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ARTICLE I.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OFFICE OF DEACON.

The particular topic to which we shall direct attention is *the Importance of the Office of Deacon*. But before proceeding to its immediate discussion, we shall offer some preliminary remarks in regard to the timeliness and desirableness of considering the whole subject of the diaconate.

1. It has not unfrequently been said, that the age in which we live is peculiarly called upon, in the providence of God, to take up Church-questions and subject them to a careful examination. There is truth in this remark, if it be received with necessary qualification. No doubt, it is the duty of every age to study the whole counsel of God as revealed in his inspired word. But there are peculiar circumstances connected with the Church, at particular times, which compel her attention to certain articles of faith and principles of order. Conflicts arise in consequence of the propagation of error, which necessitate a thorough investigation of the truth which is challenged, and a sharp and definite statement of true in contrast with false doctrine. And as every error is not circulated in every age, but particular heresies prevail at particular seasons, the result is that the special form of truth which is related to the prevalent type of false opinion, requires to be precisely fixed. It is in this way that the theology

ARTICLE II.

COMMON SENSE ARGUMENT.

Metaphysical reasoning fails to interest the majority of readers. And although abstruse discussion has its uses, and while a certain class of minds delight in abstract speculation, yet the profoundest philosopher is, himself, refreshed by a return to simplicity. Unadorned truth is attractive to all. Moreover, if the plain and practical argument is understood by the uncultured, the same method of proof can be comprehended, and appreciated equally well by the scholar and thinker. A "common sense argument," therefore, has this advantage, viz., that it is adapted to the learned and the unlearned, to the young and the old.

The proposition now before us is this, Do the Christian Scriptures make up a genuine and authentic record which can be depended on in all ages of the world, to "show light unto the people and to the Gentiles"? Can the book furnish, from its own pages, unquestionable signs of divinity, inspiration, and truth?

There is one fact that it may be well to state in the beginning, to wit, that every thoughtful person concludes, but through observation and experience, that unbelief does not arise, after all, from any lack of evidence—a bulk of proof sufficiently powerful, in itself, to convince a healthful mind, but scepticism is traceable to a want of original righteousness and a melancholy corruption of the creature's heart. For instance, a hearer may sit under the gospel, preached clearly and faithfully for years, and still remain listless and unbelieving. But, afterwards, a plain discourse, or a single text of Scripture, reaches the heart, and in the moment when the affections are touched, the testimony in behalf of the word becomes convincing and overpowering. The soul, hitherto callous about a Saviour's life and love, now exclaims, "Truly this is the Son of God!" The sum of evidence is unchanged, the proclamation is identically the same that the man has heard for years; but in the new dispensation, enlightening the mind, arousing the affections, and leading to repentance and head the magnificence of the truth.

The very same outward proof which the soul refused to heed in former days is so handled, through the operations of the Holy Ghost, that the stricken spirit exclaims from its depths, "What shall I do to be saved?"

In conducting the argument let it be remarked, in the first place, that the greater portion of our knowledge or information is derived from *testimony* brought to us from abroad. Experience and personal observation constitute the remaining sources. Now, upon which of these witnesses do we, as a Christian people, accept the sacred volume as the inspired word of God? We answer that the believer himself feels and is decided by both lines of proof. For such a one can appeal to an inward consciousness that confirms the signs without. But as mankind in general, unregenerate as they are, cannot appreciate a demonstration derived from Christian experience, let us call into court the writers of the Scriptures who themselves claim to have been companions of Jesus and spectators of the wonderful things recorded.

Before proceeding farther, however, let us pause and settle distinctly the prerequisites of a witness. (1) He must be endowed with a competent understanding. (2) His character for veracity should be justly established. (3) He must be left to testify free from the fear of punishment, and uninfluenced by the hope of unrighteous reward.

