RECORD
OF
CONVERSATIONS ON THE GOSPELS,
HELD IN
MR. ALCOTT'S SCHOOL;
UNFOLDING
THE DOCTRINE AND DISCIPLINE
OF
HUMAN CULTURE.

Except a Man be converted and become as a little Child;—be born again;—of water and of the Spirit, he cannot see,—nor enter into,—the kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus of Nazareth.

VOLUME I.

BOSTON:
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1836.
EDITOR'S PREFACE.

The work now presented to the reader, forms the introduction to a course of conversations with children, on the Life of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels. It is the Record of an attempt to unfold the Idea of Spirit from the Consciousness of Childhood; and to trace its Intellectual and Corporeal Relations; its Temptations and Disciplines; its Struggles and Conquests, while in the Flesh. To this end, the character of Jesus has been presented to the consideration of children, as the brightest Symbol of Spirit; and they have been encouraged to express their views regarding it. The Conductor of these conversations has reverently explored their consciousness, for the testimony which it might furnish in favor of the truth of Christianity.
Assuming as a fact the spiritual integrity of the young mind, he was desirous of placing under the inspection of children, a character so much in conformity with their own, as that of Jesus of Nazareth. He believed that children would as readily apprehend the divine beauty of this character, when rightly presented, as adults. He even hoped that, though their simple consciousness, the Divine Idea of a Man, as Imaged in Jesus, yet almost lost to the world, might be revived in the mind of adults, who might thus be recalled into the spiritual kingdom. These views, confirmed by long intimacy with the young, as well as by the tendency of his own mind to regard the bright visions of childhood, as the promise of the soul's future blessedness; as the loadstar to conduct it through this terrestrial Life, led him to undertake this enterprise, and to prosecute it with a deep and kindling interest, which he feels will continue unabated to its close.

The Editor will not, meanwhile, conceal the fact, that it is with no little solicitude
that he ventures these documents before the eye of others. He feels that his book should be studied in Simplicity. It is, in no small measure, the production of children. It is a record of their consciousness; a natural history of the undepraved spirit. It is the testimony of unspoiled natures to the spiritual purity of Jesus. It is a revelation of the Divinity in the soul of childhood. Like the Sacred volume — on which it is, indeed, a juvenile commentary — of which it is an interpretation, it cannot be at once, apprehended in all its bearings, and find its true value.

There may be those, however, who, unconscious of its worth, shall avail themselves of the statements, views, and speculations, which it contains, to the detriment of religion and humanity; not perceiving, that it is a work, intended rather to awaken thought; enkindle feeling; and quicken to duty; than to settle opinions, or promulgate sentiments of any kind. Whoever shall find its significance, will scarce treat with disrespect these products of the sacred being of childhood. For childhood
utters sage things, worthy of all note; and he who scoffs at its improvisations, or perverts its simple sayings, proves the corruption of his own being, and his want of reverence for the Good, the Beautiful, the True, and the Holy. He beholds not the Face of the Heavenly Father.

It has been a main purpose of the Conductor of these conversations, to tempt forth, by appropriate questions, the cherished sentiments of the children on the subjects presented to their consideration. It was no part of his intention to bring forward, except by necessary implication, his own favorite opinions as a means of biasing, in the smallest degree, the judgments and decisions of the children. He wished to inculcate only what was the universal product of our common nature. He endeavoured to avoid dogmatizing. He was desirous of gathering the sentiments of the little circle, in which it is his pleasure and privilege to move as teacher and friend. He believed that Christianity was
in Childhood, and he sought the readiest and simplest means to unfold it, and bring it into the light of day.

That he has withheld his own sentiments from the children in all instances, he can scarce hope. It was next to impossible. He has doubtless led them, in some instances, by the tenor of his questions, and his manner of disposing of replies, to the adoption or rejection of sentiments, foreign to their nature. But he believes that he has seldom erred in this way. He preferred to become the simple Analyst of the consciousness of the children, and, having no opinions of his own to establish against their common convictions, he treated with reverence whatever he found within it, deeming it, when spontaneous, a revelation of the same Divinity, as was Jesus.

