

You loved your last book...but what
are you going to read next?

Using our unique guidance tools, Love**reading** will help you find new books to keep you inspired and entertained.

Opening Extract from...

The Good Book

A Secular Bible

Written by A. C. Grayling

Published by Bloomsbury Publishing PLC

All text is copyright © of the author

This Opening Extract is exclusive to Love**reading**.
Please print off and read at your leisure.

— THE —
GOOD
BOOK

A SECULAR BIBLE

CONCEIVED SELECTED REDACTED ARRANGED WORKED
AND IN PART WRITTEN BY

A. C. GRAYLING

B L O O M S B U R Y
LONDON • BERLIN • NEW YORK • SYDNEY

First published in Great Britain 2011

Copyright © A. C. Grayling 2011

A. C. Grayling has asserted his right to be identified as the author of this work

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the Publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles or reviews

Bloomsbury Publishing Plc
36 Soho Square
London W1D 3QY

www.bloomsbury.com

Bloomsbury Publishing, London, Berlin, New York and Sydney

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7475 9960 9

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Typeset by Hewer Text UK Ltd, Edinburgh
Printed in Great Britain by Clays Limited, St Ives plc



EPISTLE TO THE READER

Dear reader:

It might be thought vain to offer a work such as this to humankind in the hope that it will be useful, because the diversity of principles, ideas and tastes among people is very great, as is the fixity of our notions and our reluctance to change. But in truth it would be a greater vanity to offer a work for any other reason. Let the sincerity of the intention, then, be this book's main commendation. No work of this or any kind can please everyone, whatever its ambition; but this one at least gives satisfaction to its maker, of having aimed sincerely at truth and usefulness, and having done so by following in the paths of the wise. Throughout history the commonwealth of humankind has had master-thinkers whose mighty works are monuments to posterity; it is aspiration enough to be a guide among them, and to take from them resources to promote what is true and good.

All who read this book, therefore, if they read with care, may come to be more than they were before. This is not praise of the work itself, but of its attentive readers, for the worth to be found in it will come from their minds. If there is anyone who learns nothing from this book, that will not be attributable to faults in it, but to that reader's excellence. If readers judge candidly, none among them can be harmed or offended by what it asks them to consider. Yet all who come hungry to these granaries of the harvest made by their fellows and forebears, will find nourishment here.

Every art and inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, aims at some good; therefore the ultimate good has rightly been described as that at which all things aim. If there is a goal of what we do that we desire for its own sake, everything else being desired for the sake of this, that goal must constitute our chief and highest good. Seeking knowledge of that good cannot fail to have a great influence on life. When archers choose a target to aim at, they are more likely to aim true; shall we not do likewise by having as our target the discovery and doing of what is right? To determine what the good is, and

of the best ways to know it, is the most important of all our endeavours, and is truly the master art of living.

Here in your hands is just such an endeavour, consisting in distillations of the wisdom and experience of humankind, to the end that reflecting on them might bring profit and comfort. It has been remarked that a person who fishes a stream might find something of advantage to himself there, but he who takes his nets to the ocean might expect greater catches, and from greater depths. In what follows these great catches are brought before us by fishers of wisdom, returned from the storms as well as the calms of their voyages, and from both near and distant shores.

Anyone who rises above his daily concerns in hope of finding and following truth, will discover it here. Every moment of the pursuit of truth rewards the pursuer's pains, when seeking it alongside the great company of those who have trodden the paths of life before us. These are gifts which they have passed back to us; they have freely given the best of themselves, and their gifts have been freely accepted here. Other such books have been similarly made: writings of many hands, ancient and otherwise, taken, wrought, arranged, edited, supplemented and changed, and offered with a familiar purpose in view. Here the procedure has been the same, but the purpose is different: not to demand acceptance of beliefs or obedience to commands, not to impose obligations and threaten with punishments, but to aid and guide, to suggest, inform, warn and console; and above all to hold up the light of the human mind and heart against the shadows of life.