Let these tests be applied to the writers and witnesses of the New Testament. Were the authors of these gospels mentally competent? Did Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John comprehend their mission when called to testify concerning the sayings, work, and life of Jesus? Does any deficiency of capacity crop out anywhere in the writings of these authors? Does the slightest suspicion of intellectual unfitness in these men ever bring the reader of low or high degree to a pause? When we read the Epistles of Peter or Paul, do we for an instant entertain a doubt of the mental vigor of such apostles? Would such witnesses, were life itself at stake, be refused in a modern court, and upon the charge of mental incapacity? If Paul's "sufficiency" were in debate, then it might be inquired what man of the ages can the world point to, as possessed of larger natural gifts, aye of nobler culture,

than belonged to this "Roman citizen," "this vessel chosen of God to bear his name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel"? What writer of ancient or modern times excels this man in logic, persuasion, fulness, and power? Where, again, can eloquence be found which surpasses the sublime and burning words of Paul when in bonds before Agrippa he pleads for truth, for true liberty, for Christ? or when on Mars' Hill, with "his spirit stirred in him," he sought to point the Athenian from the superstitious columns, altars, and temples, to the "unknown" but true God, "in whom we live and move and have our being"? Was this man of mighty thought and noble act unfit to testify?

Turn to either Gospel, and consider any parable or other reported saying of Christ. Are these utterances the product of incapacity? How can this be, when the entire literature of Greece and Rome furnishes nothing that so fastens itself on the judgment or so lingers in the memory as the Sermon on the Mount or the parable of the prodigal. And if the verdict of the whole race was ascertained to-day, it would decide, beyond a question, that no lines of gifted poet, no speculation of wise philosopher, can compare with the simple, profound, sublime, elevated, and elevating teachings which we of the present time receive through the pens of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Did these evangelists possess the mental capacity that a careful court demands? Can these writers be accepted as witnesses, when the intellect is considered? Why, to ask such a question is an insult to the understanding!

But, secondly, we must inquire, were these writers and witnesses persons of veracity? Who can cast a suspicion on them? What falsehood can be alleged? It is to beg the question to point to the remarkable facts and superhuman events which they record. For the question must be, Were these extraordinary deeds—these heavenly words—matters of observation, subjects of personal experience? The witnesses are in court, and their testimony is to be sifted and weighed by those rules which are righteously and almost universally established in the tribunals of the nations, for the reception of evidence involving property, honor, or even life

itself. We have proven intelligence already, and now what shall be the decision about the moral character of men who taught the purest doctrines, announced the loftiest precepts, and who themselves, so far as aught to the contrary has ever been shown or seriously asserted, lived lives above reproach and walked in a way that defied calumny itself? Turn to a few maxims propounded by these witnesses. "Deny thyself and take thy cross." "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness." "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out." "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off." "Blessed are the pure in heart." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute you." "Enter ye in at the strait gate." "Whosoever loveth or uttereth a lie is excluded from the kingdom of God. Can the authors of such sentiments of purity be aught else than pure themselves? Could falsehood find a lodgment in the heart, or thus issue from the lips of those who, in the same breath, make truth and holiness an indispensable condition of happiness and of the divine approval hereafter? The sword that the objector seeks to wield has a double edge to it. For if the law holds every man innocent until his guilt is made clear, simple fairness requires that the facts recorded in Scripture shall be disproved before the witnesses we have produced can be denominated liars. And he who charges his neighbor with perjury must either prepare himself beforehand to make the charge good, or else patiently suffer the penalty which his failure entails. With such a dire alternative in view, what sceptic would venture to charge the Apostles and Evangelists with lying? The third prerequisite of a witness is, that he shall not be in duress, neither must bribery in any form be allowed to enter. Unfortunately for the sceptic, the fears and hopes which existed in the bosom of our witnesses were all on the side opposed to unbelief. When Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John testified as they did, persecution, with the loss of everything earthly, stared them in the face. Therefore, if it was a lie which these men uttered, then they chose to speak falsely—and thereby incur disgrace and sorrow—at the hour that truth would have answered better. Yea, if it be contended that the writers