He is aware that the work which he has assumed is one of great difficulty. He feels that it is not easy to ascertain the precise state of a child's mind. He knows that much of what a child utters has been received from others, that language is an uncertain organ
in his use; that he often endows words with his own significance; that he is liable to mistake the phenomena of his own consciousness; and, moreover, that his scanty vocabulary often leaves him without the means of revealing himself. Still some certainty is attainable. For a child can be trusted when urged to ingenuous expression; and when all temptations to deceive are withdrawn. A wise and sympathizing observer will readily distinguish the real from the assumed; penetrate through all the varying phases of expression, and do him justice.

Yet, while so little is done to guard children against servile imitation, by a wise training of their minds to original thought, we are in danger of not giving them credit for what is their own. So little confidence, indeed, do we place in their statements, and so imitative do we deem them, that, when a wise saying chances to drop from their lips, instead of regarding it, as it of right should be, the product of their own minds, we seek its origin among adults, as if it must of necessity spring from this source alone. We greatly underrate the genius of child-
ren. We do not apprehend the inward power, that but awaits the genial touch, to be quickened into life. The art of tempting this forth we have scarce attained. We have outlived our own simple consciousness, and have thus lost our power of apprehending them. We have yet to learn, that Wisdom and Holiness are of no Age; that they preëxist, separate from time, and are the possession of Childhood, not less than of later years; that they, indeed, often appear in fresher features, in the earlier seasons of life, than in physical maturity. In Man they are often quenched by the vulgar aims of the corporeal life.

To a child, all questions touching the Soul are deeply interesting. He loves his own consciousness. It is a charmed world to him. As yet he has not been drawn out of it by the seductions of the propensities; nor is he beguiled by the illusions of his external senses. And were he assisted in the study and discipline of it, by those who could meet his wants, and on whom he could rely, his spiritual acquirements would keep pace with his years, and he would grow up wise in the mysteries of the
spiritual kingdom. The Divine Idea of a Man, the vision of Self-Perfection, would live in his consciousness; instead of being, as now, pushed aside by the intrusive images, and vulgar claims, of unhallowed appetite and desire. Christ would be formed in the Soul the Hope of Immortality.

In the original copy of this record, the names of the speakers were preserved, as necessary to identify their different views and statements. It is feared that some persons may regret the insertion of these in the printed volume, from a regard to the effect on the speakers themselves. Yet to have used assumed names would have impaired the identity of the record, and have diminished its value, of course, as an historical fact. No serious evils, it is believed, can arise from retaining them. The children expressed themselves in simplicity; there is nothing in their remarks, to flatter their vanity; and they have no desire to see their names in print. The Editor would regret extremely, to be the means of wounding the feelings of those of
his patrons, who have expressed their sympathy with his views, and who, amid much to try their faith in the practicability of his attempt to renovate education, have continued their children under his care. Much less, would he wantonly do ought to injure, in the slightest degree, that simplicity and meekness, which he has sought to cherish in those, for whose spiritual and intellectual culture, these conversations were primarily intended.

The Editor would remark, in conclusion, that he deems his labors valuable, not only to those children, who were present at these conversations, and to the general reader, but he ventures to hope that they will commend themselves, also, to those parents and teachers, who deem the spiritual growth and discipline of those committed to their care, of unspeakable and primary importance. He trusts that he has given, in these specimens of his intercourse with children, a model, not unworthy of imitation, of the simplest and readiest mode of presenting religious truth to the young. He believes that he has
shed some light over the path of Human Culture. He feels, that for children, if not for adults, he has delineated, and in a form which they can apprehend, the Divine Life of Jesus; and has urged upon them, through the mouths of his little ones, considerations and motives, fitted to inspire them with the noble ambition to strive to imitate his Example.

Temple No. 7.
Boston, December, 1836.
CONVERSATION I.
IDEA OF SPIRIT.

EVIDENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS.


I. METAPHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTS.
1. Testimony of External Senses; Their Office; Fruits.
2. Testimony of Internal Senses; Their Office; Intuition of Spirit; Analysis of Functions and Offices; Terms.

