of the Lord. I delight in the law of the Lord after the inward man. I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved." That is the spirit of religion. Do you go to church because it is your duty to go? Then I do not wonder at you being late, because a man hates duty. Do you go to church because it is your duty to go? Then I do not wonder at you longing to get out of it again, for duty is always hard if included within itself, without outlook, or fire, or poetry, or equal motive behind it. At first it may have somewhat of the nature of discipline in it. You are learning music; you touch your instrument, and the instrument speaks back as if it were insulted. Why? Because it did not know your fingers, and though your fingers did not mean to be at all rude to the great eloquent angel, yet they touched it roughly, and the sound was a sound of resentment. Put into English, it meant, "Hands off." Then, oh, the looking at the notes and at the keys, and at the keys and at the notes, and the twisting and the beginning again, and the going back, and the exclamations of self-disgust, and the determinations never to try again! Still you persevered, and one day you touched the instrument like a friend, and the instrument answered you like a friend. From, that hour it was your delight, not your duty, to go and hold sweet long fellowship with that instrument.

You are learning a language; you say you would like to learn it without going through the grammar. I daresay you would: that is an old wish, and most human. But the strange alphabet, the everlasting declensions, the whole regiments and armies and phalanxes of irregulars and exceptions- who can face them? You persevere, and some day you hear a speaker of that language address you, and you know what he said, and, oh, the boyish joy, oh, the childlike gladness! You run to your best friend and say, "He spoke to me in German, and I quite understood him." From that moment your German was a delight to you - if ever such a language can be a delight to any mortal intellect. But it is first hard, and then easier, and then gladsome. So with this church-going and Bible reading and religious service; it is at first somewhat perhaps of the nature of duty and obligation - you feel that you are in an imperative mood and cannot well escape from it, and so you have to conjugate backwards until

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you get into the lighter and more genial moods - but at last it is a delight, and the word commandment itself but too sweetly indicates the gladness and the rapture with which you render religious service.

If I study God under the direction of Jesus Christ, and following his example, I shall be quite childlike in my spirit in relation to the Father. Jesus Christ was a Son in the Father's house. Beloved, what manner of love hath the Father bestowed on us that we should be called the sons of God! I want to be led into this higher music, namely, my Father's business, my Father's way, my Father's house, my Father's pleasure. When I can say so,

"I'll bid farewell to every fear,
And wipe my weeping eyes."

When God is only an intellectual conception to me, my life is an intellectual weariness, my toil a manual drudgery, but when he says, "I am thy Father, and thou art my child," and I seize the notion, then all the days of the week are absorbed in a bright calm Sabbath that comes like a sanctuary and a defence around my soul.

But my unbelief will not let me seize all this enjoyment of God. My unbelief will not let God be Father; my unbelief says to me - for unbelief is an awful theologian - "Look here" - and I look at its grim, hard face - "God will be a kind of Father to you by-and-by if you will do certain things, which it is impossible for you to do." Poor gospel, mean gospel! Faith says, "See here; God is your Father; whatever you may be, he changeth not. Mean, miserable, sinful head, heart, hand, foot, soiled through and through, God is still your Father, and he is longing for you to come home again. He is grieved by your sin; as a Father he will pardon your guilt, as a Father he will watch over your going out and your coming in; as a Father he undertakes your redemption - look to him and live." That is a grander speech; I know speeches that are true: we all do that. When unbelief says to me, "God will be your Father under such and such conditions, which it is impossible for you to fulfil," I know that unbelief is telling me a lie; the voice is false, the tone is undivine. When faith says to me, "Child, thy Father calls thee," something within me answers like an echo to a voice, and I know the Gospel to be true.

Then what is it that hinders me fully and entirely enjoying all this revelation of God and resting upon him wholly? If I have to be frank with you, the answer will be a mournful one. I could gild it; I will not. The reason I do not fully, with absoluteness of realisation, enjoy this revelation of God in Christ is, after it there comes a demand which I find it painful to fulfil; I first of all have to go to a Sinai: the ten commandments are handed to me written in stone. I walk on; precepts and statutes are written upon the rock and upon the tree: are being uttered in the wind and trumpeted in the thunder. Religion, as revealed by Christ, is not a pleasant dream or an intellectual luxury; it is the supreme command, it is the absolute claim of God. If I have to be religious in Jesus Christ's sense, accepting his definition of God, I shall have no time for myself, I shall have no money of my own, I shall have no friends of my own picking, I shall have no feast that he will not claim to be at, I dare touch no wine that he does not first drink - I dare not even go into a wilderness without taking his lamp with me - and these things the incomplete, shattered human will hates. Selfishness says, "Give me a little of my own, I do not care how little; only let it be mine. Give me half a day in the month, give me ten shillings a week, let me go into this door and into that - only do, and I ask no more." But Jesus Christ says, "No - not a moment, not a penny, not an entrance, not a single thought thine own." And yet he says his yoke is easy and his burden is light. So it is, like the music and the language I have now

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spoken about. Rightly taken to, the preliminaries rightly undergone, in the grace and strength of Heaven, the outcome will indeed be blessed.

So I return to my starting point, and say I have two courses open to me about this matter. I can have a god of my own imagining; I can go to my fancy for a god, or I can accept the God that is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. You go to your fancy for a god; let me ask you a plain question: Is your fancy a very likely quarter in which to find a very adequate divinity? You mock the poor idolater who makes a god out of a tree; I want you to see you are doing exactly the same thing, minus the tree. Nay, the idolater has a god of his fancy; he says, "I must make this into something visible": you have a god in your fancy, and you dare not make him visible; you cannot, no manger would cradle him, no Magi from the far East would trim their lamps and bind their sandals and handle their staves to find him. It takes the true God to come down into flesh; no other dare venture on the meanness. Besides, if you made your god, you could unmake him.

I conclude, therefore, by saying - finishing thus the first part of my discourse - that, given the universe, given human life, given the whole scheme of things as now known to us, to account for them, no other solution so fully satisfies my intelligence and my heart as the solution - God. Given the solution, God, no interpretation of that term, pantheistic as including the great sum total, deistic as including a general but not special providence, can satisfy my heart. I find the only interpretation of God I can rely upon and rest in is the interpretation given by Jesus Christ. With that I will fight my fight in time; with that I will face the great unknown.

We have agreed, for the purposes of this argument, not to endeavour to prove intellectually the existence of God. We have, indeed, gone so far as to say that that is impossible. The finite cannot prove the infinite; it would, indeed, be a self-stultification of terms. The infinite must reveal itself to the finite; the finite can never either find out or prove it. What then? Our course was to take the facts as we find them, and having massed those facts before us, to put this inquiry concerning the whole of them: How are these facts to be accounted for? We say nothing about God at the beginning. We do not dogmatically and authoritatively say, "There is a God, and you must believe it." We are content for the purposes of this study to leave God out of the question altogether at the beginning, and to go with men of science wherever they may take us, and when we have completed their circle, to ask the question I have just put, namely. How are all these most wonderful things to be accounted for?

10.6 ARGUMENT FOUNDED ON SOCIETY

Let us look at human society. Having acquainted ourselves somewhat with its constitution, with what I may call the very mystery of its being, let us continue to urge the inquiry. How is it to be explained or accounted for? You have upon the face of the earth what is called human society, an organic sum total, which time does not destroy, which contention, antagonism, and strife of the fiercest kind only helps to expand and to consolidate. Time uses his scythe. Death goes forth to his black harvest, the whole earth seems to be ripped and scarred with tombs, and yet on the green earth there is a greater society to-day than there ever was. How is it to be accounted for? By its order, by its sympathy, by its brotherly love, by its spiritual graces? You do not ask me to answer that ridiculous interrogation. No two men are exactly alike, no two interests are precisely identical; everywhere the thing that strikes you is difference, contrast, incompatibility, and yet you can no more hinder the progress of this society, or reduce it to nothingness, than you can impede a planet or dissolve a star. This society is a continual mystery. It is a batch, a chaos, of inconsistencies. You say

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it must kill itself, yet it lives on, more prosperous and influential year by year. Might has sometimes had right so utterly in its power that you have said right can never survive. Yet right has thriven in adversity, and clothed itself with new beauty in the fire. Human society seems always to have had a razor at its throat, but never yet has it taken its own life. Account for it. Society is marked by contrasts that appear to be in themselves full of peril, and fraught with danger that can neither be mitigated nor avoided. What think ye? Society is divided into master and servant. What society, looked at philosophically, could live under such a division as that only? Why do you not bridge over the difference? Why do you not make all men equal? Why do you not lift up that which is far down, that all may become on a level, one having no higher and better rights than another? You meet in congress; you print programmes; you have discussions. Why do you not level up and make all equal? Society is divided into learned and ignorant. Why does not the ignorant man read books and make himself learned? You have refined and vulgar. Why does not the vulgar man go to school and put on refinement, if he cannot put it in? These are questions that you can dismiss with an easy, airy lightness if you like, but if you do so, you abandon the scientific spirit, and you have no right any longer to claim a status amongst the most ardent and interrogative intelligence of the day.