of the Scriptures were perjurers, then it may be proved that a man can deliberately, and without motive, rob himself of earthly gain, and voluntarily impose on his soul a great burden of guilt. Is this common sense? Does human nature ever thus act? Is there an attorney, practising in the very lowest courts, whose observation can unfold such a transaction as this? Do not the vilest criminals—witnesses bought with a price—have an eye to safety, or reward? One cannot sink so low, provided that intelligence remains, that he does not respect, in some form, the law of self-preservation. Hence the theory of unbelief literally places the scriptural witnesses outside of the pale of a common humanity. The Evangelists were anomalies—persons of an unknown description, in whose bosoms could be found no sentiment, principle, nor motive, which bound them to the race. For if infidelity speaks truthfully, the disciples and apostles who witness for the gospel devised more methods to throw away worldly honors—to provoke persecution, imprisonments, bonds, and trouble of every sort—than the most zealous unbeliever was ever known to put forth to establish any purpose or system whatever. For the writers and witnesses of the New Testament knew full well that they must suffer all things, lose all, so far as earth can give, if they ventured to affirm what they did. And, nevertheless, these men steadfastly refused to be silent. Aye, more, they diligently sought opportunity to declare the gospel in every household, from country to country. And notwithstanding an opposition which involved stripes, chains, and death, our witnesses exhibited to all, everywhere, an outward life of unceasing toil and heroic self-denial. Here let the thoughtful pause and consider the witnesses. Are they competent mentally? Can any legal cause, of any kind, be shown sufficient to reject, or in the slightest degree invalidate their testimony? On the contrary, has not each and every requirement, demanded by the exactest court, been met to the letter?

If it be asked, was the New Testament written in the first century, and how do we prove it, the method is very simple. That the Gospels, as they are accepted at present, existed in Luther's time, no sane man can doubt. Did these writings exist

a century earlier? The proof is still clear. And so we can easily ascend to the days of the Apostles. Indeed, so freely were the Scriptures quoted by the Fathers of the second, third, fourth, and fifth centuries, that from their pages alone might be collected every essential fact and doctrine. Throughout the rolling centuries not a single link is missing. The evidence that Horace or Virgil lived and wrote certain poems cannot compare in bulk to the proof ready to hand to demonstrate the genuineness of the Gospels. But if historical testimony is relied upon universally to point out the literary works of heathen authors, as well as the period at which they wrote, how can the same species of proof, with its quantity augmented, be refused when the Christian Scriptures are in question?

If, however, the New Testament is genuine and authentic, so, too, is the Old. For it will be recalled that Christ's constant appeal was not to the Gospels, but to the "Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms." In our Saviour's time, as every intelligent person knows, the New Testament had no existence. Even when Jesus said "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me," he referred to the Hebrew Bible.

Still further, a division in the Jewish family was remarkably overruled of God for the preservation of the sacred text in its integrity. Down here was the Jew and up there lived the Samaritan, and each had his version. Not a word, yea, not a letter, could have been changed by the one side or the other without quick detection and certain exposure. And during long years a deep seated jealousy excited envy and quickened vigilance in the minds of these sections of a divided Hebrew household. Added to this, it must be remembered that the scribes examined into the accuracy of each roll or copy of "the Law," even to every "jot and tittle." The minutest divergence excited suspicion. And had either Jew or Samaritan ventured to alter a line, or phrase, or syllable, an outcry would have been raised whose echo might not have died out even down to our own day and times.

After Christ appeared, and since the New Testament has formed part of the sacred Canon, a watch has been set between

the Gentile and the Jew. For eighteen hundred years neither of these could have altered their Scriptures and kept the fact concealed. The Jew, whose presence among the nations can be historically traced for thousands of years, could be a swift witness against the genuineness of the New Testament writings, provided these were a cheat—a pretended record—imposed upon the world at a posterior date, and by spurious authors. The Hebrew, whose existence embraces the whole period—the Christian era and centuries beside—has never sought to cast a shadow of doubt upon the claim that Jesus lived, that he gathered disciples and taught them, and that the Gospels and Epistles were written at the particular period, and by the very authors, contended for by the Church universal.

When we bring the Old and the New Testaments together and compare them, the argument is strengthened tenfold. For the same great mind and purpose run through them both. One is the necessary complement of the other. And is it not a wonder, yea, a miracle in itself, that persons who lived during a period of two thousand years, under governments the most diverse, should have written upon a variety of subjects, upon all that concerns man's responsibility to God and obligation to his fellows, and yet in the voluminous records not a disparity can be found? Prophets, authors, teachers, from first to last, speak and write with freedom and in correspondence to natural gifts, but there is never a conflict either of idea or spirit. Not the slightest jarring can be detected between Malachi and Moses, between Job and Jeremiah; but facts, lessons, predictions, from the opening sentence in Genesis onward to the close, move step by step in one direction and with a harmony and concert truly astonishing.

