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CHRIST AND THE SCRIPTURES



ADOLPH SAPHIR

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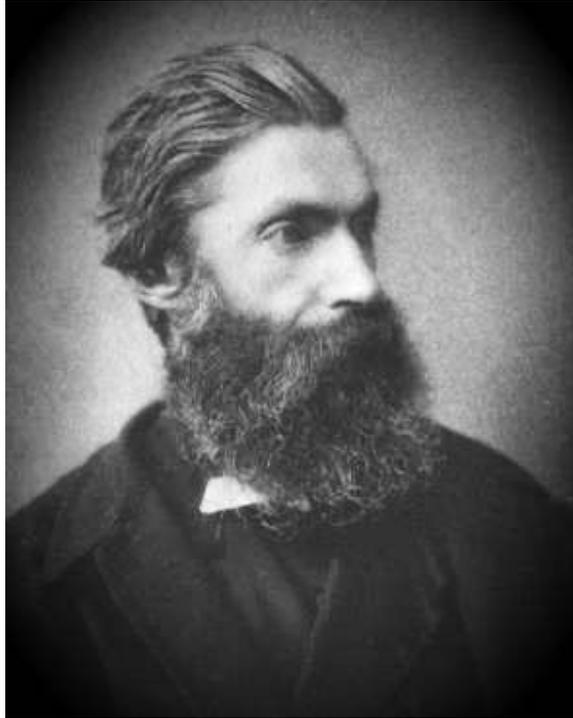


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“That God Himself May Through His Word Speak”

(1831—1891)

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PREFATORY NOTE

The following pages contain the substance of a few discourses, delivered in the ordinary course of my ministrations to my congregation, and also at two special meetings. It need scarcely be said that their aim is not a systematic or exhaustive treatment of the subject, but to suggest some thoughts which may be helpful to the reader in his view of Scripture, as related to Christ and to the Holy Spirit.

Greenwich, March, 1867.

CHRIST AND THE SCRIPTURES

COVER.....2

PREFATORY NOTE6

THE BOOK AND THE PERSON.....9

JESUS AND THE SCRIPTURES14

 1. HIS TEACHING IN GENERAL14

 2. IN THE INNER CIRCLE OF DISCIPLES.....20

 3. CHRIST’S USE OF SCRIPTURE FOR HIMSELF IN HIS CONFLICT
 AND PRAYER.....24

 4. CHRIST’S USE OF SCRIPTURE IN GLORY28

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES29

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIBLE—EVIDENCES OF ITS
DIVINE ORIGIN.....39

 1. THE SUBLIME DOCTRINE40

 2. PROPHECY44

 3. THE ISOLATED POSITION OF THE BOOK.....54

 4. THE MARVELLOUS PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE56

 5. THE CATHOLICITY [UNIVERSALITY] OF THE BIBLE.....58

ISRAEL’S MESSIAH—THE LIVING AND THE WRITTEN WORD60

SCRIPTURE AND THE HOLY GHOST.....69

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE
PRESENT AGE111

 1. STUDY OF THE BIBLE111

 2. BIBLIOLATRY116

 3. PRACTICAL CHARACTER OF THE BIBLE127

 4. CHRISTIANS THE BEST EVIDENCE OF THE BIBLE.....140

CHRIST AND THE SCRIPTURES

5. JOYOUS.....141
APPENDIX.....143
“JAPHETIC AND SHEMITIC”143

THE BOOK AND THE PERSON

1

*“In the volume of the Book it is written of Me.”*¹ Martin Luther asks, “What Book and what Person?” “There is only one Book,” is his reply—“Scripture; and only one Person—Jesus Christ.”

There subsists an essential and vital connection between the eternal Word of God, who in the fulness of time was made flesh and dwelt among us, revealing the Father and bringing salvation, even eternal life, to the sinful children of men, and that written Word which testifies of Him, of his person and work, of his sufferings and glory. It is impossible for us to understand the nature of Scripture unless we view it in relation to the Son of God, the Messiah of Israel, the Redeemer of God’s people; for He is the centre and kernel of the inspired record.

The Book lives amongst us,—old, but not antiquated; venerable on account of its age; powerful in never-failing youth and vigor. The echo of David’s voice is still heard in the chambers of meditation and prayer; the counsel of Solomon’s wisdom and experience is still aiding the wanderer in the complicated paths of life; young Timothy is still taught from his very childhood out of these hallowed pages; the Apostle Paul, according to the wisdom given unto him, is still unfolding to us the whole counsel of God; whilst the beloved disciple, in fulfillment of the Lord’s prediction, still tarries with us, and lifts us up, as on eagles’ wings, to adore the Eternal Son, and to wait for his return.

¹ PSALM 40:7, HEBREWS 10:7

The Person, the blessed Jesus, is a living One in the midst of us. It is a striking peculiarity of our age, that the attention of thoughtful minds is so pre-eminently fixed on one point, and this the central one. It is the centre of the world's history, the centre of the life of the Church, the centre of all questions which agitate the consciences and hearts of immortal men, as it is the centre of the Divine counsels. What else can I mean but the history of Jesus Christ on earth? In no age have there been so many attempts made to reconstruct, so to speak, the history of Jesus. In no age has the cry been raised from so many quarters, *Ecce Homo!*² — "*Behold the Man!*"³ Is it that there is a growing consciousness among men, that He was "*Wonderful,*"⁴ that never man spake like Him⁵, and that the influence He exerted on the world is something that is mysterious and unique?

Nor need we be astonished at the strange misconceptions and grievous errors into which men fall, who are trying to understand Jesus as they understand other historical men. For the name of Jesus is "PELE',"⁶ Wonderful, Enigma. His person, his character, his life, cannot be explained by the ordinary rules. They refuse to be classified under the ordinary categories. He is the Great Miracle, the Eternal in Time, God and Man. He is not even in his humanity intelligible, except on the territory of revelation, or to speak more distinctly, on Jewish ground. From the Jewish

² Latin for "*Behold the Man*" (JOHN 19:5)

³ JOHN 19:5

⁴ ISAIAH 9:6

⁵ JOHN 7:46

⁶ H6381; a miracle: marvellous thing, wonder (-ful, -fully) (ISAIAH 9:6)

Scriptures we must learn what is meant by his being the Son of David and the Son of Abraham; what the words “*Son of Man*”⁷ imply, and the word “*Anointed*,”⁸ “*Messiah*,”⁹ of whom Moses and the prophets spake. For the history of Jesus does not begin with his birth in Bethlehem. The first verse of Matthew sums up the Old Testament history; nor can the sequel of the Gospels, Epistles, and Apocalypse be understood without it. His goings forth are from of old. He who understands not the election of Abram, the exodus of Israel, the Angel of Jehovah, the types of the Tabernacle, the High Priest, and the Sacrifices, the meaning of the shepherd-king, the son of Jesse, and of the sure mercies of David, must find insuperable [insurmountable] difficulties in the life of Christ. All attempts to understand Jesus Christ, separate from the Old Testament, are most unphilosophical, and can tend to no satisfactory result. For Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of Moses and the prophets. He is not the Christ of history, but of a special history—the divine history of Israel. True, He is the Light of the World, He is the Desire of all Nations, He is the Centre and Life of Humanity; but He is all this because He is the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, for salvation is of the Jews. The Gospel narrative is like a high table land, but we cannot be spared the ascent from Genesis to Malachi.

When the beauty of Christ's character, and the simplicity and depth of his teaching, attract men's minds, they flatter themselves that Jesus is the efflorescence [substance] of humanity, that history has produced Him, that nature is glorified in Him. But salvation is

⁷ MARK 13:34, LUKE 6:22

⁸ PSALM 2:2

⁹ DANIEL 9:25-26

of the Lord. Jesus is above all, because He is from above. He came in the fulness of time, and belonged to Israel; the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. When Jesus quotes the Scriptures, this does not merely prove to us that He regarded them as authority and truth, but it reveals to us the organic, vital, and necessary connection between the Christ and the Nation; and if there are any who are not able clearly to understand the meaning of his life and the secret of his mission, to whom his death appears as a mysterious problem, and who walk in doubt and gloom even now that the Church testifies of Him continually that He lives above for us, that He lives on earth in us—in no other way can they be brought into the clear and full light than as the disciples on their way to Emmaus. Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, the risen Jesus expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

It appears like reasoning in a circle when we say we receive the Bible because of Christ, and we receive Christ through the Bible. But the difficulty disappears when we view Jesus Christ in connection with the nation of Israel, and with God's dealings towards them, as recorded in Scripture; and then we see, that there is a *nation* different from all nations—the Jews—chosen by God that He may reveal Himself to and through them; there is a *Man* different from all men, the Lord from heaven, Jesus the Son of David, the Son of God, Messiah of Israel and Head of the Church; and there is a *Book* different from all other books, the record of God's dealings with Israel, culminating in the manifestation of that Redeemer whose goings forth are from of old, even from everlasting. The difficulty disappears when we remember, secondly, that the same Spirit of God convinces us of the

supremacy of Christ and of the supremacy of Scripture.

And, accordingly, we find that as the hearts of men are attracted by Jesus Christ, as the only Prophet, Priest, and King, their minds are filled with reverence and love for the Scripture. The Reformation is based upon the two principles— Christ only, Christ above all; and the Scriptures only, the Bible above all human authority.¹⁰ Luther found peace for his troubled conscience in Jesus as the Righteousness of God. And because Jesus had become all in all to him, he laid such stress on the Bible, where he had found Jesus. It was Jesus who riveted his heart, and it was Jesus on whose account and in whom he felt, as he expressed it, wedded to the Bible.

For higher than the Bible is—not reason, not the Church, not the Christian consciousness, but—*the Holy Ghost*, who reveals Christ in the written Word, so that it becomes to us, what it truly is, the Word of God, the voice of the Beloved.

The relation of Scripture to Jesus—the Messiah of Israel, and Saviour of the world, and to the Holy Ghost, whose it is to glorify Christ, is the chief subject of the following pages. And first we inquire, What did Jesus think and teach concerning the Scripture—the writings of “*Moses and the prophets?*”¹¹

¹⁰ The historical, Jewish, prophetic, character of Scripture was not clearly apprehended by the Reformers

¹¹ The Scripture—called by Jesus “*Moses and the prophets,*” “*the law and the prophets,*” “*Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms*”—embraced what are commonly called the canonical books of the Old Testament, concerning whose authority there was no doubt in Israel [LUKE 16:29,31; MATTHEW 7:12; 22:40; LUKE 16:16; 24:44].

JESUS AND THE SCRIPTURES¹²

2

1. HIS TEACHING IN GENERAL

JESUS, in his teaching, constantly alludes to the writings of Moses and the prophets. He refers to almost every period of the history recorded in Scripture. He speaks of the creation of man, the institution of marriage, the death of Abel, the days of Noe [Noah], the destruction of Sodom, the history of Abraham, the appearance of God in the burning bush, the manna in the wilderness, the miracle of the brazen serpent, the wanderings of David, the glory of Solomon, the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, the sign of Jonah, the martyrdom of Zechariah; events which embrace the whole range of the Jewish record. And not merely do we meet with these direct references: the allusions to Scripture are almost

¹² * In the following pages the writings of Moses and the prophets are called "*Scripture*," (JOHN 5:39) and the writings of the evangelists and apostles are viewed chiefly as inspired interpretation of this Scripture, and inspired record of its fulfillment. I have scarcely entered on the peculiar character of the so-called New Testament, its Divine authority, and the special position it holds in the Church. The distinction between the two records seems to me to consist in this: the one is the book of the Kingdom, the Theocracy; the other the book of the Church. The gospel, the covenant of grace in Christ, the way of life, is revealed in *both*; promised in the one, fulfilled in the other. But while the view, the laws, the promises, in the one refer primarily to the *Kingdom*, the other is given for and to the *Church*, the mystery of which it unfolds. The book of the Kingdom refers to Israel, both its past history and future glory. But it is, notwithstanding its Jewish character, universal; because the foundation on which Israel rests is the purpose of God, which embraces all nations. Hence the universal character of Genesis, and the universal character of the prophecies. In like manner the book of the Church is, notwithstanding its world-wide character, Jewish; always maintaining its connection with Israel, and always looking forward to the conclusion of this era—the times of the Gentiles.

innumerable; and every careful reader of Christ's discourses, who possesses a knowledge of the so-called Old Testament, must feel convinced that Jesus knew the Scripture from a child; and that his mind, his memory, his imagination, his whole inner man, was filled with the treasures of the written Word.

Consider Christ in his relation to the people in general, and their teachers and spiritual rulers. In teaching them and arguing with them, the Lord invariably refers to the Scripture as the authority which cannot be gainsayed [refuted]; the standard which is infallible, and against which there is no appeal. He teaches according to Scripture; his doctrine, his works, his aim, his life, are to fulfill that which is written. When He entered the synagogue of Nazareth, and the eyes of all were fixed on Him, He called for the roll of the prophecy of Isaiah, and in the words of the prophet (Isaiah 61) announced to them the object of his mission as the Saviour of sinners. "*How readest thou? What is written in the law?*" ¹³ is his frequent reply to the questions addressed to Him. He reminds the cities which heard Him, of Tyre and Sidon and Sodom. He speaks of the sign of Jonah to the Pharisees who demand a miracle. He explains to the messengers of John, in the words of the prophet Isaiah, the works which prove that He is the promised Messiah.

To the Jews who followed Him in the wilderness, He speaks of the manna; to Nicodemus, of the brazen serpent; and frequently He shows that Moses wrote of Him, and that the Scripture is the only and all-sufficient message of God; leaving men without excuse, and proving their unbelief, which even the apparition of one rising from the dead would not conquer (Luke 16). The

¹³ LUKE 10:26

conduct of the children singing his praise He defends by the words of the eighth Psalm: “*Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast ordained strength.*”¹⁴ He proves his Divine dignity by quoting the Spirit-taught words of David, “*The LORD said unto my Lord.*”¹⁵ When accused by the Jews of blasphemy, because He made Himself equal with God, He shows from the expression in the Psalms, “*Ye are gods,*”¹⁶ that He whom the Father hath sealed was high above those to whom the Word of God had come; and He fortifies his argument by reminding the Jews of what they all admitted, that the Scripture cannot be broken. Every link of the chain is perfect;—not one can be taken away,—even as every one of them is reliable and solid. When He speaks of his rejection and the future of the nation, He views it as the fulfillment of prophecy, of what is written in the 118th Psalm about the stone rejected by the builders, and in Daniel of the stone which should crush the ungodly. In arguing with the Sadducees, Christ proves the resurrection by the spiritual exposition of a single expression which God had used, and which is recorded by the Holy Ghost in the book of Exodus. And on this occasion. He shows the source of error. If we know not the power of God, and the Scripture, we err. These two go together. An outward knowledge of the letter of Scripture without an inward experience of the power of God, is without avail; the spiritual experience of God’s power is always accompanied with the knowledge and love of Scripture.

These direct references to Moses and the prophets—so numerous, so striking, so solemn, and so comprehensive—must be

¹⁴ PSALM 8:2 (MATTHEW 21:16)

¹⁵ PSALM 110:1

¹⁶ PSALM 82:6

taken in connection with the more concealed allusions to Scripture thoughts and teaching, with which Christ's discourses are replete. In his sermon on the mount, in the discourses recorded in the Gospel of John, in his conversations with his disciples, in the parables, there is scarcely a thought which is not in some manner connected with the Scripture. All Christ's thoughts and expressions have been moulded in that wonderful school of the testimony which God had given to his chosen people. To mention only one or two instances: He calls Himself the Bridegroom, and thus defends the joy of his disciples, who did not fast. This word "*bridegroom*" is an epitome [perfect representation] of the whole Scripture. The forty-fifth Psalm, the Song of Solomon, Jeremiah 3, Hosea 2, etc., are all condensed in this one word. In the same way how significant the title Jesus gives Himself as "*the Son of Man*."¹⁷ (Ezekiel, Daniel, and Psalm 8)

If the sayings of Jesus had been understood in their scriptural meaning and tone, it would have been impossible for Socinianism [A form of Arianism which both rejects that Jesus is God, and, also that Jesus consciously existed before his birth] to maintain its ground for a moment; and in the refutation of this heresy the argument would not have been limited so much to a few isolated texts. When Jesus said, "*If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink,*"¹⁸ the reference is to Jeremiah 2:13, where Jehovah calls Himself "*the fountain of living waters*"¹⁹; and this single word of Christ manifests Him either as the Lord God or a blasphemer. When Jesus declares of Himself that He is the Light

¹⁷ MATTHEW 16:13, etc

¹⁸ JOHN 7:37

¹⁹ JEREMIAH 2:13; 17:13

and that He is the Life, He speaks as Jehovah (Psalm 36:9), with whom is the fountain of life, and in whose light we shall see light. His words, *“Thy sins are forgiven thee,”* ²⁰ are like the words of Jehovah, *“I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions”*²¹ (Isaiah 43:25). When the Jews ask Jesus who He is, his reply is, *“Even He that speaketh unto you from the beginning”*²²; as Jehovah had said in Isaiah²³, *“Therefore my people shall know my name: therefore they shall know in that day that I am He that doth speak: behold, it is I”* (John 8:25; Isaiah 52:6). Especially in the Gospel of John is it remarkable how often Jesus speaks of Himself as *“I,” “I am He,” “I Am”*; the name of God in Moses and the prophets: even as his *“Amen, amen, I say unto you,”* refers to the promise in Isaiah 65:16 (the God Amen).

Thus Jesus constantly quoted the Scripture, and constantly spoke out of its fulness and in its spirit. And when the final and decisive question was asked by the high-priest, *“I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?”* Jesus replies, *“Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.”*²⁴ The testimony of Jesus is the word of prophecy (Psalm 110, and Daniel 7:13,14). When He speaketh Scripture, He speaketh of his own; He revealeth Himself. Before the living God, his heavenly Father

²⁰ LUKE 5:20

²¹ ISAIAH 43:25

²² JOHN 8:25

²³ ISAIAH 48:16

²⁴ MATTHEW 26:63-64

and the God of Israel, before the high-priest, as the representative of his nation, Jesus witnessed the truth, as to his person and future, in the words of that Scripture which cannot be broken, because it is inseparably connected with Himself. Remember how Christ refers to the Scripture before friend and foe, Pharisees and Sadducees, disciples and people, in the temple and in the wilderness, from the first day in Nazareth to the end of his life.²⁵

But consider Jesus referring to Scripture—

²⁵ Many other references might be added, such as Christ's twofold commentary on the words in Hosea, "*I will have mercy and not sacrifice*" (Matthew 9:13 and 12:7), showing that the Lord has selected this word as a motto or guiding principle. In speaking of the great results of faith in the Son of God, Jesus, without a special reference to an individual passage, but combining the import of several prophetic sayings, exclaimed, "*He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*" (Comp. ISAIAH 55:1; JOEL 3:18; ZECHARIAH 14:8; EZEKIEL 47) Such an expression is most significant, as showing how the mind of Jesus was always filled with Scripture.

2. IN THE INNER CIRCLE OF DISCIPLES

We see Him here, as it were, in the bosom of his family. He had chosen his disciples out of the world to be his companions, his witnesses. They are the friends whom He loves, and to whom, as they were able to bear it, He desired to reveal all his thoughts. Here we expect to gain an insight into his true and inmost view of Scripture; and here we find the same implicit reverence for the written Word, and the same faith in its authority, power, and blessedness. When the disciples asked Him *privately*, why He spake to the multitudes in parables, He replied by quoting the prophecy of Isaiah (6:9), and referred in general to the prophets and righteous men, who desired to hear and see what it was now the blessedness of his followers to witness. In like manner, when Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives, his disciples came unto Him *privately*, asking him about the end of the world; the Lord in his reply confirmed the Scripture. He is here speaking as a prophet, and in this his prophecy He refers his disciples to what was spoken by Daniel the prophet.²⁶ He likewise refers in the same chapter to Joel, and views the history of the world in the days of Noah as prophetic of the future.

Especially during the latter part of his life on earth, when He began to speak to his disciples of his sufferings, He showed that He was continually bearing in mind what was written concerning Him, and that He was looking forward to the fulfillment of the prophetic word. His disciples were not able to understand the mystery of the cross; they were not willing to accustom their

²⁶ Daniel is placed by the Jews among the Hagiographa [the third of the three Jewish divisions of the Old Testament]; but Jesus here refers to him as a prophet. The importance of this single word "*prophet*" has been specially noticed in recent criticism.

minds to the idea of humiliation, suffering, and death. But Jesus refers them to Scripture *“Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and **all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished.** For He shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death: and the third day He shall rise again”* (Luke 18:31–33). With desire He desired to eat the Passover with his disciples, thus confirming, by his last solemn act in the circle of his disciples, the record of Exodus, both in its historical truth and prophetic import. And here again he refers to the prediction concerning his betrayal (Matthew 26:21–23; Psalm 41:9), adding, *“The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him.”*²⁷ That He would be reckoned among the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12), was another predicted feature of the sufferings which He spoke of to his apostles (Luke 22:37).

