

lives ; and the Gospel gives it, so that they who run may read and understand. The corruption of man's nature by reason of sin, the evil and the danger of sin, the unspeakable mercy of God in the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, the work of the Spirit of God in renewing and sanctifying the hearts of men, the future life, the future judgment, the future and righteous retribution—these have been, are, and always will be, the great truths and doctrines of the Gospel. It is not to be thought that any study or any time will ever evolve from the Christian Scriptures truths greater than these, or even equal in rank to these. No such development of Christianity is to be expected. Nor is it needed for the great ends, for the accomplishment of which the Gospel revelation was made. Nevertheless, there may yet be in a variety of ways, and growing out of a more intelligent study of the Divine Word, and that too, in combination with a profound veneration for its authority, what shall in effect amount to discovery—discovery in some degree analogous to that which rewards the patient inquirer into the wonders of the material world, and which may be fitted to tell powerfully on the condition of the Christian Church, even as the other tells powerfully on the condition of mankind in general.

And first, isolated passages of Scripture, particular texts, may be interpreted differently, and more soundly and justly, than has yet been done. We are naturally disinclined to think the correctness of our present interpretations questionable. But there is a lesson to be gathered in this matter from the history of the Church. Whatever others may think, no sound Protestant does doubt, or can doubt, that for many centuries the Church, undivided, or only divided into the Eastern and Western branches, did grievously misunderstand and misinterpret certain passages, and with most mischievous consequences ; as for example, our Lord's words to St. Peter,