

and patiently; that, as it is the word of a Divine Teacher, it is to be read not merely with the respect of a scholar to his master, but with the reverence due from man to his God. As a consequence of this, we are not to go to the Word with preconceived theories to be corroborated, but with an open mind seeking for light, having full confidence that what that Word may teach will be found true, though it contradict preconceived opinions; that what that Word directs, will be found right, though it may cross and thwart our inclination.

This confidence in the absolute truth of what is revealed is part of our faith as Christians. The disciples of Plato listened with reverence to the words which fell from his lips, and when his deep speculations transcended their powers to follow him, they *believed in him*—that is, passing from what they knew, to what they did not know—having proved him to be a surpassingly able man, they had confidence in his further teaching, though that teaching might leave them far behind.

Thus, we with the Divine Word. In it there are things hard to be understood—the “deep things of God;” and the spirit that should animate us in their study is this—to grasp what we can, and what we cannot grasp, to believe. And this brings us to that which lies at the root of the whole matter. To understand the Word of God savingly—that is, to receive it for the great purpose for which it was sent—we *must have the aid of the Spirit of God*. As a mind open to perceptions of the ludicrous is required to understand satire,—as a mathematical, or metaphysical, or a poetical turn of mind are requisite to appreciate works in these departments of literature, so the Word of God can only be appreciated by a mind, in sympathy and at unison with the mind of God. Now, this sympathy with the purposes of God, this unison with the will of God, can only come through the operation of the Spirit of God. The Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God; and by his operation upon the understanding and the heart of a disciple, he is prepared to appreciate fairly the truth presented to him. A mind under this influence may be likened to a prepared plate in the process of photography; and this suggests another idea of great importance, which is, that the operation of the Spirit is *not directly to reveal truth*, but to put the understanding and the heart into a fit state for acquiring it. The preparing of the plate does not fix the image, this must be communicated from without—so when prepared by the Spirit of God for the reception of the truth, we have to search for it in the ordinary way—by careful reading of the Word.

This Spirit, be it understood, is the spirit, not of prejudice, nor of passion, nor of enthusiasm, nor of fanaticism, nor of folly, but of a *sound mind*. To those who had it the Apostle could appeal, “I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say.” Having such a sound mind, we shall at once fall in with the reasonableness of the following, amongst other suggestions:—

1. As the Scriptures treat of events long past, taking place in countries remote from us, where habits and modes of life were in many cases widely different from our own, it will much conduce to a pleasant and familiar acquaintance with the truth, if we acquire such knowledge of the countries, times, habits, and manners spoken of, that the force of allusions shall be at once perceived, and we shall as readily comprehend the narrative and the prophetic portions as would the persons for whom they were originally written.