

keeps back nothing that is best for a fallen creature to know. An intelligent child of six years of age, educated in the bosom of a Christian family, knows more on moral and religious subjects than Socrates or Plato. We are scarcely aware of the vast extent and compass of religious truth with which the scriptures are so perfectly familiar. We listen to their instructions so frequently, that the thought is not always present to our minds, that they are enunciating truths which none but God knows. They point us back to the eternity which the Creator inhabited before the foundation of the world, and forward to the eternity we shall inhabit after this world shall have passed away. They lead our minds up to Him, who, though he dwells in light unapproachable and fills the universe, is about our path and about our bed; on whom all beings depend from the archangel to the worm; and who, while he is slow to anger and of great kindness, is terrible in majesty. They make us acquainted with his vast and perfect purposes, comprehending all his works and all the events of his providence in this world and other worlds, in time and through interminable ages. They direct our thoughts to the great law which he has published, and by which he establishes the moral order and harmony of the universe. They lead us to take a view of that world of wonders—man—a mystery to himself, and yet more than all the works of God, the means of eliciting the manifold glory of his Maker. They proclaim to us the glad tidings of great joy through the incarnation and death, resurrection, intercession, and mediatorial reign and triumph of the Son of God. They make us acquainted with the character and offices of the Divine Spirit, under whose transforming influence the soul is brought out of darkness into marvellous light, and though by nature guilty and impoverished, is enriched and adorned, and made meet to be a partaker of the inheritance with the saints in light. They make us familiar with the import of momentous and melancholy themes—death and the grave; with the resurrection both of the just and the unjust. They pour a light upon our path by which we desecrate the vast continent, the boundless immortality that stretches itself away immeasurably beyond our thoughts, and then lift the curtain where scenes and prospects rise that alternately appal and enchant us—the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven—the throne of judgment—the final sentence—the everlasting retribution.—How long would human reason have been clouded in mist, how long groped in darkness, had not the light dawned that has made such disclosures! He who knows all things, and sees as clearly at midnight as at noon day, not only becomes the light of reason, but even condescends to reveal to faith what our limited and imperfect reason may not in many instances comprehend. His intelligence is everlasting; he is the centre of thought, the law of all laws, and the last and supreme reason of all things. It belongs to him to originate and reveal the truths we are to receive; and even though they may not be comprehended by us, yet are they all clear and plain to him. Let the man who thirsts for knowledge, who is wearied in his pursuit of truth, and who feels dissatisfied with all that reason has ever taught him, repair to the Scriptures and see how fast he will learn under such a teacher. What an ocean of knowledge does he carry in the hollow of his hand when he grasps that sacred book! What uncreated wisdom seems then to be contained within the limits of his finite intelligence! When once a mind eager in the pursuit of knowledge begins in earnest to learn from this book of God, it continually advances.—There are no limits to these exhaustless instructions. As the intellectual powers and faculties expand and brighten by thought and prayer, as sinister and unworthy ends are lost sight of and superseded by the more steady and unalloyed love of the truth, the sphere of vision is enlarged—one degree of attainment facilitates the acquisition of another—the more is known, the greater will be the capacity of knowing—till light is poured upon the hitherto benighted mind from every opened page, and it increases in the knowledge of God till it beholds him as he is.

But the Scriptures do not merely extend the limits of moral science. In the second place, they fix its certainty. They reveal nothing as the object of conjecture, but

