

THE
BIBLIOTHECA SACRA.

ARTICLE I.

THE NATURAL SOURCES OF THEOLOGY.

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WE propose to recapitulate, in the present Article, the sources of religious knowledge which, in our four preceding Articles, we have found trustworthy; and in order that the reader may carry away a positive impression of faith, rather than of controversy, doubt, and denial, we will, for the most part, omit in this recapitulation any allusion to the modern forms of unbelief, which in the previous Articles we have endeavored to show stand on wholly untenable foundations, drawing nearly all their conclusions from premises which attempt to define the infinite. Falsely accusing Christian theology of this logical absurdity, the opponents of faith in the Christian scriptures rush themselves headlong into the error which they condemn; arguing from the infinite, while acknowledging that we can safely argue only to it. We have in the preceding Articles shown this fundamental vice in the logic of unbelief, and will endeavor to avoid either alluding to it, or carelessly falling into it, in the present recapitulation.

The grand fundamental truth, on which all human philosophy and all human science must be built, is that man has the power of perceiving things and their relations; perceiving them either by outward sense, or by inward apprehension.

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For this power of perception we may use the term sight ; we may say that we see whatever is perceived by the bodily senses, the eye, the ear, touch, smell, taste ; we see the external world and its sensible properties by outward sense ; and we may say that we see by inward sight that which is part of our own consciousness, or that which is abstract and known only by reflection, or conceived by the imagination.

We come into conscious being possessed of these powers of outward and inward sight. In our first survey of the universe we see the difference between our own self and the rest of the universe ; and the first grand division in our classifying the objects of perceptions, is into the me and the not-me ; myself and nature. Very early in our conscious life we again divide the not-me into my body and not my body. My body is subservient, in part, directly to my thought and wish ; what is not my body is in no case directly obedient. It obeys only on compulsion applied in some manner through my body. A further step is taken very early : we discover the existence of other selves in the world, each with its appropriate body, obedient to it, by which it obtains, as we do, a power of compelling a partial obedience of matter to its will. We thus learn the existence of our fellow-men, dwellers in organic forms, and partial lords of the material world. We see that the material world is more like the human body than like the soul. Nay, before adult age, we class the body in with matter, and make the primary division to be into matter and spirit. We recognize the fact that spirit is, to a great extent, lord over matter ; and we learn that the most careful experiments demonstrate matter to be wholly inert. Yet we see matter in motion when no human spirit is acting upon it : the very stars of heaven are in motion. We rise at once to the conception of a mighty spirit, ruling the world as we rule the small portions of it under our control ; and reason pushes us to the conclusion that there is no limit to his power — that he is not only mighty, but Almighty.

Thus readily is the human intellect led to perceive the existence of Almighty God, and the likeness to him in which

man is created. But the notion thus obtained is very meagre ; it presents the Deity only as the Almighty, and does not satisfy the longings of the heart after God. While man is in a rude and savage state, and his better affections are largely dormant ; while the bodily appetites and passions, together with the lust for power and the greed for wealth, fill constantly the sphere of his consciousness, he does not feel the need of any better idea of God than this rude symbol of a chieftain or king mightier than any earthly ruler.

But in the progress of higher culture, and especially in the culture of our Christian civilization, as it has been affected for centuries by the sublime teaching and humanizing influences of the gospel, men begin to desire some better knowledge of their Creator, and a longing for communion with him arises. They look eagerly in every direction for further light concerning his being and character. They would fain test and legitimate to themselves, if possible, the sweet words concerning God which they find attributed to Jesus, and to those who follow the light of that morning Star, that Sun of Righteousness. In this search for trustworthy natural sources of theological knowledge they look within ; they study their own intellectual and moral powers, and the control of the will ; in each department of their inner life they find some rays of this light for which they are longing.

