

It has never, save as revealed in the Bible, entered into the heart of man to conceive that the *higher* should be made a sacrifice for the *lower* nature; and yet, when it is disclosed, this appears to reason necessary in an atonement for human sin. The question of the competency of man to devise a plan of salvation, is thus brought to the test of history, and here it must be held as settled forever to be wholly beyond his power. This attempt has been made by unaided man—earnestly, perseveringly, anxiously made—made in all circumstances—by men of the greatest minds—and yet utter failure is inscribed on every such endeavour. In the face of these facts of human history, what shall we say of those who still venture to assert that the Bible affords no evidence in its substance that it is a book from God. They will tell you that its plan of human redemption is not beyond the mind of man to devise. Yes, you will meet with young men, mere lads, scarce out of their teens, some of whom that could not calculate the period of the next eclipse of the sun, or even work a miscellaneous question in “Gray’s Arithmetic,” though their life depended on their success, and yet they have the assurance to argue with you, that youths like them are quite competent to solve the whole moral problems connected with the redemption of human sinners to God. Or you will meet with old men, who have shown, perhaps, a lack of wisdom to negotiate a treaty between two nations at variance, or even to manage the concerns of their own families, and yet they have the presumption to affirm that men like them, by their own unassisted reason, worked out the wondrous plan of salvation revealed in the Bible. Human blindness and folly never surpassed this in vain imaginations, and surely they can go no further in absurdity, while attempting to account for the facts of the Bible. Let not unbelievers parade the difficulties which attach to the Christian faith. Verily they have difficulties in abundance in their own creed. Here, on this one point, they have a scheme of human redemption delineated in the Bible, touching on the deepest moral questions in the universe, embracing the interests of all beings, arranging all righteously, harmoniously, all wisely, and the theory of unbelief is that *this* is effected just by men of like passions and powers with ourselves. The Bible unfolds a plan of salvation which meets the wants, and wins the approval of the human conscience, while it arouses against it, the depraved passions of the human heart; and yet the creed of the skeptic is, that this book originated with men, who sacrificed their conscience at the shrine of falsehood, and claimed an inspiration which they knew they did not possess. A Chinaman, on returning a Bible to a missionary, who had given it on loan to him, was once asked how he liked the book. He replied, “I like the book better than the book likes me.” This is the testimony of the universal heart of man to the Bible. It gains at once the approval of his highest moral nature, while it awakens his dislike, because it witnesses against his passions and his sins. The Bible has been battling all along with human prejudices and human lusts, while it has had every where the human conscience on the side of its plan of redemption; and yet the infidel hypothesis is, that that plan to which the depraved human heart is so inveterately opposed is nevertheless its own offspring. Again, we say let not unbelievers talk to us of the difficulties of the Christian faith, let them rather look at such absurdities as those which beset their own system; and they must be blind indeed, if they do not see that skepticism is indissolubly wed to the sheepest credulity on this earth.

We enter not at present on the positive side of our argument, but conclude with an illustration of the power of the Bible in giving light and life to one of the greatest of the sons of men. In a garden near Milan, in the spring of the year 372, a young man lay one morning under a fig tree, moaning and bathed in tears. “Take and read!” cried a voice to him from a neighbouring house, “Take and read! take and read!” A neglected Bible flashed on his thoughts as the object of the admonition, and he hastened to a friend, with whom a short time before he had left a roll of Paul’s Epistles. “I seized the roll, in silence,” says he, describing the scene; “the chapter on which my eye first