For we live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths; and our time should be counted in the throbs of our hearts as we love and help, learn and strive, and make from our own talents whatever can increase the stock of the world's good.

To let light in upon ignorance and falsehood is a service to human understanding; a yet greater service is to show the way to an upland where the view of life is clearer. It is certain, therefore, that most readers will find profit in the following pages, if they read with the attention that those pages merit. How can it be otherwise? All times are seasonable to the increase of wisdom, and no time is lost when spent in the kind of company that inhabits here.

For this is a good book as well as a book of the good, its words from mighty pens, its thoughts from votaries of the right and true. It is a text made from all times for all times, its aspiration and aim the good for humanity and the good of the world.

CONTENTS

<i>Epistle to the Reader</i>	v
Genesis	i
Wisdom	12
Parables	30
Concord	57
Lamentations	72
Consolations	90
Sages	123
Songs	136
Histories	172
Proverbs	359
The Lawgiver	395
Acts	442
Epistles	560
The Good	591

GENESIS

Chapter 1

1. In the garden stands a tree. In springtime it bears flowers; in the autumn, fruit.
2. Its fruit is knowledge, teaching the good gardener how to understand the world.
3. From it he learns how the tree grows from seed to sapling, from sapling to maturity, at last ready to offer more life;
4. And from maturity to age and sleep, whence it returns to the elements of things.
5. The elements in turn feed new births; such is nature's method, and its parallel with the course of humankind.
6. It was from the fall of a fruit from such a tree that new inspiration came for inquiry into the nature of things,
7. When Newton sat in his garden, and saw what no one had seen before: that an apple draws the earth to itself, and the earth the apple,
8. Through a mutual force of nature that holds all things, from the planets to the stars, in unifying embrace.
9. So all things are gathered into one thing: the universe of nature, in which there are many worlds: the orbs of light in an immensity of space and time,
10. And among them their satellites, on one of which is a part of nature that mirrors nature in itself,
11. And can ponder its beauty and significance, and seek to understand it: this is humankind.
12. All other things, in their cycles and rhythms, exist in and of themselves;
13. But in humankind there is experience also, which is what makes good and its opposite,
14. In both of which humankind seeks to grasp the meaning of things.

Chapter 2

1. Those who first set themselves to discover nature's secrets and designs, fearlessly opposing mankind's early ignorance, deserve our praise;
2. For they began the quest to measure what once was unmeasurable, to discern its laws, and conquer time itself by understanding.
3. New eyes were needed to see what lay hidden in ignorance, new language to express the unknown,
4. New hope that the world would reveal itself to inquiry and investigation.
5. They sought to unfold the world's primordial sources, asking how nature yields its abundance and fosters it,

6. And where in its course everything goes when it ends, either to change or cease.
7. The first inquirers named nature's elements atoms, matter, seeds, primal bodies, and understood that they are coeval with the world;
8. They saw that nothing comes from nothing, so that discovering the elements reveals how the things of nature exist and evolve.
9. Fear holds dominion over people when they understand little, and need simple stories and legends to comfort and explain;
10. But legends and the ignorance that give them birth are a house of limitations and darkness.
11. Knowledge is freedom, freedom from ignorance and its offspring fear; knowledge is light and liberation,
12. Knowledge that the world contains itself, and its origins, and the mind of man,
13. From which comes more knowledge, and hope of knowledge again.
14. Dare to know: that is the motto of enlightenment.