The intellect, beginning with the consideration of that which is plainly known and thoroughly understood, can go but a few steps in any direction without finding itself confronted by an absolutely impenetrable wall of mystery. It recognizes the existence of spirit, yet finds that it knows spirit only by means of a few phenomena, the laws of which are but partially comprehended. There are indications that our own souls and minds are reservoirs of hidden, reserved, even of unknown, and perhaps even of unsuspected, powers. There are clear proofs that the soul within us undergoes many modifications, and accomplishes many effects which are not brought to the light of consciousness at all. Yet these hidden depths of our being, bringing up at length their effects to the

surface, show those effects to be reasonable, exactly as though our reason and understanding had worked within us much deeper than we knew. But we cannot ascribe the guidance of the motion in these abysses of our nature to our own wisdom; we find, therefore, in the rational results of the movement, evidence of a divine power within us, controlling to some extent, by laws hidden from our sight, the inmost springs and currents of our being.

Moreover, we find the intellect striving incessantly after the infinite; pushing its inquiries into the past and coming eternities, inward to the centre of the atom, outward beyond the physical universe. The intellect refuses to find any here or now. Here has no limits; it is anywhere, it is everywhere, and its limits are nowhere. Now has no duration; all time is past or future, and the past and the future have no limits, save as they limit each other by crowding against each other in the non-existent now. The intellect, thus refusing to be limited in thought, cannot believe itself limited in duration; it asserts its independence of time; its dwelling-place, whence it thus surveys the cycles of time, is in eternity; it asserts its own immortal and divine nature; yet it is humbled in the consciousness of its ignorance, and even with the vaguest recognition of the presence of thought in the universe, perceives that that thought infinitely transcends in wisdom all human powers. Thus the first survey of the intellectual powers discloses new testimony to the attributes of the Deity—He is allwise as well as Almighty.

Searching then the affections, we find them betraying the like infinite nature. The very passions and appetites of the body rage within us like stormy seas, and sometimes seem entirely too vast for the little frame in which they are implanted. But a closer examination shows this to be an illusion; we are blending spiritual powers with carnal affections, are deceiving ourselves, in attributing to the flesh, powers that come from the soul. Not so when we pass into the higher region of the affections—the love of truth, the love of beauty, the love of friends, charity towards men, reverence for men who are

great and good, gratitude toward our benefactors, or toward benefactors of the race. In these higher affections, which bind us to our fellow-men, we find no limits necessarily affixed. All the highest genius of our race has been exhausted in the vain endeavor to express the highest sentiments of our nature; and while we gratefully receive these attempts at the hands of the poet, the orator, the sculptor, the painter, the composer, and even bow with reverence before the genius that has expressed so much, we, nevertheless, all feel that within our hearts are glowing deeper things than any that have been uttered. We could not rival the man of genius in his utterance; but were his friends, instead of praising his manner of expressing himself, to praise his depth of feeling, we should instantly feel offended, and cry with Hamlet to the boasting Læertes:

"I too,
I loved Ophelia, forty thousand brothers
Could not make up my sum."

Nor forty thousand men of genius express all my feeling. No sculpture, no painting, no oratory, no poetry, not even any music, ever expressed all the depth of feeling in the human heart. Not even any music, do I say? not even the sacrifice of all personal hopes and happiness in the endurance of poverty, toil, suffering, and agonizing death, has expressed the whole depth of love in the hearts of many of those who have gladly endured all things for the sake of wife or husband, parent or child, or for country, or for humankind.

This heart, so strong in love toward others, has also an inextinguishable desire for love in return; it rejoices in the approval of good men, it is glad with the sympathy of its beloved; but it also looks trustingly up and longs for forgiveness and blessing from God. All its great tides, bearing up our hopes and joys and sorrows, flooding every inlet of our being, and daily renewing our whole life with their motions, are perpetual witnesses to the existence of the great centre of attraction, the Author and Inspirer of all forces. The love of God is the only fountain copious enough to supply such a sea.

The intellect, surveying these wondrous manifestations of the human heart, sees at once that it is absurd to ascribe such effects to any petty mechanical causes in the organization of the human body, and that the only rational conclusion is to refer them to a Being whose unfathomable love is commensurable only with his almighty power and his boundless wisdom.