When the soldiers came to seize Him, He asked them in righteous indignation and calm self-defence, *“Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take Me?”* *“But,”* He immediately added, *“all this was done that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.”*²⁸ And when Peter drew his sword to defend his Lord, how remarkable is the Saviour’s reply! *“Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve-legions of angels? **But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?**”* (Matthew 26:51–56.) Scripture must needs be the perfect and immutable revelation of the inmost counsel and will of the Lord, to which Jesus, as the righteous

²⁷ MATTHEW 26:24

²⁸ MATTHEW 26:55-56

Servant and the obedient Son, implicitly and heartily submits.

If the Jews hate Him without cause, it is as it was written: “*The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him;*”²⁹ “*This that is written must be accomplished in Me.*”³⁰ Judas, who eats bread with Him, betrays Him, and the Scripture is fulfilled. All his disciples, He foresees, shall forsake Him, for it is written, “*I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.*”³¹

And after his resurrection, when He appeared not to the world, but to his disciples, how striking are his references to Scripture. According to the words of the twenty-second Psalm, He speaks now of his *brethren* (John 20:17; Psalm 22:22). When He appears to the disciples on their way to Emmaus, He could have dissipated their doubts and gloom by announcing that He, the Lord, was before them. A single word, “Behold, it is I!” would have filled them with assurance and joy. Instead of this, He remains to them a stranger. Any one who believed Moses and the prophets had the right to say to them, “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.” And then He began at Moses, and went through Moses and all the Scriptures, and unfolded to them the things concerning Himself. Thus He led them into the infallible Word of God, which discloses to us the Divine counsel of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, that their faith might rest on the testimony of God in the written Word. And during the forty days after his resurrection, the Lord spake to his disciples of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), showing that “*all things must be fulfilled which were written*

²⁹ MATTHEW 26:24

³⁰ LUKE 22:37

³¹ MATTHEW 26:31; MARK 14:27

in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me” (Luke 24:44–48). Jesus opened their understanding, that they might understand—what? Some new revelation? Some new disclosure about the unseen world? Some secret, esoteric teaching?—that they might understand the Scriptures, Moses and the prophets. What further testimony is necessary? How perfect, how precious, how full of Christ and his future glory, as well as his accomplished work, must the Jewish Scriptures be! Disciple of Jesus, read these Scriptures, if you are anxious to know Him, and to have a heart burning within you in love and reverence.

3. CHRIST'S USE OF SCRIPTURE FOR HIMSELF IN HIS CONFLICT AND PRAYER

We have been in the outer court—Christ's dealings with the people, Pharisees and Sadducees; we have been in the sanctuary—Christ among his disciples; we are now entering the holy of holies—Christ's own inner life. Something of this we have seen already. Scripture was indeed his delight, his meditation, his food. *“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.”*³²

When we read that Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man, we are taught that the Saviour, who was true man as well as the eternal Word, was in this respect also made of a woman, made under the law; that in his body, soul, and spirit, there were growth, development, progress. Not merely physical, but mental and moral development is spoken of; and it is not impossible for us to conceive of this, while we hold fast the sinless character of Jesus. The Lord became in everything like unto us, sin excepted. He was the Son of man, and the true Israelite. Doubtless the Scripture was taught Him by Mary, who, as we know from her song of praise, possessed so spiritual an insight into the Word, and by Joseph, who was a righteous man, walking in the ordinances of the Lord blameless. The Law and the Prophets were represented in this wonderful household by Joseph and by Mary, and the child Jesus was, according to God's commandment, instructed in the Scripture. Never till then was the Scripture read by One who immediately understood it, and in whose heart every word found a perfect response. And when Jesus began to preach, and to show forth his Divine mission, his words and his acts, as well as his method and manner, proceeded from a

³² MATTHEW 12:34

heart in which God's Word was hid, from One who had completely and fully identified his spiritual life with the Scripture.

Some have said, that Christ only accommodated Himself to the generally received view of Scripture authority. Let us follow Him then into solitude. See Him in the wilderness. Here are no Pharisees to refute, no Jewish people to convince. The Lord is alone, tested by the prince of this world. How does Christ gain the victory? What weapon does He use in his conflict with Satan? What is the light to shine in this darkness, the lamp unto his feet? He says: "It is written." He refers not to conscience; He does not appeal to his own feelings; He does not bring forward thoughts and opinions, but the written Word. Three times He refers to the Scripture; to the Word containing the experience of Israel in the wilderness, recorded by the Spirit. As if He meant to say: The written Word is an ultimate authority. Not merely on earth, but in the invisible realms, in the world of spirits, among the blessed angels, as well as the apostate demons, it is known that the Lord God has revealed Himself to his people in the Word. "*It is written,*"³³ Christ says to Satan, and Satan is vanquished.

"*It is written,*" Christ says to Himself in this most solemn hour of his life, in this decisive conflict of the soul. He was tested; and though the test never became temptation to Him in our sense of the word, although He did not inhale the poison, to which his perfect humanity was hermetically [completely] sealed, yet He felt the weight, the burden of the test; it was a real test, painful, difficult, oppressive. He "*suffered*" (Hebrews 2:18). And what was his cordial [welcome], as well as his weapon? His stay as well as his sword? His inward song of triumph, as well as his battle-

³³ MATTHEW 4:4, 4:7, 4:10

cry? *“It is written.”* Let us remember what the written Word is in the estimation of the spirit-world; what it was to the soul of the blessed Jesus.

We behold Jesus on the last evening before his death. It is a most solemn moment. He had spoken his “last words” to the disciples. He had eaten with them the Passover. He was now to enter into his sufferings. He reviews the past, He beholds in spirit the future. He lifted up his eyes to heaven and prayed to the Father. Think of the prayer of Jesus—the prayer of Jesus at this most solemn hour. And in this prayer to the Father He speaks again of the *Scripture*. Referring to the son of perdition, he says, *“that the Scripture may be fulfilled.”*³⁴ Thus Christ, in his communion with the Father, remembers the Scripture, as the infallible and unfailing Word of the Most High.³⁵

And as He had always dwelt on the Scriptures as containing his own history, and especially his obedience unto death, as in the garden of Gethsemane, He refers again to the necessity of the fulfillment of prophecy, so we find, that when He was on the cross, the Scripture was in his mind, in his heart, on his lips. The only insight which is given to us into the mystery of his agony during the three hours of darkness, is the exclamation: *“My God,*

³⁴ JOHN 13:18

³⁵ Jesus, who had sung with his disciples the hymn of praise (PSALM 116—118), refers in his prayer to the “Word,” which is truth. Doubtless, the Word here refers primarily to the revelation of God in and through Christ, and only indirectly to the Scripture. But as little can it be doubted, that even as David and all true spiritual Israelites knew that the “Word of God” had a much larger meaning than Scripture, and yet knew and believed that Scripture was the Word of God, so the Saviour here thinks also of the “oracles of God,” entrusted to his people. The Principle (Head) of the Word is truth. (PSALM 119:160, HEBREWS)

my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”³⁶ In these words the Holy Ghost had foreshadowed the sufferings of the Substitute through David, the type of the suffering King, of the *beloved Forsaken*. Now, the twenty-second Psalm was fulfilled. The adorable Saviour knew that He was now exhaustively fulfilling the typical experience and prophetic utterance of David. He knew, and wished his Church to know, *that between the Scripture and his own heart in agony there is a profound and inseparable connection*.

And then before the Lord said *“It is finished,”*³⁷ reviewing all that had been predicted of Him, that the Scripture might be fulfilled He said, *“I thirst.”*³⁸ One prophecy remained yet to be accomplished: *“They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink”* (Psalm 69:21). And when this also was fulfilled, Jesus exclaimed, *“It is finished.”* His last utterance on the cross, the last words from his lips, which the world heard, were words from Scripture: *“Into thy hands I commend my spirit.”*³⁹ (Luke 23:46)

³⁶ PSALM 22:1; MATTHEW 27:46; MARK 15:34

³⁷ JOHN 19:30

³⁸ JOHN 19:28

³⁹ The words *“It is finished”* refer to Psalm 22:31, *“God hath done,”*—i.e., made Christ to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him (2 CORINTHIANS 5:21)

4. CHRIST'S USE OF SCRIPTURE IN GLORY

Jesus, after his resurrection, unfolded the Scripture. That Scripture which He had learned from his childhood, which He had heard from the lips of his mother, Mary, to which He had listened in the synagogue of Nazareth, and which He had read and cherished in his heart during his whole life on earth, He remembered after his resurrection. This is also part of that blessed identity of the risen Saviour and Jesus, as they knew Him before his death. This Scripture He remembers still in glory. Even now He is expecting the fulfillment of Scripture in his future reign. From his heavenly throne He sent seven epistles to the seven churches; here we have the mind of the exalted and glorified Redeemer. And in these epistles He continually refers to the Scripture: He speaks of the tree of life in the paradise of God; He refers to the history of Israel in the wilderness; He speaks of the manna, of the key of David, of the true temple, and of the New Jerusalem. "Behold, I stand at the door and knock," is the voice of Jesus from heaven, even as in the Song of Solomon the bridegroom speaks in the same language. One of the last sayings of Christ is the most comprehensive as well as concise summary of the whole writings of Moses and the prophets: "*I am the root and the offspring of David*" (Revelation 22:16). Jesus, in his glory at the right hand of God, remembers the Scriptures and fulfils the Scriptures, and looks forward to the perfect consummation of the whole, and perfect, and unchangeable counsel of God, revealed in his written Word.

THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES

3

We have thus considered the Scriptures as viewed by Jesus. Let us now look at the Gospels, Epistles, and book of Revelation, and notice their relation to the Jewish Scripture.

And here I cannot but express grief and astonishment at the prevalent neglect of the Jewish Scripture. The term “Old Testament” may partly have contributed to this, people imagining that what is old is antiquated. We have already seen that these Scriptures are full of Christ; and were it but for the circumstance that they are the only writings of which we know that Christ used and loved them, they ought to be most precious to us. Christ’s favourite book! Christ’s only book! The book He always read, always quoted; his guide and companion during life; his meditation and comfort in his sufferings and on his cross. If you love Jesus, you ought dearly to love and diligently to read this book.

But the thought of many is, I can read all about Jesus, much better described, more clearly and more fully, in the New Testament. I believe this to be erroneous, and in part bordering on superstition. Take the Gospels. How can we understand them without Moses and the prophets? The very first verse of Matthew is unintelligible: “*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.*”⁴⁰ Who is David? who is Abraham? What meaning is there in this genealogy? And yet we

⁴⁰ MATTHEW 1:1

know that it is full of the most blessed meaning, viz. [namely] that Jesus is the seed of Abraham, in whom all nations are to be blessed; and the Son of David, the Beloved, the King of the Jews, and the Shepherd of the flock.

The name Jesus refers to Joshua; the name Christ to the anointing, the significance of which was well known to Israel, who had been taught the meaning of prophet, priest, and king.

The expression “*Lamb of God*,”⁴¹ does not refer exclusively, or even primarily, to the meekness of Christ. The natural symbolism of the lamb was, indeed, the substratum [underlying substance]; but the real symbol is that lamb of which we read in Exodus, and which finds its perfect and minute [thorough] fulfillment in Jesus, in his death on the cross, in the sprinkling of blood on the conscience, in the believer’s partaking of Christ, in the spirit of repentance and separation unto God with which faith is accompanied. Therefore is Christ called the *Lamb of God*. “Bearing sin” is an expression based upon Leviticus, and illumined by Isaiah 53.

When we read the words “*generation of vipers*,”⁴² we are unable to understand their real import, and are in danger of viewing them as the expressions of an unrestrained anger and abhorrence, except by referring to Genesis 3:15; Psalm 91, and other scriptures; where we are taught that there are two seeds, two generations; that of the serpent and the children of God, the seed of the woman.

If we wish to understand the Gospels, the life and teaching of Jesus, we require the same preparation as Israel enjoyed. The

⁴¹ JOHN 1:29,36

⁴² MATTHEW 3:7, 12:34, 23:33; LUKE 3:7

evangelist Luke gives us a lovely description of that garden of prepared Israelites who received the Saviour with joy. Notice, in the first place, Mary, the blessed Virgin. The angel had announced to her the birth of the true David, and his words (an echo of 2 Samuel 7:11,12; Isaiah 9:6,7; Daniel 2:44) sufficiently show that the prophetic word is known and believed in the angelic world. Mary's song is full of allusions to the promises of God as given to the fathers. So is the song of Zacharias, who, being filled with the Holy Ghost, praises God for his gracious fulfillment of his word, "*spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began.*"⁴³ Simeon, who, according to Luke, waited for "*the consolation of Israel*"⁴⁴ (what is this? Read Isaiah 40-66), rejoiced when he beheld the holy Child, and confirms the prophecy of Isaiah 8:14, that the Lord is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. The good news was joyfully received by them that "*looked for redemption*"⁴⁵ in Jerusalem—people who knew and believed the Scripture.

Again, how did John the Baptist prepare the way of the Lord? He preached, according to the Scripture, of a change of mind, of the kingdom of God, of the great harvest, and the separation between wheat and chaff, of baptism with the Holy Ghost, of the Lamb of God. (Jeremiah 3:12–14; Isaiah 58:6,7; Psalm 1; Isaiah 2; Ezekiel 36; Exodus 12; Isaiah 53) To prove that the Gospels cannot be fully understood without the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets would be to go through the whole of the fourfold narrative. It is not sufficient to say that many of our Lord's actions

⁴³ LUKE 1:70

⁴⁴ LUKE 2:25

⁴⁵ LUKE 2:38

were performed expressly with a view to the fulfillment of prophecy;⁴⁶ it is not sufficient to recognize his references to the written Word. The whole picture of Jesus given us in the Gospels is the fulfillment of that outline which was sketched in word, and sign, and fact, in Israel's record. The Gospels declare that Jesus is *He*. "We have found *Him*."⁴⁷ He is come that was to come. But who and what that glorious and divine *HE* is, Moses and the prophets explain.

Consider, moreover, who were the Saviour's first disciples. Andrew said to Simon, "We have found the Messiah." Philip said to Nathanael, "*We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.*"⁴⁸ Nathanael welcomed Jesus as the Son of God, the King of Israel. These men knew the Scriptures. They were waiting for the promised Messiah, the Anointed One. They had studied Moses and the prophets, and recognized now the fulfillment. Nathanael knew that God had a Son; he had learned so from Psalm 2, from Proverbs 30:4; he knew that Israel's King was to come from above, that David's Son was David's Lord.

Thus *we* also ought to enter on the study of the Gospels, on the contemplation of the life and the words of Him whose goings forth are from of old; and then we shall see that *it is He*.

And in like manner the apostles preached Jesus, not from their own writings, which did not exist then, but from the Scriptures. What was Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost? He announced (1) the outpouring of the Spirit according to Joel 2; (2) the

⁴⁶ MATTHEW 4:13-16; 12:16-21; 13:34,35; 21:4,5

⁴⁷ JOHN 1:45

⁴⁸ JOHN 1:45

resurrection of Jesus according to Psalm 16; (3) his ascension according to Psalm 110; and, following from this, (4) the lordship of Jesus as the Messiah.

When Peter is before the Jewish rulers he preaches Jesus from the 118th Psalm; and when the apostles return to the company of believers, the Church is of good comfort, because it knows (from Psalm 2) that Christ, and not it, is the object of man's persecution. It is on the ground of Scripture that the apostles decide the great question concerning the Gentiles and the law (Acts 15), even as it was the prophetic word which Peter had preached to Cornelius (Acts 10). What did the evangelist Philip declare to the Ethiopian? He expounded to him Isaiah 53, and the eunuch believed, and went on his way rejoicing. What did Stephen testify? Behold him, his countenance like the countenance of an angel; in the face of death his last word is a summary of Moses and the prophets! How clear was this word to his mind, how near to his memory and mouth, how dear to his heart! What was Paul's preaching? He proved from Scripture that Jesus is the Christ; he opened the meaning of the prophetic word concerning the Messiah; he asked not merely the Jews, but also King Agrippa, "*Believest thou the prophets?*"⁴⁹ He sums up his teaching in these words: "*that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures*" (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). Apollos also was "*mighty in the Scriptures.*"⁵⁰

All the apostles preached Jesus from Moses and the prophets. The book of Acts is a continuous unfolding of the ancient

⁴⁹ ACTS 26:27

⁵⁰ ACTS 18:24

Scripture. The Bereans are commended because they compared apostolic teaching with the Scripture; from which we learn not merely that the apostles based their preaching on Scripture, but that they were anxious their hearers should believe the message, because it was in accordance with the infallible Word of God.

Look at the Epistles. What are they but the unfolding of the gospel of Scripture? Take that most important Epistle to the Romans. All Christians regard it as a very fundamental epistle, our great defence and bulwark, the basis of our instruction; containing so clearly the doctrine of justification by faith which we teach in our schools and congregations. Now, analyze the epistle. From the very outset Paul announces as his text and thesis the words of Habakkuk, “*The just shall live by faith.*”⁵¹ (Yet for a hundred people who read Romans, is there one who reads the prophet Habakkuk?) He then proceeds to prove, from the Psalms, the sinfulness of man. Then he shows justification. But how? By referring to the mercy cover, in Leviticus. If we understand the tabernacle, the meaning of the ark, of the testimony of the law against us which it contained, of the mercy cover, of the sprinkling of blood, we see the force of Paul’s words, that “God hath set forth Jesus to be a mercy cover (Hilasterion⁵² [that which expiates or propitiates]), through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:25). He goes on to explain the way in which the sinner is justified, by the Scriptures concerning Abram (Genesis 15:6) and David (Psalm 32). He derives an additional argument from the date and meaning of circumcision.

In Romans 5 he shows us how sin and death are connected with Adam, and righteousness and life with Christ. Is this chapter not inseparable from Genesis 3? If you know not the history of the fall, can

⁵¹ HABAKKUK 2:4 (ROMANS 1:17; GALATIANS 3:11; HEBREWS 10:38)

⁵² Hilasterion — that which expiates or propitiates, the gift which procures propitiation

you understand the teaching of Paul? In chapters 9—11 he explains the doctrine of election, the position of Israel and the Gentiles, and the final conversion of the Jews as a nation; always quoting and illustrating the words of Moses and the prophets. In short, the whole Epistle to the Romans is an unfolding of Moses and the prophets, even as Paul writes to them—“*Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning.*”⁵³ Take the Epistle to the Hebrews, and its most striking points. Christ’s divinity is proved from various Scriptures, his humanity and future glory from the second Psalm, the glory of his priesthood from the history of Melchisedec. Hebrews is a commentary on Leviticus. It is a book in a foreign tongue, unless read in the light of the Scripture. Look at the Epistle to the Galatians, a Gentile church, only of recent date in their experience of Christian truth. Paul’s argument is about Isaac and Ishmael, about Sara and Hagar. This most fundamental, evangelical defence of the liberty of the children of God rests upon Genesis.

So with all the apostolic epistles. In the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians Paul shows from Isaiah and Jeremiah the true character of the world’s wisdom, and that “*eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.*”⁵⁴ His exercise of discipline (chapter 5) he founds on Deuteronomy 13:5. In chapter 10 he explains the history of the wilderness, and from the law of Moses he urges the duty and privilege of the support of the ministry. I will only add his references to the creation of the woman out of Adam (chapter 11), and his exposition of the resurrection (chapter 15), so full of the Scripture. How striking and powerful is his quotation in 2 Corinthians 6 of four different passages

⁵³ ROMANS 15:4

⁵⁴ 1 CORINTHIANS 2:9

(Leviticus 26:11, 12; Isaiah 52:11; Jeremiah 31:33, and 32:38), introducing them with the words, “As *God* hath said!”⁵⁵ And it is truly the voice of God speaking to us to be separate unto Him.

How beautifully does Paul explain in the Epistle to the Ephesians (this most characteristic portion of the book of the Church) the words of the sixty-eighth Psalm. How emphatic is his testimony concerning the Scriptures in his Epistles to Timothy, possessed of special solemnity in the prospect of his departure, and of perilous times.