everything as of absolute knowledge. The truths they disclose are not matters of opinion; they are facts, facts ascertained by the God only wise, and the reality of which depends on his veracity speaking in his word. There is no foundation in the nature of things, for uncertainty in moral, rather than in natural, or mathematical, science. Every thing which men perceive, and about which they think and reason, is either certainly true, or certainly false.—Independently of all our views and the views of others, distinct from all the notions we derive from custom and education, irrespective of all our caprice, prejudice, and ignorance, there is such a thing as religious truth. There is in the nature of the case, no ground for doubt and uncertainty.—Though not decided by the same kind of evidence by which we resolve an equation, or demonstrate a theorem, or determine the nature and causes of disease, it is not on that account the less certain. Where infinite intelligence and integrity bear witness, there can be no room for uncertainty. All farther inquiry is out of place. One declaration of the God of truth is paramount to all the philosophical theories, and all the opposing systems of faith the world ever beheld. It is amusing to hear some modern religionists talk about a more rational religion than the religion of the Bible! What can be more rational than the religion of God! "Who hath been his counsellor, and who hath instructed him?" A suffering, but godly man was once asked if he could see any reason for the dispensation which caused him so much agony. "No," replied he, "but I am as well satisfied as if I could see ten thousand. God's will is the very perfection of all reason." So of the revelations of his truth. They are the perfection of all reason. The reason that is opposed to them is not reason, but folly. We need not be surprised, therefore, that the Scriptures claim for themselves certain knowledge; for how can it be otherwise, since they come from God? Nor should it be any matter of surprise to us that those who truly receive the Bible should regard it as an unerring standard, and be established in its truths. "Lord, to whom shall we go, but unto thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God!" Men who love the Bible, know that it is true. They have not merely learned to bow the understanding to the decisions of infinite wisdom, but they have felt its power. Its truths accord with their own experience. They perceive their excellency and beauty.—They have felt them; they have handled them; they have tasted and enjoyed them; and those wants of the soul which have so long been mocked, and deluded, and unrelieved, have found in them that satisfaction and peace which have elsewhere been sought in vain. "Do not wonder," says the devout Paschal, "to see some unsophisticated people believe without reasoning. God inclines their hearts to believe. They judge by the heart, as others do by the understanding. The Holy Scripture is not a science of the understanding, but of the heart. It is intelligible only to those who have an honest and good heart. Charity is not only the end of the Holy Scriptures, but the entrance to them." Men who are born of God, are begotten through the truths of the Bible; they are, as we were born into them, and they form the basis of their spiritual being. They have had access to the tree once guarded by flaming cherubims; they have plucked its fruit, and know indeed that it is the tree of life.

Nor is it a consideration of little moment, that the Scriptures fix the certainty of religious truth. Few principles are of higher importance than that truth, so far as it is attained, can be known with certainty. It is one thing to be on the whole persuaded, and another to be assured. It is one thing to view a proposition undulating between two different gradations of probability, and established only by the preponderance of probabilities; and another to consider truth beyond the influence of a doubt. If, after patient investigation, there were few subjects but may be unsettled by a corrupt philosophy; if, after a laborious, impartial, and prayerful study of the Scriptures, it were impossible to arrive at any other conclusion than conjecture, we might well feel ourselves involved in "an horror of great darkness." I cannot easily conceive of a more painful state of mind. Perhaps, in-

deed, there is no feeling in the human bosom so distressing as suspense and uncertainty, be the subject what it may. Man needs firm ground wherewith to place his feet, and not the marsh or quicksand, that trembles beneath him. He has a singular power to brace his courage on a level with his condition, and to endure with fortitude those evils which, before their arrival, seemed almost insupportable. But a state of hesitation between hopes and fears is, if possible, more tormenting than the fulfilment of his worst apprehensions. The haunting fear, the agony of suspense, prostrate his energy, and to escape them, he often leaps to grapple with the dread realities. Where then can be imagined a more dreadful state of mind than one of uncertainty as to the most important and vital subjects? Is there such a being as God? Is there a future state of immortal existence? Is there pardon for the guilty? At what rate shall we estimate the misery of the mind that ponders upon these momentous questions with doubt and uncertainty? To hang over the deep current into which all nations have sunk, while the eye finds nothing but darkness, nor even a ripple which shows the spot where they disappear, to lean over the abyss to see whether perhaps it might discover some faint outline of the world beneath, whether some gloomy echo, or some response of joy, some sound of mourning, or some song of praise, shall tell the dreadful mystery, what indescribable anxiety is this! But not thus is it with men who have the Bible. From these unerring pages speaks a voice that is echoed back from every bosom of the living, every tomb and monument of the dead. Every thing were conjecture elsewhere, here everything is certainly. We know now the value and the true business of life. And if we are misled and perplexed by the shadows of uncertainty, it is because we "love darkness," and prefer to trace our dubious, hesitating course, under the dim torchlight of reason, to being led by that book which eternal wisdom has revealed to be a "light to our feet and a lamp to our path."