But this survey of the internal world of consciousness, leading us from our recognition of the will to the recognition of the Almighty, and then from the nature of the intellect and the heart leading us, justly and with certainty, to ascribe wisdom and love to him, begins now to reveal to us features of the world within, and call our attention to points in the world without, which both confirm our first inductions and open to us new consequences and new aspects of the truth already attained.

We have seen that we are not alone in the universe, that there are other men around us, that there may be other conscious beings than men, and that certainly there is one Being above all, in whose likeness, to some extent, we have been formed; since he manifests power and wisdom and love unlimited, as we manifest them faintly and feebly. In the contemplation of this spiritual universe, this goodly company of men and angels, made in the image of God, we perceive that certain relations exist, and must exist, between them; that they have been made with reference to each other; and that out of this order of relation to each other and to their Maker, springs an obligation, a code of duty, binding us to certain courses of action, feeling, and thought; forbidding others. We thus perceive that there is a difference out-ranking in importance all those which we have previously considered; it is the difference between right and wrong. We demand of ourselves conformity to the right, we condemn ourselves if we choose the wrong. We carry this judgment of ourselves into our most secret thoughts and most private hours. We are ashamed of ourselves, and condemn ourselves for cherishing unworthy thoughts, even in solitude; feeling

that even for such secret sins we deserve, and shall receive, punishment. From whom? We push this question, and find that the voice of conscience must be considered the voice of God within us; it is his witness set in our hearts to remind us constantly of his perpetual knowledge of us, and the eternal justice of his dealing with us. The Being who created all things, whose existence and power are necessary as the first cause of all, whose wisdom is the only explanation of the myriad harmonies of the universe, and whose inspiration is the only source of holy affections; this God of wisdom, power, and love, must also have been the ordainer of those relations between spiritual beings, which first revealed to us the difference between right and wrong. God ordained those relations, gifted us with power to see them, with the moral sense that feels obligation, and reverences holiness; he must himself be all holy, and strict to mark iniquity.

Our powers are his gift, we can, therefore, neither see nor imagine aught greater than he. Stimulate our powers to the utmost, they cannot rise above the Being that made them, and as we can readily form the idea of perfection, that is of a being to whom no new excellence could be added, and in whom no existing excellence be increased, God, our Maker, must be perfect in holiness and in every attribute. He is, therefore, just, merciful, true, and faithful. Nor can our faith in these perfections of the Deity be readily shaken, they are held, explicitly or implicitly, by all men of sound mind as the very basis of all our daily thought and action. We once heard one of the leading mathematicians of the world declare that our only conception of the stability of nature was founded, unconsciously perhaps, in our faith in the divine veracity. "How do I know," said he, "that the sun will rise to-morrow? I know it as I know the invariableness of other natural laws, because I know that God is true. My conviction of the faithfulness of God is the basis on which I build my confidence in the permanence of the physical laws. God has made this world a schoolhouse for man, and man's education could not be well carried on if there were fluctuations in the order of nature."

In our survey within the soul, we discover that we have the power of seeing time and space. Their existence is implied in the first phenomenon of matter, that is, in motion; and, indeed, since both space and time are without bounds or parts or sensible properties, we should not have seen them but for motion, which calls our attention to them, and reveals to us our power of dividing both space and time into parts at our own will by a mental act, and considering the relations of those parts to each other. Then we discover that these intangible entities, having no power either of spirit or of matter, are so perfectly within the grasp of our intellect, that we can make symbols, or verbal propositions, defining perfectly certain of these relations, and from these definitions, answering perfectly to the reality in space, we deduce necessary consequences. Thus space becomes the subject-matter of geometry, and time of algebra, while the abstract relation of number furnishes arithmetic, the earliest branches of knowledge which attained a mathematical condition; using here the word mathematical in the sense given to it in Peirce's Linear Associative Algebra. Out of these was evolved a science of quantity and a science of quality, mathematically treated; that is, using perfect definitions, and thus drawing necessary conclusions. All these mathematical sciences of space, time, quantity, and quality are founded upon the direct sight of space and time—the sight of space and time, not in the world of matter, nor in the sphere of consciousness, but enfolding matter and finite consciousness, the conscious succession of thought calling our attention to the existence of time, and the motion of matter calling our attention to the existence of space; but space and time being themselves independent of matter and of our finite spirits.

