

ARTICLE V.

THE GROUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE.

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THE first exercise of our faculties is spontaneous ; we begin to acquire knowledge long before we think of proposing it to ourselves as an end. As soon as the objects of knowledge and the cognitive power come into connection, that experience takes place, which, by the constitution of nature, results from this connection, and in which our intellectual life consists. And even after we come to seek for knowledge as an object and to adopt means for its attainment, and discipline, and direct the faculties, whose office it is to discover truth ; after we have separated our acquisitions into distinct departments, and given to our various sciences a systematic character and adapted them to practice, — it is still a long time before we think of subjecting the process itself by which knowledge is acquired, to a rigid analysis.

Such analysis, however, sooner or later takes place. It cannot be that curiosity, awakened and stimulated to intensity by the world of wonders in which we are placed, should remain forever dormant in regard to the greater wonders in ourselves. The mysterious power to which all truth is revealed, and the mysterious process by which this power unfolds such secrets and appropriates such treasures, is itself in fact the most marvellous and the most inviting and absorbing of all the marvels it contemplates.

At a certain stage of mental culture, therefore, and with persons of the requisite contemplative and introspective habits, the theory of human knowledge, the origin of our ideas, becomes a subject of profound inquiry and commanding interest. The validity of our judgments, the grounds of belief upon which the vast structures of human science rest,

appear to them invested with a dignity equalled only by the grandeur of our moral destiny, and permeated through all their crystal depths by brilliant, grateful rays from the sunlight life above them.

Nor is it as a matter of rational curiosity alone, that the study of the phenomenon of human knowledge is commended to thoughtful men; it is, in truth, indefensible to an intelligent delineation of the proper limits of inquiry in every department of philosophy; without it we remain in ignorance as to what our faculties are capable of teaching us, and equally in ignorance as to what they do unquestionably teach upon any of the thousand subjects within their sphere. The progress of knowledge has consisted as much in rejecting old beliefs as in establishing new ones. Things once generally and strongly believed have been disproved. Errors for which men have been willing to risk not only their reputation as philosophers, but their very life, have been abandoned. System after system of science, so called, has arisen and flourished and passed away; and men witnessing this humiliating spectacle have been tempted to deny all certainty, to doubt every proposition, and to question the capacity of the human mind to know at all. Among every thinking people, from the time of Pyrrho, philosophy has occasionally assumed a sceptical aspect, and schools have appeared, which, like that ancient philosopher, have esteemed it the highest wisdom to doubt, and have held all knowledge to be useless.

It is then clear that to settle the question between positive knowledge and general scepticism, some standard of truth must be found, some criterion, some ultimate test, to which our judgments, our supposed knowledges, may be all brought. Without a standard of truth the controversy with error can never be settled; no basis to erect a system of belief upon can be found. Hence there comes to be at last, among the sciences to which the human mind gives rise, a science of sciences, a philosophy of philosophies, whose aim is to discover the grounds upon which all other philosophies rest; a science lying back of our physics and our psychology, the great principles of which are all pre-supposed and assumed in

psychology and physics. The Baconian method takes a number of things for granted. It requires phenomena to be observed and their natural order to be ascertained, and deduces from them the law, as it is called, or principle under which they are comprehended, of which they are developments and exemplifications. The assemblage of principles or laws thus deduced from experience in reference to any single subject, and combined according to the natural order of our thoughts, constitutes the science of that subject. The phenomena of the heavenly bodies, so observed and reasoned upon, give us Astronomy; the facts of our internal experience, in like manner, give us Psychology. But in these cases we assume the capacity to observe and to reflect; we take for granted the credibility of the senses and of consciousness. If not, how know we that we are reasoning upon facts? We assume, also, that our memory and our cognitive power may be trusted; else what confidence can we repose in our reasonings upon facts? Now the philosophy to which we have referred, proposes to inquire into the validity of the judgments thus assumed in our productive methods. Under one name or another, this philosophy has clearly a field to itself, and in the progress of human thinking, an important if not essential part to perform. Without much propriety it received the name of the "Critical Philosophy," from the title of Kant's "Critique of pure reason," in which the author proposed to determine the primary laws of belief. It has also received the appellation of "Transcendental Metaphysics," because it relates to truths which lie beyond the range of experience, which indeed experience pre-supposes, without the recognition of which experience would not be possible.

It has been denominated "Spiritual Philosophy," because it has for its object to develop and vindicate ideas, which originate in the soul itself, and constitute a part of its primordial and essential feelings or intuitions, without which impressions upon us from without would not be appreciable or even possible.

