

things as they present themselves to the Divine mind. And if it be God's Word it must be so. If it be God's Word we must take it because God says it, and we must not be disposed to seek out irreverently what it is His pleasure to hide. Human silence, you know may be broken by human tests. It is recorded that when the oracles of old were rather chary of response, Alexander politely compelled the priestess to the tripod and made her speak. And on another occasion, when the blood of St. Januarius did not liquefy as it ought to have done—when the priests were either unable or unwilling (I give them the choice of the dilemma)—a message came from one whose position gave him power, that it must liquefy in half an hour, or the high priest should be hanged. But in spite of royal will, and in spite of military insolence, the silence of the Scripture remains inviolate. The seal of that silence cannot be broken by the touch of any human hand, and it is noteworthy—and I shall come to my point very shortly (I do not know that I am very far from it now)—it is noteworthy that the subjects upon which Scripture is silent are precisely the subjects where irreverent curiosity would fain probe to the uttermost, and where speculations have been multiplied almost without end. We ask about the creation of the world; it is dismissed in a sentence, almost in a word. We ask about the angels—those vast and lofty intelligences who are so powerful for good or evil. We do not know much about them from the Word. We ask about the existence of other worlds; we would fain know something of the conditions under which they live—whether there is sin among them—

‘Whether they ever felt above,
Redeeming grace and dying love.’

We know nothing about it from the Word. We ask in reference to the origin of evil; we find scars upon the earth; sickly and wailing children, volcano and pestilence, tyranny and wrong; and if God be God, and if He be love, and if He be power, whence?—why? Scripture is silent. It is more concerned to discover the remedy than to account for the disease. We ask about the dead; what are the conditions of their existence in the world to which they are gone, and in that paradise which is but a suburb of Heaven? We do not know; the Word is silent. Who, awed by the loving ministry of the Lord Jesus, and loving Him intensely, as I trust we are getting to do as a personal Christ—as a personal Redeemer—who of us has not wondered what He was like? We know all about heroes. We know all about poets and artists. Every great man who is noteworthy enough to live in memory at all—either the pen or the pencil has brought him before us even to the buckskin or the riband. Many painters have essayed to paint Christ; but Raphael, and Correggio, and Caracci can give us no light, nor Matthew, nor Mark, nor John. Nay, Luke even—if he was, as tradition says, painter as well as physician—has not essayed to draw for us on canvas the features of the Master whom he loved. Now, mark where Scripture is silent, and where Scripture speaks; silent upon matters that are subordinate—rich with a speaking fulness upon matters that are supreme; silent where irreverent curiosity would probe or errant fancy would wander; abundant in its revelation where the intellect thirsts for knowledge, and where the hunger of heart would be satisfied with the fulness of the Word; rich in its proclamation of everything that can lead the tottering steps of a wayfaring man to Jesus; abundant in its revelation of the one way to God and of the honour that is to be given to the Redeemer and to the Holy Spirit in the salvation of sinners; free and unrestricted in its offers of mercy, and with such a power in its words that the lame man leaps as a hart and the tongue of the dumb sings; yet there is a silence—an unmistakable, inviolate, painful silence—where scepticism would inquire, or where unhallowed curiosity would probe. The Bible is like the Master who talked freely about the mysteries of His kingdom to blind beggars, and to fallen but penitent women, but who uttered not a word to the blasphemous audacity of Caiaphas and the insolent