Yet the conclusions mathematically reached, concerning space and time, may, in one sense, be called *a priori* truths; they rest upon a division of space and time by our power of thought; and not, to any great extent, upon the nature of space and time in themselves. In themselves, and undivided by thought, these elements are so devoid of interesting

properties that they give us few ideas. The conceptions of geometry and algebra, and of the various forms of the calculus can therefore be justly considered pure creations of the human intellect. The points in the circumference of a circle are distinguished from points within and points without the circle only by an intellectual act, fixing them at an intellectually appointed distance from an intellectually established centre. Thus with the points constituting any other geometric locus, or the instants constituting a pure algebraic equation. Yet some of these pure intellectual creations of the human mind have been found embodied in every atom of matter and in every combination thereof; many others are found embodied in special parts of the material world; some of them being of a high and difficult order. Furthermore, in very many parts of this physical creation we find ideas embodied, which, although not among those actually reached by the *a priori* road, are of the closest similarity to them; and in all parts of the universe we see manifest indications that ideas are there which may at some future day be grasped by human minds. The whole encyclopædia of the physical sciences is, indeed, only a statement, in human language, of the ideas which have already been discovered embodied in the physical universe. The whole army of scientific investigators are, whether consciously or unconsciously, pursuing no other end than the attempt to unfold ideas expressed in the material universe, and not yet read by man.

What is the meaning of this recurrence in nature of our *a priori* thought? There can be but one conclusion, that the Maker of the world made the soul in his own image, and gave us some feeble power of seeing space and time, quantity and quality, as he sees them; that our geometry is all included in his perfect knowledge of space.

But it is not the physical sciences alone that bear this glorious testimony to our divine kindred. The domain of science is extending beyond physics into political economy and government, education and psychology; and the aim of science is everywhere the same; she first seeks facts, then to

understand them, finally to be able to draw necessary conclusions ; she proceeds on the assumption that everything is intelligible, that everything is governed by some law which may be comprehended. But what is this assumption which every scientific student must make, and without which no science were possible, what is this assumption that everything can be comprehended, but an assumption that everything was comprehended before it was made ? Space and time and matter are as inert and powerless intellectually as physically, and the intelligible order of the creation could have sprung only from spirit, that is, from a Being to whom spirit is more akin than matter or space or time can be.

Science is the unfolding of the harmonies of creation, a reverent pointing out of the wisdom and self-consistence of the creative thoughts of God. The whole universe is, to science, a combination and expression of philosophical ideas ; these ideas include many of those which were once supposed to be their own pure creations ; they include also many which will probably be discovered by the *a priori* road before they are perceived in the world. Indeed, Whewell, one of the ablest of English writers on the philosophy of science, maintains, in a book of great learning, that this is always the actual process in the discovery of a natural law ; namely, that the facts never give the law, but only suggest it, sometimes very dimly, so that the mind really invents it as hypothesis and then verifies it by comparison with facts.

But the world is not only an expression of thought, it is an accomplishment of purposes ; it is an extensive system of means and ends. Certainly in organized beings, and, we think, in inorganic nature also, we find effects taking place, "not as the necessary consequences of what went before, but as the necessary conditions of what is to come after, thus demonstrating foresight, and therefore mind — a plan, and a mind working according to it." The heavenly bodies accomplish changes on the earth, absolutely necessary for the vegetable and animal life upon our planet ; in imparting heat and light, electric and actinic forces, and distributing them