Chapter 3

1. All things take their origin from earlier kinds:
2. Ancestors of most creatures rose from the sea, some inhabitants of the sea evolved from land-dwelling forefathers;
3. Birds descend from creatures that once ran flightless on the ground;
4. Horned cattle, the herds and all the wild creatures of nature, that graze both the wasteland and the sown, are the progeny of earlier kinds.
5. Nor do fruits for ever keep their ancient forms, but grow new forms through time and nature's changing course.
6. Could such be the outcome of an anarchy in things, arbitrarily arising from nothing? No:
7. For nature is orderly, and works by measure; all things arise from the elements in their generations,
8. Each kind exists by its own nature, formed from the primal bodies that are their source, and descended by steps through life's rhythms.
9. We see lavished over the lands at spring the rose, at summer heat the corn,
10. The vines that mellow when autumn brings them to ripeness, because the seeds of things at their own season stream together,
11. And new forms and births are revealed when their due times arrive, and pregnant earth safely gives her offspring to the shores of light.
12. But if they came from nothing, without order and natural law, they might suddenly appear, unforeseen, in alien months, without parent;
13. Nor would they grow from living seeds, if life were an arbitrary product of emptiness or chaos:
14. Then the newborn infant would suddenly walk a man, and from the turf would leap a full-branched tree;
15. Rather, by nature each thing increases in order from its seed,

and through its increase conserves its kind.

Chapter 4

1. From this comes the proof that nature's bounty has proper origins in all its forms.
2. The fruitful earth, without its seasons of rains and sun, could not bear the produce that makes us glad,
3. And everything that lives, if deprived of nourishment, could neither survive nor further its kind.
4. We see that all things have elements in common, as we see letters common to many words.
5. Why should nature not make men large enough to ford the seas afoot, or tear mountains with their hands,
6. Or conquer time with great length of days, if it were not that all things are subject to proportion?
7. We see how far the tilled fields surpass the untilled, returning to the labour of our hands their more abounding crops;
8. Would we see, without toil of ours, the straight furrow and the tended orchard, fairer forms than ours coming from spontaneous generation? Yes;
9. For nature likewise is a husbandman, whose ploughshare turns the fertile soil and kneads the mould, quickening life to birth;
10. Nothing comes from nothing; all things have their origins in nature's laws, and by their edicts reach the shores of light.

Chapter 5

1. When things fall and decay they return to primal bodies again; nothing perishes to annihilation.
2. For if time, that wastes with age the works of all the world, destroyed things entirely, how would nature's generations replenish themselves, kind by kind?
3. How might the water-springs of the mountain, and the far-flowing inland rivers, keep the oceans full?
4. And what feeds the stars? Time and ages must otherwise eat all things away, except that nature's laws infallibly rule that nothing returns to nothing.
5. Behold, the rains, streamed down from the sky, sink into the earth; then springs up the shining grain,
6. And boughs are green amid the trees, and trees themselves are heavy with fruit.
7. By these gifts of nature mankind and all creatures are fed; so joyful cities thrive with children, and woodlands echo with birdsong;
8. Cattle, fat and drowsy, lay their bulk in the pastures while their milk flows, and sheep grow their wool on lush hillsides;
9. Nature offers its bounties; the kind earth gives up its stores; then what is given returns to its source, to prepare bounties anew;
10. Nothing perishes utterly, nor does anything come to birth but through some other thing's death,
11. For death is nothing but the origin

of life, as life is the compensation of death.

Chapter 6

1. And now, since nature teaches that things cannot be born from nothing,
2. Nor the same, when born, be recalled to nothingness, do not doubt this truth because our eyes cannot see the minute parts of things.
3. For mark those bodies which, though known and felt, yet are invisible:
4. The winds lash our face and frame, unseen, and swamp ships at sea when the waves rage, and rend the clouds,
5. Or, eddying wildly down, strew the plains with broken branches, or scour the mountaintops with forest-rending blasts.
6. The winds are invisible, yet they sweep sea, lands, the clouds along the sky, vexing and whirling all amain;
7. Invisible, yet mighty as the river flood that dashes houses and trees headlong down its raging course,
8. So that even a solid bridge cannot bide the shock when floods overwhelm: the turbulent stream,
9. Strong with a hundred rains, beats round the piers, crashes with havoc, and rolls beneath its waves down-topped masonry and ponderous stone,
10. Hurling away whatever opposes it. Even so the blasts of the hurricane, like a mighty flood hither or thither driving all before,

11. Or sometimes in their circling vortex seizing and bearing helpless objects in whirlwinds down the world:
12. Yet these invisible winds are real, both in works and ways rivalling mighty rivers whose waters we can see.