It has, also, and more generally of late, and especially

among the Scottish philosophers, been known as the "Philosophy of Common Sense," so called first by Reid, because the principles of this philosophy appeal for their vindication to the common original convictions of all minds.

It has received the appellation of "Fundamental Philosophy," also, because its object is to discover and justify the laws or principles of belief that lie at the bottom of all reasoning and all knowledge.

The object of this branch of the transcendental philosophy, as already said, is to discover and substantiate those primary laws of action which the human mind observes in its intellectual and practical judgments; to exhibit some of the essential elements of the reason, the forms under which it cognizes all truth, and without which it would be incapable of knowledge — would be no longer mind.

These original ideas, or forms of thought, or conditions of knowledge, are found of course in all minds, and need only to be brought into the light of a cultivated, reflective consciousness, in order to be recognized. The mode of verifying them is precisely that in which all ideas are verified, viz.: by an appeal to the mind itself, the consciousness, the experience of thinking men. It supposes that any account of the ideas to which it directs our attention would be unphilosophical; for no account can be given of them without taking them for granted. An argument, an explanation, supposes the existence and identity of the mind that makes it and the mind that demands it. To give a reason for a thing implies the idea of a reason, the notion of cause, the idea of sequence, of law. It is absurd, therefore, to argue for the existence of such ideas, every possible argument necessarily pre-supposing them. Such ideas exist, or they do not exist, in the consciousness; and the mind may be made by patient efforts, to recognize them there, or their existence can never be known. Their existence is the proper and only condition of our knowledge of them.

To what else can appeal be made for the vindication of knowledge, upon any theory of its nature or origin? How else establish and justify any sequence in any argument, any

belief, any simple idea, any sentiment, any principle of right or of beauty? To what is appeal to be made in disproving or bringing into doubt one of these original ideas, or in asserting even the fact that the existence of such ideas has been brought into controversy?

All languages exhibit words signifying knowledge, certainty. Whence comes this idea of knowledge? To deny the possibility of knowledge implies an idea of the thing denied. If we have the idea of knowledge, what is it? Can it be anything less clear than that which is seen in its own light, without aid from anything more clear? Is it not absurd to suppose a thing to be proved by anything less clear than that which it proves?

Knowledge, we have just said, cannot be denied without implying an idea of what it is to know. What then would be knowledge, if it were possible? Anything different from what we already have? Could it be anything more than conscious seeing, immediate, direct, distinct intuition? If such a thing may be, and if what we now call knowledge has all the marks which any supposable knowledge can be conceived to have, what more have we reason to demand?

The higher, the fundamental philosophy, it is clear, does not attempt to contradict or to supersede the Baconian or the Aristotelean logic; it consists entirely with the methods of reasoning employed in the sciences; indeed, its grand aim is, instead of destroying, to justify these methods, and to place their results in the mental and the material worlds, beyond the reach of scepticism or cavil, by showing that nothing is assumed in our induction or deduction which has not the sanction of our mental constitution, and therefore of Him who so mysteriously and wonderfully organized our physical and spiritual being.

What then, according to this philosophy, may I be said to know? Why, undoubtedly, in the first place, all that is proved, demonstrated; and secondly, all that I see clearly without proof, directly, intuitively. There is no third way of knowing, possible or conceivable. That which is proved depends upon something else which is not proved; no argu-

ment can commence without an assumption; it may be a definition as in Mathematics, or a fact as in Chemistry, or a proposition dependent on a foregoing demonstration. Ultimately, all reasoned truths will be found to rest upon truths which are not reasoned, not obtained by any induction, truths seen in their own light, not capable of proof for the very reason that they need no proof; so plain that nothing plainer can be found to illustrate them. What is proved then, at last, is traced to what is seen directly, without the aid of proof. If it were not so, inasmuch as every argument is substantially an inference of something not known from something known, the series of arguments must be infinite. And besides, in all demonstration, every step involves an intuition; each successive step is indeed an intuition. In the first Theorem of Euclid, the idea of a point, a line, a circle, an angle, a triangle, is intuitive; and the perceptions of equality and coincidence, which constitute the several stages of the argument and the conclusion itself, are each and all direct judgments of the intellect. And therefore the whole demonstration is but a series of intuitions or direct judgments; and every mathematical demonstration is resolved at last into propositions not proved and not admitting of proof — self-evident, intuitive propositions.