aright; in providing also for those movements in the ocean, and in the atmosphere, which produce the changes of the weather, the alternate sunshine and rain, so necessary for every form of terrestrial life. The parts of the earth itself are adapted to the same ends; the proportion of land and water, and of the various elements; the elevation and slope of the continents, the quantity of the atmosphere; these, and other adaptations, fit the earth precisely for the home of its living tribes. And not merely for animal life,—the nature and proportion of the elements fit the planet to be the abode of civilized and intellectual men; all is arranged in such a manner that this earth becomes a home, a workshop, a playground, a schoolroom, a temple, for the human race. Then, in the smaller field of organic structure, for the support of which all nature is adapted, we find the plants and animals subserve each others needs, the machinery for the continuance of each species after its kind is perfect, the parts of each individual make a harmonious whole; each part is a perfect means for accomplishing certain ends. Most marvellous among these ends is the conveyance, in the animal, of sensation to a conscious spirit; accomplished by the marvellous organs of the senses, among which the eye and the ear are complicated with many nice adjustments of parts to a common end.

Nor do we see how any sound logic can avoid the conclusion that these innumerable adaptations of means to ends were adaptations for those ends; that although it is impossible for us to reconcile the infinity of God with the conception of working in detail, of planning separate adaptations; yet the force of the facts is irresistible, and we must suppose the infinite God foresaw and predetermined these ends to be accomplished by these means.

Furthermore, we recognize, in general, an adaptation of the spiritual gift in each animal to its organization. The animals who are especially fond of flies, for example, are those which have especially good means for catching them; the swallow his swiftness, and the bristly corners of his

mouth; the bat similar means; the tortoise his flexible neck and the ability to move it with a sudden jerk; the toad his darting tongue; the dragon-fly his ability to back, rise, fall, or go sideways, instantly, while in flight; the spider his web; the plover his sharp wrist-spurs and talons. Thus throughout the whole animal kingdom; thus in all the variety of national and individual character in man, in general, each one finds pleasure in success; likes to do what he can do well, and can do well that which he likes to do. This grand truth, illustrating both the wisdom and the loving-kindness of the Creator, is made only the more strikingly true by the occasional instances in which, in individual cases, the adaptation is not as perfect as usual.

The universe is the embodiment of ideas, and the adaptation of a system of means to ends; one of those ends is the furnishing to us men an opportunity for the exercise of our higher powers. Among our powers of perception we find special senses, giving us special reports concerning the world of matter and motion. The eye reports to us not only those motions which we recognize at once as motions; but also motions which, for many centuries, we called colors, without knowing that they are motions. Thus also the ear reports to us motions, which we called sounds, without knowing that they were merely modes of motion, although we knew that they were accompanied by motion. The general nerves distributed over the body reported to us still other vibrations which we called heat, and failed to recognize their character as movements. We cannot dispense with these names of light and color, heat, electricity, chemical action, and sound. These various modes of motion, although all motions, are various; each produces its specific effect not only upon our senses or feelings but upon sundry inanimate objects. The simple arithmetical idea of the ratio of four to five, combined with the idea of two series of equidistant pulses in the air, produces no effect upon us as mere ideas. We could not foresee on any *a priori* ground what the effect should be. But express these ideas not in words, but by actually making two

series of pulses, their absolute frequency being within the limits say of fifty and five thousand to a second, and the relative frequency in the ratio of four to five, and we at once obtain a peculiar effect upon the ear, a musical concord; an effect which cannot be represented to the mind as an arithmetical ratio nor as a mechanical pulsation; which cannot be imagined until heard, nor imagined other than as it was heard. In this chord of the major third we distinguish three kinds of beauty: first the beauty of tone, arising from the equidistance of the pulses; second, the beauty of the quality of tone arising from the form of the pulsations; thirdly, the beauty of the harmony, arising from the relative frequency of the pulsations in the two series. In exceedingly simple cases of beauty men have been able to discover part of the causes of beauty; as in the present case, that it arises from the expressions in the elastic tremors of the air of simple arithmetical and geometrical ideas not recognized by the ear as such, but only recognized as purity of tone, coloring, and concord. In more complicated cases of musical expression, where melody and progression of chords join in producing the effect, we are wholly without a clue to the meaning of the beauty or the cause of the expression. Yet we cannot esteem it accidental. The language of tone; the pathetic effect of one modulation, the joyous expression of another; the inspiriting power of martial strains, the touching emphasis of a song of the affections; these are acknowledged and felt by men of every nation; nay, even the animals are to some extent under their influence. No sound philosophy can put such facts aside as of no meaning. There is evidence here that the Creator of man knew how to produce the highest effects by the simplest means; in simple arithmetical ratios of vibration he has foreordained a means of pouring out all the varying depths of passion and sentiment from the thoughtless carelessness of our adopted national air, to the hellish fury of passages in Cherubini's *Medea*, or to the rapture of the ransomed worlds in Beethoven's *Mount of Olives*. •

