

Charles Krauth

The Bible: A Perfect Book



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The Bible: A Perfect Book

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The Bible: A Perfect Book
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By Charles Porterfield Krauth, D.D.

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The Bible A Perfect Book

“The Law Of The Lord Is Perfect.”

By Rev. C. Porterfield Krauth, Winchester, Va

IN THE NINETEENTH PSALM, a parallel between Nature and Revelation is drawn by the author of both. He shows no disposition to praise one at the expense of the other, but he does apply to the latter a term, which is nowhere employed in speaking of the former. “The law or doctrine, or instruction of the Lord, is PERFECT.” By the law of the Lord is meant revelation, perfect in David’s time, not because its details were finished, but perfect because self-developing, growing as the infant grows to the man, or as the pebble on the lake, originating the wave-creating wave. It is not more true of Revelation now, but it is more conspicuously true, for it has grown to its absolute and last form.

Consummatum est God has spoken in these *last days* by his Son — the Book is sealed, and as fearful a curse is pronounced on him who adds to the Record, as on him who takes from it. Nor is it strange that to so vast and varied a thing as Revelation, a term which seems so restricted as that of “Law” should be applied. All Revelation considered on the side of authority is Law, because in some way, whether it speaks in poetry or prose, of God or man, it works itself out in duty. Revelation is the book of worship, and “all worship is prerogative.” Its obligation on the faith and obedience of men, though highly rational, does not put itself at the mercy of the power of man to perceive its rationality. It binds the conscience not by its rationality, but by proving itself to be from God. If reason could reach all the results of revelation, we would still need revelation; for government must rest on law, and law on authority. Stealing is contrary to reason, yet what government proposes to prevent it by an appeal to reason. Reason gives the law to the lawgiver; authority binds it on the ruled. — Revelation is law.

The Bible contains the constitution of a state and the annals of its administration. It is law in precept and law in cases, and that law is *perfect*. The original word here translated perfect, is a polygon, whose various sides have been given in different translations. The law of the Lord is *spotless* — immaculate, says the Vulgate. The Sun who is represented in this Psalm as the giant bridegroom espousing all nature, has his spots; but the Word has none. The law of the Lord, says Castalio, is complete, *integer*. It grows from its own life — needs no addition, and will bear no diminution. There is nothing in it, which should be out of it; nothing out of it, which should be in it.

“—————Fortis et se ipso
Totus, teres, atque rotundus.”

It is “spotless,” “irreproachable,” “entire;” or as our translator well sums it up, it is “*perfect*.”

We have not time here to enter into a detail of the process by which we come to a designation of what is required in a perfect revelation. We are sure, however, that even the skeptic will not charge us with making the conditions of our proof too easy, when we state as essential to the demonstration of our thesis — “The Bible a perfect Book;” — that we must show, that it is derived from God, is mediated through man, and springing through human channels from the eternal fount, must have the power of tracing its way through the history of the race. It is divine, it is human, it is historical. Let us then look at this perfect Book, in the beauty of its humanity, the glory of its divinity, and the grandeur of its history.

1. The Bible Is Perfect In Its High Humanity

It was an early heresy in regard to the humanity of our Saviour, which represented it as a mere phantom drapery of the descended God. He only *seemed* to eat, to languish, and to suffer. Too often and too long has this phantom theory been applied to the Bible, in forgetfulness that it, too like that other word, has a tabernacle in flesh, is a revelation of Deity in humanity. In it, too, is seen the “true man” with the “very God.” It is this mingled Gnostic and Apollinarian heresy, taking from revelation its true

human body and true human soul, which has given to the reverence for it a false direction, and has made the most honored Book in the world, the subject of more crude, allegorizing and nonsensical interpretation than any other. The Bible has been filled with types, double senses, mysteries innumerable after the same fashion in which

“———Sober commentators view
In Homer more than Homer knew.”

Thus, Barnabas found, in the three hundred and eighteen persons, circumcised by Abraham, the mystery of the Cross. Clement, of Rome, sees a type of Christ's blood in the scarlet thread hung out by Rahab. Justin Martyr tells us that Leah and Rachel represent the Jewish and Christian dispensations. St. Augustine, who sometimes advances sounder principles, nevertheless runs into the same sort of false supranaturalism: “The dimensions of the Ark,” says he, in the fifteenth Book of his City of God, “do signify man's body, in which the Saviour was prophesied to come, and did so; for the length of man's body, from head to foot, is six times its breadth from side to side, and ten times his thickness; whereupon, the Ark was made three hundred cubits long, fifty broad, and thirty deep: and the door in the side was the wound that the soldier's spear made in our Saviour; for by this do all men go in unto him: and the Ark being made all of square wood, signifieth the unmoved constancy of the saints: for cast a cube or squared body, which way you will, it will ever stand firm. The three stories of the Ark may mean the three Evangelical increases; thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold: chaste marriage dwelling in the first, chaste widowhood in the second, and chaste celibacy in the highest of all.” And with this sort of thing he seriously confutes Faustus the Manichee, who denied that the Old Testament had any prophetic things concerning Christ. This is, indeed, what the Old Translator, from whose version we have quoted, aptly calls “screwing an allegory out of Scripture.”

This falsely directed feeling of the divinity of the Bible, which utterly refused to let a human heartbeat in it, and made it a book of riddles, a scheme of correspondences, long and wearisome, received a scientific shape in Origen, and culminated in Cocceius, whose law of interpretation practically ran into this, that everything is in a text, which the imagination of man can possibly get out of it. It has been thought that the Bible had new

claims on us, when it was shown that it is not only a manual of Faith, but of Chemistry, Astronomy and Geology, that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, in the phraseology of the Copernican system, that St. James understood the parallax, and that Amos speaks of railroad cars and steam engines. “Jerome and Origen,” says Luther, “helped to this allegorizing way. May God forgive them! Mere botching, child’s play, harlequinade, is this sleight of hand with the Scriptures — trifling with it like the man who applied the whole of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* to Christ. Suppose I took up the legend of St. George after this fashion. St. George is a type of Christ; the Virgin, he delivered, is the Church; the dragon in the sea is the Devil; his horse the humanity of Christ. Who does not see that such interpretation would be mere jugglery?”

An ancient and current, though not undisputed doctrine, was, that the sacred writers were not so much the conscious instruments of the Holy Ghost as mere machines. No tinge of style, no form of expression, no point of view was in any sense to be derived from the man. To all intents and purposes, the pen might as well have been moved over the parchment by that hand which wrote on the Babylonian wall, as by Moses, Isaiah or John. One author, indeed, calls the sacred writers pens, another hands, and another amanuenses of the spirit. Lightfoot grows angry at the bare suggestion, that the vowel points are not inspired. “I do not wonder,” says he, “at the impudence of Jews who invented the story of their formation by wise Tiberians: I do wonder at the credulity of Christians who fall in with the idea.” “No,” he says, after giving the “wise Tiberians” a very rough handling; “No, the pointing of the Bible has the savor of the Holy Spirit, not of lost, blinded and crazy men.” This dreadful heresy which he reprobates, has long since been embraced by everybody.

