

ideas or first views of things; so the symbols or types of all his ideas are the material objects around him. By comparing these objects with one another, by abstracting, classifying and compounding their qualities or properties he forms all the complex ideas of which he is possessed. So that all his simple ideas are the images of things which do exist, and he has not a single idea, the archetype or pattern of which is not to be met with, in the materials around him. His imagination may create a great many new forms, but the materials out of which it creates these new forms were originally presented him in the great magazine of nature. He may now fancy a tree, the roots of which are iron, the trunk and branches of which are brass, the leaves of which are silver, and the fruit of which is gold. But, had he not obtained by sensation or observation the idea of a natural tree, he never could have imagined this unnatural one.

The inlets of all human knowledge are the five senses. Reflection upon the ideas thus acquired gives birth to new ones, which, however, are those received by sensation. Imagination may now combine these ideas without any restraint but its own power. It may associate those ideas with, or without regard, to natural fitness, congruity, or consistency. It may create a Polyphemus or a Centaur, but it cannot create an idea perfectly new. As human skill and human power may new modify, but cannot create a particle of matter; so the imagination may vary or new modify the ideas acquired by sensation, but cannot create a new one. And here ends the chapter of all human science. . . .

Revelation opens a new world, a new order of relations, and gives birth to new ideas, which as the great apostle to the nation says, "The eye of man never saw, the ear of man never heard, nor the heart of man ever conceived." But this commences a new chapter in human knowledge. The first chapter contains all natural knowledge. The second, all supernatural. These things performed, we proceed to the consideration of the patriarchal age of the world.

However numerous the ages may be imagined, or however diversified in their character, yet as respects man's religious relations, they are scripturally distinguished into three. And these may be fitly styled the Patriarchal, the Jewish and the Christian. The Patriarchal continued from Adam to Moses; the Jewish, from Moses to the Messiah; and the Christian from the Messiah till now, and is never to be superseded by another. Religion is one and the same thing in all ages of the world as respects its distinguishing character and design. And a good man has been essentially the same sort of a being in all ages, and under all the instituted acts of religion which have ever been preached by divine authority. Faith, or confidence in God according to the development of his character, has always been the basis, and controlling principle of all religious homage. A good man has ever been the man who paid a just regard to all the relations in which he stood to God and man. The principles of all true piety and humanity are, as invaluable as God himself. But the development of the divine character, and of all our relations to God and each other, has been progressive, and not consummated at once. Like the path of the just that shines