The same argument may be drawn from other forms of beauty, and other modes of expressing passion by means of art, as by form and color. They also are primarily simple forms of expressing geometrical and algebraic ideas, symmetry in space and time. But these ideas are not always recognized by us as such; they are deciphered into an intellectually intelligible form only in the simplest cases; in higher cases we feel the beauty, but do not recognize the law by which it is produced. And in all these cases man is not only capable of feeling the beauty, he is gifted with a subordinate power of reproducing it; first by copying the forms in which it is expressed by nature, and afterward by the creation of similar forms, guided by the spirit or feeling inspired by nature, but without an intellectual perception of her law. In the case of music, this production of new forms is carried to a point of perfection incomparably higher than that of the natural model; so that it is difficult to find in nature the original suggestions which have led to the sonata, the symphony, and the oratorio. This artistic genius which creates the statue, the picture, the overture, is in some senses a higher power than that of the intellect; it is in every sense a spiritual, exalted work, and commands reverence and affection toward the artist.

Now the universe is not only a combination of ideas and of means to ends, it is a work of art; and that of the highest order. Musical expression is by no means wanting in it; the winds and the waves, the cries of animals, the song of birds, all have their powerful musical expression. But in beauty and expressiveness of form and coloring the natural world far exceeds the best efforts of the painter and the sculptor. A glance of the living eye lighted by a living soul within, when that soul is filled with deep and earnest emotion, makes even the eyes of the wonderful child at Dresden dull. One October afternoon throwing its golden light over our New England hills surpasses all the possibilities of mere pigment under the hands of the highest conceivable genius. We cannot believe that these exquisite effects of the face of man and of the face of nature were not foreseen by the Creative

Mind. The perpetual presence of beauty in all the forms and coloring of natural objects and of the human face, most beautiful of all, bears perpetual testimony to a wise and loving God ; it calls upon us not only for reverence, but for gratitude and love toward him.

There are artists also in another sphere, who create ideal character, and hold in the drama, or the tale, the mirror up to human nature. The highest admiration is accorded to one who creates new personages, and by his life-like descriptions of them, or of their words and actions, makes them realities to us. The evidences of his skill are found in the unity of each character introduced into his work, in the excellence and the variety of these characters, and in the harmony with which the action of each contributes to one final result. But in all these respects human society and human history form together an artistic work of the highest character ; and the long course of ages exhibiting its innumerable individuals, many of wonderful excellence, and its numberless by-plots leading to separate issues of great interest, is still evidently ever tending toward some higher and higher final accomplishment worthy of the long delay, and to the production of which each of the various parts has been adapted. Herein, therefore, are marks of the creative wisdom, peculiar and altogether different from those to which we have heretofore alluded.

It is, however, vain to endeavor to condense into a single brief Article an enumeration of the varieties of argument, each capable of large expansion and illustration, by which this main doctrine of natural theology is established. That man is made in the image of his Creator, and may justly argue from his own thought and feeling, care being taken to argue soundly and justly, to the attributes and purposes of God ; this is a conclusion reached by many lines of induction, of which we have alluded to but a few, and against which we can find no solid or valid argument ; no argument which is not rendered worthless by the admission of infinity into the premises in an inadmissible manner. When from this con-