Equally rich in Scripture quotation and illustration is Peter in his Epistles; indeed, no apostle speaks more decidedly and clearly on the authority and Divine inspiration and fulness of Scripture, even as no one uses more beautifully and abundantly the Scriptures for our instruction and comfort. The Rock on which this rock was founded was Christ, and Christ according to the Scripture. The little Epistle of Jude refers to Cain, to Sodom, to Balaam, to Korah, and speaks of the body of Moses, in harmony with Deuteronomy 34:6 “The Epistles of John are a powerful exposition of the history of Cain and Abel.”⁵⁶

James speaks of Abraham offering up Isaac, of the faith of Rahab, of Elijah and his prayer, of Job’s patience and the Lord’s dealings with him, of the law in its unity; and his epistle abounds in allusions to Scripture thoughts and words.

The book of Revelation is a compendium of Moses and the prophets, referring especially to Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah; a summary of all the preceding revelation of God, the beautiful culminating point of the whole record.

⁵⁵ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:16

⁵⁶ Kohlbrügge

It is not too much to say, that as a dictionary is necessary to explain the words of a new language, so the words and facts of the Gospels and Epistles require the explanation of Moses and the prophets. You cannot read the “New Testament” without using the “Old” as a dictionary;⁵⁷ and it is a very superficial view to think that, because we see the word “*Jesus*,” and the word “*Lamb*,” and the words “*blood*” and “*mercy-seat*,” we have therefore clear and full views, and solid and substantial ground of confidence, comfort, and hope. Unless we know the meaning which God has attached to these words—a meaning which is explained in the history, the types, the institutions, and the prophecy given to Israel, we do not rest on a solid basis; we are not feeding on nourishing food; we are not growing by the sincere milk of the Word.

Oh that we were wise and read the Scripture, the whole Scripture from Genesis to Malachi, and the inspired commentary from Matthew to the Revelation! That we went into God’s school, learning his ideas and language, and explaining his Word, not out of the dictionary of reason, the opinions of men, and the traditions of the Church, but out of the dictionary He himself has graciously provided! That we used a wholesome frugality in our reading of uninspired books and tracts, and that we possessed a healthy appetite for the nutritious and strengthening Word of God! That we would not confine ourselves to our favourite chapters, but launch out into the free, majestic, infinite ocean of Scripture! That we fed on the green pastures, so spacious and so varied! Let me entreat the young especially to read the whole Scripture, copiously, regularly, and systematically. The older people among us

⁵⁷ “The most beautiful exposition of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms is the New Testament, and especially John and Paul; even as the Old Testament is the foundation and fortress of the New Testament. If I were younger, I would seek all the words of the New Testament in Moses and the prophets. By placing expressions and texts of the two together, grand and wonderful expositions of Scripture would be obtained.”—Martin Luther, *Tischreden*, 1

enjoyed a training in systematic theology, according to catechisms. It is not the best way, but it is far preferable to what, alas! is too much the state of things now,—that is, the absence of systematic spiritual training. Scripture knowledge derived from Scripture itself is the best. But what is to be feared at present is, that our young people, fully sharing in the general and somewhat exaggerated dread of catechisms and systematic manuals, live chiefly on popular sermons and tracts. Of too many it must be said, they are not convinced by Scripture. They do not possess an insight into the scope of the Bible. They know little of Moses, and still less of the prophets. They do not understand the drift of an epistle. And therefore they may easily be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. A good flow of language, solemnity of manner, and plausible philosophy, carry them away. Our armor is the Word. Read the Scripture, and prayerfully and diligently study “the whole counsel of God.”⁵⁸

⁵⁸ There is much force in the remark of Edward Irving (“Oracles of God,” p. 42). “We lament,” he says, “that the catechetical books of any church should have come to play such a conspicuous part in the foreground of the Christian stage, and not have kept their proper inferiority of serving as handmaidens to the Book of God. They are exhibitions, not of the whole of the Bible, as it is often thought, but of the abstract doctrines and formal commandments of the Bible . . . We are very discontented that they should have stepped from their proper place of disarming heresy and preserving in the Church the unity of the faith, that from this useful office they should have come to usurp it as the great instrument of religious education.” This is true, yet the systematic training through catechetical books is certainly much to be preferred to the absence of all systematic teaching; and in order to carry out the more excellent way of scriptural training, it is most desirable, nay, an urgent necessity, that our young men and women should be taught the Bible, its history, doctrine, and prophecy, in a *systematic manner*. The chief defect of the catechisms seems to me their utterly unhistorical character. They say nothing about the kingdom of God, which was the subject of Christ’s and the apostles’ teaching, nothing about Israel and the purpose of God; whereas in Scripture all is concrete, full of life and color, narrating the dealings of a living God with men, and connecting the past with the future.

FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIBLE—EVIDENCES OF ITS DIVINE ORIGIN

4

The Scripture is its own evidence. God did not leave a matter of such vital importance as the authority of Scripture to depend upon minute investigation, for which only the learned have leisure and ability; nor upon abstruse and metaphysical argument, for which the mass of mankind have no aptitude. There must be something about the Scripture obvious and tangible, to prove its authority and demonstrate its high origin. Apart from the testimony of the Spirit, without which there is no true and vital faith in the Word of God,⁵⁹ there seem to me to be five great and simple facts in connection with Scripture, which declare distinctly and clearly its heavenly origin.

⁵⁹ “No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” There may be an intellectual assent to the claims of Jesus. The evidence for his Messiahship, Divine mission, resurrection, may be clearly seen and conscientiously accepted, and yet the apostolic assertion still remains fully true, that to call Jesus Lord is not by nature, but by grace; not the act of unenlightened reason, but the result of the Spirit's work. The Lord receiveth not testimony from man (John v. 34). In like manner the Bible asserts, that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. It would therefore be against all analogy, and in contradiction of Scripture teaching, if faith in the Bible, as a Divine revelation, could be attained by man through logical and historical argument. It is the testimony of the Spirit by which we know that the Word is truth. It need scarcely be added, that historical and philosophical arguments hold an important though subordinate position.

1. THE SUBLIME DOCTRINE

We find in Scripture, doctrine which man never could have discovered, and which, now that it is revealed, no man and no age can exhaust. The one fact proves that a higher than human mind is the Author of the book; the other is a sign of its infinite and eternal character.

1—Take the idea of God, such as the Bible gives us. So spiritual, and yet so simple. God is infinite and incomprehensible, dwelling in light inaccessible, and full of glory; high above all that is created and finite; whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, and before whom even the angels veil their faces as they adore Him. And yet He is presented as being near unto us, even unto all that are of a broken and contrite heart; as listening unto the sighing of every humble child, and condescending to reveal Himself unto babes. How spiritual and sublime is the Scripture teaching of God! how homely and simple its revelation of the Father! Scripture reveals to us God as the great Creator of the universe, the Governor and Upholder of the world, the adorable King of angels, who obey his commandments; and at the same time we are assured, that not even a sparrow can fall to the ground without his will, and that the very hairs of our head are numbered; we are taught that we may commend to his guidance the minutest duties of our life, and expect his answer to our prayers on behalf of our daily troubles and difficulties. Scripture reveals Him as a God of holiness, justice, and truth, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and whose throne is established in verity and righteousness; and Scripture unfolds to us the mercy, the compassion, the tenderness of God—his delight in blessing, his glory in his wonderful grace. Whence this idea of God, so sublime and yet so simple, so spiritual and yet so tangible, so

pure and holy, and yet so gracious and loving? Do we find anything to be compared with it among the Greeks and Romans? It has come down from above. God revealed Himself.

2—Or take the idea of the law of God. What the Bible teaches us concerning man is no less wonderful than the idea of God which it brings before us. What is man? As nations advance, their idea of humanity advances. While savage nations value man according to his strength, subtlety, courage, and even cruelty, civilized nations have a higher and more intellectual and moral standard of human excellence. But what is the true, the perfect idea of man? Look at the Scriptures, teaching us that man is created in God's image. And because since the Fall we do not know clearly what that means, God gives us in the law his idea of humanity; and the law teaches us that man is to love God with all his heart, and his neighbour as himself. How wonderful are the Ten Commandments! How high is the law of God, elevating man to communion in love with the Lord God! How deep,—requiring truth in the inward part, the affection of the soul, the surrender of the will! How broad,—taking cognizance of all our varied relationships, of all occupations, circumstances, duties; entering into all the minute detail, into all the ramifications of our earthly life! And this idea of man, existing in the original purpose of God, realized in Adam, and subsequently described in the law of Jehovah, is afterwards manifested in greater fulness and glory in the person of Jesus Christ, the second Adam. This is the second idea revealed in Scripture, above human thought and discovery, the Divine idea of man.

3—The Bible idea of redemption. Of sin we have no adequate conception. Scripture reveals to us the depths of sin, as offence against God and as a disease—as guilt and pollution. But as the Bible-view of sin far transcends our thought, still more wonderful is

the Bible idea of redemption! Take a beautiful vase, a masterpiece of art, and dash it to the ground, so that it is shattered into a hundred pieces. Who can restore it? Who can unite the fragments, so that the beauty and harmony of the original shall again show forth the master's skill and thought? Yet what is this compared to the Fall, when man's understanding became darkened, his heart alienated from God, his conscience burdened, his will enslaved, his imagination defiled, his soul and mind and affections corrupt; when man became dead in trespasses and sin, so that from the inmost centre of his being to the very members of his body sin reigns unto death? And then see how the idea of redemption runs from the very threshold of the Bible in Genesis to the topmost stone of the edifice in Revelation. And such redemption! Full pardon of sin, so that our souls are whiter than the snow; enemies are reconciled, and adopted as children of God; condemnation is removed, and the kingdom of heaven is opened; the heart is changed, the will set free, the mind enlightened; in short, as sin abounded unto death, grace doth much more abound unto life! Whence such a glorious thought?

4—Man never could have conceived this. But could man have conceived the superabundance of this grace, restoring us not merely to the lost Paradise, and to the condition of Adam before the Fall, but giving us far more than we lost, and placing us far higher than man at his creation. For we are accepted in Christ, the Beloved, and by the Holy Ghost we are one with Jesus, who is the Son of God, one with the Father. Ours is not merely peace, but Christ's peace; not merely life, but Christ's life. Christ is given to us for ever, and we are members of his body, one with Him in the Spirit. Thus are we partakers of the Divine nature, and in Christ the quickening Spirit is our new life. Who could have thought of this?

5—And then notice how Scripture reveals to us all this as

portion of the counsel of God. Into the council chamber of eternity, into the secret purpose which God purposed in Himself, before the foundations of the world were laid, the Word of God takes us, and shows us that according to this purpose God created the world in Christ, elected Israel, sent his Son, brought in the Church, Jews and Gentiles in one body, that in the ages to come Christ and the Church should manifest his glory, and that thus his grace should be seen and adored by angels and the nations of earth. (Ephesians and Colossians) Who could have found out this, or imagined it? A plan so vast, so grand, so beautiful, could only emanate from Him who is God, who is love; and none could have known it but the chosen ones, to whom He revealed his will. And now that it is revealed, we cannot exhaust the Scripture teaching. It is above us and beyond us. We can only exclaim, *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things. To Him be glory for ever. Amen.”*⁶⁰

⁶⁰ If the Bible, revealing such truths, is peculiar, Christians who hold these views, and live in them, must needs be also peculiar. Their mode of viewing things is very different from that of the world. To know God, to believe that man is fallen, to rejoice in the redemption of Christ, to realize our oneness with Him by the Spirit, and to wait for his coming from heaven—to believe, in other words, what God has revealed to us in the Bible, this is so peculiar, and so different from the general thought and tone of men, that it must be regarded by the world of professing Christians as very strange. But, alas! even among people who believe the Bible to be God’s Word, there are many who have scriptural views on certain points, such as the atonement, faith, etc., but not understanding the “whole counsel of God,” in their views on the history and spirit of the world, on the work of the Holy Ghost, on the position of the Church, they savour not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.

2. PROPHECY

Scripture contains predictions which have been fulfilled. These predictions are marvellous, both on account of their comprehensive grandeur, containing great historical outlines and principles, and on account of their circumstantial and minute detail. The one was beyond the mind of the prophets, the other beyond their calculation.

The element of prediction in Scripture has been lately undervalued, and under the specious plea that the moral and spiritual, the ethical element in the prophets, is the chief thing. This is a confusion of ideas. All prediction in Scripture is ethical, or rather spiritual, because it refers to the kingdom of God, and to its centre—Christ. But the spiritual element is intimately connected with the facts, the continued manifestations and gifts of God unto his people. That Scripture prediction is throughout ethical, that it differs from all soothsaying, from the foretelling of isolated events and incidents to satisfy curiosity; that it is organically connected with the Divine education of Israel, full of principles, warning, guidance, and encouragement for the people to whom it is given, ought to be perfectly plain to every reader of the Bible. But equally clear it is, that Scripture predicts events which none could have foreseen. How could the thought enter into Abram's mind, or even into the mind of Moses, that in Abram's seed all families of the earth should be blessed? What a marvellous conception! It is impossible to account for it, except on the ground of a direct revelation. In Scripture prediction the ethical element is inseparable from the facts; the facts are the revelation of God, educating and comforting his people.

Let us consider only one great subject of prediction, the history of the Lord Jesus Christ. The whole life of the Saviour, from his birth

to his ascension and his sending forth the Spirit, may be narrated in the words of Moses and the prophets. Without referring to the four evangelists, the whole history of Christ in its great outlines, as well as its minute [smallest] particulars, has been foretold by the Spirit through the Scripture.

We ask first concerning his birth. And Genesis 3 informs us, that He is to be emphatically the seed of the woman; while Isaiah teaches us that the mother of the Saviour, the great Immanuel, is to be a virgin, and that this child thus born, this Son given unto us, is the Wonderful, the Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.

We inquire further, Whose Son is the Messiah to be? The Scripture points out Shem, for “*Japheth shall dwell in the tents of Shem;*”⁶¹ and still further we are directed to Abram, and still further to Isaac (as distinguished from Ishmael), and still further to Jacob: and from among the twelve sons of Jacob, the patriarch on his deathbed singles out the tribe of Judah; out of him shall come Shiloh, and to Him shall be the gathering of the nations. But Scripture is still more definite. The son of Jesse, even David, receives the promise of the great King and Redeemer. Thus we know that the Messiah is God and man; born of a woman, even of a virgin; a Sethite; a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; of the tribe of Judah; of the house of David.

Where is He to be born? Like the wise men from the east, we would naturally suppose in Jerusalem, the holy city, the city of the great King. But Micah knows differently, and points out Bethlehem Ephratah, little among the thousands of Judah: “*Out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel, whose goings*

⁶¹ GENESIS 9:27

forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” ⁶²

When is He to be born? Jacob predicts the period: *“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come;”* ⁶³ and Daniel more definitely speaks of seventy periods of seven which are to elapse from the going forth of the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem, before the coming of the Messiah the Prince.

Born in Bethlehem, He is to be taken into Egypt; as Hosea saith, *“I have called my Son out of Egypt.”* ⁶⁴

What is to prepare the world for his coming? What great event is to announce his advent? Isaiah and Malachi tell us it is to be a man, a messenger, *“the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”* ⁶⁵

What is to be his character? *“Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my Spirit upon Him. He shall not cry nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench...”* ⁶⁶

What is to be his work? *“He shall open the eyes of the blind, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. The lame man shall leap as*

⁶² MICAH 5:2

⁶³ GENESIS 49:10

⁶⁴ HOSEA 11:1

⁶⁵ ISAIAH 40:3

⁶⁶ ISAIAH 42:1-3

*a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.”*⁶⁷

What is his preaching? *“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Him, because He hath anointed Him to preach good tidings unto the meek.”*⁶⁸ *“The Lord GOD hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary; He wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learner.”*⁶⁹

How will the people receive Him? how will the rulers and guides of the nation welcome Him? *“He is despised and rejected of men.”*⁷⁰ The builders reject the stone.

Is He to appear as Jerusalem’s king? and in what manner? Zechariah tells us: *“Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.”*⁷¹

What is to be the end of his life on earth? Daniel tells us He shall be *“cut off.”*⁷²

Who is to deliver Him into the hands of his enemies? The Psalmist tells us, one of his friends, he that eateth bread with Him⁷³; and Zechariah states that for thirty pieces of silver He shall be

⁶⁷ ISAIAH 35:5-6

⁶⁸ ISAIAH 61:1

⁶⁹ ISAIAH 50:4

⁷⁰ ISAIAH 53:3

⁷¹ ZECHARIAH 9:9

⁷² DANIEL 9:26

⁷³ PSALM 41:9

betrayed.⁷⁴

Will his disciples stand by Him in his last sufferings? No; the Shepherd is smitten, and the sheep of the flock are scattered.

How is He to die? He is the Lamb; and is to suffer a slow painful death, and not a bone of his body is to be broken. Moses teaches us that his blood is to be shed, and that He is to be lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness. Zechariah adds another feature of his sufferings: He is to be pierced. No other mode but that of crucifixion fulfills all these descriptions.

What further happened during his crucifixion? The twenty-second Psalm tells us: *“All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver Him: let Him deliver Him, seeing He delighted in Him. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; my tongue cleaveth to my jaws. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.”*

What further circumstances attend his death? *“He opened not his mouth.” “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth.” “He was numbered with the transgressors.”*⁷⁵

Why did He suffer? Isaiah answers: *“He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and by his stripes we are healed.”*⁷⁶

⁷⁴ ZECHARIAH 11:12-13

⁷⁵ ISAIAH 53

⁷⁶ ISAIAH 53:5

Was it only man who caused his sufferings? Isaiah saith, *“It pleased Jehovah to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief;”* and Zechariah saith, *“Awake, O sword, against the Man that is mine equal; smite the Shepherd.”*⁷⁷ And in the words of David his soul is to cry, *“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”*

Is He to remain in the grave? David says, *“Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption;”*⁷⁸ *“The stone which the builders refused is become the head-stone of the corner;”*⁷⁹ while Jonah’s history prophesies the same; and Hosea speaks of the third day as the day of revival.

And after his resurrection? The sixty-eighth Psalm says, *“Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.”* And in another Psalm it is written, *“The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”*⁸⁰

Thus we have the life of Christ in Moses and the prophets.⁸¹ The picture of the Messiah in its grand outlines was quite above the conception of Israel, and even of the prophets, at any time. Even after the fulfillment it was new to the people, different from their

⁷⁷ ZECHARIAH 13:7

⁷⁸ PSALM 16:10

⁷⁹ PSALM 118:22

⁸⁰ PSALM 110:1

⁸¹ GENESIS 3:15; 9:26,27; 12:3; 17:20,21; 49:8–10; ISAIAH 7:14; 9:6; 11:1-10; 2 SAMUEL 7; MICAH 5:2; DANIEL 9; HOSEA 11:1; ISAIAH 40 and MALACHI 3; ISAIAH 42; 35; 61; ISAIAH 53; ZECHARIAH 11:13; 12:10; 13:7; PSALM 41:9; EXODUS 12:46; PSALM 22; 16; 68:18; 110:1; 118:22, 23.

ideas, high above their thoughts and expectations. And as for the circumstantial fulfillment of the wonderful detail, who can explain it on natural principles?

The prophets spake of the grace of God, as the Spirit revealed unto them the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Theirs was not the insight of great minds into future history, based on their profound knowledge of the present. It was a Divine prediction of events intimately connected with the kingdom of God. It was not in accordance with the ordinary laws which govern the history of the world, but in harmony with the laws of the Divine kingdom as they had already partially become manifest, and as they were more fully to be unfolded in the future. The events which are singled out are not those which would strike man as especially important; while events which by us are regarded as the most influential are often passed over with silence. But in the great day it will be seen that prophecy throws more light on history than history on prophecy.

These considerations are sufficient to show that the Scripture prediction is essentially spiritual, and inseparably connected with its whole teaching and history. It may be added, that although the people to whom the prophecy was addressed, and even the prophets themselves, did not fully understand the things signified by the Spirit, yet that the prophecy was always connected with the peculiar history, trial, and difficulty of the people at the time; so that it was a warning to the ungodly, guidance and encouragement to the God-fearing, and a new test which separated the precious from the vile. (Thus Isaiah 40-66; Daniel 9, etc.)

As *miracle* is the intervention of God's grace in *act*, *prophecy* is the intervention of God's grace in *testimony*. Both appear on the

background of man's failure; both are intended by the Divine wisdom, which educates his children and rules the world, as a help and consolation to the flock, and the hardening of the wicked.