Yes, whoever investigates the Hebrew Scriptures with scrutiny will perceive that one great central thought pervades the whole. That type, symbol, prophecy, recorded providences, all point to a Mighty Prophet, like unto Moses, but far greater, who should fulfil all righteousness, put away sin, to the brightness of whose rising the Gentiles would come from the ends of the earth. Can this unmatched accord, this unity in design, traversing, as it does, centuries of time, including writers and actors brought up and

trained in different lands, amid opposing scenes, can a volume that under such conditions exhibits a perfect oneness of spirit, an identical aim, be aught else than a product where infinite mind controlled? This must be, for collusion in such a case was impossible. Its very suggestion is an absurdity. For how could authors and actors, whose places in history are five hundred or a thousand years apart, meet together and agree? And agree, too, about what? About events over which the greatest intellects of earth had no perceptible control! Nor could the prophets and thinkers of Moses' and Joshua's day have anticipated, without inspiration, the thought, customs, deeds, which were to dominate in the times of Isaiah, Daniel, and our Lord. This concord, therefore, that runs through the Book, and that has no parallel elsewhere, can be accounted for upon one ground only, viz., that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," and that the entire drama unfolded in the Old Testament and the New, was present beforehand in the divine mind, and every scene and act and person and plan were subordinated in the roll of ages by Him with whom one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as a day. As in the physical universe we can trace through all the periods the work of the same creative hand, can discern at each advance unique design, so in the Sacred Scriptures the careful inquirer finds conclusive proof that the identical contriver, the one omnipotent will, that presided in the beginning, continued to preside even to the end.

Look upon the Jew: is he not an ever-fulfilling prophecy? He is walking at present the precise path foretold by Moses and Joshua four thousand years ago. Scattered among the nations, no amount of contempt or persecution has induced him to amalgamate with the Gentiles. The same omnipresent hand that guided him in the long gone centuries, guides him to-day. He is preserved separate to subserve a purpose, and in that providence which awaits the Jew will be revealed "the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out." Into whatever land the Hebrew wanders, he bears in himself a living

argument to establish, beyond doubt, the authenticity of the Scriptures.

A dualism runs through all nature, from the smallest things up to the greatest. Stand by the machinist when he constructs the curious engine, and what does his skilful work suggest? Why, force, motion, of course. Look at the farmer as he ploughs the furrow, and does not this foretell sowing, harvest, garners, winter? See the architect who plans and rears the building, even in the wilderness, and are not our thoughts turned at once to an occupant? To ascend higher, let us examine the senses which belong to man's physical frame. Scrutinise the eye, and what does this organ suggest? Is it not light? And the capacity to see indicates objects to be seen. Consider the ear, was it not made to hear? Is this not a medium formed, of design, to transmit sound, from the first cry of infancy up to the grandest notes which peal out from the organ? The sense of smell is a prophesy of fragrance, incense, and the balm of flowers. Appetite points to food. Indeed, there is not a thirst or longing of the physical man that does not find a safe and healthful answer. And how exact the correspondence? Who, therefore, can discredit the identity of the power that planted the need, the desire, and that intelligence which supplies, at every turn, the creature's real wants. Is there not ONE God over all?