Then look at the moral distinctions you have in society. You have every variety of temper, purpose, desire, sensibility, and service. You have the brave man whose face is a battle; you have the coward that skulks out of the light, the generous and the mean, the unsuspecting and the distrustful, the earnest soul that prays for the race like an intercessor, and the villain whose life never heightened and softened into a prayer for any human soul. Account for these things. On yonder hillside you have such a lot of dear, bright, romping little children; they never could be sad; that is the sun of the world. Arguing from what I see on that stirring side of the hill, I should say the world is heaven. On the other side of the hill you have the old man sighing for home, the bad man ending a wild day in a wilder night; you have the blind, who only know of morning by hearsay, the dumb, the imbecile; and on and on the exciting panorama stretches and palpitates until the eye is dim with watching. Account for these things - for progress amid collision, for rest amid strife, for solidity amid earthquake and whirlwind. Tell me how it is that society, drunk, mad, with a razor at its throat, cannot commit suicide.

Now I hold that this is as much matter of purely scientific interest as the formation of rocks or the distribution of plants. One student says, "I am an inquirer into physical manhood." I reply, "I am a student of social manhood." We are both scientific inquirers. I cannot allow that the man who has a small sharp knife in his hand for the purpose of cutting human sinews is a scientific student, at the expense of the man who is studying social humanity and asking how it coheres, increases, and advances. This, however, in passing.

Now look at your own individual life, and thus bring the mystery nearer home. You have no control over your birth. In the name and fear of God, I say that if I had been asked if I would have been born into this world, I should have said No. I am not here of my own will, yet I dare not go out. Born a little infant, of whom the priest says, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," I may go out into hell. I did not ask to come in; I dare not pray to go out, except with reserves and calculations that diminish the prayer into a skulking request. You work, you learn, you suffer; you fight and lose the battle, you run and lose the race; you are just going to drink the cup of joy, and an invisible hand dashes it out of your grasp. The child that is to be your mainstay and comfort, that is to draw down the lids of your eyes at last, and say, "God bless you!" even after you have just gone, dies first. The man who never prays beats you hollow at every game you play. You touch the rock, and it melts into water; another man with foot that never trod the altar stair touches the water, and it hardens into rock again, and

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he builds his castle upon its stony base. How is it? Is he a scientific man who comes with his brows bound with botanical specimens, and he not a scientific man who comes up from society asking urgently with tears in his voice, with much doubt in his tone, and great sad wonder, "How is it? can it be explained? what is the rationale of this marvellous incoherent cohesion, this self-contradictory society"?

Then see your power and your weakness. You cannot do the things you want to do. From finger tip to finger tip you are under seven feet in length. If I offered you the sun in the heavens to put out your fingers a sixteenth of an inch further, you could not. You are full of yesterday; you are no wiser than a dog about to-morrow. We say, "When the historian comes, how will he view such and such circumstances?" - that is, a man who is clever in turning over dusty pages, and making out small print, and getting together forgotten things. I say, "When is the prophet coming who can read to-morrow?" and the dreary answer, more an echo than a voice, is, "Never."

How do we account for these things? Suppose we say it is chance. Magnificent answer - satisfying every fool to satiety - chance! I ask if that would satisfy any intelligent man amongst you. The man who can believe that all I have now described, and all which is related thereto, is the work of chance, has a greater capacity of belief than any heathen that ever swallowed ten thousand gods. Look how the suggestion of chance degrades us. Have we not power to protect ourselves against chance? We protect ourselves against infection; why do we not get up a limited liability company for the protection of one another against this mad dog, chance? We are clever; why not apply our ingenuity in this direction? What is the good of your building bridges, and laying telegraphs, and lighting electric flames, and doing all manner of wonderful things, if you cannot conquer chance and chain him to a kennel? Are you going to sit down under the plague of chance? Why do we not assemble in solemn congress, and get the upper hand of a power that makes everything else so uncertain? Let us, however, renounce the name of chance as rather short, and, on the whole, somewhat silly, and let us give it a nobler name, and call all that we have now seen "the operation of the law of averages." I am sure that must console every breaking heart. At once you will feel that we have hit upon the profoundest solution of the mysteries that becloud and embarrass and agonise this frail human life. But if Presbyter is Priest writ large, the law of average is chance turned into a polysyllable, and nothing more. How are we to account for these things?

Suppose a man should say, "Let us not account for them." Then I should charge him with being wanting in the scientific spirit, which says, "We want to know; we want to find out; we must be true to the line of our inquiry."

Upon this matter you go to what is called Church, and addressing the man who stands up in the pulpit, you say to him, "Sir, how do you account for what is called Society, with all its tragedy and comedy, its strife, contention, loss, pain, joy, risk, madness, and yet wondrousness of genius and power? How do you account for the child dying, for the good man suffering, and for the knave prospering? What have you to say about blood problems like these? I am tired of hearing trifles discussed." I answer, "In the beginning, God. These things are not what they seem; you have not seen all; above all, under all, around all, there is a mysterious, benign, judicial, gracious Providence. The time of full solution is not yet; we are in the thick of dust and smoke; a great fight is going on; the meaning will be read out to you by-and-by." What is his answer to me? He says, "Without calling upon you for any merely intellectual defence of that suggestion, I feel that it ought to be, that it must be, true." I cannot, however, rest with that concession; in the meantime it is excellent; it gives me a standing ground with the man, but nothing more. Observe how this method of reasoning

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operates. If you start from the point - there is a God; go and find him - then all the mysteries of society will be so many objections to the theory. If you commence at the other end - see, here is society; account for it - then you are not lost amid all the details of the case, but you catch its spiritual genius, its moral afflatus and spirit, and lifting yourself above all that is of the nature of mere detail, you say, with a reverent spirit, "How is it?" The answer is, "God."

But if we give the answer: "God," the difficulties appear to remain. Children die; good men suffer; bad men prosper; the scroll in the hand of weary pensive Time is still written all over with mourning, lamentation, and woe. How are we to reconcile such facts with the doctrine of an all-wise, all-powerful, and all-gracious Providence? I will give you the answer. How does the Bible, regarding it as simply a book without a name, treat such inquiries, or regard such differences? First, it recognises them, and by so much it commits itself to some explanation. The Bible does not slur over the difficulties of human life: no book is so explicit and minute and emphatic in its delineation of human life, human suffering, and human discipline. Sometimes when I open my Bible it seems to be nothing but one long, heavy groan over human sin and human woe. So we have to deal with a book that comes down amongst us and says, "Yes, the difficulties you speak about are real; they are not to be ignored, and no trifling answer will cover them." So far, so good.

In the next place, the Bible traces these evils to their cause. It may be wrong, or it may be right, but it does not blink the question, "What is the reason?" It says, "This is the reason: sin is the explanation of moral crookedness on the part of man. The breach of faith, the suicide of integrity, the rebellious off taking of the robe of innocence and taking on the nakedness of shame - this is the explanation." I claim nothing for the answer, further than it does attempt to go to the root of the matter, and give a cause for what occasions us so much just and bewildering perplexity.

In the next place, the Bible points out the highest uses of many of the sufferings which afflict human society. The Bible does not give them up in despair: the Bible does not limit those sufferings within the area of their immediate operation. The Bible says to me, "The wound is very deep, but it may be healed; the suffering is very keen, but it is for thy chastening and purification. The disappointment is very bitter, but there is a deep and gracious meaning in it, and behind it; wait for the explanation. Accept these perplexities in a reproachful, pining spirit, and they will aggravate themselves and become tenfold more difficult of endurance; receive them in the right spirit, saying, 'God reigns; God loves me; God means good by me: he makes stars in the darkness; he intends all these things to bring out of my life wine that has not yet been crushed out of the grapes of my heart' - speak so, and what now afflicts thee may become a root of joy and a spring of pleasure." I take that answer: I say there is in it sympathy; there is no attempt to evade the difficulty, there is no effort made to mitigate my own apprehension of the magnitude and terribleness of these sufferings: they are all recognised; their case is stated, their possible highest uses are indicated.

And then the Bible not only recognises these evils, traces their cause, and indicates some of their uses; it predicts their consummation and their extinction. It is not afraid of them. The Bible says, "Sorrow may endure for a night; joy cometh in the morning." The Bible says, "All these things are but for a moment, if you bring to bear upon them the power of an endless life. Your light affliction is but for a moment, if you look at things not seen." "Jesus Christ came into the world," says the Bible, "to put an end to these things, and to reconcile all things unto 'himself, and he will do it.'" There is no break in the emphasis; there is no halting in the Biblical prophecy; it goes straight through like a king, like a God. When I compare these answers with the suggestion of chance and the law of averages, I feel that the true science is in the Biblical reply, and not in the false conjecture. Here, then, I rest, till

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some better solution be given me. I quiet myself in God. "Not my will, but thine be done." The details vex me; the great universal and unchangeable principle consoles and sustains me.