It was also contended, that the sacred writings would in every case endure the test of the most accurate rules of Rhetoric, and of the severest technicalities of Logic, that the Song of Solomon would not be found wanting in the balances of Quinctilian, and that Paul never reasons without the formalities of Major, Minor and Copula.

It was thought to border on the sin against the Holy Ghost to intimate that the Greek, in which he inspired Matthew to write, was not as pure as that of Plato. To say that a jot or tittle not longer than the visible flavor in vanilla ice cream had got awry, was to play into the hands of Spinoza and Hobbes, if not to be “worse than an infidel.”

These were monstrous suppositions, at war with facts, totally uncalled for by any interest of the cause they were designed to sustain, and rejected even when they were most prevalent by many of the profoundest minds and most pious hearts in all ages of the Church. Such a view contradicts every page of the Bible, a day's perusal of which suggests more difficulties against the theory than any ingenuity would be able to solve in a thousand years. This view, moreover, mars the beauty of the Bible, and stultifies its very plan. It makes a question of life and death out of matters that have no more connection in the life of revelation, than the spelling of a word has with the grandeur of "*Paradise Lost*."

God raised and inspired the Man. The inspired one is like a Lute, whose music flows from the hand of God, but whose power and tone are conditioned by the character of the instruments. If revelation were a simple, unmingled divine work, why take the Lute. For the stammering utterances of Moses and Ezekiel, why not give us the "daughter of the voice," whose tones should float upon the air direct from Deity? Why take many lutes, and pipes, and harps, unless revelation were designed to be symphony as well as melody, whose unity should be not that of the single strain, but that by which the great Composer pours his own divine Spirit of music into many parts, whilst wind and touch on instruments faithful to their own nature, unite in "Creation" or "Messiah" to form what is at once truly their's, and because such, truly his?

The word of God is perfectly divine in its contents; but except where the divine form is as necessary as the divine fact, no book is more perfectly human in its form. It is inspired, for it comes from God; it is human, for it comes through man. But remember, we do not say that the human is without the divine. The Spirit, is incarnate in the Word, as the Son was incarnate in Christ. There is a deep significance in the fact, that the title of "the Word" is given both to Christ, the Revealer, and to the Bible, the revelation of God, so that in some passages great critics differ as to which is meant. As Christ without confusion of natures is truly human as well as divine, so is this Word. As the human in Christ, though distinct from the divine, was never separate from it, and his human acts were never those of a merely human being, his toils, his merits and his blood, were those of God, so is the written Word, though most human of books, as Christ "the Son of Man" was most human of men, truly divine. Its humanities are no accidents; they are divinely planned. It is essential to God's conception of

his Book, that it shall be written by these men and in this way. He created, reared, made and chose these men, and inspired them to do this thing in their way, because their way was his way.

Take up the Bible — read it impartially. You see in it the unity of truth, an agreement in facts, in doctrine and in spirit. It is one book as “our God is one God.” Just as palpably, however, do you perceive difference in form. You have before you poetry and prose, history, biography, drama, proverb and prophecy. The Hebrew changes from the golden age of Moses to the iron time of Chaldee intermixture, not as thoroughly, yet as certainly as the Latin of Plautus varies from that of Calpurnius. The Greek of the New Testament is prevailingly Hellenistic, yet Luke differs as much from John as Plato does from Polybius. In some of the sacred writers the thought is condensed, in others expanded; simple in its robe in some, ornate in others. The Bible is in fact a body of rational literature, in which the life of God and the life of a people flow on together. A history out of which all history has risen, you trace from the haziness of its morning to the mellowness of its eve. You hear the wrath of God in the wild whispers of seers, like the wailing in the shrouds of a ship scudding under bare poles, or crashing like the artillery of great hosts; and then from the gloom rise sweet promises like moonbeams o’er the mountain, which still rocks with the passing storm. The Shepherd leads his flock along the grassy streams of sacred vales, or lies in the shadows of rocky Engeddi, and lulls his heart by opening deep sayings on the tones of his harp. See, he has grown to the greatness of a throne, still with the lessons of earlier years fresh within him. He sits with drooping head and tear-moistened eye; his child has brought him some flower from the meadow, — some flower often plucked and worn by him above his heart, which knew no care, when he followed his father’s flock. It is drooping already — he bends over it — a tear falls as though to revive it, and he confesses: “As the flower of the field, so man flourished!”— morning — night and birth — death! Is this less divine, because it springs out of the very depths of human association? Could an angel, nay, could God, without this human mediation, have so spoken to our hearts?

It is the great divine human heart of the Bible, which has made it so varied in eternal freshness. How every thing is permitted to shine out in its own light, and the men of all its eras permitted to make their utterances in the spirit of their own time! The morning stars shout over an infant world! The hosannas of a nation, waked from the cradle of slavery to be adopted as

sons of Jehovah, mingle with the roaring of the wild surge, that has just engulfed their foes. The shadows of eternal things, phantoms more enduring than substances:

“Wave their cloudy wings,”

amid the smoke of altars. The thunders of law are echoed by the thunders of law repeated. The first lines of government are traced. A great theocratic Republic is formed, in whose battles the armies of God on earth and in Heaven make common cause. The policy of Courts is revealed; the meanness of the great and the vices of the good are exposed, and the heart of Kings is laid bare. There you can soothe your mourning soul with strains of Elegy, which make you glad as you weep! There you can find voice for the unutterable groanings of a prostrate spirit. There will that deep mystic vein find nurture, which runs most freely in the profoundest natures, and which must seek spiritual life, even in material things. There, too, will that close sagacity find food, which is at the other extreme, and desires all to be palpable and practical. It is here the poor will find comfort, and here the heart, satiated and worn out with the too much of a prosperous life, will be revived; and where the longing soul, which finds the past and the present too contracted for its scope, cries, "What of the night?" Human voices laden with divine goods come back from the thick darkness. These are the contents of the books of the Old Covenant, which their mere names recall.

And what is the New Testament but an unfolding of this same divine humanity. The New Testament is the life of God in human nature. It is humanity pitied, transfigured, redeemed, risen, ascended, crowned with the gifts of the Spirit, justified, sanctified; and the whole wondrous scheme detailed, the whole wondrous story told by artless men, in their own artless way. God moves round him the whole circle of humanity, from the starlight on the manger to the darkness on the grave, from the rending of the sepulchre to the revealing, hiding cloud of glory over Olivet — moves it around him, pierces every part of it with the brightness of uncreated light as the sun girds himself with the planets to which his beams give life. Through God in Christ, and Christ in man, we are led from the lineage of him, in whom the blood royal of the realms of Heaven and earth met — to the closing book of broken seals, and seals yet to be broken. But with whatever pulse your human heart may beat, God has placed in his book a heart as

truly human as your own to beat with it. Sad or exulting, ardent in the desire of a long life, or almost ready to curse the day, when you were born — going forth bearing precious seed, and weeping or coming again rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you — there, on the hill side or in the valley, the feet of these old pilgrims have worn a path for you. There is no air you can breathe, in which their whispering tones do not linger; and from the lowest path of earth to the last footstep in the sky, the tears of their sorrow have marked the dust, or the melody of their songs has made mute in holy awe the music of the spheres.

