

Bible, it is sufficient to say that, since the aim of the scriptures is to purify the heart and to guide the conduct of man, no merely intellectual examination of it can profit a man. The critical reading of the Bible may occupy a man's whole lifetime, and yet he will be no better for it, unless, while so doing, the spirit, the truths, contained in it inspire his soul with love to God, with determination to be wiser and better, with hopes and expectations that will bless him here in the paths of virtue and piety, and conduct him through all trials and difficulties to bless in heaven. If this is not the result he might as well be employed about the works of Homer or Virgil, except perhaps so far as his labors may, as they often do, conduce to the real edification of minds more susceptible than his own. But this is not the usual fact. Few can begin by reading the Bible critically, without ending in persuing it devotionally—with the heart impressed with God's power and goodness, shewn in his dealings with mankind.

The third, however, is the error which is most usually committed at the present day, and that too by the very best of men, viz., reading the sacred volume for edification, without having any adequate knowledge previously of its nature, origin, and varied contents. What has been the result? These persons come to the Bible with christian feelings, with warm imaginations, and with preconceived opinions handed down to them from their forefathers, or taught in modern catechisms, respecting the plenary inspiration of *every word* as well as *fact*, of *every deed* as well as of *every person* therein mentioned; and what can they then make of certain parts in this volume? The only resource is to treat it as no other book on the face of the earth is treated, and where a writer in the Bible *says one*