Crossing the great deep at night, lying sleeplessly and perhaps painfully in your berth, longing for the light, without much hope that it will bring you comfort, what hear you? The surge of the water, the moan of the wind, and the tinkle of a bell. That bell has no sooner told its little tale of time than a voice in a sing-song tone says, "All's well, all's well." It is the man on the look-out. You say, "How can all be well when I am not sleeping? how can all be well when I am sick and in pain? how can all be well when I am not at home and the children are longing for me?" There is a higher law than your sleeplessness, your pain, and your child's desire for your presence. Within those limits you are right; all is not well; but in the higher sphere that takes in a larger area and commands a wider outlook, all's well, all's well. So it is with this marvellous mystery, this strange Providence. "I am sick, and tired, and heart-broken, misunderstood, and belied, and slandered, and ill-fed, and battered down," saith the Christian man, but the angel on the look-out says, "All's well, all's well." The vessel has her face straight home, and the sea is yielding to give her passage-way. "All's well, all's well." And at last, at home,

"Above the rest this note shall swell,
My Jesus hath done all things well."

When I compare this reply with chance and law of averages, I feel that the Bible has got the scientific answer, the grand philosophy. So my song shall be: -

"O Lord, how happy should I be
If I could cast my care on thee,
If I from self could rest,
And feel at heart that One above
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
Is working for the best!"

Men, brethren, and fathers, this is the answer of the Bible. I wait for a more magnificent reply.

10.7 HOLY SCRIPTURE ACCOUNTED FOR

I have finally to apply the argument to the book which is called the Book of God. I shall report first upon the Old Testament; I am to do it simply as a literary surveyor, not as a theologian, not as a sceptic. I assume that you have appointed me to prove the book; to look over it for you, and to tell you what is in it, and to give you a general notion of its genius and scheme. You will understand, therefore, that I am now about to act the part of a literary surveyor, whose business it will be to draw you a general outline of the book, and to tell you something about its principal contents. Having got the plan fully on the table before us, I shall repeat the question which constitutes the staple of this whole argument, namely, How is such a book to be accounted for?

I may just mention to you, in the first instance, that as a literary surveyor, I have thought it to be my duty to read the book. I am certain that many persons on hearing that will be secretly surprised, for nowadays there is a keen and all but infinite intuition which knows a book without reading it. Not having attained to that high grace, I am obliged to begin at the beginning, and read my book straight through, like a drudge. I have done that for you. You will be surprised how very few people have

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ever done so. If you press them upon the point, they will say that no doubt they must have done so when they were at school. Others will say that there can be no doubt that, as children, they may have gone through, at all events, the principal part of the book; so you have halting and crippled talk of that kind. Where is the man who can say - as every man is bound to say, who is going to give anything like a complete and responsible opinion - "I have read the book straight on, from 'In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,' to the benediction in the book of the Revelation of St. John the Divine"? The man who has done so has a right to have some opinion about the volume. Having myself, therefore, as your literary surveyor, just gone over the whole field, from the very beginning to the very end, I am here to report to you something about the book, and having handed in my report, I shall not be content for you to pigeon-hole it, and to say you will look at it by-and-by when you have a more convenient season. I shall ask you to remunerate me for my toil by giving an opinion, a decision, promptly; and the question I shall urge upon you with importunity and vehemence will be, "How can you account for such a book as the Bible?" Now let us go to work.

First of all, I am struck with what we should call the utter want of scientific or artistic arrangement in the putting together of the book. Nobody seems to have cared much how it was put together. It has not been edited, it has been huddled; there is no trace of a literary plan; no editor or architect could have been employed in putting together the various parts. Man after man appears to have written just what he pleased, and the parts seem to have been thrown together anyhow. I dare not put out a book so badly arranged, but here it is, with all its imperfections on its head. There is no preface; there is no index; there is no table of contents. Here and there - in fact, all over the face of the book - strange hands have scribbled something by which they have meant to indicate the contents of the book, but the men themselves have written, as it appears to me, when they pleased, how they pleased, as much as they pleased, and have allowed other people to add little bits here and there, and the book has come together in the night time, when nobody could tell exactly how it was, to tumble into such rough coherence as it may claim. There is not the slightest attempt to secure beauty or uniformity of outline. Things that belong to one another are not put together. Some are here, some there, and some elsewhere, and a good many are half put: are suggested rather than stated. There is a great deal of cloud and mystery and incompleteness. I was not surprised at this, because I had, just before reading the book, been spending a few years in endeavouring to put together another book, called Nature, and I was quite struck with the resemblance between the book written and the book unwritten. When I went out to the fields of nature, I said, "Now, all the ferns will grow together, all the oaks will be set in a row, all the birds will be distributed, will be caged in with little golden clouds they cannot escape, and all things will be done in order." Just the contrary. I seemed to find the ferns anyhow. As I got farther and farther into the secret, I began to see that under the disorder there was an order, subtle and complete. When I went from Kew Gardens into the great forest of nature, I said, God made Kew, and some blundering fools have made the forest. I said, Kew does credit to God. so nicely trimmed, so carefully swept, so critically labelled. Ah, said I, this is worthy of a God; but the tangled forests, the solitary places, the growth unregistered, untrimmed, unscheduled, growing without tabulation - what could I say but that some wild beast of a man had been there, making order disorder, and turning scheme and plan and cosmos into chaos and darkness?

When I went to the Zoological Gardens, I said. Now you see this is worthy of a God: all nicely caged in, all the places ticketed; a man knows here where he is, but as to nature - a jungle and forest and wilderness and rock and crag and ravine and deep river and tortuous way. But I saw that the book unwritten and the book written were marvellously alike in this; there was a kind of fearless genius, of dauntless spirit, that rose up out of the chaos, and said, "Mend me, if you can," and I was,

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therefore, as a literary surveyor, touched into a momentary glow by what I thought was the independent fearlessness and fierceness of a disorder that set itself up to rank with sun and star and milky way. I found the Botanical Gardens were made by man at so much a day, the Zoological Gardens the same. I found that any extent of botanical and zoological arrangement could be effected for so much a day. There is no science in nature, there is no theology in the Bible; but as nature supplies all the material upon which science operates, so the Bible supplies all the material which theology puts together, often with the hands of a clumsy artisan, and nearly always with the beggarly spirit of a bigot.

The next thing that struck me in reading your book was that it makes no pretence whatever to be restrained by what is called taste or delicacy. There are many things in it that cannot be read aloud, thank God. There are some things which little children are not permitted to read. Ah me! how foolishly we treat those who are of the kingdom of heaven! The book moves calmly and without shame right on, amid the miscellaneousness of our life. It looks like fire; who can corrupt fire? It has a spirit of absolute and incorruptible purity. The Bible makes no apology, draws no curtain, makes no excuse, never turns aside to stammer or to blush; on it goes: taking life as it is, and describing it without flattery or fear. It strikes me as very like what I have seen in the other book, unwritten. The Bible is true to the very root and reality of things. The book does not ignore facts with a goody-goody blindness, but faces them, names them, proposes remedies for them, and searches into the root and core of the whole of them. No man in this country dare publish certain separate chapters of the Bible, and show them in his window. How then? They are right in their setting. Pick them out with a foul spirit, and they are foul; let them alone in the order and rhythm which God has appointed, and we cannot do without them. Evil be to him that evil thinks. These things belong to a greater whole; they must not be detached; the part that would be intolerable is essential to the whole that is beautiful.

The third thing that I have to report to you, as your literary surveyor, is that this book was written by some thirty or forty people, who, generally speaking, never saw one another, and who were probably unaware, speaking generally, that other people were writing parts of the book. Some of them lived a thousand years and more apart. Hardly any of them had what we should now call schooling or education; some had very much, some had none. There was one grand old man - I like his pen, shaggy and strong; it makes a crashing noise as it writes - who was very highly learned, and another was a rough-handed, horny-fleshed man, who kept a secretary, whom he never paid, to put down such blundering remarks as occurred to his fisherman's lips. One was very great, clothed with clouds, crowned with starlights, and another was an unlearned and ignorant man, and they have put their contributions to this book all within the same covers. There they are to-day, and the literary beauties of the Bible have been praised by men of letters. Many of the compositions are bold, grand, elevating, thrilling; some of them have never been excelled in simple pathos and in profound sympathy. I report this as a fact.

Add to these considerations the further fact that this book never shirks any great question. It does not content itself with trifles; it is not a book that offers little mincing guesses to little riddles - it gives an answer, whether right or wrong I do not now say, but, as a matter of fact, it does give an answer to the highest questions that can engage the human mind. By so much it commits itself - by so much it comes into open court in the broad daytime, and says, "Cross-examine me"-by so much it gives a cross-examiner an immense advantage over it; its utterances, and confessions, and statements are so broad and unreserved he would be an unskilled cross-examiner who could not torture a witness so frank and open-mouthed. In the very forefront it has a God; its very first

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sentence is illumined and sanctified by an awful name. The Bible does not grope after God in reverent or audacious speculation-it declares him, reveals him, asserts him. The Bible does not say, "Now let it be granted, merely for the sake of argument, that there is a God , but boldly it begins, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." It next addresses itself to man and enlarges upon his career and destiny. The Bible accounts for him, the Bible says "I will tell you when you were made, and how, and all about you." The Bible says, "I will account for the tumult and disorder, and incoherence and ruin: I know the mournful secret " For these things it gives no superficial name , it speaks a new word. It gives to dumb unconsciousness a speech which that unconsciousness claims as most expressive. The Bible says, "Sirs, all these tragedies, tumults, tempests, agonies, ruins, griefs, deaths, all come out of sin." The answer may be right, the answer may be wrong-I am only telling you that the Bible does not shirk the question. It has a short, sharp, piercing answer: it does not hide itself in a high cloud, where you cannot get at it; it comes flap down on the plain dust and says, with face of fire and tongue of passion, "This is sin." By so much it puts itself into my power. It does not address me from an altitude I cannot attain; it puts its feet, so to speak, in my own footprints, and tells me the cause of my distress and bitterness of soul.