But prophecy—and this is our chief point here—is a proof of the Divine origin of Scripture. Its force is, unlike that of a miracle, not dependent on the credibility of testimony. *It is its own evidence.* It is fulfilled before the eyes of the world. The Jews, Tyre, Babylon, Nineveh, demonstrate to all who have eyes to see that we have a sure word of prophecy, and that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. The words of the prophets find their best explanation in the actual condition of the nations and lands of which they spake; and all men may see it, that the Lord God, who alone can see the end from the beginning, hath revealed these things to his servants the prophets.⁸²

The most striking fulfillment of prophecy is seen in the existence of the Jewish nation. Forty centuries have run their course since the first promise of the nation was given unto Abram. As Balaam predicted, the people dwell alone, and are not reckoned among the nations. While the ancient Egyptians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, and

⁸² “In the latter days we may consider it perfectly. . . . All the nations, which in ancient times were the enemies of Israel, have been utterly destroyed, the Arabs excepted, who still dwell in the presence of their brethren. The Jews have been scattered among all nations, are yet dispersed in all countries, and distant from every people. Judea, Ammon, Moab, Edom, and Phalestis bear their brand in every feature. A plain, whereon fishermen spread their nets, is the prophetic representative of princely Tyre. . . . The chief city of Ammon is a stable for camels, that of Moab is a ruinous heap; the temples of Petra are courts for owls, and the word of the Lord against the capital of Edom is written with a pen of iron on the rock for ever. Babylon the Great has been converted into heaps. . . . The spirit of prophecy, which gave forth the anticipated history of the world, and which pointed to cities in their utmost desolation, while they yet blazoned in all the pride of their power, has never been known to lie; and predicted judgments have been fulfilled to the very letter, till the truth of every jot and tittle has been confirmed by its effect.” —Dr. Keith, *Demonstration of Truth*, pp. 13 and 388.

Romans—the mightiest nations the world ever saw—have disappeared, Israel lives, and has survived all the fearful calamities and persecutions which came upon them. Driven from their own land, dispersed among the nations, for centuries denied the privilege of possessing land, subjected to insult, robbery, and persecutions of the greatest cruelty, they still exist, numerous, energetic, in vigour of body and mind, mysterious alike in their preservation as in their isolated position. In the midst of the numerous changes which have occurred in the history of nations, Israel is the historical nation, or, as Isaiah calls his people, “*the everlasting people*” (Isaiah 44:7, Hebrews); a witness of the sacred history recorded in Scripture, a pledge of the fulfillment of a yet greater and more glorious Theocracy. And when the metaphysical subtleties as well as the refined secularism of our age turn with aversion from all direct interference of God, whether in the past as recorded in the history, or in the future as recorded in the prophecy of Scripture, the Jews are a living sign and irrefutable evidence of the truth of the Bible. Miracle and prophecy find in them their living monuments. No wonder that the greatest philosopher of our age (Hegel) felt the Jewish history a dark and perplexing enigma. It is the miracle of History as it is the history of Miracle; its exposition is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel.

A living God, as distinguished from idols, whether the idols of heathenism or the idol of the abstract god of philosophy, appeals to this as one of his attributes, that He revealeth future things. “*Bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth and show us what shall happen: show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.*” And again, “*Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I*

declare; before they spring forth I tell you of them.”⁸³ Even the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, a Heathen, exclaimed, “*Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret.*”⁸⁴

Thus prophecy is declared by the Lord Himself to be a manifestation and evidence of his wonderful wisdom and infinite supremacy, as sent in order to prove to us that He is dealing with us, and also to fortify us against the claims of error. Common, unsophisticated, natural sense will receive prophecy as a sure mark of supernatural authority, and it has been only the perverse ingenuity and pseudo-spiritualism of our age, which, from the dreamy height of its speculative wisdom, has spoken with half-contemptuous vagueness of prophecy as an evidence of the truth of Scripture.

And every fulfillment of the events predicted, whether that fulfillment be recorded in Scripture itself (as the prophecy about the captivity of Babylon, Cyrus, etc.), or recorded in the annals of history (as the destruction of Jerusalem, the dispersion of the Jews, etc.), renders to us “*more sure*”⁸⁵ the word of prophecy; so that we look forward with the firm expectation that the Lord God will do nothing but make manifest the secret which He hath revealed unto his servants the prophets, while we are most fully convinced that the Scripture contains the things which the Lord hath spoken, attested as it is by the mark given by God, through Moses, for our guidance and assurance (Deuteronomy 18:20–22).

⁸³ ISAIAH 41:21-23; 45:18-21; 48:5, 14-16

⁸⁴ DANIEL 2:47

⁸⁵ 2 PETER 1:19

3. *THE ISOLATED POSITION OF THE BOOK*

Contrast the Bible with the Apocrypha. How marked is the difference! External authority sufficiently separates between the canonical books and the apocryphal writings. But who that has tasted the old good wine could mistake for it the diluted and feeble work of man? “*What is the chaff to the wheat?*”⁸⁶ We need not underrate the value of the Apocrypha, especially those which belong to the period between Malachi and Matthew. The history of God’s people during this interval is most interesting and valuable, the sufferings and faith of the Maccabees most edifying and encouraging. The development of doctrinal views may also be traced in the various apocryphal books. But in reading them we cannot but feel, that here is the voice of man, and not that Voice which speaks to us at sundry times and in divers manner through the prophets.

What a contrast is felt between the four evangelists and the apocryphal gospels! How puerile are the miracles which tradition attributes to Him who, in all his doings, glorified and showed forth the Father!⁸⁷

⁸⁶ JEREMIAH 23:28

⁸⁷ The Church of Rome has been anxious to exalt the apocryphal books, on account of some of their doctrinal statements. The Rationalists of Germany have also manifested a partiality for these books. Their importance has already been indicated. Their very faults are useful, not merely to show the excellence of Scripture, but also to bring out the fact, which is otherwise also sufficiently clear, that the Jewish nation was in a state of darkness and spiritual weakness when the Lord came; and that He, though of Israel, was not the product of the Jewish nation, deriving his wisdom and light from man,—but the Lord from above.

It is significant, that in the Gospel of John 2 the miracle at Cana is described as the beginning of miracles which Jesus did, thus excluding all the miracles ascribed by tradition to Christ’s childhood.

And the writings of the apostolic Fathers, beautiful and good as they are, only set forth more brightly the marvellous peculiarity of the inspired apostolic epistles, their inexhaustible depth, their heavenly simplicity, their wonderful condensation, their transparent clearness, their universality, in short their Divine character.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ With reference to the apostolic Fathers, Neander has the following important remarks (“Church History,” 2, 405):— “A phenomenon, singular in its kind, is the striking difference between the writings of the apostles and those of the apostolic Fathers, who were so nearly their contemporaries. In other cases transitions are wont to be gradual, but in this instance we observe sudden change. There is no gentle gradation here, but all at once an abrupt transition from one style of language to the other, a phenomenon which should lead us to acknowledge the fact of a special agency of the Divine Spirit in the souls of the apostles, and of a new creative element in the first period.”

4. THE MARVELLOUS PRESERVATION OF THE BIBLE

It is wonderful how this record has been preserved. The Jews have carefully watched over the letter of their sacred writings. The most accurate and diligent research has availed to discover only trifling variations in the manuscripts. And although both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures have often been the object of persecuting enemies, the cruelty and ingenuity of man have not been able to destroy their existence.⁸⁹

This is still more wonderful when we consider by whom these writings were preserved. The Jews were the conscientious guardians of the book of the Kingdom. Rome preserved the book of the Church. The Jews, who themselves rejected the Messiah of whom Moses and the prophets testify, preserve the very books which prove their unbelief, and convince the world of the Divine authority and mission of Jesus.⁹⁰ And where is there a nation preserving carefully a record, which so repeatedly and emphatically declares that they are obstinate, ungrateful, and perverse; and which attributes all their victories and excellences, not to their natural disposition and qualities, nor to their energy

⁸⁹ The history of the persecution of the Bible would form an interesting chapter. Jehoiakim, king of Judah, burned the roll of the prophecy, which Jeremiah had dictated unto Baruch, having himself received the word from the Lord. The king was not willing to accept the message, and consigned the roll to the flames. But his attempt to destroy the Word was in vain. God's Word must stand, and according to the commandment of Jehovah, Jeremiah took another roll, and wrote in it all the former words; and there were added besides unto them many like words. When Diocletian persecuted the Church, he demanded all parchments containing portions of the Scriptures, and not a few Christians sealed with their blood their faith in the Word of God.

⁹⁰ Pascal, "Pensées, des Juifs," 8

and merit, but exclusively to the mercy and power of God?⁹¹

Look again at the Church of Rome preserving the writings of evangelists and apostles. That Church preserving writings which declare that Christ hath perfected by one sacrifice them that are sanctified; that salvation is by grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; that all believers are kings and priests unto God; that there is no mediator between God and men but the Man Christ Jesus; that Peter in himself savoured the things that are of man, and not the things that are of God, and had, even after Pentecost, to be severely rebuked and energetically resisted by Paul; that Mary is told by the Son Himself not to interfere in the concerns of his kingdom; that freely we have received and freely we are to give; that men forbidding to marry and to abstain from meats are the expected false teachers; that in the congregation we are not to pray in an unknown tongue; and that Christians are commended for subjecting even the teaching of apostles to the authority and confirmation of the Scripture!

The Jews bear unwilling witness to Jesus, and Rome has carefully preserved and transcribed her own condemnation.

⁹¹ In speaking of the sources of Assyrian and Babylonian history, M. von Niebuhr remarks: “The Old Testament stands perfectly alone as an exception from the untruth of patriotism: it never conceals and disguises the calamities of the nation whose history it records. Its truthfulness is the highest in all historical writings—even for him who does not believe in its Divine inspiration. At the same time I must also ascribe to it the most minute [precise] accuracy.”—(Quoted by Auberlen, *Göttliche Offenbarung*, p. 86.)

5. THE CATHOLICITY [UNIVERSALITY] OF THE BIBLE

A Book which has existed for so many centuries, has influenced so many nations, and has moulded the minds and characters of the wise and simple, the rich and poor, the civilized and the barbarian, may well be called a catholic, world-wide Book. When we hear the people in the north of Scotland sing the Psalms which David, the king of Israel, wrote so many centuries ago, while the lyrics of Greece and Rome are known only to the learned few, we may well ask, How is it that the sorrows and joys, the difficulties and doubts, the aspirations and hopes of men, so apart in time and in clime, should find expression in the same songs? When we hear our little children conclude their prayers with the Hebrew word, “*Amen*”; when we hear our dying saints utter as the symbol of their victory and hope, the Hebrew words, “*Jerusalem*” and “*Hallelujah,*” we may well ask, Why is Hebrew the language of our soul’s life, from its earliest commencement to its latest breath on earth? Scripture, the Jewish Word, is the universal Book.

The most cultivated nations bow before it, and learn as docile children from its inexhaustible pages; to the rudest tribes light and love are brought from its simple and powerful declarations. It is the guide of Edward VI, the delight of Francis Bacon, the study of Sir Isaac Newton and Pascal. While kings and philosophers find wisdom and counsel in this inspired volume, it is the companion of the artisan and merchant, the comfort of the widow, and the instructor of the unlettered and uneducated. There is no age of man when it is not suitable. It gives milk to babes, guidance to the young, strength to men, and consolation to the aged. There is no occupation or station in life in which it is not profitable and healthful. It is an armory to those who are in battle, a storehouse to

those who are lonely, a protection to all who are in peril, a rod and staff to the dying. There is no state of mind for which it is not salutary. The tone of it is joyous, but its joy does not grate on us in our most solemn moments; its tone is earnest, but this earnestness only irradiates and elevates our joy. The twenty-third Psalm is consolation at a death-bed, and yet gives expression to our most joyous and festive feelings. Wonderful Book, for all ages, all nations, all men, all times; no marvel thou hast been called Bible —THE BOOK.⁹²

⁹² “Sir Walter Scott, during his last illness, asked his son in-law to read to him out of the Book. ‘What book?’ was the question, and the great man’s reply was, ‘There is only one Book, the Bible. In the whole world it is called ‘The Book.’ All other books are mere leaves, fragments. The Bible is the only complete, perfect Book. Its light sheds brightness over the grave and into eternity. It is the only Book.”—Mallet, *Altes and Neues*, 1866, p. 105.

ISRAEL'S MESSIAH—THE LIVING AND THE WRITTEN WORD

5

When Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, “*Salvation is of the Jews,*”⁹³ He announced a fact which explains the history of the kingdom of God and the peculiarity of the Scripture. Jesus is of Israel, and to Abraham’s seed belong the oracles of God. The written Word was given to the Jews, and the essential eternal Word was made flesh, and was born of the Virgin Mary, the daughter of David. God has thus connected from all eternity, and in a necessary and inseparable manner, the Word, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person; Israel, his chosen nation; the oracles or Scripture; and Jesus, the Son of God and man. As the Word was with God, and the centre of the Divine counsel, as the Word became the centre and medium of creation, so the Word was set apart to be the centre of redemption, and the centre of the future glory and inheritance.

This great plan of God, while it had the Son of God for its centre, had Israel, as it were, for its immediate and primary circumference. God selected Israel as the garden in which the blessed Branch should appear. From all nations he separated Israel, that out of them should come the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind. And as Israel was chosen in Christ, and for Christ’s sake, so their whole history and education were according to that great object. More than this, Christ the Word was in reality the

⁹³ JOHN 4:22

spirit of the nation, moulding their history and character; He was their true life; whence it is easily understood that since their rejection of Jesus they are dead (Ezekiel 37).

The Scripture, which is the testimony of God's dealings in mercy as a Saviour, could therefore not originate anywhere else but among the Jews. It was according to the Divine plan that Jesus should be of Israel, and likewise the Scripture must needs be Jewish.

Between Jesus and the Scripture there is therefore the most striking resemblance; a resemblance which must subsist where there is the same source and method of life. Both are revelations of God; *human and Divine, Jewish and catholic [universal]*.

When people saw Jesus and heard Him teach, their first impression was, that they knew Him as man. They knew his mother, and brothers, and sisters. They knew that He was from Nazareth. They had seen Him with Joseph, the carpenter. His true, real, humble humanity was not concealed; on the contrary, in all simplicity, undisguised, unadorned, without an attempt to invest Himself in appearance, manner, speech, with anything imposing or mysterious, Jesus lived, spake, and walked as man. And this very simplicity struck people, and they spoke of it as if it was against the claim of a peculiar Divine mission. So truly did the Son of God take upon him the form of a servant, that it was necessary for him to say even to John the Baptist, "*Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.*"⁹⁴

It is so with the Bible. The style of this book is human, more especially Oriental. Men say—Is not this a human book? Is it not

⁹⁴ MATTHEW 11:6

Eastern in language, diction, thought, and imagery? Do we not meet its brothers and sisters, books of cognate tribes? The human element, or rather aspect, is very prominent. The Bible consists of historical books, records of events, narratives of families, notes of genealogies, and statistics of tribes and wars. Part of it is like a diary, which the nation kept of its experiences, interspersed with all kinds of detail, which would not interest a stranger. The Bible contains poetry, parables, riddles, maxims, letters⁹⁵—every variety of human composition. But this human character in no way militates against its Divine origin. It was God's gracious purpose that the Word should become flesh. Jesus was true man and very God. The Bible is in the form of a servant, human, yet Divine in its origin, truth, and power.

Jesus was not merely man: He was a Jewish man; He belonged to Israel. We have already seen that this was according to God's idea. But it may be necessary to add, that Jesus never gave up the Divine thought of Israel's priority and peculiar position in the kingdom of God. While He protested against the traditions of men, against Pharisaic pride and narrowness, He confirmed the promises made unto the Fathers. (Romans 15:8) He spake of Jerusalem as the city of the great King, of the times of the Gentiles, and of Israel's future return to Him; and in the full possession of the Spirit, He anticipated the time when every jot and tittle of the law and prophets shall be fulfilled. Jesus was the

⁹⁵ It is worthy of notice, as quite in harmony with the peculiarity of the book of the Church, that it contains so many epistles. We have not merely the epistles of the apostles, but of the gospels. Luke wrote his narrative as a letter addressed to Theophilus, and John's gospel (whether accompanied by his first epistle or not) concludes likewise in the form of an address to a special circle of readers. The book of Acts is likewise an epistle, and in the book of Revelation we have the seven epistles of the Lord. In this we may see the family character of the Book. The records of a family are letters.

true Israelite. His nationality is apparent throughout. Israel, the chosen nation, the servant of God, the nation of priests unto God, finds its true exponent and fulfillment, flower and perfect fruit, in Jesus, even as He is the spirit and root of Israel, root and Lord of David.

And for this very reason is Jesus the man for all men of all nations. For the only centre of catholicity [universality] is Jerusalem. The Jews were chosen to be a nation separate, but in order to bless all mankind; Israel is to be the centre of light and blessedness for all people; the purpose of their election is universal; the secret aim of their isolation is expansion; the very joy and glory of their destiny is a world-wide influence. Jesus as the King of the Jews, Jesus as the true Israel, is appointed to draw all men and to rule all men.⁹⁶

As it is with Jesus, so it is with Scripture. It is Jewish and universal. Universal, not in spite, but in virtue, of its Jewish character. In order to be universal, it must not be Paganised or Gentilised, or stripped of its Jewish character. Its Jewish character is not a garment in which it is accidentally clothed; it is the body which the Spirit, according to God's plan, has prepared. Eliminate the Jewish character, and you lose the essence: Christ and Christ's thoughts are Jewish, and that according to God's plan.

⁹⁶ This view meets us in all the apostolic writings. I would direct the reader's attention to the testimony of John, whose gospel has been called "the Spiritual Gospel." His use of the word "nation" (Israel) is striking (John 11:52). Jesus should die, not only for that nation, but "that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." We have here a nation and an election from among all peoples. Just as we read in Revelation 7 of the twelve tribes, and *after this* a great multitude of all nations, etc. Strange to say, this latter passage (verse 9) has been quoted to show that there is no more distinction between Israel and the other nations!

The Pagan and Gentile element in the Church has, to a very great extent, been the source of theoretical heresy and practical apostasy. And not even the Reformation has entirely got rid of the Gentile, though it freed itself nearly altogether from the Pagan element. Shem is to give room to Japheth; not Japheth to modify Shem. The facts and doctrines of the evangelists and apostles are Jewish; not otherwise can they be truly understood.

The Messiah, the sin-bearing Lamb, the blood of Jesus Christ and its efficacy, the kingdom of Israel, all the great, substantial, and glorious truths of the so-called “New Testament ” have been often converted into Japhetic abstractions, in the well-meant hope of making them thereby accessible, plausible, and practical, to the Occidental [Western] mind. But in reality the offence of the cross is the ultimate source of this procedure. “*Salvation is of the Jews;*” and to Gentilise (Platonise) Jewish facts and ideas, is to falsify the Gospel, in order to please the *Greeks* who desire *wisdom*.⁹⁷ Our theology (even that of believers) is far too abstract, unhistorical; looking at doctrines logically, instead of viewing them in connection with the history of the Kingdom and the Church. It is Japhetic, not Shemitic; it is Roman, logical, well-arranged, methodized, and scheduled; not Eastern according to the spirit and method of Scripture, which breathes in the atmosphere of a living God, who visits his people, and is coming again to manifest his glory.

The Scripture is like Jesus Christ, because He is the Spirit of Israel, and Scripture is the record of Israel. Viewing thus the Scripture as an organic growth (not an aggregate, a stone; but a plant), many interesting facts are explained, of which I single out

⁹⁷ See note in APPENDIX

only three:—

First. Every part is complete, containing the seed, the germ; and though subsequent parts contain a much fuller unfolding of the germ, they do not render their predecessors superfluous or antiquated. Thus the whole Gospel is in Genesis; even in Genesis 3 the Protevangelion contains the whole counsel of God in germ. More fully in Leviticus, more fully in David's Psalms, more fully in Isaiah's prophecy, more fully in Paul's epistles. As Israel developed and grew in stature and wisdom (or rather the revelation of Christ in Israel, for the nation always fell short of the glory of God), so the Scripture develops. It is not that something is added to the old stock (as another stone to a collection of stones), but the plant, the organism, the body, *grows*. Beautiful and benign arrangement of our great and blessed God! Abraham rejoiced, and David rejoiced, and Isaiah rejoiced, and Paul rejoiced; because to each there was given *all*, though on a different scale, in different degree and measure.