Chapter 7

1. Consider, too, we know the varied perfumes of things, yet never see the scent touch our nostrils;
2. With eyes we do not see heat, nor cold, yet we feel them; nor do we see men's voices, yet we hear them: everything is corporeal,
3. All things are body or arise from it; the real is the corporeal, visible and invisible alike.
4. Raiment, hung by the surf-beaten shore, grows moist; the same, spread before the sun, then dries;
5. No one saw how the moisture sank in, nor how it was lifted by heat. Thus we know that moisture is dispersed in parts too small to see.
6. A ring upon the finger thins away along the under side, with the passing of the years;
7. Raindrops dripping from our roof's eaves will scoop the stone;
8. The hooked ploughshare, though of iron, wastes insidiously amid the furrows of the fields.
9. We see the rock-paved highways worn by many feet, and the gates' bronze statues show right hands leaner from the greeting touch of wayfarers.

10. We see how wearing-down diminishes these, but what tiny parts depart, the envious nature of vision bars from our sight.
11. Lastly whatever days and nature add little by little, constraining things to grow in due proportion,
12. No unaided gaze, however keen, sees. No more can we observe what time steals, when things wane with age and decay,
13. Or when salt seas eat away the beetling cliffs. Thus nature by unseen bodies and forces works;
14. Thus the elements and seeds of nature lie far beneath the ordinary gaze of eyes,
15. Needing instead the mind's gaze, the eye of science and reason's eye, to penetrate and understand;
16. And at last the instruments that man's ingenuity has devised, to see and record the minute parts of things,
17. And nature's ultimates, from which its infinite variety is built.

Chapter 8

1. Bodies are unions of the primal atoms. And these no power can quench; they live by their own powers, and endure.
2. Though it is hard to think that anything is solid; for lightnings pass, like sound, through walls,
3. And iron liquefies in fire, and rocks burn with fierce exhalations in the volcano's heart, and burst asunder;
4. Rigid gold dissolves in heat; cold

- bronze melts, conquered by the flame;
5. Warmth and the piercing cold seep through silver, since, with cup in hand, we often feel either, when liquid pours in;
6. It seems that nothing truly solid can be found, other than the world's foundation of elements.
7. But if nature had given scope for things to be dissolved for ever, no more rejoined or renewed in being,
8. By now all bodies that once existed would be reduced to ultimate parts alone, nothing returned or built from them again.
9. For each thing is quicker marred than made; whatever the long infinitude of days and all fore-passed time dissolved,
10. That same could never refurnish the world, no matter how much time remained.
11. Yet we see things renewed, in their seasons and after their kind: renewed or new made, by nature's laws and necessities;
12. We see how things endure, great crags of basalt and bars of strong iron, demonstrating the foundations of nature's frame.
13. The entities and forces underlying everything are powerful in their ancient simplicity, knitting and tying all objects.
14. By this they show their strength, binding each other by bonds which our senses do not perceive:
15. A bonding that exists within all

- parts, in the minima of nature,
each thing itself a parcel of another,
16. From which other parts and others
similar in order lie, packed in
phalanx: the plenitude of body.
 17. Whatever has parts, its parts have
their bonds, connections and
motions, whereby things have
being, and continue, decay, and
renew.
 18. What is less than atoms make
atoms; and atoms, molecules; and
these in the animate and inanimate
make the solid, liquid and gaseous
varieties that in their systems and
relationships are nature,
 19. Forming everything from the
animalcule to the host of stars that
figure the night with brilliance, vast
in time and space.