The Bible does not content itself with drawing a line around one world or one day. It takes in the future; it has a great horizon; its straight lines do form an angle, Euclid notwithstanding. Ay, marvellous is that. The old geometrician tells me that straight lines do not form an angle, and he is right within his limits. But if I look at two straight lines, say two rows of trees, or two rows of houses, if they be long enough, they seem to get together, or there would be no poetry in the world. It is that forming the far-off perspective, that mingling of things so far separate, that gives the world its genius and its literature. So the Bible looks down the common rows and lines of things, and brings in the future, a haze, a mist, a golden cloud, a strange mingling of things, out of which shall come what it calls heaven.

The Bible is not a book that can only tell you what is the matter with you. Any doctor can do that. The Bible is a hopeful book; its music seems to come out of Almightyness, and to fill all space with its enraptured strains. It foretells the levelling of the high hills and the lifting up of the valleys, the outstraightening of the crooked lines. The Bible is most jubilant in tone. With a trumpet of thunder it tells that the King is coming. Nor is this animation to be accounted for by high spirits that are momentary and transient. The Bible deals with the saddest facts in human life first, and out of its treatment of these facts comes the shouting of infinite joy. The Bible deals with the most ghastly and tragic human fact of sin. Never does it say "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Its policy is not "Forgive and forget and say nothing more about it." Never does it make light of iniquity. It says, "Stand, till I dig a hell for it, and fill it with unquenchable fire."

The Bible does not say, " If there has been sin in the world, punish it." Any gaoler can punish a thief; how to redeem him, cure him, make him honest, that is the problem the Bible undertakes to solve. The magistrate arms himself with little rods and instruments of- torture and punishment, and he says, "Hand over the thieves and rascals to me, and I will see what can be done with them." Nothing. Punishment is failure; punishment is vile surgery. What does God do? This book says - I am simply reporting upon it - "I show unto you a more excellent way." Punishment we must have for social uses, but punishment is never regenerative. Punishment does not re-make or re-create or restore the soul. You must have atonement. How? By blood. Whose blood? The blood of the innocent. The injurer can never die sacrificially, expiatorily - he can only die like a condemned dog. Who is to suffer, then, that forgiveness may be possible? The innocent, the injured. The future of the afflicted land will have to be redeemed through the suffering of the sons of God, through the night sweats of

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blood the light may not look upon, but there will come that sweet, great spirit of love afterwards that will say, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do." You will never say it out of your own intelligence; you will never say it out of your consciousness; you will never say it out of your selfishness; you can only say it when the nails run into you and the blood gushes from your smitten side. If thou hast not been among those agonies, thou art a poor fool and not fit to read words that have any sense in them.

The Bible does not come to me and say, "You are a sinner, only; it says, "You are a sinner, and I can save you. Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin." You can vulgarise these answers, or you can make them sublime. They are The answers of this book. The Bible is not afraid to say that God died. No other book ever parted with its god in death. The Bible is not afraid to say that sin is the supreme difficulty of God, a difficulty not to be met by the miracle of power, but to be counteracted by the greater miracle of sacrifice.

I have to report that your book reveals God in a very singular manner. It does not shut up God in eternity; it makes him a man, it gives him a human name, it finds a cradle for him in Bethlehem and an altar on Calvary; it represents him as hungering, thirsting, sleeping, rejoicing, weeping. Does it bring him into contempt? No further than you can bring fire into contempt. Fire will be treated most familiarly up to a given point, but beyond that - hands off! That is how it is with God. Fire loosed from the sun will come into your kitchen and cook your food, in the friendliest way; fire will go upstairs into the nursery and keep the little children warm all day and not refuse to burn all night. When there is sickness in the house, fire says "Take me into the sick-chamber; I will make pictures for the ailing one; I will throw shadows on the wall; I will warm the air"- it will be friendly with all possible generosity and grace. Now make free with it, trifle with it; down goes your house Say, "Thou dost come into my kitchen and nursery and sick-chamber; now let us be friends, and let us take away all restrictions and limitations," and one hot cinder brings your castle to the ground. No trifling. Friendliness? Yes. Trifling? No. So my great God Christ. Who so gentle? who so humble? who so meek in heart? No house too mean for him to enter, no food too coarse for him to bless, no sin too vile for him to pardon; yet does he answer rulers with silence, and astound death by resurrection.

I have to report that this book never flatters or courts any reader, - does not wish to make itself popular. It announces its laws and urges its claims most inexorably - compromise and concession it will never make; with authority and emphasis it never ceases to speak. Other books ask to be read, plead for opportunity, beg to be heard; I have passed thousands of them through my hands as a literary surveyor, and they all begin, in effect, "Courteous reader, will you be so indulgent as to pay attention to me? Will you oblige me by reading half-a-dozen pages?" This book never. It tells every man that he is a sinner: to every man it preaches the humiliating doctrine of self-helplessness. At first it makes enemies. It sends a sword in the earth; it kindles a fire in families. When the proud man comes to it, it says, "Hands off; you are bad." When the rich man says, "Let me look at you," it says, "Woe unto ye that trust in riches." When the self-righteous man comes with long lean fingers, and touches it with cold marrow, it says, "O ye generation of vipers!" It takes the wise in their own craftiness, and the answers of great men it returns as the replies of fools. Yet it leaves no class of human experience unprovided for. It has a gospel for the penitent and a promise for the hopeless, a blessing for little children, - a solace for hearts broken with grief. It has texts which the poorest memory can recollect; it has "jewels five words long that sparkle on the forefinger of all time." It has

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arguments to arrest the most powerful mind, promises which must be whispered, psalms in which the thunder might take part, judgments which strike us dumb with fear.

Now; sirs that is my report. I will next treat of the New Testament, for you especially, but my report is so far complete. Now account for the book. If any of you should say to me, having heard these things, "Truly this is the book of him who made the heaven and the earth," I should say, "Amen." If any of you should say, "A book that inspires must itself be inspired," I should say, "The argument is unanswerable."

I now propose to give you an idea of the structure and bearing of the New Testament, and then to ask you, How do you account for such a book written under such circumstances?

Now, there was a Man in history - nobody doubts his reality as a historical personage - called Jesus Christ, who lived a certain life, who had round about him a certain number of disciples, part of whom undertook to give to the world a biographical and spiritual description of their Master. How would that life be written? I should say, first of all, the oldest disciple will write the first part of it, and that would be natural. In fact, I do not see how there can be any escape from an appointment of that sort. The senior disciple, the first man called by his Lord, will, of course, know more about him than anybody else could possibly know, and, therefore, he will write the first portion of the life. Then there were two other men with whom Christ was very familiar; their names were James and John. James will follow the first disciple, as a matter of course; then John will conclude the whole testimony; and thus we shall have the three favourites in actual life, also the three favourites in literary appointments, and the biography of Christ will be threefold, and its author-ship will be by Peter, James, and John. So you think? You are wrong, wholly. The first disciple is not permitted to write a word of the life of his Master, nor is the second whom you have named, James; and the third undertakes to do a work which I will presently describe. Matthew and John were of the first twelve; Mark and Luke were not. So we are to have two lives written from the inside and two lives written from the outside. Where there is such an openness, where such a challenge to variety of gift, recollection, power, genius, I want you to see that there must also have been a certain indestructible consciousness of the truth and reality of the things that were about to be narrated. If all the disciples had been of the first twelve, we might have said there is something like a literary conspiracy there; but two of them are of the twelve, and two are not of the twelve; two of them write from a more or less interior view, and the other two from a more or less external view.

Now look at the characteristics. The first man is called Matthew. He was a man of business; he was a commercial man; he was a tax-gatherer, a publican; he had to do with figures, with marking down accounts, with taking a statement of this man and of that man, embracing many particulars. He was a kind of commercial literary character. Now when he comes to write a book, is he faithful to these characteristics, or is he so completely changed that he himself actually would not know his own individuality? He is precisely in literature what he was in business - a man of action. In Matthew's Gospel you have action following action right swiftly, and also you have in Matthew the longest reports of the discourses which Jesus Christ delivered. He was a man of action, and he was a man also used to the pen. He took down statements and objections and all kinds of different things which he heard in the prosecution of his business, and he is precisely and minutely faithful to those characteristics when he comes to contribute his share to the literature of the Master whom he served.