But though Paul possesses this whole more perfectly than David and Moses, does he throw aside David and Moses as a scaffolding is thrown aside when the building is finished? By no means: and, among many reasons, for this reason also,—that in Genesis, and the Psalms, and the prophets, there is the revelation of a great comprehensive plan, the fulfillment of which reaches into the ages to come; so that without the previous portions of the Word we, and future generations, cannot be perfect; there is much of this whole which yet remains to be unfolded, and manifested in reality and actual existence. Thus the Apocalypse returns to Genesis, and the eleventh chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans leads us back to Moses and the prophets.

If the Bible were like a collection of stones, we might select some and put aside others, as less valuable and beautiful; and although in such selection we might make great mistakes, we should still be in possession of something more or less complete. But the Bible is like a plant, and all its parts are not mechanically or accidentally connected, but organically united, and hence a law of life rules here; and He who reveres life will neither add nor take away from the beautiful plant, which the Father hath planted in and through Christ by the Spirit.

Secondly. If the Bible is a plant, a growth, or body, there are portions which are inferior in importance, value, beauty, but none which can be separated from it, or in which the same blood, or sap, or spirit, does not live. No person denies that in the human body the lungs are more important than the limbs; the heart more essential to life than the eye; the eye a more delicate and noble part than the foot. Nobody asserts that a man would be killed if you cut off his hair or his nails. But there is a vital union of all the members. If you cut off *my* little finger I shall survive it, but it is my little finger you cut off, and it is a loss, a disfigurement. So with the Bible. It is not like a piece of cloth that you can clip and cut. It is a body, animated by one Spirit. Who would assert, that a chapter of names in the book of Chronicles is as important and precious as the third chapter of John's gospel? or that the account of Paul's shipwreck is as essential as the account of Christ's sufferings? But what we say is, that all Scripture is one organism, and that the same wisdom and love have formed the whole; and that down to every branch, and bough, and leaf, it lives and breathes, and is beautiful and good. And the reason why many historical, and statistical, and prophetic portions of Scripture seem to us unimportant and even unmeaning, is because we do not

sufficiently live in the whole circle of Divine ideas and purposes.

Thirdly. Christ being thus the Spirit of Scripture as well as the Spirit of Israel, the substance of Scripture throughout is Himself. All divine revelations have Christ not merely for their Mediator, but for their centre. We have not merely a succession of prophetic announcements of his coming, his work, and glory, but in all God's dealings with Israel He revealed Himself to them in Christ. Abraham beheld the day of Christ; the Rock that followed Israel through the wilderness was Christ. In his love and sympathy, in his sufferings and faith, David was a type of the great Shepherd-King, even as Solomon prefigured his glory and widespread dominion. Through all the festivals and sacrifices shone the light of God in Christ. That God would descend *from heaven to earth* was impressed on Israel by the constant appearance of God as angel or messenger, as Angel of the Covenant, Angel, in whom is God's name; as God manifest, whom man can see face to face. And that *from earth*, from among Israel, would grow up before God One who was perfect, the Servant of the Lord, filled with the Spirit and the delight of the Father, a child born unto Israel, a Son given unto them, and yet the "PELE," [Strong No. H6382] Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; this also the prophets expressed. Christ was thus beheld in a twofold aspect (which it must have been difficult to combine), Jehovah coming down, and Israel's Representative, the Son of the Virgin of Zion, ascending from earth to heaven. They expected the Messenger of the Covenant from above. They saw a man who was Jehovah's equal.

And as Christ's person was the substance of all Jewish history and Scripture, his sufferings were continually witnessed in word, type, and experience.

Christ and Israel are thus connected, and for all ages. Scripture testifies of this Jehovah as Israel's David, in whom glory cometh to the nation, and salvation to the uttermost ends of the earth. For the view which is so prevalent, that Israel is a shadow of the Church, and now that the type is fulfilled vanishes from our horizon, is altogether unscriptural. Israel is not the shadow fulfilled and absorbed *in the Church*, but the *basis* on which the Church rests (Romans 11). And although during the times of the Gentiles Israel, as a nation, is set aside, Israel is not cast away, because Israel is not a transitory and temporary, but an integral part of God's counsel. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Israel was chosen to be God's people, the centre of his influence and reign on earth in the ages to come. The Church in the present parenthesis does not supplant them. The book of the Kingdom awaits its fulfillment; and the Church, instructed by Jesus and the apostles, is not ignorant of this mystery.

This view explains many portions of the Scripture, and likewise explains why many portions are obscure,—passages which refer not to the present dispensation, but to the Kingdom of which all prophets bear witness.

In the book of the Church we see, rooted in Israel, and beginning at Jerusalem, the history of Jesus and of the body joined to Him by the Spirit.

SCRIPTURE AND THE HOLY GHOST

6

Some people (especially in recent times) have objected to the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, on the plea that Scripture itself does not assert such a fact. But this is erroneous; and not merely does Scripture fully and distinctly assert the doctrine, but the whole teaching of Scripture indirectly confirms this view.

In most cases where the “inspiration of Scripture” is doubted or assailed, the opposition is not so much against a particular *theory* of inspiration (which would be of little importance), but it is based on ignorance of what is meant by “the Holy Ghost.” It would be better to direct the attention of people more to the general truth, that as there is no Creator beside the Father, and no Redeemer beside the Son, so there is none who can enlighten our minds and renew our hearts except the Holy Ghost, who is, like the Father and the Son, Divine in majesty and power. It is because people do not believe that only the Spirit of God can reveal the things of God and Christ to our spirit, that they have no firm belief and enlightened view as to the Spirit's special work—the Scripture. Had a scriptural view of the person and work of the Holy Ghost been more powerfully prevalent in the Church, not merely in her formularies, but in reality and life, there would never have been so much occasion given to represent the teaching of the Church on the inspiration of Scripture as “mechanical,” “converting men into automata,” etc.; and the whole question would not have assumed such a scholastic and metaphysical form. For then the living testimony and the written testimony would appear both as

supernatural and Spirit-breathed. The more the supremacy of the Holy Ghost, divine, loving, and present, is acknowledged, the more the *Bible* is fixed in the heart and conscience. But if the “Book” is viewed as the relic and substitute of a now absent and inactive Spirit, Bibliolatry and Bible-rejection are the necessary results. (See the remarks on BIBLIOLATRY, chap. 7, 2)

The whole history of Israel was under the immediate guidance of the Spirit. The tabernacle, as well as all the other institutions, was framed not by human wisdom, but, as Paul says, the Holy Ghost symbolized (signified) through them (Hebrews 9:8). Israel received a word, embodied in Scripture and institutions which were formed by the Spirit. In like manner Jesus, the fulfillment, was conceived by the Holy Ghost. The world did not understand Him, because He was from above: how could they testify of Him whom they knew not? Who can testify of Christ, but the Holy Ghost? If Scripture is the testimony of Jesus, it must be by the Spirit.

This is granted by all Christians. But fix your mind on this thought still further. Who can understand Christ fully? Not even Paul could say he knew Him, but only that he desired to know Him (Philippians 3); and whatever measure of knowledge he possessed was, according to his own confession, by the Spirit. None can know Christ fully, except the Spirit, even as none knoweth the Father but the Son. If we have in Scripture a full and adequate testimony of Christ (full and adequate, not absolutely, for no man knoweth the Son but the Father, but relatively for our life, in doctrine and walk, for us individually and as members of families and society, for the Jews and the Church in all ages), who but the *Spirit* could be the author of Scripture? He only possesses this fulness, out of which He distributes severally to the various

writers according to their position and character.

But does Scripture give any direct teaching on the subject? It does, and that, not in a few isolated passages, but frequently and copiously.

Notice the expressions constantly used by the prophets—“*Thus saith the Lord;*” “*The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it;*” “*The word of the Lord came to...*” In Hosea 12:10, we read, “*I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets.*” And so distinct is this characteristic of the true prophet, that in Jeremiah we have the most fearful denunciations against false prophets, who ran without being sent by God, and who spake without having received a message from God (Jeremiah 27, 29). The Spirit of Jehovah, the prophets assert, came upon them. It is an influence from without and from above. The hand of the Lord came upon them, in order to signify that it was not their meditation which elevated them to behold future things, but the Spirit of the eternal God. In the case of the three great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, they had each a special vision and solemn commission, setting them apart for their prophetic office. Isaiah’s mouth is touched with a live coal from off the altar: unto Jeremiah Jehovah saith, “*Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth:*” Ezekiel received and ate the roll God gave him; the message was Divine, and according to God’s commandment Ezekiel said, “*Thus saith the Lord God.*” Most of God’s prophets were unwilling to go; the Lord had to compel them to go—Moses, Jeremiah, Jonah—that it may be more evident that God sent them to deliver his message and not their own thoughts: the origin of their prophecy as well as the message itself was Divine.

In accordance with this, we find that in quoting from Moses and the prophets the Lord and the apostles sometimes mention the name of the individual writer, as Isaiah, David, etc., but more frequently the words are introduced with the expression, “*He saith,*” or, “*the Scripture saith,*” or, “*the Holy Ghost saith.*” In the Epistle to the Hebrews the quotations are *invariably* attributed not to the human writer, but to the Lord, to the Holy Ghost, or to “*one in a certain place,*” thus carrying out most fully, what is stated at the very commencement of this epistle, that it was *God* who spake by the prophets unto the Fathers.

The manner in which the Scripture is quoted by our Saviour, the evangelists, and the apostles, clearly shows, that they regarded the men by whom the Word was written, as the instruments, but the Lord, and more especially the Spirit, as the true author of the whole organism of the Jewish record.⁹⁸

So evident was this truth to the Jews, and to all whom the apostles taught, and so confirmed were they in this belief by the constant practice of their teachers, that we scarcely expect a formal deliverance on a point which indirectly was continually impressed on the early Christians. But when Paul looked forward to his approaching departure, and committed the work of the ministry unto Timothy, in the prospect of perilous times and false teachers, he reminded his dear son in the gospel of the supreme authority and sufficiency of Scripture, declaring that “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God*” (2 Timothy 3:16). There can be no doubt as to the meaning of the terms employed; that

⁹⁸ Compare JOHN 7:38; 10:35; 19:36, 37; 20:9; ACTS 1:16; ROMANS 9:17; GALATIANS 3:8; 1 PETER 2:6. Scripture is quoted as spoken of the Lord or God (MATTHEW 1:22; 2:15; ACTS 4:25; 13:34; ROMANS 1:2). As the Word of the Holy Ghost (ACTS 1:16; 28:25; HEBREWS 3:7; 9:8, etc.)

“*Scripture*” means the writings of Moses and the prophets, as acknowledged by the Jews and confirmed by Jesus; that “*all Scripture*” means the whole of that Scripture (just as in Ephesians 2:21, the same expression “*all*” means the whole building, and in Ephesians 3:15, the “*whole family*,” and in 1 Peter 1:15, the “*whole conversation*”), the whole, showing both its organic unity (as Romans 11:26, “*all Israel*”), and the perfection of all portions of the Book; and that “inspired of God” means, that the Spirit of God is the author of this Scripture, influencing the men who wrote in such a manner that their writings are pure and absolute truth.

If on the basis of this declaration (which is in harmony with the whole tone and teaching of Scripture) we distinguish between the inspiration of the prophets and apostles as men and their inspiration as writers, such a distinction is absolutely necessary, and confirmed by the facts. As *writers*, they were perfectly and adequately guided by the Holy Ghost to write what is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; as *men*, they were eminent, but still on the same level with other disciples of Christ; and it was their work to meditate, pray, and watch, in order to appropriate for their own spiritual profit and growth that which was delivered to them. And that between these two elements there was not merely the difference of perfect and imperfect, but sometimes even of positive and negative, is shown by the case of Peter. Fully enlightened by the Spirit as to the position of the Gentiles in the Church, and their relation to the law, he was unfaithful to his own knowledge and testimony. And when Paul rebuked him, Peter acknowledged that his conduct had been erroneous, and that his

apostolic teaching had been true.⁹⁹ For the men, highly favoured, and especially fitted for their position as they were, delivered a testimony which, in a special sense, was Divine in its origin and substance, clothed in that form which God deems perfectly sure and adequate for all future generations.

If we believed the men inspired, and their writings worthy of our acceptance, because proceeding from them, then our faith would rest on the men, and for their sake we would believe their message. But our faith rests on a Divine testimony, and our authority is the authority of God. Peter and Paul believed the testimony they received from God, and so do we, in believing through their writings, accept a *Divine* testimony.

Still more explicit on this point is the teaching of Peter. He declares to us (1 Peter 1:10–12; 2 Peter 1:21) that holy men of old spake as moved by the Holy Ghost; that this Spirit, who was in them, was the Spirit of Christ, in whom and for whom Israel was chosen; that He revealed to them the whole counsel (Christ's sufferings and glory), and that they themselves did not fully understand their own writings, but searched diligently into them. How could we be taught more distinctly that the Holy Ghost (and not their own spirit) revealed to them what they wrote, and that their writings were high above their own measure of spiritual insight?

The quotations of Paul show, moreover, that he regarded this inspiration as extending to the very form of expression. To separate thought and word, spirit and embodiment, matter and manner, is at all times a very difficult and dangerous thing. In killing the body we lose the spirit. The boundary line between the

⁹⁹ I. T. Beck, *Einleitung*, p. 230.

idea and the word is very difficult to find. But especially on the ground of revelation is such an attempt dangerous; for this simple reason, that God reveals Himself not in spirit, but in flesh—not in abstraction, but in embodiment. As Martin Luther, foreseeing the approaching rationalism and pseudo-spiritualism, remarked, “Christ did not say of his Spirit, but of his words, *they* are spirit and life.”

This is not deifying the letter as letter; apart from the indwelling Spirit, the letter *throughout* killeth. But *God's words* are not merely letters, but spirit and life. Paul's argument in Galatians (not to seeds, as many, but to the seed, as one) is not according to the taste of Japheth; Paul, who was determined not to be afraid of the offence and foolishness of the cross, has often been criticised as falling into Talmudical trifling, by men who little knew that their vaunted intellectualism and spirituality are allied to that rationalism by which Jewish, Papal, and philosophical Rabbis have made the Divine truth of none effect. But the God, without whom not even a sparrow can fall to the ground, and who shows wisdom in the minutest work of his hand, may surely have watched over every expression used in his Scripture; and to discover the wonders of God's Word by microscopic examination, is the sign not of a trifling but of a great mind.

But Paul derives an argument not merely from a word, but from the silence of Scripture. The circumstance that Scripture does not mention Melchizedek's parentage, is in Paul's estimation significant; and thus, even as in music, not only the notes, but also the pauses, are according to the mind and plan of the composer, and instinct with the life and spirit which breathe through the whole, the very omissions of Scripture, be they of great mysteries, such as the fall of the angels, or of minute detail, such as the

descent of the king of Salem, are not the result of chance, or of the accidental ignorance of the writer, but according to, and in harmony with, the wisdom of that eternal Spirit who is the true author of the record.¹⁰⁰

The most common objection urged against this view is, that it is inconsistent with the individuality of the writers. But whatever our difficulty may be in combining the two facts, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost and the liberty and individuality of the writers, both facts are sure and apparent. The books of Moses, the Psalms of David, the Proverbs of Solomon, the epistles of Paul, are all marked by very decided peculiarities. The prophets and apostles not merely wrote, but in their writings we see the influence of their history, character, disposition, and mode of thought. It is evident that the Spirit did not destroy men's individuality, and that their peculiar history, experience, and conformation of mind, formed not an obstacle, but a medium. In this we can only admire the educating wisdom of God.

¹⁰⁰ "The title, which in Psalm 82:6 is given to rulers, and which consists of a single word, is quoted by Christ (John 10:34, 35); and He adds, *'the Scripture cannot be broken'* — that is, in reference to such single expressions. The word 'all, which occurs in Psalm 8:7, Paul takes in such an accurate sense in Hebrews 2:8 and 1 Corinthians 15:27, that he adds, nothing is excepted, except He who put 'all' things under Him. By the little word, 'to-day' (Psalm 95:7), the apostle proves in Hebrews 4 that there is yet a rest for God's people, and that therefore they should not harden their hearts. How strictly does Christ take the word 'Lord' (Matthew 22:44), and Paul the word 'new' (Hebrews 8:13), and also the word 'covenant' (Galatians 3:15), and the word 'seed' (verse 16) (the last as in the singular number). See also how Psalm 110:4 is analyzed, and great truths deduced from every single expression. The order of time in which, according to Scripture, events took place, is noted, and important lessons derived from it (Romans 4:10 and Galatians 3:17). The silence of Scripture is also important, and furnishes arguments. Because, in Psalm 32:1, 2, there is no mention made of good works, Paul concludes that blessedness is of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works." —Roos, *Glaubenslehre*, p. 34.

But the whole objection has its root in a vague idea of what individuality truly means. Error and sin are not essential elements of individuality. A man free from error and sin does not thereby lose his individuality; on the contrary, he gains it in the fullest sense. When the Holy Ghost fills the mind with light and the heart with love, He sets us free; and man's spirit receiving God's Spirit is not in an abnormal state, but is in the true natural state, according to God's idea. Scripture thus teaches us that God's children alone have individuality in the highest sense of the word. They are called *by name*. Every one receives a name, which is a secret between him and the Lord. (Revelation 2:17.) Can there be a more beautiful and glorious idea of individuality? Will the saints in heaven not have the most marked individuality? Will there not be the greatest variety, liberty, spontaneity there, and that from the very fact, that sin is excluded and knowledge is perfect? Even here on earth what is distinctive in men is some good quality, their affection, patriotism, courage, diligence, cheerfulness, etc.; whereas in hell there seems to be an utter absence of diversity, of color,¹⁰¹ of peculiar character, and its inhabitants, although retaining their separate identity and existence, seem to be a mass of darkness, and hatred, and hopelessness.

The Scripture authors, inspired yet individual and free, give us some idea of our future state. When filled with the Spirit we shall be truly the sons and daughters of the Most High, each having a name given by God. There would be more individuality among Christians, if instead of "*turning about*" and looking at our fellow disciples, we simply followed Jesus (John 21:19–22).

¹⁰¹ Contrast with "the blackness of darkness" (Jude 13) the description of the city in Revelation 21, with its foundations of precious stones.

We admit willingly the diversity of the authors. They lived in very different periods; their outward conditions, as well as their mental and moral peculiarities, are very diverse. Moses was brought up in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; Amos was taken from the simple scenes of shepherd life; Daniel was a statesman at the court of Babylon; Peter, a fisherman; Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel. The book of Job leads us into the earliest period of our history; the Gospels and Epistles bring us to the Roman monarchy, under which we are still living. The languages also differ, Hebrew, Chaldean, and Greek. The writings correspond to these differences in time and country and position of life, as well as of mental conformation. But with all this diversity there is the most marvellous harmony and agreement not only in the great outlines of thought, but in the minute details of fact and doctrine, as well as in the delicate shades of feeling. And not merely this, but the thread is often apparently left for centuries, and then taken up after a long pause in a way which cannot be explained on merely natural principles. A few instances may suffice. I read in Genesis the incident of Melchizedek blessing Abram. It stands there isolated. No reference to this narrative occurs till the Psalmist (Psalm 110) applies it to the promise given to him of a royal priest who is to be enthroned and to have a priesthood different from Aaron's, and to endure for ever. Mysterious as this Davidic comment on Melchizedek appears, it is fully explained, centuries after, by the author of the Hebrews, where he develops from these two Scriptures the nature and glory of the priesthood of Jesus, who is David's Son, of the tribe of Judah, and who is now in the heavenly sanctuary. Take the position assigned by God to man in Gen. ii. The eighth Psalm refers to this word. In Daniel we have again the Son of man spoken of in great glory and power. In the

second chapter of Hebrews the whole subject is explained (as David himself could not have explained it) as referring to Jesus, made a little lower than the angels, but now seated at the right hand of God, and crowned with majesty and glory.

Take the doctrine of justification. Abraham is justified by faith. David describes the blessedness of the man who has righteousness without works; Paul fully unfolds this in Romans 3 and in the Epistle to the Galatians. The atonement in like manner is declared throughout Scripture. God clothes man (Genesis 3); and in Revelation we read of the multitude whose robes were washed in the blood of the Lamb. What harmony exists between Leviticus and the Epistle to the Hebrews! How striking is the unity of this Book, and how impossible to account for it, considering the diversity of the authors, unless we believe that all Scripture is one great organic whole, possessed of the self-same spirit and life, inspired by the Holy Ghost, who saw the end from the beginning, and who unfolded, through successive developments, the manifold fulness which existed from the very earliest commencement of God's dealings with the children of men.