The same is true of moral reasoning — of all reasoning. The premises, whether matters of fact or primary judgments of the reason, and the successive conceptions on to the final proposition, are all immediate, direct cognitions, original acts of knowledge. Thus, in Paley's Argument for the Divine Benevolence, the first proposition is a primary judgment of the reason; "when God created the human species, either He wished their happiness, or He wished their misery, or He was indifferent about both." In this proposition (to say nothing of the ideas attached to each word, as "God," "created," etc.) in the general proposition, we have expressed an original immediate judgment; the truth of the alternative presented is seen directly, not by any induction, not by means of any intermediate idea; he who does not assent to it cannot be induced to do so by argument; it is as much an

intuitive perception as that of coincidence or equality in the demonstration of the first Theorem in Euclid. Of the same nature is the second proposition in Mr. Paley's Argument: "If He had wished our misery, He might have made sure of His purpose by forming our senses to be so many sores and pains to us," etc. Again: "If He had been indifferent about our happiness or misery, we must impute to *our good fortune* both the capacity of our senses to receive pleasure and the supply of external objects fitted to produce it." But either of these, and especially both of them, being too much to be attributed to accident, nothing remains but the first supposition, that God wished our happiness. The propositions implied in this part of the argument, viz.: that such adaptations cannot be the work of accident, and that therefore God wished our happiness, are expressions of immediate, intuitive judgments. And so of every proposition in the following form of the argument: "Contrivance proves design; the predominant tendency of the contrivance indicates the disposition of the designer. The world abounds with contrivances, and all the contrivances which we are acquainted with, are directed to beneficial purposes. We conclude therefore that God wills and wishes the happiness of His creatures." The first two of these propositions are primitive judgments of the reason; the two following, judgments of the reason upon the intuitions of sense or the testimony of others; the conclusion, the final sequence, a simple judgment of the reason. Arguments are, then, all resolvable into primary intuitions, either of sense or of reason.

In searching for the elements or original ideas of the human mind, we may thenceforth assume them to be contained in the intuitions of which we are made capable by our intellectual constitution; in being capable of which our intellectual constitution consists; to fit us for which was to create us rational beings; for evidently if we could know nothing directly, we could know nothing at all, all knowledge acquired by demonstration depending ultimately, as we have just seen, upon immediate, intuitive judgments.

What then are these original, intuitive ideas? Why,

evidently, directly or indirectly, all that we are made capable of knowing; all knowledge at last appears in this form. To enumerate these primary intuitions would of course be to detail the infinitely varied immediate acts of knowledge of the objects of human thought.

The most general and most marked division of them is into intuitions of sense and intuitions of reason; the former supposing always the use of some one of the external senses as the organ of the cognitive faculty, the latter including such intuitions as have their origin immediately in the thinking principle itself. This last class are again subdivided into intellectual, moral, and æsthetic intuitions, the first giving us our ideas of the true, the second our ideas of the good, the last our ideas of the beautiful.

Our remaining remarks will be confined chiefly to the first of these divisions, viz.: purely intellectual judgments; of themselves quite too numerous and too various to be intelligently treated under a single head, and therefore to some extent, for convenience, subdivided into distinct varieties. The most important of these varieties are the ideas of cause, of space, of time, of substance, of quality, of law, of number, of identity, of design, of infinity, etc.; the mathematical axioms, and the fidelity of the senses, of the cognitive power and of memory.

In support of the fact of the existence of such ideas, as the original furniture of the human mind, or more properly as necessary elements of its very first thoughts, provided for in its constitution, and indispensable, because constituent parts of all its subsequent knowledge, we appeal to human experience, the experience of mind. They are of course, if found anywhere, to be found in the consciousness. Whether they be indeed there, we learn as we learn the existence of thought or feeling in general, by introspection of ourselves. By a beautiful provision of nature, the existence of such truths is questioned only by cultivated, curious, reasoning mind; and such mind is fitted by its habits to settle the question which it raises. It is a philosophic question, disturbing philosophers only, and to be answered by philosophers, upon philosophic grounds.

Some of these ideas, or intellectual states, are of such a character as not to admit of denial or of doubt. To deny one's own existence is an absurdity; to doubt it is an absurdity. A denial or a doubt supposes a denier or a doubter. To see, supposes something seen; to question the truth of a past sensation or thought implies the continued existence of the thinker, his personal identity. Action, reflection, hope, all pre-suppose a feeling of our own existence and identity, and a dependence on the truthfulness of our powers, and the connection of cause and effect. On no other grounds could we hope or fear, or remember or act. Thus, while reasoning sometimes fails to convince, we are daily and hourly impelled by this voice of our Maker speaking through our very constitution, to every action, precaution and enterprise, every hope and fear of life, even while at the same time we may be questioning the voice that directs us.