Chapter 9

1. The generations of the world and
life in the world evolve, one from
another, through the vastness of
time.
2. Earths from each sun burst, and
second planets issued from the first;
3. Then the sea at their coeval birth,
surge over surge, involved the
shoreless earth;
4. Nursed by warm sunlight in the
primeval caves, organic life arose
beneath the waves.
5. First, heat from chemical changes
springs, and gives to matter its
elliptic wings;
6. With strong repulsion parts the
exploding mass, melts into solids,
or kindles into gas.
7. Attraction next, as earth or air
subside, the heavy atoms from the
light divide,
8. Approaching parts with quick
embrace combine, swell into
spheres, and lengthen to a line.
9. Last, as fine goads the matter-
threads excite, cords grapple cords,
and webs with webs unite,
10. And quick contraction with
ethereal flame lights into life the
atom-woven frame.
11. Hence in biochemical spontaneous
birth rose the first specks of
animated earth;
12. From nature's womb the plant or
insect swims, and buds or breathes,
with microscopic limbs.
13. In earth, sea, air, around, below,
above, life's subtle web in nature's
loom is wove;
14. Points joined to points a living line
extends, and touched by light
approach the bending ends.
15. Rings join to rings; and outreach-
ing tubes clasp with young lips the
nutrient globes or cubes,
16. And urged by new appetencies
select, imbibe, retain, digest,
secrete, eject.
17. In branching cones the living web
expands, organs grow, and life-
giving glands;
18. Arterial tubes carry nascent blood,
and lengthening veins return the
crimson flood;
19. Leaves, lungs and gills the vital
ether breathe, on earth's green
surface, or in the waves beneath.
20. So life's first powers arrest the winds

and floods, to bones convert them,
or to shells, or woods;

21. Stretch the vast beds of argil, lime
and sand, and from diminished
oceans form the land.

Chapter 10

1. Next, nerves unite their long
synaptic train, and new sensations
wake the early brain;
2. Through each new sense the keen
emotions dart, flush the cheek, and
swell the throbbing heart.
3. From pain and pleasure quick
volitions rise, command the limbs
and guide enquiring eyes;
4. With reason's light new-woken man
direct, and right and wrong with
balance nice detect.
5. Last, multiple associations spring,
thoughts join to thoughts, feelings
to emotions cling;
6. Whence in long trains of linkage
quickly flow imagined joy and
voluntary woe.
7. Organic life beneath the shoreless
waves was born and nursed in
ocean's pearly caves;
8. First forms minute, unseen by
microscope, swim the sea, or climb
the muddy slope;
9. These, as successive generations
bloom, new powers acquire, and
larger forms assume;
10. Whence countless forms of vegeta-
tion spring, and breathing realms of
fin, and feet, and wing.
11. Thus came our world and life, a
natural realm, from nature born,
with nature at the helm:

12. By evolution, in the aeons vast,
since life first rose, to complex life
at last.

Chapter 11

1. In all species, nature works to renew
itself as it works to nourish itself,
and to protect itself from danger,
2. Each by its kind and for its kind, in
the great work of continuation that
is evolution.
3. In humankind the work of renewal
lies in the work of affection, the
bond of one to another made by
desire;
4. Among the objects that nature
everywhere offers desire, there is
little more worthy of pursuit, little
that makes people happier,
5. Than the enjoyment of another
who thinks and feels as oneself,
6. Who has the same ideas, experi-
ences the same sensations, the same
ecstasies,
7. Who brings affectionate and
sensitive arms towards one's own,
8. Whose embraces and caresses are
followed with the existence of a
new being who resembles its
progenitors,
9. And looks for them in the first
movements of life to embrace
them,
10. Who will be brought up by their
side to be loved together, whose
happy birth already strengthens the
ties that bind its parents together.
11. If there is anyone who could take
offence at the praise given to the
most noble and universal of