Examine man's intellectual and moral nature. There is within the human bosom (1) The sense of sin. (2) Conscience striving to bring an offering—to find an acceptable sacrifice. (3) A longing after immortality. (4) Hope and fear. The most favored are not exempt. All come short and every creature suffers, while "passing away" is written upon the entire framework around us, from the weakest to the strongest. Ask the wise or the simple, and each alike will tell of an inward void, of expectations wasted, plans marred, and of the sad changes which the "King of Terrors" makes, from time to time, in every house. For the ills which environ us in this sublinary state, the heart of the faint and suffering looks, yea, yearns after a remedy. As to the *facts* themselves, belief and unbelief are agreed. But when we apply to infidelity for a *solution*—aye, for any common sense explana

tion—it is here that faith and scepticism part company. It is true that unbelief abounds in negations, proposes to throw overboard every scheme heretofore proposed, but in the midst of its denials and objections no plausible substitute can be offered. Investigate one by one the systems of philosophy of India, China, and other heathen nations, and what contradictions we find. “Read,” says Gaussen, “in the Shaster, in the Pouran, in the four books of the Vedham or law of the Hindoos, their shocking cosmogony.” What mistakes in science—what physical errors throughout! And if we turn the pages of the renowned teachers of Greece and Rome, we can cull sentences uttered by Aristotle, Seneca, Pliny, Plutarch, Cicero, which would fatally compromise any book in the Bible. And if we descend to modern times, the more far-famed schools offer nothing conclusive, nothing on which the weary and heavy laden can rest.

The inquiry still ascends from the yearning soul, “Who will show me any god”? Is there any balm for human sorrow, any life beyond this toiling vale, where the corruptible shall put on incorruption and this mortal immortality? Have man’s physical cries been answered, in the early and latter rain, in food convenient, and the soul been left to grope its way in darkness with no supplies for the present and no prospect in the future? Did he who planted those vast desires in the human spirit forget to provide a response thereto? Did the Creator exhaust his forces on the body and its needs, and leave out of view the longings of the spirit? In the search can we find some bright paged book whose teachings science and unbelief have attacked in vain? Is there a system in all the world that meets—yes, has already met—in cases innumerable, the holiest cravings of earth’s broadest minds and noblest hearts? We reply, that the Christian Scriptures answer, and have answered for mighty ages, man’s every moral want in time, and solved, as far as human thought can go, the mysteries beyond. This record, the more narrowly it is searched, reveals a superhuman Author. Whoever studies its pages devoutly must be convinced that he who fashioned man furnished this Book to guide and cheer him on his way.

What a spirit of catholicity pervades the Scriptures. Its ap-

peals and offers are to every one alike. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth." Condition, whether poverty, wealth, obscurity, or renown, is nothing. The Book speaks with authority in the pauper's hovel, but utters its voice none the less authoritatively in the ear of kings. Human societies exclude certain ages, but in that grace of God which appears to men, in this sacred volume, the young, the old, the middle-aged, the very babe in the cradle, can be made a partaker of the benefit.

In one place the lessons of the Scriptures are so simple that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein; in another the wisdom is so deep that the mightiest mind can "know only in part." We read a work of human genius once, twice, thrice, and the thought is mastered or becomes stale, but these Scriptures are a study for the loftiest intellect through generation and generation. Moreover, the terms of salvation presented here differ in components from all earthly schemes. Human associations and worldly plans demand a price; but the gospel requires, *allows* no recompence. Admittance free is written on its every lintel.

Furthermore, the Scriptures oppose desires native to the fallen soul, and condemn, without compromise, the creature's dearest lusts. Could such condemnation of self by man be pronounced aside from superhuman force? Is it possible for a person, voluntarily, to sentence to death his best-loved idols. Can a creature, to whom vengeance belongs and is sweet, say, "Avenge not thyself, but rather give place to wrath; if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Do good to them that hate thee, and if the right cheek be smitten, turn the left to the smiter"?

The Book abounds in such paradoxes as the following: "Blessed are the poor in spirit;" "blessed are they that mourn;" "blessed are ye, when men revile and persecute;" "the love of money is the root of all evil;" "cast thy bread on the waters." The boldest heathen intellect of all the ages never dared to utter one single saying like unto these. The Scriptures empty man of self

and pride. They tell of strength that flows from weakness, glory bought by shame, and a life which comes of death. To deny self, to take up a cross and bear it, here are the first steps toward true honor. From Genesis to Revelation, holiness is the watchword and a prerequisite indispensable. Are such doctrines and precepts divine or human? Would impostors and liars exalt righteousness and take pains to shut heaven's door against themselves?