The notion of an argument to prove or disprove such truths is absurd; for argument is made up of them. The mind that denies them cannot be reasoned with; it wants the common features, the characteristic, essential elements of reason.

The only account to be given of original, intuitive ideas, is to describe them, so to mark them as to direct the consciousness of others to them, among the phenomena of their own minds. If they be able to recognize them there, they need no other evidence of their existence; if not, there is no way of proving them.

The foregoing remarks suggest the true distinction between mathematical and moral science. Mathematics has important incidental peculiarities in the definite nature of its subjects, viz.: extension and quantity, — and the corresponding fewness and measure of its terms. The logical process is, of course, more simple and therefore somewhat easier and in these respects more infallible than the complicated processes involved in extensive argument upon matters of fact, in which numerous circumstances are to be considered, and the meaning of words watchfully guarded.

A more essential peculiarity of mathematical reasoning is, that the data are mere assumptions, definitions, concep-

tions of our own, while the moral sciences start with facts. This circumstance accounts in part for the singular definiteness of its terms; if these terms conform to our ideas, that is all we require. In the sciences of fact, we demand that our ideas should conform to nature, as well as our words to our ideas.

It would, however, be extravagant to assert that on account of these differences, truth is confined to Mathematics. It were hardly more extravagant to say that truth is not found in Mathematics. Fact, reality, is certainly not found there. Not setting out with facts, its reasonings can never lead to facts. It is hypothesis all. If we can be said to know nothing certainly out of Mathematics, we can be said to know nothing really anywhere.

But is it so? Is nothing certain beyond the sphere of Mathematics?

Mathematical truth rests ultimately on definitions, conceptions of the reason, ideas of lines, angles, circles, etc. Moral reasoning rests for the most part upon ideas of sense or of consciousness.

That we truly have such ideas in both cases, we know by precisely the same means, the testimony of our own minds; they do see these ideas in themselves. That in the case of sight there is a thing seen and a seer, we know by the same testimony; we directly see both. Can evidence be higher or clearer?

We may make wrong inferences; but the senses do not deceive us. It was a wrong inference from the testimony of the senses, that the sun revolves about the earth; there is another alternative equally consistent with the testimony of the senses, viz., that the earth moves round on its own axis. The fact of a relative motion is all that is attested by the eye; this may be either motion in the earth or the sun; the visual effect will be the same in both cases, as we see illustrated in sailing along the shore, or passing a stationary train of cars upon a railroad; it is impossible to say, so far as the eye is concerned, which is moving, the boat or the shore, the standing or the passing train. If motion itself were denied, it would contradict the senses. The fact of motion they are competent to know; for our inferences they are not

responsible. So far are the senses from being uncertain inlets of knowledge that they, in fact, furnish us with our most expressive language of certainty; to be as clear as sight is to be past all doubt.

In the purely logical process, which is, as we have seen, intuitive at every step, in all reasoning, there can, of course, be no essential difference between mathematical and moral reasoning. The axioms that constitute the successive links of the chain in the one, are no more certain than those equally intuitive judgments which complete the other. That the whole is greater than a part is not clearer than that design implies a designer. Is my notion of sequence among the relations of lines and angles any more certain than my notion of antecedent and consequent among the feelings of my own mind? Is my idea of body or of space less certain than are my ideas of the admeasurements of body or space, their mathematical affections? Yet the ideas of body and of space, and even of extension itself, which the mathematician considers, are metaphysical. The notion of time, whose various portions the mathematician computes, is not itself given by Mathematics. The infinity to which his parallel lines are supposed to be extended, is a metaphysical idea. Indeed, the very subjects whose extension and quantity he deals with, and without a notion of which he could have no extension or quantity, are furnished by the metaphysician, and cannot be less certain than the notions built upon them.

Is any proposition in Euclid more certain than my own existence, or yours, or that of the earth, or of Paris, or of Bonaparte,—of matter and mind and God? If not, what becomes of the conceit that there is no certainty beyond the limits of the Mathematics? Scepticism without those limits is scepticism within them; truth in all science reposes on the same basis, the original laws of our mental constitution.

