

kind, and are the only source whence the truth of Christ's doctrines and history can be ascertained. The grounds according to which the early church settled the canon of Scripture were the internal credibility of the several writings, the authority of the authors of them — who must be Apostles or the companions of Apostles, and the certainty of the traditions which ascribed the works to their respective authors. The decisions of the early Christian Church on these points have not been extensively called in question ; and it is plain that no later generation could be such competent judges as they were, respecting the *external* evidence of tradition — however much better we may be able to appreciate the *internal* evidence — or the signs of purity and divinity and authenticity obtained by examining their contents.

Next, let us consider the contents of the Bible. What is it that renders this work so important, so invaluable to Christians? And what are the causes why so great a variety of opinion prevails on this subject? No one can consider this subject carefully without being astounded by the paradoxes which force themselves on his attention.

Here is a book which is more extensively read than any, over the whole globe, and yet perhaps *less known* — less really understood — than most others. Here is a work which is perused by all, and yet not thoroughly comprehended by one. Here is a book placed in the hands of a young child, as so simple that he who runs may read it : and yet concerning the true and full meaning of the different parts of it, there have been and still are opinions as varied as the characters of those who study it. Here is a book which, without note or comment, is read by the hour — at home and in school, in the cottage and in the palace,