The Scriptures explain affliction. As fire tries the gold and burns away the dross, so tribulation, for the soul of man, worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. It is through discipline that man's spirit is refined and ascends from glory to glory. Hence, without chastisement, the sons of God cannot grow. The pathway to eternal blessedness leads, by divine appointment, through "great tribulation."

The Scriptures elucidate the present inequalities. In this transitory world, preparation is the one great business. To watch, to labor, to suffer, to endure, these are the needed duties day by day. In the life that now is, Christ's soldiers are to be valiant, contending, to prison or to death, for the faith delivered to the saints. True, to him that runs well, much peace and honor are promised along the journey. But, about quiet happy hours, as men count happiness, the Christian pilgrim need not care. Heaven is the goal, and no earthly wrongs can keep the faithful back. Sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning. Said Richard Allestre, when speaking of the martyrs, "God's furnace made their crowns splendid, gave them a majesty of shine and an imperial glory."

Study the character of Jesus as portrayed in the Gospels. Did ever man thus speak? Does not Christ as a Teacher stand out alone, and unapproached in wisdom among the sons of men? Take the centuries and the nations through and through, and can one single son of Adam be found to match this Nazarene? He mingled day after day with sinners, ate and talked with them, relieved their needs, and yet never for once was guile found on his lips. The bitterest foe confessed that he was holy, harmless,

undefiled, and far separated from sin. Now, if Christ was simply human, why has not nature repeated itself? Why cannot the like of Jesus, even approximately, in the revolving centuries, be found speaking to the people? Yea, more, either such a person as Jesus Christ lived and acted as reported, or there did not. If Jesus lived, and performed the wonderful works attributed to him by the Evangelists, then he was divine, and the Scriptures true. But if the record be false, then we have a company of unprincipled conspirators creating a character of ineffable perfection and unearthly beauty! The illiterate and wicked produce a record before which the mightiest efforts of genius are as chaff! The intellects of Greece and Rome, however vast, must yield the palm to these untutored impostors—to men, who if they testify falsely, trample into dust every law spiritual and material, human and divine. Such a view of the case is not only impossible, but simply absurd.

In addition, the Scriptures—turn whither we may—contain the only plan that ever satisfied the deep yearnings of the immortal soul. For, when sorrow comes and sin oppresses, and the grave begins to open, every system of philosophy miserably fails. Only in the Christian Bible do we find words to cheer, and light to guide, when the shadows fall thick, and heart and flesh are failing. Through no other weapon has the benighted and encompassed pilgrim been enabled to cut his way in the darkness. In no other book, in the world's entire circuit, has light and immortality been brought to light, death the universally dreaded foe been robbed of his sting, and the grave, once victorious over all, made to yield its sceptre to a mightier Victor. Wonderful Book! Its pages penned by shepherds, publicans, fishermen, and dwellers in the desert. The record embracing mighty centuries, and yet, from first to last, in history, science, philosophy, not an error, not the shadow of a blunder, that hate, learning, or unbelief can show. Aye, more, as painstaking research ascends higher, or goes down deeper, the more amazingly does the truth, whether physical or moral, greet the eye in its finish and beauty. The things hitherto too deep for proud philosophy, hidden for ages from the schools and from science, are found revealed, far

back in the past, to those humble ones who walked with God, and unto whom, although counted babes and sucklings by this world's wise, he made known the secret wonders of his power in earth and sky.

Of what avail, then, is Hume's oft-repeated sophism before such proof as the Christian apologist can distinctly adduce? With nothing but a Jew before us, we could almost, if not altogether, accept the conditions of debate offered by this noted sceptic, and come off victors. Whence this Hebrew of undoubted physiognomy? We find him among all the nations, and yet diverse from all. With every temporal inducement to be otherwise, he has stubbornly refused. With no parallel in history, and yet working, living, acting, and suffering, just as was foretold of him four thousand years ago. Here is a wonder as great as the chiefest miracle of the New Testament, and brought home to "the experience" of every man. The assertion, that a miracle is contrary to human experience, and cannot be established by any bulk of proof, is false. For we reply that an individual or generation can know but little by actual contact and personal inspection. All information concerning the past, or the absent, must be derived from testimony. It is in this way alone that we are certified of facts which fell out in the ages long gone. And when the law, or rules, of evidence are properly considered, then Hume's boasted argument amounts to a simple begging of the question. For if it be asked, was there ever a miracle, how are we to ascertain? Certainly by putting the question to each generation. If the first century responds, Yes, we had miracles here, then its claims are to be tested upon the uniform grounds of proof. And if testimony can be rejected here, it can be refused anywhere that presumption chooses, and in the end nothing can be proved that has not been seen and handled. Even the existence and exploits of Napoleon must be accepted upon testimony, while the multitude of wonders which this man and others have performed—the authenticity of which no one questions—must be taken upon the statement of a limited number of witnesses.