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Now Mark was a different kind of man. There was not so much activity in his disposition and life. He was a quiet, observant man, nearly always in the background. When he came to the front, he very soon regretted having done so, and fell back again into the shadows. He was one of a large number of persons - not active, enterprising, valorous, hardly ever seen at the front, and yet necessary to the completeness of the construction of human society. What do we find in Mark's Gospel, then? Exactly what we should expect to find from such a man. There is no other Gospel that exhibits so clear and complete a power of observation as Mark's Gospel exhibits. Hence I find in Mark an account of Christ's gestures, how he stood, especially of Christ's looks - those silent, all-meaning looks. Mark seems to have kept his eye upon the eyes of his Lord. It is in Mark I read how he looked, how he observed, how he stood, how he sighed - precisely the characteristics you would have expected from all that is known of Mark's general disposition and turn of mind. He is not a monstrosity in literature; he is alike when he stands back in the shadow and when he represents his picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And yet who can tell how much Mark was indebted to another? Who was that other? That other was the first disciple. Mark was the secretary of Peter. Mark wrote very much at Peter's dictation and who could have told Mark so much about the looks of Christ as Peter could tell him? The supreme look of Christ was directed to Peter; that look broke Peter's heart; and who could tell how quietly and pathetically, with great tears in his eyes and great sobs in his voice, Peter directed Mark's attention to those wonderful and revealing looks of the all-seeing eyes of the Lord, and especially of that last look which went to Peter's heart and broke it? How strange a retribution, how singular that the first disciple should be ordered back, and that the first disciple's interpreter, or secretary, or clerk, should be sent forth to the very front! How like what we do know in Providence ourselves! Who can tell whether this book was not also written by the hand that is writing the literature of our daily life - so strange, so mixed, so tragical, so startling, so unlike everything that we ourselves ever have written, or could write? I suggest the thought; I do not give an authoritative reply.

Luke was a physician, a man who had been long years at school, a literary man, accustomed to observe closely, to ask critical questions, and to listen for the answers. Do we find anything in his Gospel to correspond with that kind of training? Exactly what corresponds to it, nothing more and nothing less. Hence, in Luke, you have so long accounts of the diseases which our Lord cured; you have a completeness which you might have expected from a scholarly and literary man. Luke, in fact, begins his Gospel by saying that, as many persons had undertaken to give a life of Christ, he himself would undertake to write a life, beginning at the very beginning, and setting forth in order the things which occurred in that life - just what you would expect from a man who had been at school, from a skilled pen, from a literary mind. I point this out as part of the evidence, and leave you to form your own opinion as to its value.

Now we come to one of the first twelve, John, and John is unlike all the other three. John does not pay so much attention to events as to thoughts. He is not so careful about the alphabet as about the literature. John was deeply religious; he lay on the bosom of his Lord; he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. How, then, did he do his work? Precisely in conformity with these characteristics. In John we find the deep things of God. He takes us beyond mere fact and incident, and reveals the eternal light and the infinite love. He makes us acquainted with the heart of Christ; he binds up the whole meaning and purpose of God in the short but immeasurable word Love. It is just the Gospel one would have expected from the man who reclined on his Lord's heart, and who seemed to hear the beatings of that inward life. I point this out also simply as a fact in the record; it is for you to think about it. Matthew could not have written John's Gospel. If Matthew had read John's Gospel, he would have been astounded by it, so differently may the self-same thing be represented, so

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immeasurable is the infinite, so impossible is it for any one mind to grasp the whole truth and any one eye to see all the beauty of that which is Divine and eternal. I should not wonder if Matthew had almost questioned the reality of John's Gospel, simply because John goes beyond the letter and beyond the event into infinite meanings and poetical interpretations. He had that high and Divine imagination which magnifies things little and mean and vulgar until they become great and grand and sublime. Mark could not have written John's Gospel; only John himself knew the mystery of this music; only John could venture into those high sanctuaries and repeat in spiritual speech the music of the Gospel of the Logos. In John's great heart was the secret of the Lord. John's scholarship was not of the letter; it was the light of genius, it was the quiet and holy miracle of sympathy, it was the triumph of love. This is the secret of all true and deep interpretation. You cannot teach a man to be an expositor of Scripture. This kind is not learned in the schools; it is learned in secret with Christ; so that the great expositor of the Scriptures is born and not made. It is in him; it is not put into him by man. As we love we read deeply; as we pray we see farthest; as we shut out the world by closing our eyelids, so do we enlarge the world and see the brightest and Divinest things in God's creation.

This, then, is the book you have to deal with, written by four different men, written by two who were of the first number of the twelve and by two who were not included in that select society, bearing upon it all the characteristics of the individual writers. Where, then, is Peter, the senior disciple, the man who first gave Christ companionship? Has he no place in the book? Was he lifted up only to be laughed at, and then to be dropped into oblivion? Is it so that Christ treats those who first come to him and obey his voice in life? No, no. We expected Peter to be first; he is first - at the other end. Was it not mercy that spared him from being in the first four? Was it not pity that spared him from writing the story of his own shame? Think for a moment. How could he have written one of the four accounts of the life of Christ? How perplexed and bewildered he must have been all through because he saw the end from the beginning of his undertaking! Was it not mercy, I repeat, that spared him that test? Now, Paul could tell the story of his hostility and antagonism. Why? It was intellectual. Not only so - so far as it was moral - he could say about it, "Because I did it ignorantly in unbelief, I verily thought I was doing God service in all this open opposition." But Peter had no such plea; no such excuse could have occurred to the senior disciple. He deliberately, and with profane language, denied his Master. He said, "I know not the man." He went forth and wept out his very heart in great scalding tears in secret, and when the life came to be written, that merciful Master said, "He cannot be in the first four; he would have to tell all that shocking tragic story; let that be told by others; he shall have his place; let him wait."

The Lord is most merciful even when we least expect it. Did we but know it, there is always mercy in the very thing which we regret most. When we are kept in the background it is mercy that appoints our lot. There is something in it we cannot understand. If I say, "Why am I not of the first four? I can find no reason for not being there; I am older, abler, better, stronger than any of them; why am I not there?" hear thy Lord saying unto thee, "Because of my mercy. Something would occur thou dost not fully foresee; the background is thy place just now. I appoint the lot and the estate of man; if thou art at the front or at the back, it is my doing." The Lord exalteth and the Lord abaseth, and men's lives are not thrown together by mishap and by chance and by lottery. There is a Divinity in all this masonry and shaping and upbuilding. Thou shalt have thy place. It is not man that is keeping you back. You are fretting and chafing in secret because you are not in the head place; it is not men that are keeping you down; they could not do so. God knows that it is better for you and me to be where we are than to be elsewhere. Wait in the prison till Pharaoh sends for thee, poor injured one. Wait in the stable till the Lord sends for thee, thou complaining colt. Wait on the Lord, I say, and know that

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thy place is not of thine own carving and forcing, is not a birth and expression of thine own foolish and selfish urgency, and that the bounds of our habitation are fixed by God.

Is Peter wholly overlooked and allowed to drop out of view? No; Peter's record is in the book; he has his own place; he writes two letters which no other man could have written; they are the letters of a penitent. His pen is dipped in the blood of a broken heart, and truly the music is grand in massiveness and passion. He takes his place without a murmur; even in the arranging of the book, with which he had nothing to do, he seems to be in his right place. The others were first; he comes last; the pinnacle hath an honour as well as the foundation. The Evangelists have written, the acts of the apostles have been recorded, Paul has argued, James has lectured; and when they are all done the old disciple comes forward, to be followed by the only man who could complete the new and final revelation of God's love. There is a rhythm in this order which is not mechanical, or to change the figure, the stones thus placed were set up by him who built all things, and he who built all things is God. It is not every hand that has skill to write a programme; it is not every man who is equally clever at all points. There is a genius of order, and that genius of order is wonderfully honoured in the very succession of the books of the New Testament. I want to hear what Peter has to say. He is kept back from view till they are all done, and when they have all laid their pens down, he says, "I will write you what I know of this great Christ," and Peter's epistles are full of the blood of Christ. It is Peter who calls it "precious blood"; it is Peter who sets it above silver and gold and all corruptible things; it is he who magnifies the Cross of Christ and the blood of Christ with the pathos that can only come out of a heart not lightly wounded on the surface, but struck through and through with the darts of the enemy.

Read the book in the light of these suggestions, and when you have so read it tell me how you are to account for it.