clusion, or from the purposes and attributes which we are, in conformity with it, led to assign to God, we attempt to draw inferences, then we must beware lest we also err in reasoning from the attributes of an infinite being. We must ever remember the distinct warning given us by the earliest of Christian philosophers, who, a full thousand years ago, warned us that the first and only thing that can be known of God, is that he cannot be known, and that "Deus ipse nescit se, quid est, quia non est quid." We can say that he is wisdom and power and love only because all these dwell in him as their cause and essence; but all our conceptions of these attributes are but as nothing in respect to the infinite fulness of their being in him. In other words, the induction which correctly leads us to assign but one cause for the universe, and in that cause to place infinite perfections, and among them perfect wisdom, holiness, justice, and love, does not enable us to decide in all cases what those infinite attributes imply. They do imply that no action of God, no course of events in the universe, can, in the long-run, work injustice, or do a real injury to the children of God; but this conclusion is drawn from the nature of the attributes, not from their infinity. We may be certain that God can and will hear and answer prayer, and make all things work together for good to them who love and trust him, and accept his mercy offered in Christ our Lord. We may be certain also that he will not leave wickedness unpunished, but will render to every man the just deserts of his sin. Reason goes so far with unwavering step. But shall we argue from his infinite love that he must bring every creature finally to eternal happiness; or from his infinite justice that he must assign the incorrigibly wicked to eternal and infinite torment, we should be arguing from the infinite, and our argument would not be sound. The question of eternal punishment, or of future universal restoration, can be settled only by revelation, if settled at all.

The light of nature is in many respects clear, and leads to very valuable conclusions; and we may devoutly thank God

that it is so. But we are the children of the Infinite One, and we have within us illimitable desires; the clearer the light we have, the more we watch for the breaking of the perfect day. These inductions concerning our likeness to the Creator, and the inference of our own immortality which immediately flows from them, makes us long only the more earnestly for a closer communion with him; for a more direct spiritual contact with him dwelling in our hearts. We pray that he would guide our thoughts, purify our affections, awaken in us holier desires, inspire with new strength our feeble and corrupted will. Abundant reasons are given us for believing that these prayers are acceptable, and when offered in earnest sincerity are accepted, and bring holier influences into the suppliant's heart. And yet he is ever longing for more light, and trusting that, after the night of death, a morning shall come refulgent with more heavenly glory.

The Christian saints furthermore believe, and we devoutly believe with them, that this great light which is to break upon us when the shadows of death flee, has already dawned and spread its reviving light from over the hills of Galilee. They find in the person of Jesus of Nazareth a light clearer than the noonday sun, and revealing to us more truth than the light of nature ever could reveal. They recognize in him an image of God, answering far more perfectly than any ideal being whom we could portray to our best conceptions of perfection. The ineffable tenderness of his love towards men, the gentleness of his dealings with sinners, give men a confidence which no mere words could give, that the awful sacrifice on Calvary was indeed for the many, for the remission of their sins; and that he who thus suffered, rose again, to pour down upon his church the manifold gifts of the Spirit.

It has not pleased him to make further revelations of truth concerning God than was necessary for the salvation of sinners,— and upon those truths, or upon nearly all, we had a glimmering light before Christ came; but he has made the important truths plain and certain; such truths as these,

—that God is, through Christ, reconciling men unto himself, that he will forgive those who trust in Christ for forgiveness, and turn away from sin; that he will inspire such with a new power to live holy and useful lives; that both the Father and the Son dwell in the heart of a penitent believer and fill him with the Holy Spirit that leads to victory over the tempter, over sin and death. The history of the Christian church abundantly witnesses the truth of these promises. In that church, despite its manifold corruptions, failures, and sins, there has always been a large body of men distinguished for excellence of private character far beyond those who have been alien from the church. With this excellence of character has been joined clearness and strength of religious faith. And the last natural source of theological truth which we shall mention is the experience of saintly men. The fact that in all communions of the Christian world we find the holiest and purest men substantially agree on the great doctrines of religion and morality, and that the best and clearest thinkers of other great religions agree in the same essential doctrines of central Christianity, is in itself a very strong argument in support of those doctrines; an evidence both of the truth of these points in natural religion endorsed by Christ, and of the value of his endorsement.