- passions, let us evoke nature before him, and make it speak.
12. For nature would say: 'Why do you blush to hear the praise of pleasure, when you do not blush to indulge its temptations under cover of night?
 13. 'Are you ignorant of its purpose and of what you owe to it?
 14. 'Do you believe that your own mother would have imperilled her life to give you yours if there were not inexpressible charms in the embrace of her husband?
 15. 'Be quiet, unhappy man, and consider that it was this pleasure that pulled you out of nothingness, and gave you life.
 16. 'The propagation of beings is the greatest object of nature. It imperiously solicits both sexes as soon as they have gained their share of strength and beauty.
 17. 'A vague and brooding restlessness warns them of the moment; their condition is mixed with pain and pleasure.
 18. 'At that time they listen to their senses and turn their attention to themselves.
 19. 'But if an individual should be presented to another of the same species and of a different sex,
 20. 'Then the feeling of all other needs is suspended: the heart palpitates, the limbs tremble;
 21. 'Voluptuous images wander through the mind; a flood of sensations runs through the nerves, excites them,
 22. 'And proceeds to the seat of a new sense that reveals itself and torments the body.
 23. 'Sight is troubled, delirium is born; reason, the slave of instinct, limits itself to serving the latter, and nature is satisfied.
 24. 'This is the way things took place at the beginning of the world,
 25. 'And the way they still take place among the silks of the wealthy boudoir, just as in the shadows of the savage's cave.'
 26. Such is the great command of nature, that in a hundred thousand ways and forms, seeds flood in abundance and super-abundance,
 27. Sea and air in season float myriads of possible lives; man and animals in season turn to their mates, obedient to desire;
 28. Spring sees newborns emerge into light, or call from the nest for sustenance; and at the mother's breast the suckling lies,
 29. Proof that no human law or folly can change the river of life, that must flow in its power from the beginning always onwards,
 30. And seek every path to its future, accepting no obstacle or hindrance.
 31. For its one monarch is nature, its one guide nature's hand, its one aim fulfilment of nature's great imperatives.

Chapter 12

1. I wander afield, thriving in studious thought, through unpathed groves of woods trodden by none before.

2. I delight to come on undefiled
fountains there, to drink their cool
waters deep,
3. To pluck new flowers, and the
leaves of laurel and green myrtle,
4. To make a crown for my head from
regions where inquiry never yet
garlanded the brow of man.
5. For, since I teach concerning
mighty things, and seek to loose
man's mind from coils of blinding
ignorance;
6. Since I vouchsafe themes so large,
of smallest and greatest, of origin
and end, in nature's broad empire,
7. I choose a path without brambles,
and frame a lucid song, touching
all throughout with charm,
8. As when physicians, needing to
give infants the bitter wormwood,
first spread the cup's brim with
juice and honey,
9. That the unheeding child might be
cajoled as far as the lips, and
meanwhile swallow a healthsome
draught;
10. So now I too expound in song,
soft-speaking, to touch with honey
the rim of truth.
11. If one thereby might teach the
world, its multitudes would cease
the strife that ignorances bring,
12. Knowing truth at last, and the
nature of things.

Chapter 13

1. Let us admit no more causes of
natural things than are both true
and sufficient to explain what we
see.
2. For it is observed that nature does
nothing in vain, and more is vain
where less will serve.
3. Nature is pleased with simplicity,
and does not need the pomp of
superfluous causes.
4. Always assign the same effects to
the same causes, as respiration in a
man and in a beast;
5. As the geological formations of
mountains in Europe and in
America;
6. As the heat of our cooking fire and
the heat of the sun;
7. As the reflection of light on the
earth and by the planets.
8. For the same laws apply every-
where, and the phenomena of
nature are the same, whether here
at hand or in a distant galaxy.
9. Those qualities of bodies, which
admit neither intension nor
remission of degrees,
10. And which are found to belong to
all bodies within the reach of our
investigations,
11. Are to be esteemed the universal
qualities of bodies everywhere.
12. For since the qualities of bodies are
only known to us by experiment,
we are to hold for universal all such
as universally agree with
experiment.
13. We are not to ignore the evidence
of experiments for the sake of
dreams and fictions of our own
devising;
14. Nor are we to part from the
analogy of nature, which is simple,
and always consonant to itself.