Now, resuming the thread of the last discourse and completing it in a moment, let me ask, What was Jesus Christ's relation to the whole - to the Old Testament, the writings that were said to be inspired? He had a very difficult part to play with that book, in the hands of those who were the leaders and teachers of the people. He came forward, and he said, "I observe those books in your hands; all that they contain is sufficient to guide men to God." Where was his mission - what did he come to do? Again and again he said, "There is enough in these books to lead you to God"; so then what work was set out for him to accomplish? He said, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." When a man asked him the way of salvation, he said, "How readest thou? what is written in the law?" When a man cried from hell that someone might be sent to his father's house to convert his five brethren, the answer was, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them: if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." So he made his task most difficult. He said, "There is enough in those writings to enlighten the mind and lead the heart to the Eternal Father," and then he claimed that every jot and tittle in those writings bore entirely upon himself. He set himself forth as the interpretation and completeness of everything that was written. So the book is there, and the Man is there, and judgment is called for. This Man never smoothed down difficulties, but rather seemed to create them, to suggest points of challenge and comparison. There was no fear in his mind and heart: he spoke like a man who was addressing himself to a great question, every point of which he had fully comprehended. Not only so - he is not merely general in his application of the Old Testament to himself: he is minute and special and particular. So he takes up the volume of Isaiah; he finds the place where it is written, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, unto the poor, and to those that are bound and are heavy-

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laden." He closes the book, hands it to the minister, and says, "I am he of whom the prophet did thus write." He says, "The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head stone of the corner." He applies, therefore, not the whole Scriptures only, but minute and separate portions of the whole record, to himself, so that men who might have been bewildered by a great breadth of application had the opportunity of testing him very severely at special points which he himself indicated as crucial and final. Then he gave unity to the book. We thought that as it had been the work of some thirty or forty men, it was more or less incoherent - we were to make of it what we could - it was something built at different ages and periods of the world's history, and one part had next to no relation to the other. Jesus Christ said, "All these Books are one; I am the all-uniting and all-illuminating centre; you can trace every mystery in the Scriptures to me; you can find the fulfilment of every hopeful prophecy in my kingdom. Where shadows startle you, I am behind them; where types and symbols perplex you, you will find their meaning in my ministry and priesthood." So the book is not many, but one: from beginning to end it is the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. We upon whom the ends of the age have come are not to read the book to find what meaning we can put upon it: the meaning is settled, and it is Christ, and Christ only. The creation means Christ; the promise to shattered man in Eden means Christ; the sacrifices and all the ceremonies of Judaism mean Christ; the music of Israel's sweetest harp means Christ; the light that gleams and burns in prophecy means Christ; the Song of Songs rolls its tender strain around Christ; the burdens of the later seers were burdens of Christ. No page did Christ disclaim; no prophet did Christ disown; he appropriated all names and figures and symbols of beauty: he was the Root and the Offspring of David, he was the Bright and Morning Star, he was the Flower of Jesse and the Plant of Renown, he was the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley, he was the Shepherd of the Flock, and the Redeemer of those who were in the hand of the enemy; he had not where to lay his head, yet he was perfumed with the powders of the merchants. He sat on the well of Jacob weary with his journey, yet his chariot was of the wood of Lebanon. His face was marred more than any man's, yet to the eyes of love his countenance was white and ruddy, and among ten thousand he was chief. He was thirsty, yet he knew the nations were preparing for him spiced wine of the pomegranate. He was despised and rejected of men, yet he filled the firmament as One who was to be the Desire of all nations. What wonder, then, that when he met the distressed ones going to Emmaus, and when he heard the complaint of their ignorance and their sigh of suppressed dismay, he began at Moses and all the prophets and expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself?

We are invited now to read the Bible in the light of the suggestion that it all means Christ, all its ends are to be bound up in Christ, all its difficulties and mysteries are to find their solution in the Son of God. As he proceeded, would God we had been there to hear the wondrous word! The hearts of the dejected burned within them. That is the secret of inspiration; that is how you know whether the Bible is inspired or not - does it make your heart burn - does it inspire you? If so, the cause must be equal to the effect. Christ therefore began at Moses and the prophets and the Psalms, and expounded unto the disciples in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. No other man dare have claimed so tattered a book; no other man dare have said, "All these writings, by so many different hands, and at so many periods of the world's history, converge as to their meaning and fulfilment in my person and ministry." We should have needed a neater book, a smaller and completer treatise; but he takes in all the varied writing, all the tumultuous and miscellaneous literature, and he says, "I bind it into one unity and compose it into one unique and indestructible system of my personality and my ministry." He put the key into the drooping hands of the men walking to Emmaus; at its touch the lock sprang back, and a liberty wide as heaven came in place of their limitation and distress. When therefore I read this book, I now read it as a complete book: I take Christ with me from the beginning to the end. When the writing is very hard, the reading very

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difficult to my ignorance, and I want information, I will wait until I see Christ himself, and then I may have some hard questions to put to him - hard to me, not to him - everything is hard to a man who cannot see one hour ahead-but what can be hard to him who breathes eternity and the measure of whose strength is infinite?

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Without Christ the Bible is chaos; with Christ it is order, and music, and light.

Hitherto we have been discussing what may be called the negative side of the great questions which have come under our consideration. We now advance to consider the positive aspect of these great inquiries and problems.

In the Bible you find men who say positively that God has spoken to them, and has told them to speak to other people in his name. They do not merely suppose that God has spoken to them; they say they have received messages from his mouth, that his hand touched their lips, and that they have spoken the very words which he told them to deliver. Now, on the face of it, this is an astounding declaration. It has no counterpart in our own experience, we imagine. Judging by ourselves, by all our communications with the unseen world and the Divine intelligence, we should say that no such action ever took place in any human instance. Let us consider that a moment. If a man were to arise, and say, "God came to me last night, touched my mouth, and gave me a certain message. He asked me what I saw; I told him what appeared to me in the visions of the soul, and the consequence of it all is that he has sent me to you this morning to speak directly and positively in his name." I ask you, as a Christian assembly, how you would receive that man. You would unhesitatingly pronounce him a fanatic or a lunatic. There is not a soul here, probably, that would regard that man as other than in some degree insane. Yet we who would so speak about a contemporary gather reverently, and, we believe, with intelligent adoration and hopefulness, around a book which says in every tittle of it, "God wrote me; God spoke me; God endorsed me." Is it antiquity that we are worshipping? Is it old English terminology that gets the better of our veneration, and makes us think that this book is Divine, and this spelling is holier than all other orthography? Or is it (let the heart answer and the intelligence speak) a deep, solemn, childlike conviction that in the Bible we have God's own plainly declared word, and that it is all we require for earth and time, for heaven and eternity? I ask you to consider that question, lest you should be labouring under some delusion. Let us be healthy in our thinking, let us be sound and real in our intercourse and convictions, and then we may expect to enjoy all that belongs to sound health, to robust intelligence, to complete and earnest conviction.

Consider the times in which the Bible writers lived, as compared with our own days. Consider the all but infinite silence of their intellectual region. Is there any silence anywhere now? The air is full of noise; silence is a banished spirit, a historic angel. We live amid the dinning clatter of the fussiest civilisation that ever prevailed. That may account for a good deal that is peculiar in our thinking. Every wheel creaks, every footstep has an echo; the noise is so rude and deafening that some of its more tired victims long for the release of that wide land where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. There seems to have been no noise in the old times - the Bible days - but now there is no quietness. One has a fiery tongue, another a prophecy, another a patent, another a telegraph, another a telephone. Great buildings are put up, in which men place cunning samples of machinery; science and travel outrun one another for their respective prizes; it is all fuss, noise, rivalry, neck-and-neck work. It is enough to make God speechless. How can he be heard amid the

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uproar of our unintelligent and urgent fuss? He built a pulpit; he meant that pulpit to be wide as the horizon, high as heaven. We have made it six feet long by four and a half, and have told men to build a little, fussy, noisy thing outside it called a platform, where sweltering rhetoricians encounter the continual peril of rhetorical suicide. God said it was to be all pulpit, all church; men were to preach in the pulpit and sing in it, and be glad in it; it was to be the greatest and grandest thing under the stars. Now we lock it up; now we diminish its dimensions; now we say that certain things are more becoming the platform than the pulpit. Ah me! Every morning has its snowfall of newspapers, every evening its special editions and its latest telegrams. There is a financial pandemonium on the exchange, and a theological Bedlam in the church. Every man knows now everything better than everybody else and uses the speech of infallibility in protesting that he is the humblest of creatures. The whole air is lacerated by the cries of human turbulence; cursing and praying, lying and preaching, oaths and brawls, songs of hell and psalms of heaven, heighten and aggravate the swelling discord. What wonder if, amid all this, we say, "God hath not spoken; there is no God to speak"? We have filled the atmosphere with dust, and we have made the dust move by the breath of our noise until it has become quite a storm, and then, having created all this tempest of violence round about us, we wonder whoever can believe that God has spoken to the human race. To whom does God speak - to the blustering maniac, or to the trembling worshipper? He says, "To this man will I look: to the man who is humble and of a contrite heart, who trembleth at my word."