But you will ask me, Has human reason no place in the pursuits of moral science? She has a definite and definable place. It is her province to ascertain that there is a God, and that he is a being of infinite power, knowledge and rectitude. It is her province to ascertain that he is able to make a revelation of his will to men, and with such evidence of its reality that she can believe and know that it comes from him. It is her province to inquire and judge whether the persons who speak in his name were truly sent by him, and to become assured that what they have spoken and written is in conformity with his own word. It is her province to look at the difficulties, and weigh well all the objections, to the primary inspiration of the sacred volume, and to be the more secure in her security because the volume claims to be the only infallible rule of faith and practice. Nor does her province terminate here. While it belongs not to her to erect herself into a tribunal before which the truth of God must appear to be judged, at the same time it belongs to her to inquire and ascertain what the divinely inspired book contains. This she must do diligently, humbly, and with becoming meekness.—Having ascertained that this is the book of God, she may take all her powers and all her learning, and what is more, all her earnestness and candour, to ascertain the true sense and import of the sacred writers. Her views of religious truth she must draw directly from the Scriptures. She is not merely to call in the aid of the Bible in confirmation of her own opinions, but to begin her investigations with the divine source of knowledge. The evidence of the truth she receives is the divine testimony, and she has nothing to do but ascertain and receive it. She may not interfere, nor hesitate, where the God of truth has decreed. Her business is to stand a silent inquirer at the shrine of these Oracles, and there hear what God the Lord hath spoken.—Her object is to get at their philosophy, and not her own. She must take leave of her lofty independence and dignities, if she would learn of Christ. Her philosophical speculations have nothing to do in ascertaining the meaning of the Scriptures. Nor can we give too great emphasis to this thought. Men are very apt, where they have fixed views of the laws which regulate mind, to look at God's truth through the medium of their own philosophy. If, for example, God

declares that the human race are sinners from their birth, they hesitate at such a statement, because according to their received opinions, the human mind is not capable of sin. If God declares that the moral renovation of men is effected by his own mighty power, they call in question this doctrine, because, according to their philosophy, the mind is an existence which is incapable of being acted upon except by light and motives. Instead of allowing the Bible to influence their philosophy, they allow their philosophy to become the arbitrary interpreter of the Bible. Instead of submitting their judgments to the decisions of the uncreated intelligence, they require that his intelligence should be subordinate to their own. There are few Christian divines that have not to some extent fallen into this error. This was eminently the error of Origen, of Cocceus, of Hutchinson, and of Swedenborg. This is the error of the Pelagians and Arminians of ancient and modern times. This is the error also to some extent of the Calvinistic and Hopkinsian schools. Nay, this is the error of most of us, heterodox and orthodox.—Strange to say, we can afford to bear in our hearts the shreds of our own philosophy with the wisdom of God. We do it meanly. But human reason was never given to man for such a purpose. When she has ascertained the true import of God's revelation, her work is done. To attempt more than this, is rebellion against God—nay it is rebellion against herself; for reason decides, and decides intuitively, that "if we believe the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater." It has been well remarked, that "periods in which the pride of philosophy has been most exalted, have often been distinguished for the widest departures from the simplicity of Scriptural theology." Human reason is never so truly in her proper place as when she sits a learner at the feet of Christ. How can she soar on a lofty wing than when she flies so near the Sun as to see her face and lose her vision in the brightness of his rays? It is not reason that guides the soul then, but God. It is a heavenly light—a guide from a purer and more intellectual world. It is reason, but not her own—a reason that never hesitates, never tires, and never becomes weary; a reason that is never prejudiced, partial or benighted, and that never errs.

We think it, therefore, no small commendation of the Bible, that it is the only book that has opened to the world the extended field of moral science, and so marked and guided the path of human inquiry, that if the mind wanders, it can never be said that it is for want of light. Few truths come to us with such overpowering evidence, as the truths of the Bible. The cheerless gloom which hovers over the understandings of men had never been chased away, but for the beams of the supernatural revelation. Men may look with an unfriendly eye on that system of truth which reproves and condemns them, while they little know the loss the world would sustain by subverting its foundation. We have tried paganism; we have tried Mahometanism; we have tried deism and philosophy; and "we cannot look upon them even with respect." The Scriptures contain the only system of truth which is left us. If we give up these, we have no other to which we can repair. We must travel back under the faint and trembling light of reason and nature, where "darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people." We must wander and the regions of fancy and scepticism, where there is no argument to convince, and no oracle to decide. Every thing we see, and hear, and feel, becomes more and more the source of solicitude and apprehension, and the farther we extend our views, unless guided by this heavenly light, we behold only a vast desert—a deeper abyss of doubt, darkness and despair. Between reflections upon ourselves, and reflections upon God; between just views of his character and our own, we see no ground for hope. We are burdened with a sense of our sin, misery, and darkness, and long in vain for some quiet resting place—some covert from the tempest—some shadow of a great rock in this weary land—some thing which has "the promise of the life that now is, and that which is to come." We strive to break our bondage, but every struggle binds us faster in our chains, and is only the intellectual effort of a mind separated from God to restore by its own wisdom its lost fellowship with its Maker. We counsel you therefore to cleave