The great Spirit who lives in the Universe gives it glory and unity; but it is the lower part of it, the material which gives it variety. God is the same, where the seraph dwelling in the sun leans upon his arm, and where, to the dim-eyed tenant of Uranus, he reveals light in the darkness. God is one, but what suns and spheres, moons and belts, what orbs of varying size and beauty, what creatures of inconceivable varieties make up his universe! Yet a star is a star, whose difference from its fellow is a difference in glory. So in the Bible, the Universe of Truth, the created element varies its beauties, yet all is worthy of God.

“Look how the floor of Heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold:
There’s not the smallest orb, which thou beholdest,
But in his motion like an angel sings.
Still quiring to the young-eyed Cherubims.”

Yes, even Philemon and Jude quire to Cherubim and Seraphim, help to “make known to principalities and powers,” that manifold wisdom of God, which fills Heaven with his praise.

And the analogy, we have drawn from the Universe, is not forced. God made it and the Bible on a common principle. He did not say, in making the former, ‘one color on the whole is best,’ and create a blue Universe: nor did he say, ‘one sort of world on the whole is best,’ and make the orbs facsimiles of each other. He did not say one sort of thing is best, one sort of man is best, and people creation with monotony, blue eyes and Roman noses. No, he made a creation rich in variety, and ranging through all the forms of beauty. Creation is indeed a unity, but it is a unity, in which the restless torrent foams over the fixed rock, violets and mountains spring

from the same plain, over which the softest breezes float, and deepest thunders break, over which wrath hovers, and love:

“Shakes thousand odors from his dewy wings.”

If Leviticus were to us a sterile waste, the world has deserts; if the Song of Solomon be thick inwoven with warm fancies, do not the tropics of a globe which has an Iceland, burn with flowers? In God’s world there are Oceans girdling all lands, and there are little lakes, the gathered waters of single springs, where, among mountain solitudes, the children of a cottage love to play. In God’s Book, there is a circle which embraces history and destiny to the end of time; there is another for the simple maiden, “the wife of the dead,” gleaning in the fields of her kinsman. In the Bible are judgments, as the world has cataracts and tornadoes, and promises like silver streams. The gigantic forms of prophets, heroes and martyrs, rise like cedars, sloping their long shadows on Lebanon; and gentle shapes of holy mothers and holy children spring up like flowers in grassy meads. Here Jehovah lifts his high hand above our insect race that creeps below, and there God incarnate folds an infant in his arms, and declares the spirit of a child to be a sublimer thing than the thrones of Kings.

The Bible is to systems of Theology what a landscape is to a brick wall. Theologies are wearying, and never can be truly popular. They are universes of drab and dead levels; in which every thing is stretched or shortened by the Theologian’s law, that nothing shall be taller than himself. They are the chips of an oak, made into solemn play houses for large children with learned titles. The life is gone — not an acorn will they bear — and after having duly served their part as play things, the mutation of the theological years lays them away in their wood-boxes, jocosely called Libraries, to be used for occasional kindling. Whatever may be their use and dignity, it is but that of chips. But the Bible is an everlasting old forest — full of fruits and leaves for healing — with even renewing undergrowth, shaded streams for the stricken deer — moving life,

“And charm of earliest birds.”

Blessed is the man, wiser than Solomon, who in that forest knoweth every tree from the cedar on its Lebanon, to the hyssop, that springs amid its primeval rocks. No man, though he had two lives of Methuselah, could exhaust its balsam and fruits. "I have now," says Luther, "for some time read the Bible twice through every year. It is a great tree, and all its words are twigs and branches, and every twig and spray I have struck to find out what was on it, and what it was good for; yet, knock as often as I will, down comes a fresh handful of fruit."

And long before Augustine had recorded his experience in a letter to Volusian: "So great is the depth of the Christian letters, that daily could I still grow in them, though with unbroken leisure, with intensest study, with all faculties undimmed I had devoted myself to them, from earliest boyhood to decrepit old age; not that in things needful to salvation is such difficulty found; but when we have derived thence that faith, which leads to a holy life, there remains so much spoken with varied shades of mystery, such height of wisdom latent in its words and things, that to the oldest, the acutest, the most ardent of its scholars, remains true that saying of Sirach:

"When a man hath done, then he beginneth."

Yes, it is a part of its perfection, that the Bible should be the most human of all books — not a mere disclosure of God to his creatures — but the most honest, unaffected revelation of man to man; for we can never understand God, until we understand ourselves. "Its characters are living statues;" they are fixed as marble, but they breathe like men. The only thorough confessions, the only absolute pictures of man are to be found in it. The confessions of Augustine and Rousseau, though they seem to lay bare their very hearts, are not to be compared with these. The highest pitch, to which truth ever carried the confessions of an uninspired man, was to the acknowledgment of what would make him an object of hatred and execration. Men can bear to be hated, but not to be despised. But here is a book, whose writers are as honest about themselves as they are in dealing with you. They will show you the littleness of man, even at their own expense, and are willing to give themselves to contempt for the truth's sake.

The Bible is a most undistracted book — a revelation preternaturally limpid. Its men are prismatic drops, refracting the eternal light most

beautifully when clearest, and most purely themselves. And this brings us to the sun beam of this rainbow, the divine element.

2. The Bible Shows Itself To Be Of God

The Bible, we enunciate as the second part of our proof, is a perfect book, because it shows itself to be of God.

The Bible is the center of more evidence than was ever brought to bear on any other subject. There is such a wealth of testimony about it, that the modes of establishing its divinity areas various as the minds, that lay hold of it. No faith can rest upon all the evidence, for no lifetime is sufficient to examine it all. The Evangelical demonstration forms in itself a distinct world of Literature. The sophistries of pagan philosophy were ground to powder by Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius and Augustine. The revived paganism of the sixteenth century was overthrown by a Bacon, a Grotius and a Des Cartes. The names of Lesley and Leibnitz, Huet and Clarke, Leland, Bentley and Fabricius, of Lardner, Euler and Paley, of Butler, Watson and Jenyns, of Lyttleton, Campbell, Sherlock and West, of Chalmers and Wiseman, of Reinhard, Koppe, Tholuck, Hengstenberg, Olshausen and Neander, are associated eternally with the proofs of the divine origin of God's word. These have left no point untouched. The external and internal, the well grounded expectation and the corresponding facts have been clearly pointed out. Error may look plausible on one or two sides, but the more you multiply the points of view, the more obvious become her deformities: but truth, and preeminently Bible truth, gains by each new scrutiny, its evidence cumulates, until it overwhelms.