That the Spirit of God, while He enlightened the mind, preventing the erroneous and limited views, as well as the sinful and worldly tendencies of the writer, from exerting an influence on the deliverance of the message entrusted to him, accommodated Himself to the individuality of the chosen men, is in accordance with the whole method, the condescending wisdom of God in educating and influencing his children. It is our experience that the Spirit becomes Paul to Paul, and Mary to Mary; and that He, in wonderful love, like an all wise and considerate Teacher, adapts Himself to our peculiarities in mind and disposition. He knows us perfectly, watches all our steps, and,

according to the inner peculiarity of our character and the outward development of our history, He brings light and truth into our hearts. God influences us from within, so that often we can scarcely separate between our thought and feeling and his teaching and moving, for God dwells in us and we in Him.

The condescension with which the Spirit adapts Himself to man is strikingly illustrated by the vision which Peter had at Joppa. The truth which God impressed on him was one which was new to Peter, and which he, from his previous education and thought, was not at all prepared to accept, viz. [in other words], that the Gentiles should be received into the Church of Christ, without first becoming disciples of Moses and submitting to the rite of circumcision. This was not a thought developing itself naturally in Peter's mind, but the communication of a Divine thought. Peter, we read (Acts 10), became very hungry, and would have eaten. Naturally the subject of food was in his mind. The Spirit takes hold of this physical and mental state, and Peter beholds a vision of a certain vessel descending from heaven, where in were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air, and he was commanded to kill and eat. Now the lesson here was one which came direct from heaven. It was not excogitated by Peter's mind, but the Holy Ghost revealed unto Peter that Jew and Gentile were now to form one community, and that the Gentiles should be received without hesitation into the Church. But the manner in which the Holy Ghost taught him was by adapting Himself to the physical condition of the apostle at the sixth hour of the day, and the vision was in accordance therewith.

And the Spirit uses the individual characteristics of the writers for great purposes. God the Redeemer is the same as God the

Creator. The natural endowments of his chosen servants, as well as their experiences of life, are all under the guidance of God, who makes them subservient to higher ends in redemption. And thus, if David had not had the experience of a shepherd trusting in God; of an exile, persecuted, suffering, and forsaken; of a king, who lifted not his heart above his brethren, but who declared God's name unto them, and sang praise unto Him in the midst of the congregation; could we have received through him Psalms such as the twenty-third and the twenty-second?

If Jeremiah had not been naturally timid, easily cast down and discouraged, sensitive, tender, shrinking from the opposition of man, feminine in his delicacy, rich in sorrow and in tears, how could there have been given to us such a wonderful outpouring of heart as we have in his prophecy and Lamentations, which reveal to us the anguish of a godly and holy man in the midst of a rebellious and apostate nation; a loving, tender spirit, who felt the unbelief and sin of his nation as a heavy, overwhelming burden, and who sought relief and comfort by unbosoming all his thoughts and complaints before his God and Lord? What a marvellous foreshadowing of the mind and sorrows of Jesus; what a touching and deep exposition of what is meant by the "*bowels of Jesus Christ.*"

From whom but Solomon could we have received the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs? From the man who asked for wisdom as his chief desire; from the philosopher who studied nature and observed the ways of men; from the king whose experience, so ample and so diversified, illustrates so strikingly that "*all is vanity;*" and from the Jedidja of whom it is written, "*the Lord loved him*" (2 Samuel 12:24); and again, "*he loved the Lord*" (1 Kings 3:3); from him alone could we have had

three such books of wisdom, of experience, of love.

Consider the peculiar history, mind, and experience of Saul of Tarsus; it is by the Epistles, as revealing Paul, that the Holy Ghost reveals to us precious truth.

The inspiration of Scripture is a fact, not a theory. We find great difficulty in framing a theory even of those influences of the Spirit which we ourselves have experienced, such as regeneration and conversion. How can we, with any degree of certainty, propound a theory of an influence of which we have no personal experimental knowledge? We receive the fact, asserted by the Scriptures themselves, and abundantly confirmed by them, that, though written by men, they are of God, and that the ideas they unfold are clothed in such words as He, in his wisdom and love, intended, so that they may be safely and fully received as expressing his mind, and the thoughts which He purposed to convey to us for our instruction and guidance.

When such a view is described and condemned as *mechanical*, there is, after all, nothing said and proved. There is scarcely a Christian, however illiterate, who imagines that Isaiah did not feel awe and reverence when he wrote the sixth chapter of his prophecy; that Jeremiah, in writing the book of Lamentations, was a mere amanuensis, who, without sympathy in his heart and tears in his eyes, obeyed the dictation of a higher voice; that David's heart was not filled with joy and gratitude, when he sang the 23rd or the 103rd Psalm; that Paul, in writing to his congregations, did not pour out the rich treasure of his own experience and love. However strong and unguarded may have been the expressions of some Christians regarding the objective authority and perfection of Scripture, they never deserved to be characterized as teaching

“cabalistic ventriloquism,” which has been so frequently done, and by men who meant no irreverence. The Lord has spoken, and that it has pleased Him to speak, “*at sundry times and in divers manners*”¹⁰² through prophets, may appear to us mysterious, but the fact is received by faith with gratitude, and with the assurance of *that* light which is seen only in God’s light.

We notice a difference of inspiration when we compare the book of the Church with the book of the Kingdom. A difference, not as to authority and degree, but as to character. Before the coming of Jesus, and the outpouring of the Spirit, the inspiration was, as it were, more direct and objective. The prophets of old said, “Thus saith the Lord;” and in delivering their message they pronounced, and afterwards wrote, the “*ipsissima verba.*” As Bengel expresses it, their inspiration was more according to the way in which we dictate to children, while the apostles exercised more that liberty which the Spirit had given unto them. It is true, that in the Gospels we have the words of the Lord Jesus; but in the Epistles we find a testimony which accords in its character with the peculiarity of the Church, which has received the Spirit as indwelling light and power. This more free and personal character does not exclude the other equally true and important aspect of the Spirit’s influence on their writings. The prophets of old did not understand their own predictions, and had to search into them. There we have inspiration absolute and objective (though, as we have seen, not mechanical, nor without connection with the prophet’s individuality, age, and position). In the apostolic epistles we have the message delivered by men who had received the Holy Ghost, and who spake in the bright light of fulfillment. Of the

¹⁰² HEBREWS 1:1

prophets we read that the Spirit came upon them; of the apostles we know that the Spirit had his abode in them. While this invests their writings with a personal character (identifying their testimony with their own inmost self and experience), the apostles emphatically declare that their teaching is by revelation of God; that the Spirit reveals the things of the Spirit; and that they speak not with the words which human wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. The Church has the indwelling of the Spirit; the promise of the Father was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost was not given as an indwelling Spirit before Jesus was glorified. This gift constitutes the great difference between the Kingdom and the Church; and bearing this in mind, we recognize at once the peculiarity of apostolic writings.

Nor have we any difficulty in seeing why the book of the Church has not the same formal authentication as the document of the Kingdom. The Lord Jesus Himself confirmed the latter. It is the Spirit who confirms the former.

In the case of Moses and the prophets, we notice already such a progress from the more formal to the more spiritual authentication. The books of Moses are more especially and formally an authoritative document. The books of the prophets, equally emanating from God and given by the Spirit, were recognized by the faithful people as Divine, and added in full conviction of their authority, as we read in Daniel 9:2 I *“understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet.”* We notice here how the collection of Scripture was not regarded as yet complete; but book after book was added through the spiritual conviction of the children of God, just as Peter in his second Epistle (3:16), in speaking of Paul’s letters, adds them, as equal in position and

character, to the “*other Scriptures.*”¹⁰³ In like manner Paul, in the Epistle to the Romans, writes thus: that the gospel and the mystery “*is now made manifest by prophetic writings according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith*” (16:26). He here evidently refers not to the writings of Moses and the prophets, which do not contain “*the mystery*” (compare Ephesians 3), but to the writings after Pentecost, containing the full revelation of Christ and the Church.

Thus the Holy Ghost, whose power was not merely felt in the apostolic Church, but whose voice was heard (Acts 15:28; 13:2), who taught his servants the things which are spiritual, and the words wherein to teach them, produced the record of the evangelists and apostles, and they, not less than the prophets, though in a freer and more personal manner, wrote “*by revelation,*” and the things that they write are the commandments of the Lord (Ephesians 3:3; 1 Corinthians 14:36, 37).

Although the apostles do not say in the same formal manner, “*Thus saith the Lord,*” they write with an authority equal to that of the prophets, having received their message not from men but from the Lord Himself, and being especially set apart by the Holy Ghost to write for the instruction of the Church of all times.

Nor does this authority belong to the writings of apostles exclusively. The two Gospels of Mark and Luke, the Epistles of James and Jude, fully manifest and evidence their Divine character and organic connection with the “*other Scriptures.*” And to conclude the whole volume of the Book, connecting the twofold record of the Kingdom and the Church, and protecting as it were the very last page of that perfect and harmonious Scripture,

¹⁰³ 2 PETER 3:16

the apostle John received from the Lord Jesus Christ Himself “*the revelation which God gave unto Him.*”¹⁰⁴ Here we have again the *ipsissima verba* of the Lord. This book is, in the most formal and fully-authenticated manner, the “Book of the Lord;” and the testimony which so solemnly concludes it may well be viewed as having a reference also to all the “other Scriptures”: “I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18, 19).

Believing the book of the Church inspired, we can understand its structure and harmony, which could not be accounted for otherwise. One instance may suffice—that of the four Gospels. How could uninspired men adequately write the life of Jesus Christ? How could they select events and discourses,—fixing on the most important, the essential for all ages? How could they record the sayings of Christ, so profound, so inexhaustible, so perfect in every expression?—to say nothing of events which were not witnessed by man, as the temptation in the wilderness? Again, the fourfold narrative forms a complete whole. Jesus, as the Messiah, the Son of David, is set forth by Matthew; Jesus, as the righteous and obedient Servant of God, is described by Mark; Jesus, as the Son of man, the Redeemer, and Physician, by Luke; Jesus, as the Word, the Son of God, by John. The Spirit of God alone can give an adequate representation of the life of our Lord

¹⁰⁴ REVELATION 1:1

Jesus Christ; it would have been impossible for men to write a narrative which is sufficient for the wants of the Church in all ages.

A SUPERNATURAL HISTORY REQUIRES A SUPERNATURAL RECORD. The origin and history of Israel is recorded in the books of Moses and the prophets; the origin and history of the Church is likewise recorded by the Holy Ghost. We find the Scripture in accordance with the history. The Church, during the times of the Gentiles, requires the record of the life of the Lord, the Pentecostal origin of the Church, and the Acts of the Spirit through the apostles; the various Epistles revealing the mystery, and unfolding the “*whole counsel of God;*” and the Apocalypse [Revelation] containing what the Lord Jesus Christ desires his disciples to expect and hope. Israel required what is contained in the book of the Kingdom, and for their future perusal and obedience that book contains still much that is at present sealed. When we thus see the connection between the sacred writings and the dealings of the Lord, and find, experimentally, *what* the book of the Church actually is, our inference as to the Spirit-origin of the book is one which is not merely logical (though it has no cogency [logicalness] to the unbeliever), but which is a strong conviction—nay, it partakes of that direct and spiritual assurance which is independent of the testimony of man. The Church of God learns from the whole organism of Scripture, and is in communion with every portion of it; nor is she interrupted in this docile and obedient attitude by the difficulties and discrepancies of historical testimony and critical investigation.

In every portion of the Word (including those whose genuineness has been most doubted, as the Epistles of Peter and Jude) there is a solemnity and an authority nowhere found except

in writings God-inspired. The Word appeals directly to the soul, as light and life. It is pure, it is perfect. Out of the fulness of the whole counsel of God it speaks, and we feel that the Spirit of the eternal God is teaching us. And the same Spirit who convinced the early Church of the authenticity of the books, convinces the believer in the present day.¹⁰⁵ For our faith is not based on human testimony, though we honour and value it. In fellowship with the saints of all ages, we hear the voice of the Shepherd. The flock will not follow a stranger's voice, nor will it fail to recognize the voice of the Son of God and the teaching of the Holy Ghost.

From this great fact of the inspiration of Scripture several important features of the Bible may be deduced.

1. The Bible not merely was inspired, but is so still.¹⁰⁶ The Holy Ghost not merely inspired the men as they wrote, but He is still connected with the Scripture. It was originally Spirit breathed, but the Spirit is still breathing on it. When the soul, thirsting after God, reads the words, "*Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; buy wine and milk without money and without price;*" when the burdened heart and oppressed conscience reads the words, "*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest,*" the words are breathed again by the Spirit. It seems as if the ink was not yet dry, and as if the warm breath of eternal love, from which these promises flowed, was even now quickening and consoling the troubled soul. The Spirit makes the Scripture a living word. The Spirit

¹⁰⁵ "But if they ask, How can we know that the Scripture is of God, without taking refuge in the decree of the Church? it is as if they asked, How can we distinguish between light and darkness, white and black, sweet and bitter? For Scripture bears in itself no less evidence of its truth, than white and black things of their color, sweet and bitter of their taste." — *Calvini, Instit.*, 1, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Bengel, *Gnomon*, 2 TIMOTHY 3:16.

breathes here as in no other book. He makes the writing spirit and life, and man lives by it, because it is word proceeding *even now* out of the mouth of God. He who has experienced this can have no doubt about the origin of Scripture; for in his measure he receives it from God Himself, as David, Isaiah, Paul, John, received it. It is to him a Divine word. He knows not merely it is written, but that it is the living word and voice of the Lord. In obeying its precepts, he knows he acts in obedience to his heavenly Father; in resting on the promises and assurances which he reads in Scripture, he is convinced he is trusting in the Lord his God and Redeemer; and when, in the hour of his departure, his soul clings to the consolations of strong hope, set before us in the Word, it is the voice of the Saviour Himself, who says to him, “*Be of good cheer; it is I.*”

2. How can a Spirit-breathed book be understood without the Spirit? As no man without the spirit of poetry can appreciate poetry, or without the spirit of music, music, so it is impossible for the natural man, who is not a Spirit man, to understand Scripture. He may understand Hebrew and Greek, he may be well acquainted with grammar, history, and antiquity; but this refers only to the *body* of Scripture. He may have a mind capable of appreciating the beautiful and the sublime; he may be able to discern the human elements in all their pathos and significance, and thus see Scripture as characteristically different from Roman and Greek literature, or as striking from the fidelity of its resemblance to the various experiences of mankind. But this is only the *soul* of Scripture: the spirit of Scripture is God’s Spirit—the Holy Ghost. And hence it is that David, to whom the language and the customs of the Pentateuch were perfectly familiar, prayed to God to open his eyes, that he may behold wonders out of this law. Hence it follows, that what is most essential in Scripture is understood by

the spiritual man, though as to the soul and body of Scripture he may be ignorant; and that the best critical, grammatical, historical, and aesthetic or human understanding of Scripture (valuable and subservient to the pneumatic exposition) is utterly insufficient to seize the real meaning of the Word. An unlettered, simple Christian applies the twenty-second Psalm, for instance, straightway to Christ. He does not see, perhaps, its primary reference to David. He supposes, most probably, that David saw without any mediating circumstances and limitations, simply by the Spirit, the sufferings of Christ. Such a view is imperfect, but it is not incorrect. It is, after all, the main and true view, which God wishes us to take. Whereas all historical expositions of the Psalm (however correct the psychological analysis of it may be) which do not see in it the suffering and exalted Messiah, are false and shallow. No doubt, many an unlettered but Spirit-taught man has given truer exegesis than erudite but unenlightened scholars.¹⁰⁷

3. If the Bible is the book of the Spirit of God the Eternal, it must be a book for all ages. It cannot possibly be merely a record of the past, or a guide for the present. Emanating from Him who is, and was, and is to come, the Scripture also must be a book for all generations. All God's acts as well as words are in accordance with his counsel, and stand in relation to that whole plan which shall be fully manifested in the age to come. The Bible is therefore an eternal book. We breathe here the atmosphere of eternity. The author is He who is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

¹⁰⁷ This requires a word of explanation. There is a tyranny and conceit of the unlearned as well as of the learned. A man may be without scholarship, and without spiritual insight and humility. The most humble and spiritual men most probably are also diligent and conscientious students, availing themselves with gratitude of whatever throws light on the Scriptures. And those who take the deepest interest in the true welfare of the Church uniformly desire, in the first instance a spiritual, and in the next a learned, ministry.

Hence we find in every Scripture narrative, and in every successive revelation, limited and individual as it may be in its form, an element which is universal; it contains a lesson for every period of the Church's history, even as it is connected with the whole economy of God's dealings with men. The Scripture is a whole in every part, a mirror of the world, and a picture of all ages. The words of Scripture are according to the all-comprehensive view of God; and though often very limited and local, everything is of the widest application.

Hence it is, also, that Scripture does not merely contain prophecy, but that it is throughout prophetic. It is a superficial though not uncommon view, that prophecy does not constitute one of the general features of the Bible, but is limited to a few portions of the Word; this opinion is refuted by a single view of the facts. We have not merely the books pre-eminently prophetic, and thus designated by common consent, as Isaiah, Daniel, Zechariah, etc., and the Revelation; but looking at the historical books, we find in the Pentateuch, and in the subsequent historical portions, continual prophecy. In that first gospel, by which the Lord Himself broke the silence which sin had introduced, and opened the gate of heaven, even before He banished man from the garden of Eden, we have the most comprehensive prophecy, which still awaits its final fulfillment, when Satan shall be bruised under our feet, and the kingdom of righteousness be established. In the words of Noah, in the promises given to Abraham, in the blessing of Jacob, in the predictions of Balaam, in the song of Moses, by the mouth of Hannah, by the Lord Himself to David, etc., we have prophecy. In the Gospels we have the prophetic discourses of the Lord Jesus (as well as the parables, which most probably have a secondary prophetic meaning); in the Epistles (for instance, Romans and

Thessalonians), prophecy about Israel, the Antichrist, the return of Jesus. In the book of Psalms (where we would least expect it), we have, almost throughout, prophecy of the Messiah, his sufferings, his glory, and his kingdom. Scarcely a single book of Scripture which does not contain prophecy. And how could it be otherwise, when Jesus, his first and his second coming, God's kingdom, the struggle with the great enemy, and the victory, form the substance of the book.

We have also Scripture authority for viewing the history and characters of the Bible as prophetic. Thus Christ views the period of Noah as foreshadowing the days before his coming to judgment; the apostle Paul, in describing the Antichrist, uses words of Daniel which had received only partial fulfillment in Antiochus Epimanes. The history of Joseph and his brethren is a striking type of Jesus in his relation to the Jews, etc. The Song of Solomon is also prophetic, the principles and spiritual experience it contains being, at the same time, of immediate use and application.

If Scripture does not merely contain prophecy, but is prophetic throughout, does it not follow, that any exposition of Scripture or system of teaching which is without the prophetic element, must be different from the *tone* of the Bible, and must be defective even where it is correct? Can it be said of what is commonly called "orthodox preaching," that it is scriptural; that it is the same as that of the apostles, who we find invariably taught the people from the very outset, not merely to turn to God, but to wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven? Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, as the object of faith; Jesus, dwelling in the heart by the Spirit, as the object of love; Jesus Christ returning for us, as the object of hope,—such was the simple and comprehensive evangel

[good news].

4. The eternal character of Scripture may be viewed in a twofold aspect. As opposed to the limitations of time it manifests itself as prophecy. Scripture contains the gradual unfolding of the counsel of God in constant reference to its final consummation. But the eternal character of Scripture manifests itself also in another way. Scripture reveals not merely the things which are future, but eternal things *which are not seen*. “*Eternal*” is that which is spiritual, real, substantial, heavenly. In nature and history, in men and nations, in conflicts and victories, there is an outward, temporary, visible element, and an inward, spiritual, and essential element. The Spirit of God deals with all in an eternal way; that is, his representation of the visible and partial manifestations of God in nature and history continually seize the hidden meaning, and unveil the real and unfading substance. Thus eternity, as a characteristic of Scripture, includes two elements, the one opposed to the limits of time, the other as showing the substance under the transitory form. Scripture has thus, if we may say so, extensive and intensive eternity.

