

In short, we are not orphans ; we are children ; and our God is not the great unknown ; he is the dear Father.

If then the world stands in need of a divine revelation from God, if it needs a divine book of instruction and spiritual impulse, we may reasonably look for such a book. And that there is such a need is testified to by the universal craving of the human race, and by its universal ignorance.

I am not able to find a great deal of fault with Herbert Spencer's philosophy, if only his premises are granted. Without the Bible we know very little of God, we know even less of the future life, we have no absolute standard of duty, we have no true ideal of character. It is true that something may be judged concerning God from a study of his works. But they do not really bring us into communication with the heart of God, any more than the painting brings us into sympathetic friendship with the artist, or the church with the architect, or the machine with the machinist. Natural theology, when interpreted by the Bible, confirms its declaration that God is love ; but natural theology, uninterpreted, has never brought any nation or any priesthood even, to the recognition of that simple but sublime truth. It is true that our aspirations, if not our intuitions point to an immortality beyond the grave. But its nature, and the prospects it affords of possible growth and spiritual development, are not indicated by either aspiration or intuition. For that we must look to some clearer disclosure, or remain in ignorance. Conscience affords a kind of standard of duty. But that unenlightened conscience affords a poor standard of duty, is sufficiently demonstrated by the history of heathen communities.

To me then it seems no extraordinary or unreasonable thing that there should be an inspired Bible. On the contrary it seems to me that it would be very strange if there were not. God is our Father. The whole human race is comparatively ignorant of him. It has a vague idea that there must be a Supreme Being, but who or what he is knows not, yet longs to know. It has a vague dream of future immortality ; but what it is or how to prepare for it, it can only guess. It has a vague sense of sin and a sorrowful separation from its Maker and its Judge ; but how to secure his pardon and peace within itself it knows not, and accepts almost any burden the priest chooses to lay upon it. Under such circumstances seems it to you strange that the Heavenly Father should make some disclosure of himself to his children, some revelation of their future to their yearning hope, some assurance of pardon and clear disclosure of way to peace ? Know you any earthly father who would leave his child in ignorance of himself, in ignorance of duty ? We give our children bread ; does he leave his children to perish with hunger ?

In my own thoughts, then, I start with the assumption that there is likely to be a revelation in clear, plain explicit language from God to his children. Starting out with this expectation, I find no difficulty in the conviction that the revelation I seek is afforded by the Christian's Bible.

For this Bible supplies exactly and perfectly the need. It gives a full disclosure of a paternal God, whose love satisfies the filial craving of the soul for a Heavenly Father. It reveals a future life, which satisfies both the requirements of justice and the aspirations after a disclosed immortality. It not only affords explicit assurance of pardon on the conditions of repentance and acceptance, but it shows how our sins have borne their punishment in another's suffering, and so does actually afford that peace of mind which no other religion has ever been able to afford. It promises help, divine help, in the endeavour to live a new and holy life, and the help actually afforded, and the wonderful changes wrought through the Bible, in individuals, and entire communities, is the very best evidence that its promises are sanctioned by Him in whose name they are made. And in its perfect law of love, and in the sinless life and character of Jesus Christ, it affords such a standard of excellence as the world needs, as heathen poets