15. We know the extension of bodies only by means of our senses, and our senses do not reach into all the parts of bodies;
16. But because we perceive extension in everything that we can sense, therefore we ascribe it universally to what we cannot directly sense.
17. This is the order and discipline of science.
18. We are to look upon propositions collected by general induction from phenomena as accurately or nearly true, notwithstanding any contrary hypotheses that may be imagined,
19. Till such time as other phenomena occur, by which they may either be refuted, or made more accurate.
20. This rule we must follow, that the argument of induction may not be evaded by hypotheses.
6. We cannot hope that the errors which have hitherto prevailed, and which will prevail for ever if inquiry is left uninstructed and uncorrected, will correct themselves;
7. Because the early notions of things, which our minds in childhood or without education so readily and passively imbibe,
8. Are false, confused, and overhastily abstracted from the facts; nor are the secondary and subsequent notions we form from them less arbitrary and inconstant.
9. It follows that the entire fabric of human reason employed in the inquisition of nature, is badly built up, like a great structure lacking foundations.
10. For while people are occupied in admiring and applauding the false powers of the mind, they pass by and throw away its true powers,

Chapter 14

1. I am convinced that the human intellect makes its own difficulties, not using the true, sober and judicious methods of inquiry at our disposal,
2. From which comes the manifold ignorance of things which causes innumerable mischiefs in the world.
3. Therefore let us try to see whether that commerce between the human mind and the nature of things,
4. A commerce more precious than anything on earth, for it is nothing less than the search for truth,
5. Can be perfected; or if not, yet improved to a better condition than it now displays.

11. Which, if supplied with proper aids, and if content to wait upon nature instead of vainly affecting to overrule her, are within its reach.
12. Such is the way to truth and the advancement of understanding.

Chapter 15

1. There was but one course left, at the dawn of true science:
2. To try the whole anew on a better plan, and to commence a reconstruction of human knowledge on proper foundations.
3. And this, though in the project and undertaking it may seem a thing

- infinite and beyond the powers of man,
4. Yet when it came to be dealt with was found sound and sober, vastly more so than what had been done before.
 5. For from this there have been great advances; whereas earlier speculations, unscientific and fanciful,
 6. Produced only a whirling and perpetual agitation, ending where it began.
 7. And although the first encouragers of enquiry were aware how solitary an enterprise it would at first be,
 8. To encourage science where there had been only ignorance drawn from the dreams of mankind's infancy,
 9. And how hard a thing to win credit for, nevertheless they were resolved not to abandon the attempt,
 10. Nor to be deterred from trying and entering upon the great path of truth open to human inquiry.
 11. For it is better to make a beginning in that which may lead to something,
 12. Than to engage in perpetual struggle and pursuit in courses which have no exit.
 13. And certainly the two ways of contemplation are much like those two ways of action, so much celebrated, in this:
 14. That the one, arduous and difficult in the beginning, leads out at last into open country;
 15. While the other, seeming at first sight easy and free from obstruction, leads to pathless and precipitous places.
 16. Moreover, because people did not know how long it might be before these things would occur to others,
 17. Judging especially from this, that they had found no one who had hitherto applied thought to the like,
 18. They resolved at once to say as much as they were able. The cause of which was not ambition for themselves, but solicitude for true knowledge;
 19. That there might remain some outline and project of what could be achieved for the benefit of humanity.
 20. Many other ambitions of the human breast seem poor compared with such work,
 21. Seeing that the task is a thing so great that it can be content with its own merit, requiring no further reward:
 22. For it is nothing less than seeking to understand the world, and mankind within it:
 23. It is nothing less than science, mankind's greatest endeavour, greatest achievement, and greatest promise:
 24. If only humanity will be wise in its use.