Hence it is that Scripture is throughout parabolic. It views the visible as corresponding to, and showing forth, the unseen. It explains the silent language of nature; it beholds the principles of the spiritual world shadowed forth in the manners and experiences of men. When Jesus speaks in parables it is in accordance with the whole method of Scripture. He is the true Son of David, who read the two books of nature and of the written Word (Psalm 19); the true Son of Solomon, who saw in earthly prudence the mirror of heavenly wisdom, and who uttered proverbs—*i.e.*, parables, dark sayings—clear in their primary meaning, but suggestive of higher lessons. Jesus spake in parables, not merely because He was the

Son of David and Solomon, the Israelite trained in God's school of revelation, but also because He was the Son of man. Man ought to have an eye for the beautiful works of God, for the light and the innumerable hues of wondrous beauty; he ought to have an ear to hear the thousand voices around him of deep solemnity and exquisite tenderness, even as his mouth should show forth the praises of God in response to God's message of love and power at sundry times and in divers manners. But there is a separation, through sin, between heaven and earth, and it is faith only that can see the things which are not seen in the things which do appear. Jesus was in heaven while He lived on earth (John 3:13); the essence of all things lay before Him. God and his kingdom, Satan and his kingdom, He beheld and traced throughout. He opened his mouth in parables.

He spake of nature. He had watched the clouds and the red sky at evening; the sun in his glory; the fowls of the air in their blithe carelessness; the flowers of the field in their gorgeous beauty; the wisdom of serpents, the guilelessness of doves; the eagle's keen eye and sudden descent; the hen gathering her chickens under her wings; the wind blowing where it listeth; the vine and its branches; the trees good and bad; the fig-tree and its leaves; the mustard-seed and its development;—all this became to Him a picture of heavenly things.

He spake of man; of the relationships and occupations of human life; of the eye as the light of the body; of the eye and hand which endanger life and health, and require to be cut off; of the sick, who need a physician; of the father giving good gifts to his child; of the mother rejoicing that a child is born into the world; of the friend showing himself friendly to his neighbour; of the shepherd and the flock; the king and his nation; the master and his

stewards; the merchant seeking goodly pearls; the sower going forth to sow; the fishermen casting out the net; even the little children playing in the market-place;—and in all this He beheld pictures of eternal truth and spiritual relationships.

He noticed also the foolish and the evil ways of men: the unrighteous judge, who feared not God, neither regarded man; the rich man trusting in his earthly possessions; the unmerciful servant, who will not forgive, though himself a debtor to mercy; the unjust steward; the man who begins to build without counting the cost; the thief and robber; the hireling;— and here also He sees spiritual principles, eternal results.

He noticed the common objects and events around Him: salt; the light and candlestick; the house and its foundation; the door; bread and water; the ways of the good householder. He spake of the marriage feast and the wedding garment;—in all He beheld the things that are real and are for ever.

And how constantly does He use the Scripture symbolism—speaking of the temple as his body, the manna in the wilderness, the brazen serpent, the water drawn at the feast, the vineyard which bare no fruit—according to the way in which God had spoken of them to his people.

This parabolic teaching is not for the purpose of making difficult truth more easy to a passive intellect or an inactive conscience. It has for its object to conceal the precious jewel from the eye of the sluggard and worldly, and to rouse the mind and to prepare the heart of the sincere. The chief purpose, however, is, according to the spirit of parabolic teaching, to impress on us that we are even now in eternity; that everywhere we are surrounded by the same God; that the invisible kingdom is manifested in the

visible; that God, and his truth, and his righteousness, are the true reality and substance.

The meaning of symbolism is based on the great fundamental fact that God is the Creator, and that Christ is the beginning of the creation of God. Thus there must be a great parallelism between the realm of nature and that of spirit. And as all things are upheld for Christ's sake, in Him and unto Him, there must be a great parallelism between history—the events and relationships which arise in providence—and the history of grace in redemption. There is only one Word of God, who expresses Himself in nature and in the spiritual world. Hence we have such striking resemblances. “*Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground, and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.*” This mysterious law is true also in the spiritual world, finding its most wonderful and perfect fulfillment in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus we are prepared to find in all the realms of God's kingdom, from the lowest to the highest, symbols of Christ. In the lowest we have Christ represented by the *Stone*, the *Rock*—the emblem of strength, of firmness, of never changing stability; the foundation which cannot be moved. But He is also like the *Plant*. His is life, even as He gives life. He is therefore called the *Branch* (or *ZEMACH*), simply and most generally representing the idea of organic life. And this in its highest and noblest form, for He is the *Vine*; and in its loveliest and most beautiful manifestation, for He is the *Rose*. But He is symbolized forth in a higher kingdom than that of the plants. He is strong and royal as a *Lion*; He is meek and gentle, attractive and patient, “made for suffering,”¹⁰⁸ like a *Lamb*. But yet higher we rise. He is called “*the Son of Man*,” for

¹⁰⁸ HEBREWS 2:9

whatsoever is truly human (according to the idea of God)—wisdom and love, strength of purpose and gentleness of submission, concentration in God and expansive benevolence to all, work and energy, and meditative rest and festive sabbath,—all that is truly man finds in Him its perfect exponent and fulfillment. And above all, He, the true Microcosm, in whom and by whom all things were created and are upheld, and who is the very Spirit of *All*, in so far as it is¹⁰⁹, is the Lord of glory, the Son of the Father, God of God, and Light of light. The Father beholdeth all things in Him, who is the beginning of the creation of God; and we, to our unspeakable joy, with adoring hearts and light-filled eyes, learn to see all things in Him and Him in all things.

Jesus speaks of Himself as the King, the Shepherd, the Friend, and the Bridegroom; while the Spirit is spoken of under the emblems of Wind, or Breath, Fire, Oil, Water, and the Dove.

The book of Nature is more especially brought constantly before us, that we may read in it, and trace in its pages the same wonderful truths which the Word has spoken more distinctly in the written book of God's testimony. It has been noticed by Alexander von Humboldt ("Kosmos"), that in no book of antiquity is there such a loving and faithful observation of nature as in the Bible. Such testimony is welcome; it confirms what we could not expect to be otherwise. Here also, as regards nature, we may say: God loveth his children; the works of his hands are dear to Him, and He often refers to them, to the heavens and the earth and the sea, to the stars, and to the trees and fields. Where is there such a description of nature as we find in the book of Job, in the words attributed to the Lord Himself? As He said at the first, his works

¹⁰⁹ Sin is not substance

are very good, wonderful in their beauty, and marvellous in wisdom and greatness. But here we may also say, “God is his own interpreter.” He explains to us the meaning of light and of the sun; He explains to us the meaning of the heavens being high above us, and the symbolism of that sapphire blue which is above the black clouds of Sinai. He explains to us the meaning of the rain and snow, which come down from heaven and return not thither, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, to give bread to the eater and seed to the sower. He speaks to us of the mountains and rocks, and what is symbolized by their strength and immoveable steadfastness; of the fountains and wells of water, refreshing in the wilderness; of honey from the honeycomb : of all that is in heaven, and on earth, and in the sea, God often speaks, showing us that all was made by the Word, even Christ, and therefore speaks and testifies of Him.¹¹⁰

In this symbolism everything is so simple, so real, that it speaks to the heart. There is nothing forced here. The spiritual meaning does not supplant, nor even place in the background, the immediate and primary meaning of God’s works, as showing forth his wisdom, power, and goodness. Nor is this spiritual meaning a moral appended, as some lame fables require an explanation. We love and appreciate the works themselves the more we connect them, as God does, with the inward idea. God interprets *Himself* in interpreting his works, for there is but one God, Creator, and Redeemer.

¹¹⁰ “The whole visible world is a large Bible, full of parables, allegories, and doctrines. They were written before there were men to read them, in order that, after man’s creation, he might immediately begin to learn and spell; as you have seen a schoolmaster write on the black board before the children assembled, so as not to lose any time, but to be able to begin his instructions at once.”—Alban Stolz. *Water Unser*

This symbolism enters very minutely into all Scripture; the measure of understanding it varies in us according to our disposition and discernment. Colors and numbers, the very hem of the garments, of space and time, are significant. Blue, purple, scarlet, and white (in the Tabernacle), black and green—the rainbow with its twofold, outer and inner, aspect. Again, the numbers three and seven, as relating to God and heavenly things; four, the number of earthly completeness; ten, twelve, forty, and others, which I only desire now to indicate.

And in this symbolism there is (as must already be clear) nothing arbitrary. The symbol generally runs through the whole of Scripture, such as Serpent (from Genesis to Revelation), Marriage, Bridegroom and Bride, Woman, Daughter of Zion, Bride of the Lamb; Babel (Genesis, Daniel, and Revelation); Beast, the Power of the World; Dove, the Emblem of the Spirit (Genesis 8, Matthew 3, Song of Solomon), and many others. God speaks in a perfect way; expect perfection, and, according to your need and capacity, you will find it.¹¹¹

God taught Israel by symbols: symbols on a very grand, large, awful scale. Their own history was the parable. The election of Abram, the birth of Isaac, the exodus out of Egypt, Israel's wanderings in the wilderness, their wars and victories, the reign of David, the glory of Solomon, the captivity of Babylon—all this was symbolical. So were their great men, Joseph, Moses, David,

¹¹¹ I observe in passing the wonderful spirituality and prudence of Scripture in using some emblems both for good and evil. Thus, for instance, Christ does not scruple to say, "*Be wise as serpents;*" nor does Peter scruple to compare Satan to a lion, though he knew that the lion was an emblem of Jesus, the Lion out of the tribe of Judah. Such instances show us how different Bible symbolism is from the Pagan symbolism. All human symbolism has naturally a Pagan tendency.

Jonah. So were their festivals and ordinances. And as all pointed to the future, even to Christ and his kingdom, the symbols became typical.

Hence every portion of Scripture has a meaning and application which no single age exhausts; it fulfils itself continually. No Scripture is of private interpretation. The wanderings of Israel through the wilderness are our own experiences in our pilgrimage on earth. Every Christian speaks of his Marah and Elim, his Massah, and Meribah, and Rephidim; the varied experiences of the Psalms have been realized by thousands as their own; and no pastor, acquainted with their circumstances and sympathizing with them in their sorrow, could have prayed with them, and given expression to their feelings and wholesome guidance to their thoughts, in more suitable words than those of David, the son of Jesse.

The enemies of Jesus, Pharisees, Sadducees, Pilate, Herod, the people crying “*Crucify Him,*” the daughters of Jerusalem weeping—these all exist in the present day, as they did eighteen centuries ago. Mary and Martha, Peter and John, Nathanael and Thomas, are eternal characters. The pictures of Scripture never fade, because the Spirit writes according to the essence.¹¹²

Types were given to convey light, and in such a way as to make an indelible impression. Besides, doctrines are more securely handed down by types such as were in the Tabernacle,—the altar,

¹¹² “It is remarkable how the child of God naturally reads: the Word in this way, long before he knows the reason why he does so; for the spiritual sense within him, far in advance of his spiritual discernment or strength, instinctively draws to and uses that which is suited to it. . . . And the more he meditates upon these subjects, the more is he amazed at the fulness and exactness of the analogy between himself and Israel.”—Jukes. *Mystery of the Kingdom*, p. 14.

candlestick, shew-bread, veil, etc., etc., all signifying truths; their very position, and the acts connected with them, embodying important spiritual teaching. It by no means follows that the thing typified was not seen and known by the people; on the contrary, we know from Psalms 51 and 119, that the true Israelite believed that there was a hidden wisdom and marvellous substance in the law and its ordinances. How much the mind of the deepest and most spiritual believer dwells on symbols and types, is seen by the fact of the Gospel of John containing more references to the symbols of Scripture (both from nature and Jewish history), than any other portion of the Word. How many symbols are alluded to in the first chapter! The Word, by whom all things were made (Genesis 1); the Word tabernacling among us (Exodus 25:8; 29:45); the Shechinah (Exodus 40:34); the way of the Lord (Isaiah 40); the ladder of Jacob; the Paschal Lamb. In chapter 2, we have the type of the Temple. In chapter 3, the new birth; the Spirit as the wind, which bloweth where it listeth (Ezekiel 37); the brazen serpent; the offering up of Isaac; the bridegroom and his friend. In chapter 4, the symbolism of water (Isaiah and Ezekiel), the symbolism of the harvest. Symbolical is the pool of Bethesda (in chapter 5), and the sea (chapter 6). Then follow the discourses about the manna (chapter 6); and about the water of life drawn with joy out of the wells of salvation (chapter 7); the symbol of the light; of servant and son (chapter 8); in chapter 9, the spiritual meaning of blindness; chapter 10, the parables of the door, the sheepfold, the hireling, the shepherd, the twofold flock; chapter 11, Resurrection, the spiritual and the real; chapter 12, the great parable of the corn of wheat; chapter 13, the symbolic act of washing the disciples' feet; chapters 14—16, the Father's house with many mansions; the vine; the Friend laying down his life and

the friends treated with confidence; the woman rejoicing over the child that is born.

It is John who notices that Christ's thirst on the cross was a fulfillment of prophecy, and who records the fulfillment of the typical predictions, "not a bone of his body was broken," and that He was pierced. (Exodus and Zechariah).

John especially dwells on the contrast of light and darkness—life and death. He speaks often of "*eating and drinking*," of "*the bread of life*," of the "*water of life*." I have given this rapid reference to the more striking and obvious allusions, in order to show that the symbolic view predominates in the mind of one who was nearest to Jesus on earth, and who has written what the Church in all ages has designated the spiritual Gospel.

5. The Spirit of God is all-sided. As regards God, He is One Spirit; as regards us, He is represented as Seven Spirits. The Scripture, the work of the Spirit, is therefore, notwithstanding its appearance of humility in the form of a servant, all-sided. It contains the truth in all its aspects. As in Nature so in Scripture, there is a "systematic want of system,"¹¹³ and therefore its completeness is not so obvious as if it was arranged like a botanical garden, and had annexed to it a table of contents, showing that from A to Z all was contained in it. For many reasons God has thus ordered it; one doubtless is, that we may use the Book in a spiritual and not in a mechanical manner. Not memory, but conscience; not intellect, but the heart; not a superficial submission of the will, but a conformity of mind—or rather, the Spirit producing this—can enable us to use Scripture aright. Hence the Saviour teaches us a profound lesson, when he refuted

¹¹³ Hamann

Satan's quotation of Scripture by saying, "*It is written again.*"

What is the meaning of this word "*again*"? Does one Scripture contradict the other? Or is one so clear and the other so obscure, that we must cleave to the distinct declaration, and leave the dark saying unobserved? Or is one Scripture extreme? does it go too far? has its teaching to be modified and its counsel to be taken with abatement? By no means. All Scripture, we know, is Divine and profitable. What is meant, then, by "*It is written again*"? It means, that the Holy Ghost directs the conscience and heart to the right passage, which gives light and commandment for the present situation and want; and that while the passage quoted by the adversary was perfectly true and most precious, the application was erroneous and contrary to the Spirit, so that "*It is written again,*" does not modify the Bible statement, but places it in its true light.

Follow Scripture with all your might; go into the full meaning of each doctrine and fact; do not blunt its edge by an apparently contradictory statement. For instance, Paul teaches justification by faith only; James lays great stress on works. Do not add the two statements arithmetically as it were, and draw an average. In this way you are sure to misunderstand both Paul and James. "*Without works*" is the very sum and substance, pith and marrow, strength and glory, of Paul's testimony. His whole preaching is concentrated in this declaration of salvation by grace. His whole history and spiritual experience find their centre there. All his usefulness and suffering, his influence and work, are connected with this faithful saying of righteousness without works, of grace abounding to the chief of sinners. This is the root without which, as he shows, there can be no true life, while it cannot exist without manifesting itself in the fruits of righteousness. This, even grace,

is the discipline which teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. Modify or dilute Paul's teaching on this point, and the whole Paul, soul and spirit, doctrine and work, ministry and epistles, vanish into vagueness. And as for James, do the people who speak of him as practical, and are inclined to view him as a necessary and wholesome corrective, not of Paul—because Paul is now “St. Paul,” and his epistles stand in the authorized Bible—but of the spirit of Paul, of Paul's doctrine and gospel—do they understand to whom, and of whom, James is speaking? Do they know what he means by good works? Have they received his testimony, that in order to bring forth fruit, man requires to be born again of the sovereign and powerful will of God through the implanting of the word of truth? Can they also say, *“Of his own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we might be the first fruits of his creation”*? If you understand Paul aright, James will only confirm you in the true grace wherein you stand; and as he views faith as a God given power, and the believer as one begotten of God's own will by the word of truth, his questions and exhortations will, as wholesome tests and warnings, root you only the deeper in that only Wine, apart from whom we can bring forth no fruit.

When we are in doubt and sorrow, bowed down with a sense of sin and unworthiness, or tempted to trust in our own works and progress, let us remember that it is written, *“By grace and not by works.”* When we are tempted to false security and negligence, let us remember that it is written again, *“Watch and be sober;”* *“Follow Me,”* *“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”* It is written, *“Give not that which is holy to the dogs, neither cast your pearls before swine,”* but remember, it is written again, *“Preach the word in season and out of season.”* It is written, *“I am persuaded, that nothing shall be able to separate us*

from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus;” and it is written again, *“If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.”* It is written, *“All is vanity;”* and it is written again, *“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof.”* It is written, *“No man can add a cubit to his stature;”* and it is written again, *“Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* Remember what is written about Christ’s divinity, and what again is written about his growing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. It is written again, but not against. Only ask thyself who quotes, and for what purpose? For Satan quotes Scripture to his own purpose. That in us which savours not of God, but of man, and which Jesus connects directly with Satan (Matthew 16:23), quotes Scripture, leading us either into false confidence or false fear, either into morbid passiveness or false activity; and the finding of the *“it is written again,”* is the work of conscience rather than that of memory. Our errors of exegesis are far oftener moral than intellectual. It is solemn life-work before God to use the Bible aright. Here, again, we see the great position assigned by God to the Spirit. As the Book was written by the Spirit, it cannot be used safely, it cannot fulfil its practical and solemn purpose, but by the continual guidance and blessing of that selfsame Spirit. It is of little use as a dead book; it requires a continually quickened and exercised conscience.

6. In connection with this great truth, the inspiration of Scripture, consider the peculiar style of Scripture. Every reader of the Bible is struck with the wonderful style of this book. There are in its pages a simplicity and depth, a grandeur and beauty, a fervour and pathos, a brevity and comprehensiveness, which no other literary production has ever equalled. The greatest authors, poets, and artists have noticed and acknowledged this. Johannes

Won Müller speaks of Moses as the grand model for historians. Goëthe confesses that there never was an idyl written like the book of Ruth; and that the narratives of Genesis possess a charm exquisite and unique. The opinions of Schiller and Lord Byron, and many other great poets, are often quoted and well known.

But, we ask, why is the Bible style so wonderful? The men who wrote the Bible did not aim at artistic effect; they did not think about being sublime, or pathetic, or picturesque. It is this very absence of self-consciousness, this quiet and calm forgetfulness of self in the contemplation and description of what, in its intrinsic importance and beauty, requires no commendation and ornament, which invest their writings with such wonderful power. In human poetry there is always an element that is artificial, unreal, self-conscious. It is not altogether the spontaneous and true outburst of inward thought and feeling. How different are the Psalms of David and prophecies of Isaiah ! Here all is poetical because all is real; and all that is real here,—God, his kingdom, truth and love, faith and prayer,—is, in the highest sense, poetical, ideal. The Bible poetry reminds us of the sweet melody which in the lonely wood ascends from the joyous bird.