And it is a cheering thing to the searcher for truth at the very outstart, that the Bible not only permits, but challenges examination. It asks for no credit, no charity, no quarter, but defies every assault. How divinely sagacious, too, is that structure of the Bible, which at once renders its evidence resistless, and yet permits a very feeble resistance to thrust it aside, and thus preserves that important feature of its character as a test of the heart of men. It is no hazardous assertion to say, that all over its pages, in its very essence, the Bible shows, that it lives in a distracted world, a world perverted from its great intent. And we mean not merely that it speaks of such a world and makes provision for it, but that its own essential

character is determined by the condition of our race. It has come into the world for judgment as well as mercy; it has come, not to be recognized by unvarying human intuition, but to be established by evidence; it has come, not disencumbered with difficulties, but with purpose presenting them. It is not as plain as it might be; its evidence is not as resistless as it might be; its difficulties are not as few as they might be. It is not a simple teaching as it would be, had it been given to holy beings; it is a touchstone — it tests as well as teaches. It is like the “pillar of the cloud which came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these.” It is “a savor of death unto death” as well as “of life unto life.” It has nothing to commend itself to the natural heart, famishing for a God like itself. It is “foolishness,” and it meant to be foolishness: it is a stumbling block, and meant to be a stumbling block. It is set for “the fall” as well as for “the rising again of many,” for “a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” It could use the words of the Redeemer in regard to himself: “For Judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.” It is the Book most loved, most cherished, most abhorred in the world; but whatever be the judgment, pronounced by men upon it, is a judgment on themselves.

Whilst paganism has no infidels, and Mohammedanism no infidels, the Bible has fought with infidelity all along its course. Great and cultivated, though proud, distorted and wicked, minds have been found among its foes: but where opposition has been strongest, the Bible has exhibited most of its divine power. Legalize unbelief in Mohammedan or Pagan lands, and as soon as there is mind enough to think at all, the religion of the state melts away. But the Bible, giving the freedom it asks, has most power, when, without hindrance, doubting men are permitted to assail it. Is it not of God, that the only impregnable religion should be the only one assaulted in its own land — that its spirit shelters its own foes from the pains and penalties of law — that it protects those, who abuse the safety it gives, them, by devoting their lives to its destruction?

Is it not a proof of its sublime trust in itself and its Author, that it permits such a test, and adjures those, who love it most to employ none of their strength to sustain it, but to let its weakness support them and itself? The [Islamic] Crescent waves above devotees, the [Voodoo] Fetish terrifies slaves, [Hindu] Juggernaut has victims — only the Bible has believers. At

its threshold it demands an earnest heart: he, that will hold it, must grapple with difficulties: he, that would rise above its clouds, must be winged with holy purpose. Hard doubts are the penalties of hard thought: strong faith is its reward. In this age of scientific, mythic, metaphysic skepticism, he that will be prepared by a thorough understanding of the whole to rise above the whole, has a hard journey through chaos,

“Half on foot,
Half flying.”

He must, though with very different intent, like

“The fiend,
O'er bog, or steep, through strait, rough, dense or rare,
With head, hands, wings or feet, pursue his way,
And swim, or sink, or wade, or creep, or fly.”

When the “cloud compelling” heart grows serious, the Bible soon brings the controversy to an end. The unbelief vanishes with the heart of unbelief, for it is not so much the difficulties that make the skeptic as the skeptic who makes the difficulties. More hopeful under proper guidance is an earnest spirit, true to its convictions, though it may have been led far from the safe path, than one who, in a sluggish credit, takes the truth as truth, because he has been told it is, and then gives up his worthless life to show that truth, smothered in a dead heart, is as powerless as a lie. Shelley, with Atheism itself, may not have been as bad a man as some Prelate, sound in faith and holy by prescription, who grew fat on wealth, for which he rendered no service, and whose soul rotted in sloth among the perishing flock he never fed.

From its design as a test, arises, in part, the form in which truth is given in the sacred Oracles. Their spiritual food is not thrown into masses, but lies like the manna — “a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground,” — for God means, even when he gives bread from Heaven, that man should have a salutary toil in collecting it. The curse lowers even over the hook, that records it: “In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread.”

The Bible has about it a divine majesty. Its first chapter presents the noblest illustration of the sublime, which Longinus could find. When you

rest on the “testimony of God’s mouth,” you feel that there is something more solid, than the round world beneath your feet. The Universe! — it took but six days to make it, and

“Formed for the confutation of the fool,
Whose lying heart disputes against a God,
That office served, it must be swept away.”

But the Bible! — It took all eternity to furnish one line of it: “Chosen in him before the foundation of the world;” and it will take another eternity to consummate another line: “Receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.”— “Heaven and earth shall pass away,” said the Son of God, “but my words shall not pass away.” I know that there are some minds, to which the fact is a painful one, that the credibility of the Bible rests upon arguments, whose force varies according to the intellectual and moral condition of those, to whom they are addressed. Convinced, that it is the word of God, they wonder that things have not been so constituted, that all men should be forced to acknowledge its divinity. Every one, too, is struck in reading the Scriptures with the fact, that all its contents do not equally minister to his wants. Every one has his favorite book, and perhaps every book in the Bible is the special favorite of some one. We have already, we think, given sufficient reason to meet the first of these difficulties, and proved that it is a part of the divine order of Holy Writ. The second fact also seems to us to show that the Scriptures are God’s book for the race. The Bible obviously was not intended for one mind, one class or one age, and therefore does not seem to any one class, mind or age, exactly what it would expect. Like the order of physical nature in the world, it does not harmonize in all respects with an *a priori* conception, which seems to be entirely logical. Neither nature nor the Bible is in keeping with the principles of a false optimism. On the *a priori* principles, on which the skeptic finds fault with the Bible, I can show, that the world we tread has no existence, or that God did not make it.

Whilst every thing in the Scriptures is for man, it does not follow that every part is equally valuable to every man. The Bible is framed with reference to the average want of a whole race. Everything in it is put there for somebody, though it may not be specially meant for you. And yet the parts, which seem to the individual, least adapted to his wants, may have

even for him a priceless value; they may inspire him with a sense of new necessities, may enlarge his mind and heart, and lead him out of himself into a wider sphere. The parts he does not want now are waiting for him. The Bible gives intellect a many sidedness: it breaks up the mannerism of literature and society: it renders character comprehensive. The nerves, and brain, and mind of a Shakespeare must brace themselves in the atmosphere of its culture, before a Shakespeare can be formed. It has molded and immortalized many a mind, whose powers were spent in warfare with it. It has enriched its enemies more than anything on earth ever enriched its friends.

We have said, that the Bible is like the Constitution of nature, in that it disappoints anticipation in some respects. I need not tell you, that there is an immortal Book in our language, consecrated to the development of this theme — a Book, which infidelity has never dared to touch — a Book to see and thank, whose Author I look forward to as one of the privileges of Heaven. To the poet there are too many prose things in the world. Fields of grain, while they wave in the wind, and of maize, while its tassels shake fertility over its silky ears among the broad leaves, are all well; but when stubble and stalk alone are left standing among the cloddy furrows, they look to him, like blots on the plan. The mere Utilitarian, on the other hand, thinks that the fine scenery, lying in sun-shine and shade, is of little use — thinks the oaks ought to have been created rafters, and the streams interrupted by natural dams. The Philanthropist wonders at the permission of volcanoes and earthquakes, of storms and famines, of vice, linking its miseries to virtue, of advantages, obtained without merit, and of suffering, preceded by no crime. All are surprised at the mingling of deformity and beauty, of the evil and the good, of happiness and misery, under the present constitution of things.

Yet, although all will find something that would have been different, could their wishes alone have been consulted, they will all admit that there is much, that there is enough of what they need. There is light for the poet, and strength for the practical man, and love for the philanthropist, and predominance of good for him who watches the hand of Providence.