To a reasoner against the certainty of all but mathematical demonstration, may it not be replied: "Is your reasoning mathematical? If not, permit us to doubt; for mathematical reasoning alone is indubitable." And what has the reasoner to say? It is not to be denied that the Mathematics, owing to the nature of the sub-

jects as conceptions of our own minds, definitions, and in some degree also to the comparatively small number and unvarying use of its appropriate words, has remarkable advantages over all the other sciences. It is no more to be doubted that its principles have, like the ideas of right and beauty, this dignity, — that they seem to belong to the Eternal Mind as well as our finite intellect; all material nature is founded on them; though nowhere unmodified, they are everywhere involved as the ground principles of the physical universe. But that we are confined to the sphere of this science for all absolute certainty is incapable of proof, upon the very principle of the argument by which the proposition is maintained. Indeed, if we know nothing out of Mathematics, we for the same reason know nothing in Mathematics; for if our immediate intuitions are knowledge, they carry us into the whole field of nature and of mind; if they are not knowledge, what do we know of equality and sequence in the relations of our ideal lines and angles? Are these anything more than immediate intuitions?

The philosophy of human knowledge proposing, as we have said, to settle the laws of belief, the ground principles of all science, serves, we think, to throw some light upon another question of more moment still, if possible, the question, first raised, and naturally enough, in the bosom of the Roman Catholic church, but entertained to some extent among Protestants, between Faith and Reason. To deter awakening minds from inquiry and investigation, and to secure the credit of Tradition, an appeal has been made to the authority of revelation; the judgments of cultivated reason have been repressed as presumptuous and profane. By another class of theologians, the same appeal has been made from wholly different and infinitely better motives. Men of no worldly policy, and no design to prop a tottering fabric of superstition, have occasionally, at different periods, been so offended by the aberrations of opinion, and have become so impatient of the weary progress of truth in the world, that they have come to distrust our human capacities altogether, and to give up all hope of light but from a supernatural revelation.

They are right, clearly, in despairing of the human mind

without the Bible; right in depending on the Scriptures for much of our best knowledge upon all moral and spiritual subjects, and for all we may be said to know upon some of the greatest subjects of thought and dearest interests of man. Faith has its proper sphere beyond the province of reason, and supplies a class of truths to which unaided reason could never have attained. But faith is not, therefore, a substitute for reason. We are not obliged to renounce reason in order to avoid rationalism; this would be the opposite extreme. There is a point of union. The two principles are not antagonistic; they blend and harmonize in the same mind; the one is the proper complement of the other. Isolated and in excess they lead, the one to impiety, the other to superstition. Indulged to extremes, they destroy one another. A faith not justified by reason is an illusion; a reason not implying faith is impossible. How can a faith which does not commend itself to the judgment, command respect or be binding? On what does it rest its claims? Whereon does its authority repose? What gives it power to bind the conscience? To what does it appeal? And a reason which does not receive the testimonies of the senses, of the memory, of the conscience, of the taste, of the cognitive power in all its manifestations, what can it do? What does it know? Absolutely nothing. There is therefore a kind of faith, faith in God, my Maker, lying at the basis of all my primary judgments, a confidence in the divine voice speaking through my physical and moral organization. And there is a reasonableness in the faith which carries me beyond the reach of my natural powers, and helps me, reposing on God's revealed word, to see things invisible to the mere natural man. The attempt, therefore, to dissever faith from reason, is an attempt to put asunder what God hath joined together; if it could be done, and just so far as it could be done, it would make a false man; would annihilate man on the one hand, or cut him off from God on the other.

The theory is, that nothing can be known but what is taught us in the Bible; that the Bible is an authoritative revelation from heaven, and precludes all reliance on human

reason — a degraded, uncertain, fallacious guide, amusing and bewildering us with vain philosophies, but utterly unworthy to be trusted, and forbidden to presume on seeing or knowing anything.