Consider the times in which the Bible writers lived. Contrast their times with ours. Their days were long, calm, lighted up clearly to the very last; their shadow was a kind of secondary light. The old Bible man went straight up to heaven in spirit, and asked God what he was to do, and God told him. The altar fire never went out; the Bible saint took his battle orders direct from God - stored away his banner in God's sanctuary till he wanted it again. The great prophets waited daily at the gate of heaven, and panted for God as the hart panteth for the water- brooks. You can hardly imaginatively conceive the difference between those times and our own. It was the day of silence; God's going was heard in the wind; the clouds were the dust of his feet; the silence was too deep and grand to be the hush of human making; it was the very peace of God, the solemn quietness of infinite rest. Things were then seen in their Divine relations, not in their human contractions and meanness. Then there were no guide books to the mountains that are round about Jerusalem; there are now. Now the British excursionist asks, "How high is that hill?"- the hill about which the Psalmist said, "As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the Lord is round about his people." In the two voices you have the two revelations. The English excursionist, with his month's holiday heavily on his hands, asks about the geological formation of the hills concerning which the old man said, "The strength of the hills is his also" - a greater and holier comment. Oh, if Moses could now go to Sinai, and see the kind of people that are taken there, the whole thing would be explained. The grand old prophet, grim as the rock, with his torrent of beard grey as foam, would look up for God; and if we were there, we should be putting little pieces of stones in small wallets, and buying the wood that saw Christ's tears, with Hebrew inscriptions on it, and placing the same in our drawing-rooms. The times explain everything: fuss, and excursion, and noise, and rattle, and panic, and dissolution, and bank failure, and bankruptcy, and political crises, and agonies of all sorts and kinds, making the air a great swirl and torment; and the long-ago yesterday, when the mountain was petrified poetry, when the rocks were unhewn altars, when the hills were libraries, and the winds great mighty organs that could thunder and tremble and wail and cry.

The Bible man saw the religious aspect of material nature; the present-day man sees the material aspect of supposedly Divine things. We linger now where the prophets wept and prayed, and ask when the steamboat leaves, and when the train comes in, and we are the men who want to drag

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down the heavens, and make trade with the stars. Which is to be the rule, the old faith or the present unbelief? The ancient heroism or the present self-idolatry? Moses went up the mountains alone and in solitude, Ezekiel paced the way of the river alone, Isaiah saw the King in his beauty when there was nobody with him, and long before the city had lighted its daily fire, Daniel had thrown up his window eastward, and communed with the infinite, silent Holy Spirit. Do you know what silence is? You cannot know it in the city. I saw it, if I may so say, in the depths and on the heights of the grand Simplon Pass. There and then I understood the Bible! No human creature to be seen, no human voice to be heard, no human habitation to be descried; the great rocks, the clouds brilliant in their untainted bloom, the scream of birds, the warbling of the stream as it made its way down the deep ravine to some broader water, the snow here, yonder, notwithstanding the fierce glow of an all but intolerable sun - alone - there I felt that if I did not make a noise with my own going, the silence would speak to me like a ghost. I understood it then. But the moment one other traveller came, the spell was broken, the church dissolved, and the Simplon Pass became a common way.

How can I help myself in that same direction? By such solitude as is possible to me, by getting into quietness and silence, by being alone a good deal. If thou dost live only on the street, amid the rattle of bad pianos and the chatter of worse talkers, then thou dost know nothing of all the old mystery that made the Bible. When you are most alone, you will have most of God. We have been growing in the human direction. There is nothing more unlike the Bible than our newspaper to-day: it is all event and rattle and procession and march and noise and battle - and lies. We have come into a material age: we are developing the mountains. The old men made altars of them and developed themselves. That is the difference; that the explanation. Do I complain? No. The pendulum must go both ways, or it is not swinging right. You must have the Divine period, and you must have the human period; the spiritual and the material. Both have their places in this great mystery of human development; only do not say that the one is complete without the other. We need the Bible; we need the daily news-paper as well now. We need all the Biblical prayer; we need all the present-day industry and ingenuity and enterprise and thrift and skill. Do not separate the one from the other: it is the pendulum's oscillation - not this point and not that, but the complete, geometric, regular swing that ticks off your moments, and tells you how the ages are being spent.

It is thus you must read the Bible. The Bible is two books. You say the Bible contradicts itself. So it does - within the narrow, little, miserable limits which men put down for their judgments. There is Calvinism in the Bible? Yes. And Arminianism? Yes. There is one man in the Bible who says, "Faith - faith - faith," and another who says, "Works - works - works," - are they both right? Both are perfectly right. So in the old time we had the quietness and the silence, the rich psalm and the noble prayer, and the heroic self-sacrifice; to-day we have energy, industry, mechanical contrivance, great engineering skill: we are all busy from morn till eve, so busy that we resent intrusion - we have no time to talk about aught but the business of the immediate hour. And both states of life, properly understood and rightly treated, go to make up God's meaning of human history and human destiny.

The little peddling question which many men would like me to answer, if I could, is this: How did God speak to the prophets - did he speak to them face to face and visibly? How far were the prophets inspired - were the very words, the very spelling, the punctuation even, given to the prophets - is every comma in the Bible an inspired comma, or is the semicolon more inspired than the comma? The little question of - a little mind. The men who ask such questions are not in earnest: they are not blood questions, they are surface inquiries, they are of the nature of gossip and twaddle, they do not come up out of the burning, aching heart. What does that heart ask? Another kind of question

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altogether. The question which I put to the Bible, and about the Bible, is this: Do you inspire me? If so, you are yourself inspired. I enlarge that question in justice to the Bible, because there may be something in me that prevents the full expression of the inspiration that is in the Holy Bible, and I ask, What has the Bible done in those lands which have read it most and loved it most? Does the reading of the Bible ennoble man, lift up the mind, quicken the imagination, re-enkindle the best hopes, sustain the holiest ambitions? Does the Bible lead me to undo the heavy burden, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick? Does the Bible give me all the inspiration of its own infinite charity? If so, the inspiration of the Bible is an undoubted and absolute fact. You judge the tree by its fruits, and you do well; judge the book by the results which come from its careful, patient reading, and from the arduous endeavours to give practical interpretation to its most sacred and difficult precepts.

How is it that God does not write a Bible now? How is it that God does not make another sun now? Is the old sun worn out? Why does not God write an addendum to the Bible? What addendum could he write? He has spoken upon every great subject, and he has told us everything needful to their understanding and out-living. You cannot mention one great theme on which there is not more written than we have yet studied or carried out. I will tell you when the addendum will come, as I have told you afore-time. I can give the very day and date on which you will receive a new Bible. When the old one has been literally and spiritually obeyed, when its injunctions have all been carried out in their spirit and meaning, when the present Bible is exhausted as to its spiritual interpretation, its intellectual enlightenment, audits moral demands. When we can honestly go to the Lord who wrote the Bible, and say, "We have done it all; we have completed the curriculum of duty and service; there is not a letter in it which we have not fulfilled," then he will hand us the second volume of his gracious revelation.

Instead of saying, "There is a God; go and find him," or instead of saying, "We can intellectually prove that there is a God," we have started the argument from the exactly opposite point. Our course of inquiry has lain along this line, namely, "Here is the universe; how do you account for it? Here is human life, with its tragedy and comedy, its multitudinousness, yet its unity, its disorder and chaos, and yet its organisation, society scattered all over the face of the globe, always in contention, yet always in progress - how do you account for it? Here is the Bible, written by some thirty or forty people, who lived in different ages, some of whom had no idea of what the others had written, some of whom could have had no idea as to what the others would write - a book without preface and without index, which is to-day working such mighty wonders in the thinking and in the general culture and civilisation of the globe - how do you account for it?" That is the argument which we have been endeavouring to elaborate.

We have found that one Person at least has risen, and said, "The universe, life, the Bible, Christ, all that is great, mysterious, solemn, beautiful, is to be accounted for by the words. In the beginning, God." Now the question arises, and comes up, indeed, for some sort of settlement - When you say God, do you not simply add one mystery to a great number already in existence? Do you not rather increase the light, or the darkness, as the case may be? Might it not be as intelligible to say, "The universe is to be accounted for by a great Secret"? Might it not even to some be as intelligible to say, "All things are to be accounted for by an inscrutable power called ABC"? Do we not simply mention a name, and leave the mystery exactly where we find it? That is the question I propose now to discuss - I hope, in some degree, to settle.

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My first answer is that, in saying, In the beginning, God, we do not use a name only. Otherwise, then A, B, C might be just as intelligible, yet as useful, as the other letters, G, O, D. We do not, however, use a name only; we go far beyond a mere appellation. We have not a name only, but a character, and upon the quality of that character does the settlement depend. There is a very full revelation of the character of God given in the Bible, and it is so given as to come down to our own level, so that human reason can look at it, can look at what may be called even its extreme points. The character is not written upon the radiant clouds and in characters too minute for human vision to decipher. God is so delineated in the Bible as to be in our streets, in our houses, to be actually in the sanctuary of our own consciousness, so that human reason can look at him and consider the character which is portrayed, and pronounce almost complete and authoritative judgment upon it. Not only is this true. There is another fact which, in my estimation, has much to do with the whole consideration of this question. Not only is the character of God delineated in the Bible, and not only is it such a character as no human imagination, in my opinion, could have conceived, but it is precisely such a character as human imagination has been incessantly and vainly endeavouring to get rid of. I have, therefore, now to state the character of God as revealed in the Bible, and to ask you to follow me attentively in the portrayal, and to ask at last whether such a God could have sprung out of merely human fancy.