We resort to no subterfuge. For no artifice whatever is needed. Indeed, that faith is not worth the advocacy which demands craft

or unfair dealing to be used in its defence. That system which cannot challenge light and scrutiny should be set down as false. The Christian defender occupies ground from which all opposing forces may be defied. If he wields his weapons aright, principalities and powers will be unable to move him. The true believer handles both pebble and sword, and is clothed from head to foot in the panoply of the Almighty.

We are willing to submit the genuineness and authenticity of the Christian Scriptures to the strictest formula of logic and to abide by the result. The Baconian method demands a full and adequate observation of the facts, and then from particular instances we are to rise through stage after stage of generalisation, till the regular law is reached. By this principle every theory is to be tried. Does geology or chemistry claim to be a science? Then let the "particular instances" be collected, and we shall ascertain whether these are sufficient to lead us up to the law of regular succession. We claim no exemption for the Bible. Let all the particulars be gathered, and let logic, in its utmost severity, proceed to deal with the facts, and if the deduction does not distinctly demonstrate the divinity of the Christian faith, it will, of necessity, enforce a belief in wonders even more astounding.

If the sceptic taunts the Christian on account of credulity, this charge, with twofold power, can be turned on himself. Mr. Morell has well remarked that "the greatest of unbelievers is of all men the most credulous. He rejects perhaps a thousand truths which rest on a solid and satisfactory evidence, but then is obliged to accept some crude system of his own into which none of these truths (to save his consistency) are permitted to enter. The sceptic, for example, who denies the divine origin of Christianity may often appear at first sight rational in his objections so long as he is *pulling down* the common belief of Christendom, but the moment he is called upon to *build up* a system of his own, the moment he is called upon to account for the facts in the case upon some other hypothesis, he soon begins to draw far more largely than his opponent upon the very credulity he has derided. And not only this, but the more universal the scepticism, the greater must be the credulity by which it is followed, because

exactly in proportion to the number of facts which are first rejected must be the paucity of those which are left on which to construct a new system.”¹

It is our firm conviction, therefore, that the Christian scheme taxes credulity far less than unbelief. J. S. GRASTY.

ARTICLE III.

THE CHURCH AND TEMPERANCE.

The world moves; and while there is reason to believe that its general course is upward, to one viewing its progress from the standpoint of temperance, and embracing in his view the movement through centuries, it appears to be travelling on an incline towards the bottomless pit. Dr. Benjamin W. Richardson says:

“The discovery of distillation of wine has been attributed to Albucasis, or Casa, an Arabian chemist of the eleventh century: but many centuries elapsed before the process of distillation was applied to produce those stronger drinks which, under the name of ‘spirits,’ are now in such common use in daily life. Brandy is a late term in European literature. Gin was unknown two hundred years ago. Rum is an American term, applied to an American invention. Whiskey, a Celtic word meaning ‘water,’ has not been Anglicized more than a century and a half. Neither rum, nor brandy, nor gin, nor whiskey, nor any alcoholic drink of similar destructive power, has been in common use until comparatively recent modern times.”

It appears from this that during vastly the greater part of the earth’s history, the curse of intemperance has been slight compared with what it is now. “Drunkenness,” says the *Westminster Review*, “is the curse of England—a curse so great that it far eclipses every other calamity under which we suffer. It is impossible to exaggerate the evils of drunkenness.” When we read this statement, and know that what the writer says of England is true of every country where distilled liquors are used, we find

¹ Morell Spec. Philos., p. 192.