And what we have shown to be true of nature, we repeat is true of the Bible. Byron, who read it and stole from it every day, held the New Testament in comparatively little esteem, because it is not as poetical as the book of Job. Some people see no reason for the book of Leviticus, because

it is of no use to them to know how to sacrifice an ox, or forgetting that those outlines were the cartoons of the finished picture of redemption; and that the sketch is the key to the elaborated work. Some complain of the space given to the wars of Israel, forgetting that they made a home for the truth and sheltered it — that their annals perpetuated the spirit of defense, and saved the truth to the world. Some are shocked at the imprecations in the Psalms, because we should “hate the sin and love the sinner,” forgetting that, when sin and the sinner are finally committed to each other, God and man root them out together — that man does not hang murder, but murderers — and that God turns not wickedness, but the wicked into hell. Some miss the beauty of the Song of Solomon, by not seeing, that it brings forth to view the holiest domestic relation, glorified by the spirit of a nation, living in a sacred delirium of hope for a Messiah, to be born of woman; and that the luxuriance of its images is not derived from a straining rhetoric, but is the natural budding of an Eastern soil, beneath the anticipation of that King, of whom it was said: “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass, as showers, that water the earth.” The Song of Solomon, probably more than any book in the recognized Canon of the Old Testament, has been looked upon as presenting great internal difficulties. Yet there are about two hundred distinct Commentaries on it, and it has engaged the choicest hours of many of the most learned and good men, that have ever lived. On it Origen wrote ten volumes, which Jerome regards as his masterpiece. Epiphanius, Theodoret, Cassiodorus and other fathers, and in later times, Luther, Hammond, Bossuet, Herder, with many other distinguished modern writers, have consecrated distinct works to it. Bernard, of Clairvaux, “whose lips” says Sixtus Senensis, “were a fountain of milk and honey, and whose heart was a well-spring of glowing charities,” poured into its explanation the fervor and toils of his last days, and died almost in the act of dictating his comments on it. It is evident, then, that there is a class of religious wants, which this book is preeminently calculated to meet. So, too, those significant acts which the prophets connected with their messages, and which artificial and superficial minds may turn to ridicule, are the symbols, employed by a condescending God, whose very homeliness adapted them to the general mind. There is no book so full, as the Bible, of that simple grandeur, to feel which, requires no training. It is full of that purest sublimity, in which the moral element transfigures the material, and the thought, instead of resting on the image, ennobles it. The Scriptures

abound in what Chrysostom calls a “domestic grace.” It is like God, to clothe the highest thoughts in the humblest forms. The ministers of his inspiration utter, with a child-like unconsciousness, those great original truths, which have riven hearts, and institutions, and nations like bolts of thunder.

They are so simple, so unpretending, that, whilst they trace mighty principles, whose enunciation would have made the fame of thousands of Platos and Aristotles, they never make us think of themselves. They are lost in God. This makes the Bible, like the manna, according to the Jewish tradition. It gives to every palate what it longs for — the same manna adapted, by him from whom it descends, to every taste: and this universal adaptation brings us to consider, as our closing proof, the fact, that the Bible shows itself to be perfect by the part it has borne in the *history* of our race.

“History,” says St. Augustine, “is not of man. It moves through times, of which God is the framer, and God the guide.” History, like nature and the Bible, is divine; and the Bible must harmonize with history, as we have shown, that it does with nature.

When we come to such a comparison, we are struck, in the first place, with the fact, that the whole history of man, in all his social conditions, confirms, where the Bible is not found, the absolute necessity of a revelation, and where the Bible is found, proves that it is the very book needed for the race. All history is a protest for the Boole of Life, against that vague thing often lauded, but never defined, the Religion of Nature. The Psalm, which has given us our initial point, tells us that nature declares God’s glory, shows his handywork, sends out her testimony far as the line of centripetal force that binds her to the throne of God, and wide as the beams of the sun. Very well! But the “law, testimony, statutes, fear, judgment of the Lord, are perfect, sure, right, pure, clean, true and righteous altogether, converting the soul, making wise the simple, rejoicing the heart, enlightening the eyes, and enduring forever.” Now, this is not less than justice to nature; it is not more than justice to the world.

Nature, indeed, is glorious. Land and sea, and starry sphere — God moves amid them. They tell of God. But it is we who must give them inspiration — not they us. It is the Bible, that must teach us the God, who is in nature, before we can find him there. Other eyes have seen gods of slaughter and pollution, amid these scenes vocal to us with the praises of

Jehovah. A father's voice must witness of his hand. Then the Creator begins,

“Blending with our thought,
Yea, with our life, and life's own secret joy,
Till the dilating soul, enwrapt, transfused
Into the mighty vision passing; there,
As in her natural form, swells vast to Heaven.”

Four thousand years, earth and stars taught the race, and what did men know of God, at the end of that time? Not as much as a Christian mother teaches her child out of the Bible in half an hour! When did nature ever force a man to cry out: “What shall I do to be saved?” And could she, who was too feeble to prompt the question, give the answer? Those silent eyes, looking down in their beauty for ages, have never done, what was wrought by him their Creator, whose single glance made the heart of a faithless apostle burst in tears.

“When”the simple” got beyond the idea, that the sun and moon are plates of gold and silver, their impulse was to adore them, to lay even human sacrifices upon their altar. While the skies were all flooded with the glory of the immortal King; while the piping bird and roaring sea uttered his name; while it was sighed in the waving sedge, and was sinking, and rolling, and rising through the diapason, from the whispering tree tops down to the low deep bellowing of the thunder, and up to the crackling burst of the lightning; yes, while all was voicing ‘JEHOVAH,’ man worshipped the sky, and sea, and bird, and worm, and fellow-worm; “and every thing was God but God himself.”

What avails it, is the language of history, that nature offers man the alphabet of praise, when he has none to instruct him how to combine it? The Hindu woman looks upon cloudless skies and eternal verdure. There the sun walks in brightness and the moon in beauty; but the God, she sees in nature, demands the blood of the infant, she bears in her arms. The Indian pitches his tent of bark among the wild waving woods; he hears their roaring and chafing, as amid the watches of the night, they clash their branches together, like giants at strife, waking strange musings in his soul. The rushing rivers burst through the cleft mountains before his eyes; the waterfall thunders in his ears; the lightning streams from the cloud, and down crashes the tall hemlock by his side. His soul is nursed on the bosom

of sublimity; Tradition helps out nature, and tells him of a Great Spirit; but he sees nothing in His character to check his thirst for blood, or his tyranny to woman. His idea of immortality is one, in which his dog and the shade of his faithful bow have an equal interest with himself; and his conscience does not reprove him as he roasts his enemy at a slow fire, tears his flesh from his bones, and exults in the shrieks of his dying agony.

Is it objected that these illustrations are taken from low stages of social cultivation? We ask, where will you find higher, except where Christianity has made them? Do you point to Mohammedan lands? What is Mohammedanism? not a religion of nature, but a monstrous plagiarism of Christianity, and great, like Prometheus, only in the possession of the fire it has stolen. The triumph of Mohammedanism over Paganism, is a great argument for the divine origin of Christianity. The mowing out of the Oriental sects, accomplished by it, showed it to be less a deviation from Christianity than the superstitions it overthrew, and the cultivated Muslem mind is, at this hour, less alien from the Christian habit, than any portion of the Gentile world.

