

"I find no greater difficulty in giving the apostles credit for the writings imputed to them, than in believing that any other history was written by its professed author;—why should our doubts be reserved only for the sacred writings?"

"Is it probable that a number of ignorant fishermen and tent-makers could have written such works?"

"My belief in inspiration removes that difficulty from my mind. Holy men committed to writing the wisdom imparted to them by the Holy Spirit."

"But they differ in their relation of the same thing—had they been inspired, they would surely have agreed in their statement of facts."

"And so do the Apostles in all important facts—do we not invariably find, that when two persons relate an acknowledged occurrence, each will repeat the circumstance which struck himself most forcibly, omitting others, on which, perhaps, another would lay great stress; so that, although their stories agree perfectly in the main points, the attending circumstances will appear to vary."

"And you believe the doctrines they taught, were those of inspiration?"

"Unquestionably! A valuable author says the more rule of life which Christianity has laid before us, calls for such habitual and unqualified sacrifices of the selfish to the benevolent affections, imposes such restraints upon sinful passions, and teaches truths so mortifying to the innate pride of the understanding, that, allowing man to be intellectually capable of discovering such a system, nevertheless we cannot believe that his wishes and inclinations would have allowed him to form such a theory. Now since man either could not, or would not form it, we must infer that such a morality must be more divine—and your own argument concerning their ignorance and poverty strengthens my position, since nothing but divine illumination, could have so suddenly dispelled such darkness."

"But you are speaking of the morality of Christianity, and not of its doctrines."

"I consider them as inseparable—the morality of Christianity could not be transplanted into any other system with equal efficacy. It is a test of character—teaching its believers the secrets of their own hearts, their guilt and misery, and pointing to one more powerful than themselves to deliver them. Need I say, who that one is?"

"Jesus Christ, of course."

"Yes; Jesus Christ, the crucified, the ascended, the glorified! He who is our Intercessor with the Father, pleading the very sufferings he endured as a reason for the pardon of those who inflicted them! Well may we admire and love the doctrines His own life so beautifully illustrated! Well may we pronounce them divine!"

"Well, Miss Allen, so much do I find myself interested in this subject that I shall not fail to pursue

it. But what have you there?" Clara was turning over the leaves of a volume, and now answered, "I was searching for a sentence in the work to which I have so often alluded—ah! here it is: 'True philosophy could not but acknowledge that that religion must be divine, whose doctrines, while they were beyond human discovery, are also consonant to reason; whose morals are of surpassing excellence, and yet original in their perfection, in their application and their consistency; which is fitted for men of all degrees, giving wisdom to the foolish, and sight to the blind, and which acts not alone by instructing the understanding, but by filling the heart.' What more could be said?"

"Nothing more upon the subject, I hope," cried Anne, impatiently, "for I am tired to death of it. Do, Clara, think of something else besides religion, and converting Edward. I am sure I do not know why you take so much trouble with him!"

Clara blushed and said, "I fear I have said more than became me, but I was led on unconsciously, and must entreat your pardon for the impropriety."

"Indeed, Miss Allen," cried Edward, "I am the only one to be censured, if any censure is merited—and I have to thank you for so condescendingly answering all my questions. But really, my dear Anne, I thought you were as much interested in them as myself. How does it happen that your pleasure in these discussions has abated?"

"Because I see no good they can do, and they only serve to render people disagreeable. I beg your pardon—I mean tiresome."

"Upon my word, Anne," said Mrs. Courtland, "I fear your amusement of the last evening has unfitted you for serious conversation—certainly you have not improved your phrase by altering it. I hope both Clara and Edward will exercise their usual forbearance."

"I can make my own apology, mamma," returned Anne, haughtily. "I did not mean to say that Clara and Edward were either disagreeable or tiresome to each other."

Although Edward had marked with surprise and regret, the unamiable temper of his beloved this morning, yet nothing had hitherto occurred to explain to him the cause of her ill-humour; but her flashing eye and angry flush, as she uttered the last sarcasm, opened his eyes to the sentiment that occasioned them. Flattered and pained at the same moment, he hastened to soothe, as far as possible, the wounded feelings of the innocent Clara. But a light had dawned upon the mind of this lovely girl also, and displayed to her the deadly foe to peace that was already in possession of the heart of her cousin; and she sighed as she remembered her own share in introducing it there. As she rose to withdraw, Anne detained her, exclaiming, as if with a desperate effort, "Don't go, Clara; I wish to tell you who escorted me to the play last evening."