Mr. Alcott. We are now going to speak of the Life of Christ. If any of you are interested to understand how Jesus came into this world; and lived; and acted; and went back to God;
and will try to give me your whole attention, and not let your minds wander, you may hold up your hands.  

(Many did so.)

Some of you, most of you, will sometimes let your thoughts wander; but you will all try, I hope, to keep them as steady as possible; for only by doing so, can we have interesting conversations. The best thoughts do not lie on the surface of our minds. We have to dive under for them, like pearl fishers. This morning I am going to ask some questions, that I may prove to you, by your own answers to them, that you are all, every one of you, capable of thinking on this subject; and of having thoughts come from your minds, which will interest all,—teaching yourselves to know yourselves, and teaching me.

We are going, all of us, to study the life of Jesus, the Christ. As often as it is studied, it is better understood, and suggests new thoughts. I do not know all I am going to say, for I shall have new thoughts, that I never had before. Still less do you know all you are going to say; for you have not thought so much of the subject as I have. But if we will all think, and all say what we think, not repeating the words and thoughts of others, we shall teach each other.

Charles. But sometimes several of us will have the same thought, of ourselves.

Mr. Alcott. Then you can say so, and there will be no repetition.

The Recorder then said, that she was going to keep a record of the conversations, not of the same kind as before, when she was making a picture of the school; but, in the first place, to preserve Mr. Alcott’s thoughts, as far as they were expressed; and, in the second place, to preserve their thoughts, when they seemed sincere.  (See Note 1, in the Appendix.)
(All expressed great pleasure in the coming lessons, — were very ready to promise attention; and seemed perfectly to understand what was meant by sincere conversation.)

Mr. Alcott. Now, when I ask a question, each one may think of an answer to it, and as soon as he has one, hold up his hand. I shall then ask any one I please to speak; perhaps I shall ask every one to give an answer to some of my questions, so that I may compare your answers. Let no one speak without I ask him, but only hold up his hand.

(After a pause, during which there was a profound silence of expectation on the part of the children ;)

Mr. Alcott asked; Have you a clear feeling, idea, of something, which is not your body, which you never saw, but which is, — which loves, which thinks, which feels?

(All gradually held up their hands.)

Now what are your proofs?

(Many hands fell.)

Those who have proofs may answer in turn.

Lemuel. I am sure of it, but I do not know why.

Alexander. I have heard you say so.

Mr. Alcott. You have trusted to me? Well! that is faith in testimony.

William C. I cannot prove it, but I feel it.

Mr. Alcott. You and Lemuel have the evidence of consciousness. You cannot think otherwise.

George K. I thought of my mind as my proof.

Andrew. I thought of my conscience; when I do right I feel that I have one.

William B. I thought and I felt. That is Spirit.

Charles. I felt your question working within me, and that was my proof.
Edward B. Conscience is my proof. I feel when I
do right and wrong, and that is my soul.
Lucy. I have proof, but I cannot express it.
Emma. I knew before I was asked.
Mr. Alcott. It is a sentiment with you and Lucy.
Josiah. Self-government.*
Edward J. Conscience.

(Some other answers were repetitious.)

* The reader may be struck with the fact of a child of six
years of age giving self-government, as a proof of the existence
of spirit independent of matter.
This boy undoubtedly owes much to nature, but the measure
cannot easily be determined, because his education, thus far, had
been admirable. I refer to the training of the mind and moral
nature, and to nothing more outward; for he was not so
much advanced as many others in the mechanical faculty of
reading and writing; he was backward in arithmetic, and in
those things in which there is often a very deceptive precocity;
and, in general, he evinced no extraordinary ardor to acquire.
He had always been exclusively under the instruction of his
mother, whose principles and methods, as far as Mr. Alcott
has been able to discover, were singularly in unison with his
own. His eye had been educated by pictures; his mind culti-
vated by self-inspection, and conscientious stimulus, and his taste
for beauty met and sympathised with. His mother had read to
him a great deal, and taught him the use of words by conversa-
tion with herself, in which he peculiarly delighted, but which he
could not enjoy much, except with the grown up and the gentle,
on account of a natural impediment in his speech. It is also
worthy of remark, that the only books, which he had ever been
induced to read by himself, were Gallaudet’s Books of the Soul,
in which, in fact, he learned to read. He had, however, in his
memory a good deal of poetry, learned by rote, and he was in the
habit of dictating, himself, a sort of measured, unrhymed com-
position which he called poetry, the subject of which was generally
the beauty of nature, and which always expressed religious
feeling. Rec.
Mr. Alcott. So you all think there is something, which is not body.

