

**R—WHEN THE MESSAGE OF MERCY IS SECRETLY OR OPENLY REGARDED AS UNTRUE,—REJECTED AS A SILLY, OR CUNNINGLY DEvised FABLE.**

The Bible is composed of many books, chiefly histories, all having a historical character, written at different periods by prophets and holy men, through whom God in time past spoke unto the fathers. Taken as a whole, and as a mere literary document, no ancient history is so authentic, and so convincingly truthful on the face of it as the Bible; none receives so much corroboration from the monuments of the past, from institutions and customs established among men, from admitted facts, and from the best and deepest feelings of human nature. And then, though there may be dark passages in it, and fragments bearing the impress of mistaken views, and of errors and follies and guilty passions,—for the Bible is a history, and records the actual transactions of God with an ignorant and depraved race, and therefore, does present in the occurrences it narrates, the frailties and falsities and wickednesses, as well as the virtues of the human-beings it informs us about,—yet its doctrines—the clearly divine in its statements and precepts—are so exalted above any standard attained or idealized among men, so amazingly unlike in conception and truth and purity to the sentiments most advanced and refined in the age when they were given to the world;—and these doctrines are so undeniably fitted to produce the most beneficial effects in the world, and have wrought such changes on men and nations, that they carry their own evidence with them—stamping them as indubitably “doctrines according to goodness,” distinguishable by us from pretended divine revelations and from compositions of mere human authorship, even from the writings of good and holy men;—so that the result of inquiry in every

intelligent, candid, truth-loving soul, is the overpowering conviction that in these holy oracles “the mouth of the Lord hath spoken,” and the Bible is the word.

Yet there have been sceptics and infidels, chiefly because there have been men loving the darkness rather than the light—men in their voluntary and involuntary aversion to holiness, endeavouring to extinguish all glorious human hope in an infatuated crusade against all that is good and bright and blissful for man. Reason, which they profess to magnify, the traditions and records of every historic people, the pleadings and assurances of the best and worthiest of regard among their contemporaries, can be set aside by quibbling, trifling, impotent objections: and the narrative of the Saviour’s life—a gospel to all men in the scenes it portrays—they can see defamed and defiled by the low scurrility of the most infamous of our kind.

By those who cast from them the holy oracles—the victims of a strong delusion, though they flatter themselves that they are superior in acumen and intelligence to their fellows—the grace of God is frustrated: they obstruct for themselves the only channel through which it flows, and turn its living stream into the sterile sands of their unbelief to disappear in that dreariest of deserts.

Learn, while you cultivate and improve every gift of intelligence and reason—while you endeavour to prove all things and hold fast that which is good, to watch and pray against causeless doubts and suspicions, to which we are all too prone. What a miserable sophism, what inane trivialities have sometimes been sufficient to start sceptical questionings, and to blunt for us the polished shafts taken from the quiver of truth, in the word that liveth and abideth forever.