

laudable, if the spirit behind it be sincere and reverent, earnestly inquisitive, yet unfettered by theory, and loyal to the truth of things. Christian scholarship is a product of the Bible—one of its signal and noble fruits. Christian scholarship has its absolute rights, which none can invade without damaging injustice. It has the same right to investigate the Bible which the geologist has to pierce and explain the strata of the globe, or the astronomer to search out the stars with his lenses and calculations and to set them in their mighty order. It may make mistakes the first time, and many times; and when it has made such it has only to confess them. It must not be too certain of so-called "results," before they have been largely and patiently tested. It ought never to go sneering through Christendom, with eyes unloving or disdainful toward those who at first are afraid of its processes and unprepared to admit its conclusions. It is, perhaps, not wholly unapt to have a touch of arrogance in its tone, being sometimes less sensitive than even Paul was to the occasional use of that hard word "fool." So it repels, sometimes sharply and far, those whom it ought to attract and instruct; and when one of its alleged discoveries turns out a mistake, as now and then happens, multitudes are ready to say, "So we expected! The whole thing is wrong, dangerous in tendency, if not skeptical in spirit. Men's faith is hazarded, without reason, and with infinite risk."

I emphatically dissent from any such view, holding that those who habitually and impartially investigate the Scriptures, in their literary history as well as in their contents, are absolutely at liberty to do so, are indeed under constant obligation to do so, and only hoping that they will not be contemptuous toward minds which move more slowly than their own, and will not cry, "A star! a star!" when all that is before them is a will-o'-the-wisp.

That the Bible itself is to take no damage from these inquiries, as it has taken none from infidel attacks, we most surely believe. That it is a book, the one Book, for mankind, made, as God meant it to be made, for attracting and holding the attention of the world, and for making upon it the sublimest and most fruitful spiritual impression, we have no doubt whatever. It seems to us no plainer that the stars which guide the mariner over the seas are higher than our roofs; no plainer that mountains were not reared, and cañons scooped, by human hands. The marvellous unity, the infinite variety, the matchless sublimity, the inimitable pathos, the power over souls, of this unique and incomparable book; its holy law, against which fight men's subtlest and most inveterate lusts; its attractiveness for all classes, for all centuries, in all lands; the magnificent ideals presented by it; the invisible but unwasting power which goes everywhere with it, to uplift society, to ennoble civilization, as well as to bless persons and households—all these things, and others, leave us no more in doubt as to whether the Bible came from God through man, or from man himself in his uncertain inquiring wit, than we are in doubt whether light was braided in human workshops, or the ocean was poured from a million tin-cups. The Bible silently, by its progress on the earth, defies the world to make another equal or superior to it. Till that has been done, and the schools and universities owing their origin and equipment to the Bible, have made another better adapted to poor and rich, to the savage and the *savant*, more admirable in morals, more luminous with transcendent doctrine, more vivid and various in the portraiture of character, more inspiring to highest spiritual feeling, and with a character supremely in charity and in purity than that of the Christ dominant in it—till this has been achieved, we need not and we shall not worry before whatever criticism of it, or whatever daring and vehement assault. Our watches may now and then run down, but the stars in their courses do not stop. The needles in our compasses may tremble or be deflected, but the sovereign constellations hold their place. Our minds may sometimes be perplexed, but the Bible will stand, God's word for the world, till time is finished. It will continue to be found in the hands alike of childhood and of age. It will say to the most