But have you seen it; who has seen conscience?

(All made the negative sign.)

Then your eyes, it seems, did not tell you of this being, which is not body.

(All shook their heads.)

Nor your ears?

George K. I have heard my father and mother talk about conscience with my ears, and so I believed it was.*

* This child had been in the school a year, without often speaking. Evidently unused to having his intellect addressed, he had only been remarkable for his faithfulness, and the expression of sentiment, that glowed in his face, whenever an interesting subject was under discussion. He was always very attentive, yet when Mr. Alcott asked him a question that required words in answer, all his soul flew into his face, but he was dumb; and Mr. Alcott would generally say, well, it is no matter, I see how you feel; to which the child would reply, with a look of gratitude. It was evident that his mind was not idle; for he constantly seemed full of attention, and intelligence, and he always expressed himself by a silent vote, when a question was to be answered by raising the hand. From this day, in which his tongue was for the first time loosed, he became one of our most ready speakers, and in some departments of thought was always remarkably lucid.

I have been thus particular, because I think that, in this instance, Mr. Alcott’s sagacity is strikingly proved, and his example of patient waiting is worthy of consideration. If George’s parents had felt the uneasy ambition of seeing immediate effects produced; and thus lost their confidence in Mr. Alcott, as many others have done, because he would not force a mind, whose progress was real in its own way; he would not have come the second year, but have carried into another school the flower of the seed Mr. Alcott had planted;—a thing which has not unfrequently been done, as Mr. Alcott has painfully felt. Rec.
Mr. Alcott. What believed? your ears? or was it the conscience within you that understood what your father and mother meant by conscience?

George K. Yes, that was the way. But our ears do a little good.

Mr. Alcott. Yes, the spirit uses the organs of sense, though it is something else than these organs. (See Note 2.)

Edward B. It only seems as if our senses themselves saw, and heard, and smelled; but it is the mind which is really doing those things with the eyes and ears for its instruments. (See Note 3.)

Mr. Alcott. Now in all this, what are your senses after? What is it, that this something within you wants, when it uses your eyes, ears, and other organs of sense; what does it go out after?

John D. When we use our tongue, the spirit goes after our food.

Lemuel. When we look, it wants something to see; and when we listen, it wants something to hear; and when we taste, it wants something to eat and drink.

Alexander. When we look, the spirit comes to help.

Welles. When we hear, the spirit is after instruction.

Charles. The senses are a kind of feelers, to show forth what the spirit within wants. (See Note 4.)

Mr. Alcott. When you see an infant, you observe that its little body is full of motion. It seems to be constantly seeking after something. Do you think the spirit within it feels, and tries to express its feelings and wants through the senses?

Charles assented.
EMMA. The spirit goes out through the senses after outward things.

MR. ALCOTT. After what outward things?

(Emma did not answer.)

MR. ALCOTT. Josiah, what is your answer?

JOSIAH. My mind sees through my eyes.

EDWARD J. The spirit comes out to see and hear.

HALES. My mind sees with my eyes.

JOSEPH. The senses are to help keep the mind good and the body good.*

MR. ALCOTT. Do they always keep all good?

JOSEPH. When we let them.

MR. ALCOTT. What hinders them sometimes?

JOSEPH. Anger.

MR. ALCOTT. What lets them make us good at other times?

JOSEPH. Love. (See Note 5.)

JOHN D. When a baby goes into his mind to feel, he feels after wisdom and goodness.

MR. ALCOTT. The infant goes inward, then, for wisdom and goodness; and outward for food for the body, and for knowledge?