Are we pointed to Deists in Christian lands? This is a miserable begging of the question, an attempt to play off the power of Christianity against herself, to argue from that divine vitality, which sheds blessings against their will on her foes, that she has no life. But suppose we conceded, that such cases were fair ones. What has natural religion done? It left Byron, after a life of wretchedness, to die prematurely of licentiousness and gin. When the remains of Shelly (whose natural religion excluded a God) were washed on shore — in the spirit of what religion was it? — his associates burning them on a funeral pyre, after pouring libations of wine on his ashes, returned drunk, driving furiously through the forest, and yelling like demons. Let me quote a few words descriptive of Deists. “I have found them all proud, positive and dogmatizing, even in their pretended skepticism, knowing everything, proving nothing, and ridiculing one another. There is not one among them who, coming to distinguish truth from falsehood, would not prefer his own error to the truth, that is discovered by another. The great thing for him is to think differently from other people. Among believers he is an Atheist; among Atheists a believer. Their skepticism is far more affirmative and dogmatical than the decided tone of their adversaries. Under pretense of being themselves the only people enlightened, they imperiously subject us to their magisterial

decisions, and would fain palm upon us, for the true causes of things, the unintelligible systems, they have erected in their own heads; whilst they overturn, destroy and trample under foot all, that mankind reveres, snatch from the afflicted the only comfort left them in their misery, from the rich and great the only curb, that can restrain their passions; tear from the heart all remorse of vice, all hopes of virtue, and still boast themselves the benefactors of mankind.” Do you think you have been hearing the words of some heated Christian apologist? Not at all! these are the words of Rousseau.

There is, indeed, — alas! rather must we say, there was a Religion of Nature, — but our sole knowledge of it, our sole key to it in our fallen condition, is in Revelation. — Once the nature of man was in harmony with the nature of things, and found in them food for spirit as well as for body.

Then all that met his senses was a Eucharistic sign of invisible grace. Then life could be found in a tree, Heaven in a garden, God in the daisy and in the dim, faint-falling baptismal dew. Then man’s Bible was beneath his feet and over his head. The rainbow was not then, as after the flood, the sign of vengeance restrained, but the sacrament of ever-present peace. The Shekinah was within him; with no abatements of infirmity and pollution, he was himself the very “image and glory of God.” His Genesis lay in the fresh young world before him; and in the remembrance of his origin, his Exodus was the triumphal march of creation and himself, its Lord from non-being and darkness, into being and light, his Leviticus was the incense breath of prayer, which rose unbidden from his breast; his Psalm and Canticle were like the free gush of the song of birds; his Evangelical was the daily descent of the Son of God in visible form; his Epistle was written on his heart, and the Universe, great and small, gave him prophecy of continuing love, the Apocalypse of abiding grace. Purity and goodness drew their food from material nature, the doctrine of correspondence was no mystic dream, and there was an impulsive power to rectitude in what was most fixed in nature. The u silent law," which kept the orbs above him in their sphere, might, in a way different from that in which it now operates, cause the luxurious tear-drop of exquisite joy to globe itself on his suffused cheek, for the piercing eye of intuition might see tokens of divine love in that, in which we now only recognize proofs of divine power. The transmission of life, the beating of his own heart, whispered of God, were incentives to goodness, for moral necessity bound itself up with the physical, and was no less regular. The fall

in disturbing one, in the nature of the case, deranged both. In a word, moral goodness breathed by the law of its own nature, unconscious of an antithesis or an opposite. It had no knowledge of good — (it was a fatal tree which gave it) — it lay like a babe on the lap of its Creator, blooming with a thousand beauties, crowned with one worth all the thousand, an unconsciousness of its own unspeakable charm. It came to a consciousness of itself — with the loss of itself. The fruit of the tree gave man conscience. ‘Oh! that man had never known goodness,’ we are almost ready to exclaim — that he had kept it as his very nature — had felt it only as man feels that himself must be himself — and that the scowling counterpart sin had never darkened our world. But we must not say this, for there is a Book in our hands richer in its teachings than nature even in her primal estate — a Book whose “*Paradise Regained*” is nobler than her “*Paradise Lost*.” With its ever-maturing worth of divine-human mediation before us, the heart would for the murmur, almost substitute the words: “*O becitam culpam, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem.*”

In the light of history, we are struck again with preservation of the Bible, as a proof that it is of God, and perfectly adapted to its work. The Bible, as a distinct self-unfolding Revelation from God, is as old as the Race. It is the only thing which has ever been permitted to grow old in our world. The generations of men have been borne away as with a flood. The longest lineage of all Kings, but one, is of yesterday. The products of the human mind, the noblest systems, have come forth thick as leaves in spring, and have fallen fast as leaves in autumn:

“They come like shadows, so depart.”

Not only have mists vanished, and streams dried up, and rivers forsaken their channels, but the most fixed forms of nature have been changed. “The mountain falling, fadeth to naught; the rock is removed out of his place; the waters wear the stones.” New shores are chafed by the ocean; the cataract recoils on itself, wearing down the precipice, over which it thunders. Man and nature have been shifting, whilst the Bible has stood — like the pyramids among drifting sands, shall we say? No; this is too poor a figure for that word, which arose before the builders in Mizraim were born, and shall stand when their work has crumbled to dust.

This Word was two thousand years old before Inachus, founder of the kingdom of Argos, was born. More than twenty-five hundred years of its life had passed ere legend tells us, that the first ship appeared on the shores of Greece. When the Bible contained authentic history for twenty-six hundred years, the myths of classic story tell of an era when goddesses descended to teach men. Three thousand years after its birth, Troy was taken. It was old, when all profane history was young, and now it is young, vital, mingling with every interest of man, when all other history is old, or swiftly becoming old. All other things have been shaken, for they are to be removed, as “things that are made, that those things, which cannot be shaken, may remain.”

Who can resist the evidence of such facts as these, if he believes in a Providence or a God? Here is a seed, which all time has trampled on, and which yet germinates. It is an olive, to borrow a beautiful metaphor from Chrysostom, which has put forth verdure, and is bending with fruit in the midst of a glowing furnace. It is a breath, living amid storms, a still small voice, which all the roar of human passions has not been able to drown. It has made real that dream of mathematical poesy — that sound leaves an imperishable imprint on nature, that every sigh, shriek and curse, is eternal. God’s breath and word are in the Bible. Revelation — a word — made nature, and Revelation shall survive it. “Forever, O Lord, thy word is settled in Heaven.”

I know of nothing in the world, so sublime as the Bible in its historical relations. The boast of Isis is a sober verity in its utterance: “I am all that has been, or that shall be.” All the abiding realities of human history are bound up with it, giving pledge that the Book, which has blessed the past, will create and new-create the future.

