

tional. They said, as the magicians said when they saw the works of Moses before Pharaoh's throne, "This is the finger of God." He wished them to remember these two facts: first, there was a definite message from God to be delivered. Then, in connection with the message, there was a sign, or token, or seal, that could not be mistaken, that God was in and with the teacher—in and with the message. That was the way in which God for ages dealt with the people whom He would teach and bring to Himself. Was that irrational or needless; or rather, was it not rational and most needed?" If a prophet came before the Jews, and said, "I have a message from Jehovah, I am the messenger of Jehovah," they would say, "How do we know that? Show your credentials; let us see the sign-manual of Jehovah; then we will take you for his messenger." He must, in order to gain the rational confidence of the human understanding, work a work of God before he could claim that his message was the Word of God. In what position was the Church since the time of the Apostles? Had they no definite message to proclaim? What did Christ say to the Apostles? "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature;" and in one place, "Disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teaching them my Gospel." Where was the Gospel? First of all, in the Old Testament Scriptures, which Christ said at the outset of His preaching He came not to destroy, but to fulfil. The Gospel came out of the roots of the ancient Scriptures. It was not even planted in the soil of the ancient Scriptures, but grew out of their living roots, flowered out, and had its fruitage. Christ went on to say—"The Spirit will bring to your remembrance whatsoever I have said to you, and the Spirit will take of mine and show it to you." That was Christ's Gospel. The Epistles supplied the supplement, the memorials of what Christ had said, and the other things of Christ which the Spirit showed to the Apostles. There was a definite body of truth which was the message. When Christ said—"Go, disciple all nations," He put in the terms of the commission a limit to the message. No man had any right to preach natural religion, or his own opinions, or to indulge in his own speculations. Just as Moses and Elijah and Isaiah and John had a definite message, with God for its author and God's power for its endorsement, so had the preacher this definite message. He must preach the Word, and the Word alone. Any other treatment of the people was a violation of the rights of the human mind, understanding and conscience. He stood in the name of God before a people who were silent at his feet, as the messenger of the Almighty. Had he any right to take advantage of their humble attitude before him, to form in their judgment his opinion, to impart to them his convictions, to transfer to them his private notion? They came to worship Almighty God, to bow humbly at His feet, and adore Him there, in a reverential mood, in a passive state—Him who sat on the throne. Had he a right to take advantage of that occasion to impart to them his cogitations or theories or hypotheses? He stood and preached to them where they must be silent and could not answer. Had he any right to say his say where they could not say their say? They might talk about tyranny. There never was such a despot under heaven as the man who dared in the presence of Almighty God, and as his minister, to keep the people dumb while he took advantage of their silence and quiescence to put into them, without any ground but his own belief in them, his private convictions. But, besides that, he stood before them as the minister of Jesus Christ, and charged them with sin; he called them sinners, declaring that they were guilty, said they must answer before the bar of God for their lives, told them to repent and be converted, to change their spirit and reform their lives. What right had a mortal man to stand before his fellow-men and urge such an indictment,