ANDREW. When we have done right, the spirit comes out in our eyes; and when we have done wrong, it comes out and makes us ashamed to show our face.

(See Note 6.)

WILLIAM B. The senses are made so that your spirit, and soul, and mind, may get knowledge, and be kept alive; for if you had no senses you could not be very wise; and you need the senses to communicate to others, what you gain from the use of your senses.

* This child is deaf. His seat was always close by Mr. Alcott, and he fixed his eyes always on Mr. Alcott's lips, and then would follow his eye to the speaker among the children. Sometimes Mr. Alcott would tell him what the children said. His remarks are very characteristic throughout. Rec.
Mr. Alcott. Where does life come from, William?

William B. From the spirit.

Mr. Alcott. Your answer implies that life comes from without, through the senses; for you speak of the spirit’s being kept alive by them, as if there was something that came from objects of sense to keep it alive.

William B. Oh, I do not mean that; I mean that one person, by means of the senses, is able to keep alive the spirit of others.

Edward B. I think the spirit goes into the eyes, ears, &c. after knowledge. But I think the soul would have some wisdom, even if we had no senses at all,—were blind, deaf, and all. (See Note 7.)

William B. I think people who had no senses might be good, but could not be very wise.

Mr. Alcott. What is wisdom?

(A pause.)

Does not wisdom stand for all that the spirit gets from itself? The senses gain knowledge of outward things; the spirit feels, judges of, disposes, uses, this knowledge, and makes it an instrument, and this is wisdom, is it not? Is not this the distinction?

Edward B. A person who has great knowledge has greater means, sometimes, of being bad and unwise.

Mr. Alcott. Do you remember the two trees in Paradise? the tree of knowledge and the tree of life—of wisdom perhaps?

Lucy. We ought to have some senses to tell us when we do right, and how.

Lucia. There are senses in the spirit for that!

Mr. Alcott. What other senses have we but the body’s senses; what are the names of the spirit’s senses?
GEORGE K. The mind has senses, which it puts into the body's senses.

MR. ALCOTT. Has the mind any other senses than those which it puts into the body's five senses?

GEORGE K. Yes; a sense of good.

MR. ALCOTT. Has the mind a sense about right and wrong?

SEVERAL. Yes; conscience.

MR. ALCOTT. How many of you have this inward, this spiritual sense of right and wrong?

(AD pause.) (See Note 8.)

MR. ALCOTT. Yesterday one of the boys behaved wrong and was punished. When he came into school, yesterday morning, his eyes looked large and bright. When he comes into school to-day, his eyes are half shut; why is this?

SEVERAL. Conscience.

THE REST. The spirit's senses.

WELLES. Shame is one of the spirit's senses. (See Note 9.)

MR. ALCOTT. The boy I have been speaking of may rise and show himself.

(AD several rose.)

Well! I thought of one; but conscience, it seems, has thought of many more.

LUCY and others exclaimed. The spirit's senses.

Mr. ALCOTT. Such of you then, as think there is something within you which is no part of your body, but which moves your body, acts in it, and is better than your body, and your body lives upon it, may hold up your hands.

(All held up hands.)

How many think a good name for this is mind,

(Several held up hands.)
or soul, or God, or intellect, or conscience, or spirit?
CONVERSATION II.

TESTIMONY OF NATURE AND SCRIPTURE TO SPIRIT.

NATURE AND SCRIPTURE.

Idea of Spirit.

II. ANALOGICAL EVIDENCE.

1. Physiological Facts. — Reproduction and growth; light and shade; incubation and birth; budding and efflorescence; fountain and stream.

2. Psychological Facts. — Birth and death; renovation and decay; sense of imperfection; standard of perfection in conscience; idea of absolute and derivative being.

3. Historical Facts. — Record of spirit, or Scripture; general reference to the Gospels from the Sacred Text; credibility of witnesses; authenticity of the Gospel Record; sum of results.

Mr. Alcott. What was the conclusion to which we came, after the conversation of Wednesday last?

Several. That there was a Spirit.

Mr. Alcott. Did each of you conclude and feel it proved in your own heart, that there is a Spirit?

(All held up hands.)