It is a great thing, that the Bible has come to do much. If you sometimes grow disheartened at what seems to you the smallness of the actual results of so great a Book, contrasted with what you suppose they ought to be, compare it with every thing that pretends to rival or dispute its claims, and you will see the force of the evidence of its divinity, presented in its history. If, for example, it be pretended that its religion has been a failure, what has infidelity been? Full of boasts that have come to nothing, proud of names, that have not been able to lift it from contempt, but have been dragged down by it, it has been indebted for the very memory of its being, to the works that have ground it to powder, the records of its discomfiture. It has

given many a long flourish of trumpets, but has not been able to execute a single threat. It has caught in its desperation at every floating straw, but none has been able to keep its head above the waters. It has eaten, in a second generation, its words of sound and fury uttered in a former one. It never has been able to establish a single positive idea in doctrine or morals, or stir a single hope in any human heart. Boasting of reason, it has been able to satisfy no man's mind, till it has corrupted his heart. It has taught no man how to live righteously, or how to die decently. There is not on the face of the earth a single temple, reared by it to God, nor a single hospital for suffering humanity. It has been engaged in a constant struggle after power; it has attained it but in one case, and was then forced, as it experienced its own bitter fruits, to curse the day it was born. Take from infidelity the truths it has stolen from Christianity, and the proprieties forced on it by the religion it has been trying so long and vainly to sneer and lie out of existence, and what have we left but a ghastly God-forsaken illusion, from which the wildest dreams of pagan superstition were a reasonable refuge. The most Cannibal heathenism is not as complete and desolating a lie as anti-Christian Infidelity. Look at France; look at the scum of Germany; read what these infidels tell of each other; what Voltaire says of Frederick the Great, and Frederick of Voltaire; and what Rousseau says of himself and his fellow-infidels! Take their concessions in regard to Deism on the one side, and touching Christianity on the other, and if truth be of God, if either the Christian or infidel has God on his side, the adversaries of the Bible are convicted out of their own mouths. Infidelity is a failure: "Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges."

Out of nothing, nothing comes. The effect bears some proportion to the cause. The opposite idea is sustainable only by confounding cause and occasion. How is it that a Book, which has nothing to propitiate the strongest passions of men, nothing to concede, nothing outward for its defense, has proved a barrier, against which the fiercest waves of human wrath have broken in vain?

But the Bible has done more than simply sustain itself. It has depended on no people, but has made all people depend on it. The rejection of a part of it has caused the dispersion of the Jews: the retention of a part of it has kept them separate among the nations. The total want of it makes pagans, who have no history, the over-laying it makes Mohammedans, who have much history, motion without progress, as they have a mock revelation. The

possession of the whole of it makes Christendom, which alone has history. The annals of eighteen hundred years show that Revelation is the thread of destiny. There is a plan as unique and obvious as the proofs of design in nature. Historical Theology will soon be as determinate a branch of religious knowledge as natural Theology now is. The nations, that have received the whole Bible, have been and are leaders in the world; and the leaders among the leaders are those that hold it in entirety and purity.

The Bible has been the nurse of all civilization: it has brought forth and fostered the social and intellectual cultivation of the modern world. Flowing through ages of darkness, it has purged off the pollutions, which mingled with its streams, and has burst forth again shining and clear. "The Divine Scripture," says St. Ambrose, "receives many streams: there meet rivers of sweet and clear waters, and there the snowy fountains which spring to eternal life."

It has proved its adaptedness to every condition and class of human society. In Asia, where reflection and passion mingle, like lava gliding through snow, it arose. And yet to show how little it originated in, or is bound up with a natural life in any narrow sense, it is not Asia, in which its widest and most abiding conquest have been made. It is in lands, remotest from the place of its birth, that its glory is brightest. If it had been a product of the Jewish mind, it would have attracted Jews, or of the Asiatic mind, the Asiatics; but rising among Jews and Asiatics, it has a spirit wholly different from their's. It is the boon of Asia, which has lifted Europe beyond her reach, which, while she, once most cultured, has remained unchanged, has elevated the barbarians, to whom she gave it, to such a point, that she, in comparison, has ceased to be civilized. It is the boon of the Jew, by which he has placed his destiny in the control of Christian hands. He breathes by the sufferance of the people of the Messiah he rejected. Bible lands hold the world at their will. The Bible has caused Japhet to dwell in the tents of Shem, and has made Canaan his servant. In Europe it brought into captivity the polished life of classic times, and conquered the barbarians, who conquered Rome. It has breathed its vital warmth, and diffused its light among the icy huts of Greenland, and has purified the voluptuous hearts of Tropic Isles. It has been lowly enough and exalted enough for man, through the whole range of his outward and inward condition. It has stooped to the degraded Hottentot, and before man in the loftiest flight of intellectual

power; its eagle wing has winnowed the air, and guided him nearer to the sun.

Has it not been the cultivator of all, that is most purely intellectual in man? Read Chateaubriand, Neander and Balme, in their survey of its influences! Has not the profoundest logic been developed in its defense, and in the scientific exhibition of its truths? Read Chillingworth, and Butler, and Edwards; read Chemnitz, and Gerhard, and Calvin.

It has not only been the cultivator of taste and art, but has formed a new era in them. It has substituted purified sentiment for classic sensuality, has made the material subordinate to the spiritual, and has irradiated it with a regenerated life. Classic art is the art of the body, and the passions, that pertain to it. Christian art embodies the tenderness, mystery and majesty of heart and soul, of man, divine and immortal. Classic art is the shadow of nature. Christian art is the image of grace.

The Bible is inwoven with all modern literature, by ties as complicated as those, which unite the living dust of our dead race with every soil. Its illustration has made much, its influence has made more of a measureless world of thoughts and books.

Whilst the Son of Man has been sitting during the Regeneration, on the throne of his glory, the Apostles, heirs of the Prophets, have sat upon their thrones, and in every form, in which destiny, progress, hope are involved, the judgment of the nations has been committed to them. Take one or two illustrations. The Bible was translated into the Spanish language in 1478. At the beginning of the Reformation, Spain stood in the first rank of nations. She desired the Reformation — fully as much so as England — and would have kept it. The nonsense, now so current about the Anglo-Saxon race, had not then been broached. The Bible was “set for the fall” of Spain. Forced by the arm of civil power, she stumbled over it, and was broken to pieces. Had Charles V., who, on the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith, lived and died a Lutheran; had he been true to his conviction, given the Bible full scope in his life, thrown his influence decidedly in favor of the Reformation, instead of pursuing a wavering course, it would have triumphed; and no man can show, that at this hour Spain would not be first among nations, and that authors would not be proving with much dexterity, that the Spanish blood had some mysterious advantage over that of all other races. Charles was followed by Philip II., a bigot, who sent forth his “invincible Armada” against the Bible. On the bulwark, that Bible had

raised, his force was broken to pieces. The Bible would have saved the Netherlands to Philip II. Its enlarged policy would have spared the Moors, who, under Philip III., were swept from the land, causing to the nation a loss, from which it has never recovered. England, at the beginning of the Reformation, did not stand among the first powers of Europe. What has raised her to the highest rank? Why is Ireland, which made a different election, at this hour, an object of dread and pity?

And unhappy France! What did the Bible become to her? The darkest hour in her history was that in which she summoned the spirits, that wait on deadly thoughts to fill her “full of direst cruelty, when no compunctious visitings of nature shook her fell purpose.”

“Take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever, in your sightless substances,
You wait on nature’s mischief. ‘Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell!’
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes;
Nor Heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry, Hold, Hold!”

