

to a notion, a feeling, a desire, but to a *fact*. Not to what it is hoped or expected will sometime exist as a fact, but to what does now exist, what *must* exist as a fact before testimony can be given to it. Now if a man adopted a child into his family, with the purpose of making him an heir, giving certain promises as to education and succession to property, the testimony of a properly qualified witness would be competent in any court of law to establish the relation between this man and child, as a matter of fact. If then a man may become a child of God, a suitable witness may establish the fact by testimony.

But here will arise the other question,—Have we such a witness in this case? Certainly every competent witness must have direct knowledge, from personal contact or observation. No living man can testify as a witness to such an event as the battle of Hastings, for he would require to be something upwards of 820 years old. The world believes such facts of history on the testimony of those who saw them, correctly transmitted, as is supposed, by credible persons. But such testimony, received as it is through many hands, would not establish a fact in any court of law.

Now, it is plain no human witness can be qualified to testify as to the truth of statement "that we are the children of God," for whom God hath made his children by adoption, is not given directly to the knowledge of any man, be he Priest or Pope. An angel's audible voice cannot relieve all doubt on the subject, for I may question his character, or fear that I have misunderstood him, that my senses have been deceived, or that he has misunderstood the message given him to deliver. And as to impressions made by dreams and visions, nothing can be more delusive. But if God, by His spirit, will make a communication to my inward consciousness, that must be the end of all uncertainty. He only can establish the relation of parent and child between Himself and any creature. No man can adopt another into the family of God. As sin has been committed against Him, He only can pardon it, and crown the act by extending to the penitent the grace of adoption into His family. But when this is done none can know the fact until He reveals it. And what could be more suitable than that He should first reveal the fact to the person whom it most intimately concerns? Here, then, is a witness in this matter, every way competent. The only possible doubt that could arise would be on the point, whether