Mr. Alcott. What do you understand by an inward proof of Spirit?

Charles. What one feels, and thinks.

Mr. Alcott. Are there outward evidences of Spirit?

Charles. Actions, any actions, outward actions, an earthquake, the creeping of a worm.

George K. Moving, the creeping of a baby.

Lemuel. The moving of a leaf, lightning.
(Most agreed upon God as the best name. One said Spirit was the best; another said God and Spirit were the same.)

Mr. Alcott. I prefer the word Spirit. And soon we shall begin to talk of a particular Spirit that came into the world and took a body; and acted in the world; and we shall inquire what became of it when it left the world. What Spirit are we going to talk about?

All. Jesus Christ.

Mr. Alcott. How many of you will always know hereafter what I mean by the word spirit, when I use it?

(All held up their hands.)

Andrew. I think the word conscience would be a better word than spirit. (See Note 10.)

Mr. Alcott. Conscience is spirit acting on duty; Mind is spirit thinking; Heart is spirit loving; Soul is spirit feeling; Sense is spirit inquiring into the external world; Body is the instrument and organ of spirit. The action of these is divided between consciousness and conscience.
Andrew. A waterfall, a rose.
Frank. Walking.
Samuel R. A tree.
Edward C. A star.
Susan. The sun.
George B. A steam engine.
Mr. Alcott. Where does the spirit work in that
George B. In the men that work it.
Charles. No; in the steam.
Edward J. In the machinery, and the steam, and
the men, and all.
Mr. Alcott. You perceive then what I mean by
outward evidence of spirit?
Charles. Things, external nature.
Mr. Alcott. And this will be our subject in part
today.

Mr. Alcott. Do smaller things prove
greater things, or greater things smaller
things? How many do not understand me?

(Several held up their hands.)

Does an acorn prove there has been an oak, or an oak
prove there has been an acorn?

(Some said one and some the other, as they did
also to the next question.)

Mr. Alcott. Which was first in time, an acorn or
an oak?

George K. Sometimes one is first and sometimes
the other. In the woods, oaks grow up wild; and you
can plant acorns and have oaks.

Samuel R. I think God made oaks first, and all the
other oaks there have ever been, came from the acorns
of those first oaks.

Mr. Alcott. Does light prove darkness,
or darkness light?

Several. Each proves the other.
MR. ALCOTT. Can nothing prove something?
ALL. No.
MR. ALCOTT. But darkness is mere absence of light. Is darkness any thing to your spirit?
SEVERAL. No.
CHARLES. I think darkness is something.
MR. ALCOTT. Is darkness any thing to your senses?
ANDREW. No; it only seems so.
MR. ALCOTT. What does it seem to be?
ANDREW. It is the shadow of light.

Incubation and Birth.

MR. ALCOTT. Does the egg foretell the chick, or the chick the egg?
(They first said one, and then the other, and then both, and some referred to God who could make either.)

Budding and Efflorescence

MR. ALCOTT. Which has most meaning, a bud or a flower?
SEVERAL. A flower.
SUSAN. A bud, because it is going to be a flower, and makes you think of it.
EDWARD J. Perhaps the bud will be picked.
MR. ALCOTT. Accidents are always excepted.
(He then asked like questions about many things, among the rest a brook and the ocean, the cradle and the grave, and similar answers were returned. He remarked that their answers showed which minds were historical and which were analytic. He then went on :)

Psychological Facts.

Which is the superior, spirit or body?
ALL. Spirit.
MR. ALCOTT. Lemuel, will you give me a reason?
LEMUEL. Because the body decays, and the spirit cannot decay; and the spirit is not seen; and when the spirit is gone the body cannot do any thing.

MR. ALCOTT. Is it the invisibleness and the undecaying nature of the spirit, which makes it superior, then? Have you ever seen any perfect visible thing?

GEORGE B. Yes; a rose.

MR. ALCOTT. Did it remain perfect?

GEORGE B. No.

MR. ALCOTT. What thing is perfect and remains perfect?

GEORGE K. Jesus' body was perfect, for it ascended into heaven.

MR. ALCOTT. Is there proof that his body ascended?