In the Bible God is represented as being at once the mightiest, and, in some respects, the weakest of all beings. Observe the self-contradiction and the consequent audacity, if not blasphemy, of the conception. Supposing that the human mind could have conceived of God as the mightiest of all beings, it did not lie within that imagination to conceive him also as the weakest, because the one idea would, in human reasoning, of necessity exclude the other. He is God over all, omniscient, infinite in strength and in skill, yet the meanest human heart can shut him out. The heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, yet he will enter the broken heart, and take up his habitation in the contrite spirit. Angels and archangels adore him, seraph and cherub burn and glow in his presence, and do obeisance to his power, yet my human heart and yours can shut him out, and cause him to say, wet with midnight dew, cold with nocturnal chill, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man open the door, I will come in." This is the conception. I ask you whether it is a conception possible to the human mind. One or the other might be, but to conjoin the two, to clothe him with omnipotence, yet to keep him outside the heart door, unable to open it, is a kind of conception not native, so far as I know of human literature, to the human mind.

More than this; God works along the line of his weakness, and continually shows his humiliation, when he might work along the line of his strength, and show the grandeur and terribleness of his majesty. How is he represented in the Bible? He has thunderbolts in his uplifted hand. He has tears in his pitying eyes. What human imagination could conceive the two ideas? He counteth the number of the stars, and because he is great in power, not one faileth, yet his vineyard is full of thorns and briers, and the tower thereof is thrown down. He doeth as he pleaseth amongst the armies of heaven, yet the husbandmen shut him out of his own fields and slay his Son with the sword. He is clothed with honour and majesty, yet he is grieved, afflicted, disappointed, sore in heart. The question is. Could any human imagination have conceived these two self-contradictory and mutually excluding ideas? Given the possibility that one of them could have arisen in the human mind, who can account for the miracle that the precisely opposite idea and conception also occurred to the same intelligence?

Not only so - the mystery grows. God himself voluntarily and lovingly spares the very race that rejects and dishonours him. He preserves and nourishes and entreats a sinful race, when he might enjoy unbroken and ineffable delight with the spirits that have kept their first estate. Why bear with

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a race of rebels? You would not. Why not crush them, and dwell with the unfallen and loyal hosts of the heavenly world? Yet sinners are spared, the life of mischief-makers is prolonged, rebels are pitied, and tokens of love are given to them by the God who has a sword and thunderbolts, and lightnings, and judgments, and maledictions, and the key of hell. How is this? Has human imagination raised itself to this infinite compassion, spared a sinful world, and in the poetry of its highest moods redeemed a race by an ideal atonement? Is it possible? If human imagination has done this transcendent work, it must have done some other work which will be in proportion to its infinite excellence. Where is that other and competing work? We have a right to demand it; we do demand it. We pit an author against himself; we say, this was his early work, this the work of his middle period, and these are the productions of his declining years. We can never compare him with any other artist; he himself alone may be his parallel. If we have therefore this rule of reasoning amongst ourselves in other matters, why not apply it in this higher inquiry? I press it. If human imagination has conceived this God, where is the next and competing work which that human imagination has produced? If this conception is the work of human imagination, then human imagination has been declining ever since. It began with a glorious dream; it has ended in nightmare and insanity. Tell me that the architect who built St. Peter's in Rome has nothing else to show than a series of dog-kennels to prove that he built the swelling dome and magnificent walls of that great church; could I believe it? I should doubt it. So that when you tell me that this God is a human fancy, I ask for human fancy number two and three and four, that I may pit the artist against himself, and ask the dreamer for a succession of his dreams, that I may know how far he can justify himself by the multiplicity and variety of his work.

More than this: we have in the Bible a God who has created a scheme of providence which, viewed in such portion as is visible within the horizon of time, afflicts the human mind with a sense of utter confusion and utter inability on its part to bring it into order and peace. The Bible acknowledges that righteousness is thrown down in the streets, that the wicked are not in trouble as other men, that they have more than heart could wish; yet it asserts that God is all-powerful, that he is presiding over a vast and complicated scheme of things, that he rules an economy of laws, and forces, and compensations, out of which, as out of primeval chaos, he will bring light and order, beauty and rest. The Bible asserts this in the face of appearances which would cover both the theory and the theorist with utter ridicule and contempt. How dare human imagination create a conception which is falsified by everyday life and by our own little experience? What fool is he who sets up a theory which every fact on the streets overthrows, condemns, and despises? This is what the Bible does; it sets God upon the circle of the earth, it puts the reins of the universe into his hands, it tells us that all things are working together for good, it begs us to give God time that he may sweep the whole cycle of his own thought and movement, and it declares that all these conflicting forces shall be caught up in a grand astronomic movement that shall sphere them like stars, and make them glow, and burn, and revolve like completed constellations of light. Is it in the power of human genius to conceive two such contradictory ideas?

Now these considerations, accumulating themselves as they now begin to do into an impossibility as against the claims of human imagination, are further strengthened by the fact that, notwithstanding all these appearances of weakness, disorder, defeat, and humiliation, the God of the Bible never lowers the standard of righteousness, and never makes unequal and undignified terms with his enemies. He never says, "I must lower the standard if you will not come up to it." He never says, "Then I must be the party that shall make all the concessions, and we will change the whole moral standard in order to accommodate ourselves to human imbecility and pollution." Never. The standard is purity of heart, absolute righteousness, holiness without which no man shall see the

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Lord. So then, according to the theory that the God of the Bible is a human imagination, we have a corrupt humanity, known to be such by personal consciousness and universal observation and experience - we have a corrupt humanity conceiving an incorruptible Divinity, an unholy heart projecting out of its own thoughts an infinitely holy God, an imagination the feebleness of whose wing is proved by every other effort it has made, soaring into the very heaven of heavens, unwearied by the infinite distance, undazzled by the essential light, dictating a description of God in terms the sublimity of whose eloquence is only surpassed by the fascination of their music; and, having performed once for all this miracle of miracles, it subsides not only into commonplace intellectually, but into confusion and rebellion morally. Can you believe in such a possibility? Then, indeed, greater is your faith than the religion of Christ asks it to be.

There have been many gods and lords, have there not? Yes, many, of the human imagination, as pagan literature so abundantly testifies; but they betray their origin so obviously as to do away with the necessity of serious argument. We can see how they came to be, we can weigh them and measure them; we can account for them, and, as Sir William Hamilton said, "A God that can be understood is not a God at all." But even here we must be just: even such gods as we find in heathendom may be distorted figures of an original revelation, the broken memories of a sacred vision in ages far off. For God has never left himself without witness, and it is one of the charges against the men who have been unfaithful to this witness that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Truly such gods come easily enough within the scope of human imagination, so disennobled are they by their grotesqueness, so debased by sensuality, so discredited by shortsightedness; nay, more, such gods themselves are the best answers to the impious theory that the God of the Bible is the outcome of the imagination of man.

So you see when we give God as the explanation of all things, we do not use a mere name: we use a name that indicates a character, a spirit, and it is by this character that we wish the suggestion - calling it no more in the meantime - that God created the heaven and the earth and rules our life to be estimated and valued. The men of natural science to-day tell us that there is a secret, and they reverentially spell the word secret with a capital S. So far, so good. They tell us that there is a power, with a capital P, unknown, with a capital U - religion in typography, a kind of small altar made by large capitals. So far, I repeat, so good. Wherever I find a man who can spell secret, referring to some power in the universe he cannot understand, with a capital S, I find the beginning of the life that is right. Despair of no man who has a feeling of veneration; find a man who cannot look upon a sunset without tears coming into his eyes, and you find a man who may not be far from the kingdom of God. Find a man who in the presence of death is silent, and his speechlessness may be a kind of negative religion. I am not content with Secret, though so typographically honoured. The Bible says there is a secret, and the answer to it is Father, Saviour, Redeemer, Lord. Are these but so many words? Every one of these words is a character, and that character has direct and immediate relation to our life, and that character clothes itself with abasements which bring it within our vision, and subject it even to our critical inquiry and estimate. It is a great thing to do.

The argument, then, briefly stands thus. The God of the Bible is so consistent, the same at the last as at the first, though ages intervened between the delineations given by the earliest writers and those given by the latest - so majestic yet so condescending, so righteous yet so clement, so immediately and minutely identified with human affairs, yet so infinitely raised above their debasement and

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contamination - so wholly unlike every other conception of the human mind, that human credulity itself is simply staggered by the suggestion that such a God was born in the imagination of man. This then is where I rest. I claim no finality; I scorn no other man's thinking. I had a universe given to me to account for. One man told me it was to be accounted for by chance, and I felt - I felt - that he was a fool. I had human life given to me to account for, in all zones and climes, in all ages and seas and lands. I studied it. One man told me it was to be accounted for by the law of averages, and I felt that he was a fool. I had the Bible to account for. I read it straight through, and I was told by one man that it happened to come together just as it is, that there is no purpose in it, no organic or spiritual genius and unity, and that it is a gathering up of fragments that have no mutual relation, and as I read the thing, as it got into me and made my blood tingle, I felt that he, too, was a fool. Then I came to this revelation, "In the beginning, God" - God not a name only, but a character, a spirit, a life, a reality: God is light, God is love, God is Saviour, God blessed for evermore. King of kings, Lord of lords, and I felt that the answer was grand enough to be true.