When the destroying Angel, sent, not by God, but by the emissaries of hell, passed through France in a night, not to slay the first-born, but to involve every family in an indiscriminate massacre; not to slay Egypt, but to blot out Israel; the bells, whose solemn toll bounded through the hearts of Protestants, like the death-pang before the death-stroke, the bells, whose clang was followed by the shrieks of victims and the curse of the murderers, the bells were heard in Heaven, and the sword of divine wrath was already drawn from its scabbard. The blood of martyrs cried from the ground for vengeance, and step by step it came — vengeance on King and people. It came in horrors, on which we may not here dwell. What is the history of France for a hundred years? It may be told in a sentence. Godless glory her aim — withering shame her fruition! Fire and sword carried by her as the scourge of nations, and returned into her own bosom; famine and conscription, in Egypt plague, in Russia snow, on every plain death: at Waterloo, the annihilation of all her boast; these came forth from God. After the mortal struggles of years, all the blood of France has only caked the dust in the pathway of the imbecile, with no strength but the strength of a name,

whose foot is now on her neck, and who would have torn the last leaf from the wreath of her glory, if a single leaf had remained.

But the blood of martyrs pleads for mercy as well as for vengeance; and a blood, which speaketh better things than that of martyrs, unites its omnipotent voice with their's The Bible alone can redeem France. It has lived, though France refused it. Has France lived without it? No! The Bible realizes the proud boast of her Napoleon: "France is not necessary to me; I am necessary to France."

But we may not pursue these historical illustrations further. All the annals of the word of God, in its relation to nations, show, that every new assault of infidelity has prepared the way for a new era of Bible power. The sword and fire go before the Regenerations. Pelagius established the doctrines of grace; Arius fixed the foundations of the proper doctrine of Christianity; Popery brought out the doctrine of justification by faith; and the age of infidelity has been followed by the age of missions. Voltaire and Paine have helped to give the gospel to all lands, and the assaults of Rationalism, on our own loved Church, will issue in new triumphs of her holy faith.

The Bible has led all its soldiers to victory, and has bound every enemy at its chariot wheels.

This Bible is the "only rule and law, according to which all doctrines and all teachers are to be judged." If we differ from all others in our view of its meaning, we are bound to show good cause for the difference. The right of private judgment differs widely from the wrong of self-conceit. The licentious use of this right has done more in our age than ail other causes, to feed the opposite errors of Romanism and Infidelity. The great men of the past have no right to claim authority, but they are entitled to a respectful attention. We should learn in the language of the great Neander, "not to hunt after new things, which are not also old; nor to cling to old things, which will not become new." "Call no man your master," but freely, cordially, gratefully recognize every colaborer. Think not you can fathom all the depths of that divine truth, which requires the mind of our whole race through all time for its development. Trust the past for much, but not for too much. Do not think that nothing has been done, still less that every thing has been done. Much as the Bible has been examined, it is to be studied yet more earnestly, in a way which shall harmonize reverence for its majesty, and fearlessness in the spirit of its own freedom. The great work of the

future is not, however, to make discoveries, but to ripen the fruits, which the toils of the past have given us. To show the living harmony of divine Revelation, to bring the truth, long recognized, to bear on the intellect and heart of the world; this is the work of the future. That interpretation will ever be best, which is simplest. “When I was a young man,” says Luther, “I had a sight of learning, especially when I had just entered on Theology. Nothing but Allegories, Analogies, Tropology and pure Art, would do for me. Now I have given up the whole of them, and the best art I have, is to present the Scriptures in their simple meaning; for the literal sense — that does it, there lies doctrine, power and art.” He says elsewhere that spiritualizings and allegories “do very well for preachers, who have studied little,” and who put on their fancy the proper work of their reason.

I know one, not yet by any means old, but older than he used to be, who, before he had been two years in the ministry, had remodeled the whole system of Theology; had reduced *ad absurdum* the Athanasian theory of the eternal generation; had broached a scheme, which was to relieve all the difficulties of the prevalent doctrine of the Trinity and Incarnation; had laid the basis of a revised version of the Bible; had contributed to his father’s edification and pile of useless papers, several infallible demonstrations on points, which had exercised the Church for eighteen hundred years; and, in short, had got the heart of things in general from the left side to the right. He has lived long enough, however, to lose all this stupendous knowledge; his infallible nostrums have spoiled by keeping; he has reached a happy condition of deplorable ignorance; is willing to learn from any body, old or new, and hears a voice from that source whence no warning originates in vain: “Lean not to thine own understanding.” If nothing can shake us in our conviction that we have made a discovery, and if we have plenty of self-conceit, we are sure to make a great many, let us keep it to ourselves awhile; the world can revolve on its axis without it. As our discovery is, in all probability, an apocryphal one, let us take encouragement from the language, in which a wise Jew, in an apocryphal book, encourages a man to keep a secret: “If thou hast heard a word, let it die with thee; and be bold, it will not burst thee.”

And now one closing word. Take up the Bible with heart and soul, to study, comprehend, and be transformed by it. You have been reading it too long. No man has any business to read such a book. Read any other book, but don’t read the Scriptures. “*Search* the Scriptures,” says the Master. “Eat

the Book,” said the Angel. Make it your daily food. It is like the manna, of which no man could collect in one day more than he needed for the day. “What helps it,” says Luther, “that we have and hear the Scriptures so richly, and yet make no use of it? — like a maiden who sits with flowers springing all round her, yet breaks off none to weave herself a garland.” The picture of viands is as nutritious as food itself, to the eyes. A nosegay is as good as a ham, to smell. So if you read the Bible as you did that last novel, in which buzzard human depravity, went masquerading in the plumes of a bird of Paradise, or the brothel was disinfected by sprinkling a little patch only, that novel which you were poring over in the day-time, when you ought to have been studying, and over whose villainous print, telling of villainous things you were rimming your eyes with inflammation, when you should have been asleep, if you read the Bible, I don’t mean with as much interest, but with as little reflection as the novel — though it may still do you some good, though some holy thought may steal into your heart when you are unaware, some silver strain mingle itself with the jangling chords of your worldly mind, yet the benefits will be few; they will be naught to what you might have made them. You have passed all through Golconda, and have carried off nothing, except perchance some little diamond, which may have stuck to the sole of your shoe.

Give the nightingale stillness for her song. Make the hush of night in your soul, when God speaks. When his voice, mightier than the roar of waters, yet sweeter than the notes of Seraphim, comes forth, be not of those who say: “It thunders,” but of those who hear its witness for His Son. Draw bounds around Horeb, when you commune with God, that no earthly thought break through; and when necessity compels you to descend again to the world, bear back the tables on your heart, lest from your hands, passions, not less powerful, but less sanctified than the wrath of Moses, dash them to the ground.

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How Can You Find Peace With God?

The most important thing to grasp is that no one is made right with God by the good things he or she might do. Justification is by faith only, and that faith resting on what Jesus Christ did. It is by believing and trusting in His one-time *substitutionary* death for your sins.

Read your Bible steadily. God works His power in human beings through His Word. Where the Word is, God the Holy Spirit is always present.

Suggested Reading: [New Testament Conversions](#) by Pastor George Gerberding

Benediction

Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 1:24-25)

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