Now if it be so, it is certainly natural to ask where the Bible itself gets its authority? Are we to assume that it is the word of God, and receive it without examination or inquiry? Why receive it, and not the Talmuds, or the Apocryphies, or the Koran, or the Vedas? Are all of equal authority? If not, what reason of preference? How do we know that miracles were ever wrought; that Moses or John ever witnessed a miracle; that the eyes of Moses or John did not delude them; that the real books of Moses and John have come down to us; that we rightly interpret their words? How know we, in a word, that we have any revelation from God? What is a miracle, if there be no God? If all the events of nature may come to pass without God, why not those we call miracles? How can the Bible be God's word, unless there be a God? And how can the Bible, of itself, prove God's existence? The authority of the Bible is derived from its being God's book. It cannot, therefore, be assumed to prove a God. If all nature fails to prove it, can it be proved by a book? The argument for the Bible and the argument for miracles take the being of God for granted; and are both incapable of proof unless his being is assumed; for, unless this be assumed, there is no God to interrupt the course of nature for a moral purpose, and that is the idea of a miracle; no God to be set forth in Scripture. We have, therefore, neither an internal credibility arising from the correspondence of the Bible with the known character of God, nor the evidence of miracles in support of our faith in the Scriptures.

Is it replied, that we have reason, each of us, to expect a special inspiration to assure us of the authority of the Word, and to guide us to the understanding of it? How know we this? By inspiration? Then how know we that we are thus inspired? The first act of inspiration cannot be known by a previous one. And if not, we must at last come to a point where we can judge of the question of our inspiration by our reason only. And thus even this faith in

inspiration is found ultimately to rest on the intuitions of reason. If, therefore, inspiration supersedes the use of reason, and refuses to recognize its judgments, what becomes of our faith in inspiration itself? How can we possibly know that we are ourselves inspired, any more than we can know the written word to be inspired, unless the faculties of knowledge within us may be relied upon?

To present the subject in another form: the doctrine of the inspiration of the Holy Ghost superseding human reason in discovering the authority and meaning of Scripture, claims to be itself a doctrine of revelation. How is that to be ascertained? By interpretation of Scripture, doubtless. But are we to assume, that we are inspired to explain the meaning of Scripture on the very question of our inspiration? If not, then this fundamental truth is to be deduced from Scripture by the application of our reason to the study of it, according to the principles of interpretation that belong to the languages of Scripture.

On the supposition that each individual Christian is to regard himself as privileged to expect the Holy Ghost, independently of all commentators, lexicons, and other critical aids, to open to him, without danger of mistake, the treasures of divine truth contained in the sacred writings, how is it possible that good men should come to such diverse and conflicting opinions in important matters of religious faith?

Besides, what Bible is a man to study? If the Spirit and the simple Word alone are to be our guides, it must doubtless be the truly inspired word; for a translation is a commentary, a human aid, an unauthoritative representation of the Original Record.

The question is, whether the Word of God is to be interpreted by the exercise of our own reason, with the ordinary aid of God's Spirit, or by special divine inspiration, refusing the aids of reason. And it is argued with earnestness by some divines that it is to be interpreted by special divine inspiration, because the fallen and erring mind of man cannot be safely trusted with this responsibility. Now it is either true that the human reason, with such divine assistance as we are encouraged to hope for in all our duties,

may be so trusted, or that it may not. If it may, why then the question is settled; if it may not, who convinces me of this? What intellectual guide, what conclusive reasoner, demands my assent to this humiliating truth? Is it not the very Reason, whose authority cannot be trusted, whose judgments are to be always suspected? It is clear enough, that an argument based upon the incapacity of man to argue, ought not to weigh much, at least, with those who urge it.

Are we, then, without a standard of religious truth? Certainly not: the Bible is a standard. Who is to decide what the Bible teaches? Every man to whom it comes, carefully using such helps as he can command; seeking, by continual prayer, the promised influences of God's Spirit to enlighten and direct him, and cheerfully according to every other man the same sacred privilege.

And what if we should not all agree? What if none, not even the keenest sighted and the best disposed, should succeed, with all pains, in coming to a full and perfect understanding of the marvellous Book of God? The most erring and the least successful of God's children may discover enough of His truth to save them; and the gifted and favored ones not be tempted to doubt, that if the earthly things of our religious faith so puzzle and confound them, there will be occupation for all their noblest powers, when the heavenly things are told us.

It is to be remembered, also, that truth, even divine truth, enriches those who attain it, not less in the acquisition than the possession: the mental and moral habits which its slow and toilsome pursuit engenders, are not the least valuable part of the divine treasure itself. Were it all of inspiration, it would hardly possess either the charm or the utility which our trials in its acquisition and our conscious sacrifices for its sake, impart to it. Reason, though a sublunary thing, is yet a divine endowment; and its dim conceptions in this earthly state, may be real glimpses of eternal truth, and one day constitute a part, however humble and inconsiderable, yet a part, of the light of Heaven. The ethereal glories, which over-canopy the earth and festoon the upper skies, are of such stuff as dew-drops and tears are made of.