GEORGE K. The Bible says so.

CHARLES. The Bible says the disciples saw him ascend.

MR. ALCOTT. Yes, they saw him ascend; yet not perhaps his body;— and besides, Jesus' body suffered pain; and was it perfect, while it was suffering pain?

(No answer.)

Can you say that your bodily senses are perfect, that they have never deceived you?

(None held up hands.)

When you look round the world, and see no perfect, visible thing, what do you feel?

(No answer.)

Is there not something within you which measures all imperfection?

CHARLES. Yes, the thought of Perfection.

MR. ALCOTT. By what do you measure your thought of Perfection?

CHARLES. By God.
Mr. Alcott. Is the imperfection in the outward world a proof of something perfect within?

(No answer.)

For instance, you tell me that you have seen a person do something wrong: now, what do you make the standard? How do you know it is wrong?

Charles. By Reason.

Lemuel. No; Judgment judges.

Edward J. We measure by the spirit.

Mr. Alcott. What is in the spirit; a sense of—what?

Lemuel. A Sense of Good—of Perfection.

Mr. Alcott. Where is all proof, then?

Lemuel. In Conscience and in God.

Mr. Alcott. And when Jesus utters the divine injunction, “Be ye Perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is Perfect,” he does but reannounce the sentiment of Duty in every conscience, which ever utters the same words.

Now, do perfect things prove imperfect things, or imperfect things prove perfect things?

George K. They prove each other.

Mr. Alcott. Does your spirit prove there is a God, or because there is a God, must your spirit be?

Charles. Each proves the other.

Mr. Alcott. All proof then is in God, spirit being its own proof, because there is more of God in it, than in any thing outward. As an acorn reminds you of an oak, so does the spirit within remind you of God. Your spirits, like the acorns, (if you choose to carry on the figure,) drop off from God, to plant themselves in Time. Once they were within the oak, but they come out individual differing acorns, the seeds of new oaks. The other things mentioned are proofs of the same kind. Spirits are born out of
the Supreme Spirit, and by their power of reproducing spirit, constantly prove their own existence from his existence, and his existence from their own.—That there is a spirit in us all you have proofs, as you have shown.

There are yet other proofs of spirit, especially the Life of Jesus Christ, which we are going to study.

He took a body and came into the world almost two thousand years before we did. He was seen, and those who saw and knew him,—his friends,—wrote down what he said and did; and their words make what are called the Gospels. Luke was one of these friends. He began an account of Jesus,—the Gospel of his life, that is, the Good News of his life,—in these words: Mr. Alcott read

THE GENERAL PREFACE TO THE GOSPELS.

Mark i. 1.


A.D. 44. Probably written at Jerusalem.

A.D. 64. Written in Achaia.

Record of Gospels 1 The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

1 Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

You perceive that Luke wrote this Gospel—this good news of Jesus Christ—for a particular friend. He had himself learned most of the facts from others, for he was not an eyewitness from the beginning.

Now I suppose that you can place entire confidence in these words, which are called
the Gospels. You doubtless believe that they have a meaning, all of them, worth finding out; and you feel sure that they are all true.

George K. There are some things I think truer. I believe those words, but I am more sure of some things.

Mr. Alcott. Of what?

George K. Why—that the Stove is in the room. (See Note 11.)

Charles. I do not believe that those words are the same as Luke wrote down. (See Note 12.)

Mr. Alcott. Luke wrote in Greek; and these words are translated. But the Greek words are yet preserved, and those are the very words of Luke, as can be satisfactorily proved; for great care was taken of so valuable a writing, by the earliest Christians.

(Some more conversation ensued on this subject, in which Charles was told that there had been a great deal of dispute concerning these writings in the early ages; and that it was now an undisputed fact,—except by an individual here and there,—that these writings all belonged to the persons by whom they were said to be written. And that this was a subject he might examine for himself, when he was older.) (See Note 13.)

Subject. You may now tell me what has been the subject of to-day’s conversation.

Lemuel. Outward Evidences of Spirit.


Others. And in the Gospel.

Mr. Alcott. And the Evidence for the Gospel Record.