The difference between the Scripture style and the style of human writings, is the same as between the work of God in creation and a work of man in art. In this subordinate sense it is also true what the apostle says of the Word of God, it is living; and what Luther used to express in his realistic way, “it has hands and feet.” It is the difference which exists between a rose out of a garden, and a rose made of wax. The work of art may be more perfect and faultless than the living flower, in which there may be some irregularity and flaw. Yet when we see the real rose, we exclaim, “How beautiful! how fragrant!” When we see the artist’s

work, we say, “How *clever!*” In the one case our heart and eye are delighted, lost in admiration of the object; in the other case there is produced a feeling of a totally different and inferior character. “As it is in the book of Nature, so it is in the pages of Holy Writ. Both are from the same Divine hand. And if we apply to the language of Holy Scripture the same microscopic process which we use in scrutinizing the beauties of the natural world, and which reveals to us exquisite colors and the most graceful texture in the petals of a flower, the fibers of a plant, the plumage of a bird, or the wings of an insect, we shall discover new sources of delight and admiration in the least portions of Holy Writ.¹¹⁴

We may also say, that as the ocean is to a lake or river, so is the Bible style to that of even the most spiritual and profound men. For in the Bible everything is viewed from the highest point, and according to its true essence and position in the history of the Divine economy. In the Bible we breathe the atmosphere of eternity. “Scripture sees all things from a great height, therefore the expressions it uses are according to a different measure and perspective from those of the world, for which reason to the world the Scripture seems exaggerated. This absolute and perfect view and measure of Scripture, which we ought always to regard as the standard of all our thoughts and words, may be specially noticed in the Scripture description of the creation, redemption, and the end of all things. How paradoxical and above nature!¹¹⁵

We may also say that He, who alone knows the human heart, is alone able to speak to the heart of man; and while other writings

¹¹⁴ Canon Wordsworth

¹¹⁵ Oetinger, friend of Bengel, who died in 1782, as Prelate of the Württemberg Church in Murrhardt. *Etwas Ganzes vom Evangelio*, p. 148.

are preeminently logical and imaginative, or addressed to the conscience and feelings, Scripture speaks to man, to “*all that is in him*” (Psalm 103:1), to the inmost and hidden centre, from which proceed all thoughts, words, and works. This penetrating peculiarity of the Scripture style is another feature of its Divine origin. Scripture speaks to the heart of man (Isaiah 40:1, Hebrews). That means, not merely to speak so as to influence the will and rouse strong feelings, but to reveal the secrets of the heart (1 Corinthians 14:25; Jeremiah 17:10; Proverbs 15:11), and to fill its desire for eternity with something perfect. Scripture represents the heart as a little world. When the man of God speaks, his word seizes a hundred elements in this little world; what was hidden is brought out, the false imaginations are brought to shame, and despair cries for help and seeks anchorage. The heart feels the difference between a human and a Divine word.

There is another peculiarity of the Bible style; it is homely and confidential. Its tone is fatherly, friendly, winning our trust and breathing out love. Scripture is wonderfully comprehensive, and yet very minute and personal; uncompromising and stern, majestic and awful, and yet most considerate and tender. God, while He reveals his omnipotence and omniscience, and makes us feel that He is God, and that there is none beside Him, at the same time speaks to us in confidence, explaining to us his ways, his motives, his plans; causes us to listen to his covenant with his Son; asks us to rejoice in his future manifestations of goodness and glory. “I read in *my* Bible,” is the common expression of the Christian, showing that in this book God speaks to him individually as to his child; that in this book he finds the special message of God, condescending to his individual need and state. We have the same feeling of individual proprietorship in the Bible that a child has in

a letter especially addressed to himself, and with allusions to his work and play—“*his* letter.”

The Scripture speaks with authority, and not as other books; out of an inexhaustible fulness it communicates to us what is profitable. Mysteries, the knowledge of which is not necessary for our present life, or not possible for us in our present state, it leaves, without explaining the silence, and gives us such fragments about Satan’s history and that of the angels as it sees fit, and in such a manner that we feel convinced the fragments are from a connected and perfect whole, well known to Him from whom the Scripture truly comes. This very fragmentariness of the Bible produces in us a profound feeling of awe and trust while we listen to the voice of Him of whom are all things, whose ways are above our ways, and who in his mercy and wisdom teacheth us to profit (Isaiah 48:17).

The Scripture style is thus very wonderful. He who has tasted this wine, discovers at once the comparative insipidity of all human books. Compared with other words, Bible words are inexhaustible, but they are more easily remembered, and remain like nails fastened (Ecclesiastes 12:11, according to Stier’s translation): “The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened; the masters of collections (of sayings etc.) are ordained of one Shepherd.” Compared with other words, they are more solemn and awful, and yet more heart-winning and encouraging; more catholic and comprehensive, and yet more individual and minute : they are more above us, and yet more within us. In short, they are like God, who is the only One, Lord and Father.

We all must agree with the quaint remarks of old Oetinger: “I am satisfied only with the style of Scripture. My own style and the

style of all other men cannot satisfy me. If I read only three or four verses I am sure of their divinity, on account of their inimitableness. It is the style of the heavenly court. . . . The writers of Scripture observe all rules without having rules, because their word proceeds from Life; they never bring forth old things without new, which have never been thus uttered. They avoid abstract definitions like a pestilence; they clothe their ideas and give them a body, but such a body as never misleads us to the sensual. Scripture moves, describes, convinces. In Isaiah we have not formal sentences, but real addresses, which re-echo in the heart, calling on us to be comforted by God's redemption: 'Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!' All is full of the nearness of God's Spirit: "Fear not, I am with thee....The apostolic men had not the habit of prefixing their theme, even as a painter would not write above his picture of a horse, 'This is a horse;' and because divisions are chiefly of use to the learned, the prophets had another method of fastening the great points as nails into the heart, so that people did not require the art of remembering, but, as Themistocles said of his bad conscience, 'the art of forgetting.' Isaiah has perfect divisions, but not as a geometrical plane is divided into squares, but as a man consists of members, and a tree of trunk and branches."¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Selected from various works of this eminent theologian

PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PRESENT AGE

7

1. STUDY OF THE BIBLE

We ought never to open the Scriptures except with a feeling of profound reverence and gratitude. As one has said, “They are heaven speaking upon earth; in them we hear the voice of the living God.” As the same witness has declared on his death-bed : “When I shall enter the invisible world, I do not expect to find things different from what the Word of God has represented them to me here. The voice I shall then hear, will be the same I now hear upon the earth, and I shall say, ‘This is indeed what God said to me; and how thankful I am, that I did not wait till I had seen in order to believe.’”¹¹⁷

In reading the Scriptures, we ought to approach as to a sanctuary, with awe and reverence, with a collected mind and a solemn, docile heart. And how thankful ought we to be for this revelation, for its fulness and simplicity, for the great truths it unfolds and the minute counsels it contains, for its doctrine and consolation; the history of the past and the prophecy of the future, the example of the saints and the varied experiences of God’s children. If an angel from heaven, who had been before God’s throne for thousands of years, came down to earth, and dwelling

¹¹⁷ A. Monod’s “Farewell”

among us, was willing to communicate unto us out of the treasure of his knowledge of divine things, how eagerly we would seek his society, and how attentively we would treasure up his words. But the Bible is better than such a celestial messenger. It is given by God Himself, as the best and most perfect teacher. He, in his infinite wisdom, has adapted both the matter and manner to our wants and peculiar position in this world. He has revealed to us things into which the very angels desire to look. What can be more precious than his own language and his own words, revealing to us the inmost thoughts and purposes of his heart? We ought to open the Bible with the most lively gratitude. Here is indeed a treasure invaluable. "Oh, how I love thy Word! it is better than thousands of gold and silver; it is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb."

It is a weak and pale word, and not at all corresponding to the real nature of the case and to the feelings of the Christian, to speak of our *duty* to read the Scriptures. Where there is reverence, love, trust, where there is joy in communion with God, we look upon the reading of Scripture not as *a* duty; one among many others. It stands by itself. Listening to the voice of God is not one of many duties, but it is the source as well as the regulator of all duties. It is not merely a work which our conscience declares to be right, but our very conscience, and affections, and will, and mind, our whole inner man, receives from this Word light and strength.

We feel it necessary to read the Scriptures, just as food is necessary to sustain life, and as we desire to breathe pure and fresh air. It is a necessity; not a compulsion of an external kind, which is opposed to our nature, and which is as a mechanical burden imposed on us. It is a necessity, in the sense that our whole spiritual life craves for it, and cannot prosper without it. And is not

one reason of our languid and feeble life the simple fact, that we do not breathe sufficiently the Bible air? Sermons and tracts, and religious books, contain not sufficiently that ozone, which is the exclusive characteristic of God's Word.

But it may not be unnecessary to add a word on the copious reading of Scripture. Read the whole Scripture, for Scripture is a connected whole. Do not neglect the historical, or prophetic, or doctrinal portions. Forget not the book of Proverbs nor the little Epistle to Philemon. Think not that there is no food for the soul in the books of the Chronicles. God has given us the whole, and means us to use the whole, for it is all profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. We Protestants speak much, and at times somewhat boastfully, of our great reverence and love for the Bible. Is our glorying in truth? Do we love the Bible, not merely as a text-book from which to collect proofs for our doctrine, an armory from which to select weapons to defeat our opponents, but do we love the Bible as God's revelation, in which our minds are to be moulded, by which our hearts are to be influenced? Are there not many portions of Scripture so neglected, that if tomorrow some magic hand were to efface them from our editions, very few of us would miss them? Have we not received it more as a theory than a real and practical belief, that all the books of Moses, and prophets, and apostles are inspired, authoritative, profitable? Let us be really disciples, learners, not selecting, not rejecting, but receiving all our Lord has graciously caused to be written for our instruction.

If such a diligent study of Scripture should interfere with our reading of religious literature, we may rest satisfied that we shall not be losers, to say the least of it. While we use with gratitude the books in which men communicate their thoughts and experience,

we must always, not merely in theory, but in practice, hold them in a subordinate position. The more the Bible has, the pre-eminence, the greater will be our power of discernment, and the more shall we be truly benefited by the writings of men. A diligent study of Scripture will place us in the true position of not being in bondage to man, and of being willing to learn with gratitude from all servants of the Lord.

Has a Christian ever regretted on his deathbed, that he spent too much time in reading the Bible, and too little time in reading men's writings? But many of God's people have expressed their regret that they have not studied the Word of God more. Let us then act as they would have acted, had their life been lengthened; let us start now, as they, by the solemn and clear light of their last days, saw it was good, and wise, and blessed to start.¹¹⁸ Let us give time to the regular and diligent reading of "*all Scripture.*"

Read Scripture connectedly. It is true, every word of God is pure; precious is every expression, and on a single line or verse we may meditate only to find that its depth is inexhaustible. But besides this minute reading and meditation, there ought to be also a more rapid and connected reading. It is a mistaken reverence which at times interferes with our understanding of the Word. We fancy every word is printed in italics, and do not gain the meaning of a whole chapter or epistle. Bring all concentration of mind to the reading of Scripture, and then apply your intellect to it as to any other book. Reverential reading includes the lower attitude of attention, exertion of mind, and earnestness. The Spirit is

¹¹⁸ This thought has many applications. One has often struck me. Christians on their death-bed invariably look to Christ alone, and to the mercy of God exclusively. They then understand clearly "righteousness without works." They see eternal life as the free gift of God. *Start* with this.

promised to reveal and apply to us the truths of Scripture. But one result of the Spirit's influence is an honest application of the mind to the Bible. If we read in a kind of mental paralysis, with a mysterious feeling of performing a duty which somehow or other will benefit us, we misunderstand the nature of the Bible. It is used by the Spirit to convince, instruct, comfort, guide, and this through the understanding, conscience, emotions; therefore in the Bible we have history, argument, poetry, maxim, suggestion, appeal. All that is within us is exercised by this Word, and the more the Spirit aids us, the more will all our mental and moral faculties be brought into activity in the reading of Scripture. Again I say, let us give ourselves to frequent, copious, honest reading of the Bible, in dependence on the grace of God, who alone giveth the increase.

2. BIBLIOLATRY

The charge of Bibliolatry (worship of the Bible) has been of late frequently preferred against those who maintain the supremacy of Scripture. As far as this objection is urged by those who do not fully and clearly acknowledge the Divine authority and inspiration of Scripture, it is easily refuted. But as far as we ourselves are concerned, we may do well to consider whether our opponents are not giving utterance to a truth which they themselves do not fully see, and warn us against a danger the existence of which we are apt to overlook. In other words, never mind whence and for what purpose the charge of Bibliolatry is made,—consider the thing itself; is there such a tendency, such an evil, such a danger? I know that many Christians will reply at once, “We cannot value, and reverence, and cherish the Bible sufficiently.” And this is quite true. The danger is not of a reverence too deep, but of a reverence untrue and unreal. We cannot speak, think, and feel too highly of Scripture in its vital connection with Christ and the Spirit; but there may be a way of viewing Scripture by itself apart from Christ and the Holy Ghost, and transferring to this dead book our faith, reverence, and affection; and this surely would come under the category of idolatry,—substituting something, however good and great in itself, or rather in its relation to God, in the place of the living God. Gross idolatry is not the danger of the Church. Since the Reformation, idolatry must needs appear in a very subtle form.

On such an important subject it is a duty to be explicit, although one is liable to be misunderstood. Notice, that all points which are of special importance at the present time are always those on which one is most easily misunderstood; the truth which is clearly

seen and universally accepted, is not that truth which is specially needed to be pointed out at the time. By Bibliolatry I understand the tendency of separating, in the first place, the Book from the Person of Jesus Christ, and in the second, from the Holy Ghost, and of thus substituting the Book for Him who alone is the light and guide of the Church. In explanation of this twofold tendency, I submit the following considerations:—

The Jews regarded Scripture as the Word of God. They revered its very letter, guarding it with scrupulous care and studying it with indefatigable diligence. They were zealous defenders of “the oracles of God” entrusted to them, and boasted of the wonderful treasure in their possession. How then was it, that with such a reverence and knowledge of Scripture, they could not understand the Living Word, Jesus Christ? The Lord explained the fact. While they thought that in the Scriptures they had eternal life, they had not the Word of God abiding in them. Was there not Bibliolatry in their case?

But not merely did they not understand and receive Christ's word, though it was so fully in accordance with the Scripture, but they did not perceive the resemblance between Jesus and that picture of the Messiah which Moses and the prophets had delineated, and which was so wonderfully and strikingly manifested before them in glorious fulfillment. They were continually reading that Scripture in which the features of the Messiah, the chosen servant of God, were clearly and fully described; and when the Man stood before them who was the Original of the portrait, they did not know Him; they recognized not who He was; nay, they ended in condemning Him to death “according to their law” (that is, on Scripture grounds).

How is it, that with all their reading of Scripture, they did not recognize Him of whom all prophets testified? They did not fall down before Jesus in adoration and worship. Then what did they worship? The letter of Scripture they revered; the sum and substance, the reality of Scripture, Jesus Christ, they did not even recognize. Here we have a total misunderstanding of Scripture, combined with an orthodox belief in its authority, and great and zealous defense and praise of the inspired Record. How striking and lamentable is this fact! The Jews believing the Bible and rejecting Jesus; glorying in the written Word, and casting Jesus out of the beloved city; holding the Bible in one hand, and crucifying Jesus with the other; nay, accusing Him of blasphemy.

Whether there is anything corresponding to this among us, I leave the reader to judge. Whether to many the Bible is as it was to the Jews, not the voice of the living God, but *instead* of that voice, so that *while they believe it contains truth, they do not believe the truth it contains*; whether with the professed reverence for the Bible, there is much real reverence for the word which comes from God, and treatment of it as such, is an inquiry which I simply indicate and suggest.

How can we account for such a nation, Scripture-loving and Jesus-hating; reverencing the *letter* of Scripture, but not able to recognize the *voice* of Him who had spoken at sundry times and in divers manners to the fathers, and was now speaking to them by his Son, the Lord Jesus? It is “Bibliolatry” which explains it. They substituted “Bible” for God speaking in and through this book. They thought that instead of a living God guiding them and influencing them, they had now a Book which contained all, and the great thing was to explain it correctly. They asked (as our people ask) “What was the text?” and not “What is the Word, the

message of God?” It is evident from the Psalms and the prophets that the books of Moses were diligently read, and yet the constant call to Israel was, “Return to *Jehovah*.” The difference between the true Israelite and the Bibliolater was,—the one looked upon Scripture as leading him to God, as a channel through which God taught, influenced, and comforted him: the other looked upon Scripture as a substitute for God; in other words, it became to him a way of getting rid of God. The spirit of the God-estranged text-worshippers is expressed in the saying of a Rabbi, that now that God has given the Law, He has no more need and right to interfere by further revelations. Under the pretense of honoring the Bible, they virtually treated God as one who had ceased to live and rule among them.

And now the rule of man began. For if instead of God we have the Bible, the task of commentators, interpreters, casuists, commences. For the text is obscure, the commentary distinct; the text is severe, the casuist accommodating; the text is deep and many-sided, the interpreter shallow and one-sided; the text desires inward truth and radical cure, the tradition heals the hurt of the daughter of my people superficially and falsely. In course of time the tradition came to be regarded as more valuable, more necessary, more practical, than the Bible. Naturally so. Without a living God, viewing the Bible as God’s substitute, a clear and detailed interpretation of . the code is in reality of greater importance than the code itself.

This fact, Israel reverencing the Bible and crucifying Christ, is patent and striking to all. But it may not have been sufficiently considered, that it is a fact for all ages, and that the principles involved in it have a special importance for the Church.

But while this form of Bibliolatry is chiefly among those who have not accepted the message of God (though they accept “the Bible”), and who are often encouraged in their state by not having this dead acceptance of the Bible pointed out to them, there is another form of Bibliolatry which is more dangerous to the children of God. Such phrases as “The Bible is the religion of Protestants,” well-meant, and true to a certain extent, already indicate an incipient decay. Where there is life, and life in health, such expressions do not exist. Paul never would have said that the Scripture was the religion of the Christian. Christ was his Light and Life. If asked further about Christ, he would describe Him as the Scripture testifies of Him, and as the Spirit revealed Jesus to his soul. It is not that Paul thought otherwise than we do about the Divine authority, sufficiency, and fulness of Scripture, but he stood to Scripture *in a true relation*.

The Reformation-churches soon departed from the true and living view of Scripture. Luther saw Scripture in its relation to Christ and to the Spirit; indeed, many of his sayings err on the side of subjecting the Scripture too much to the testimony of the Spirit to our spirit. They are unguarded, but in reality only strong and one-sided expressions of what he felt so deeply,—that we do not place the Bible as Christ's substitute or the substitute of the Holy Ghost; that the great value of the Bible is that it testifies of Christ; and that the Holy Ghost is the true enlightener and teacher.

While Luther did not sufficiently guard his assertions (forgetting, too, that the testimony of Scripture concerning Christ was much more ample and full than his idea as to what that testimony ought to be), his followers too soon forgot the true position of the Scripture. *The Holy Ghost is above Scripture*. Not that there is anything in the Scripture which is not in accordance

with the Spirit's teaching, for all Scripture is inspired of God, but the Church is in danger of ignoring the existence of the Holy Ghost and her constant dependence on Him, and of substituting for the Spirit the Book. And now commences the reign of interpreters and commentaries, of compendiums and catechisms; for if we have the Spirit's teaching in the Book instead of the Spirit's teaching by the Book, men wish to have it extracted, simplified, reduced to a system, methodized. And then, practically speaking, the creed is above the Bible.

Thus there has been, to a great extent, “text”—preaching instead of “Word of God” preaching. The Word was “outside” of us, instead of “dwelling” in us. And our testimony is different in tone and power from that of the apostles and primitive Christians; for their testimony was in the Spirit and of Christ according to Scripture, while ours has become testimony concerning the Bible in reference to Christ and the Holy Ghost. The apostles spoke of Christ, and confirmed and illustrated their testimony by the prophecies of Scripture. They looked to the Man in the first place, and secondarily to the portrait given of Him in the Book. Whereas the pseudo-apostolic preaching fixes its own eye and that of the hearer in the first place on the Book, and deduces from it the existence and influence of the Person. The impression in the one case is: that the preacher announces a message from Christ, who is a reality to him; and this his experience of Christ, he asserts, is according to Scripture. The impression in the other case is: that Isaiah, Paul, John teach, according to the preacher’s exposition, such and such doctrine. The one is preaching Christ; the other, about Christ. The one is life and spirit; the other is possible without the spirit and vitality. The one is testimony; the other is an exposition of another man’s inspired testimony. The one is

preaching the Word (with or without text); the other is text-preaching without the Word. Paul preached Christ; our tendency is to preach that Paul preached Christ.

Why is it that God, in speaking to his own people, says so often, “I am the Lord”? Why does He speak so frequently and so earnestly against idolatry? Why does He teach us continually that the Spirit quickeneth; that the letter, even the good and inspired letter, killeth? Because the root-tendency of man is to substitute shadow for substance, the form and outline for the fulness, rules for life, and dead things for the living God. Because we like to stand on terra firma, and resemble children, who cannot understand on what pillars earth, sun, and moon do rest. Because we think of catching a sunbeam in a trap, instead of depending on the sun in the heavens. Therefore we are always apt to deify “brazen serpents,” “Bible doctrine,” past experiences.

The man who first made a crucifix, doubtless simply meant it as an aid to his memory and devotion. The thought of the Saviour’s love and death filled his heart with contrition, ardent affection, peace, and joy. “Oh, if I could always thus see a crucified Redeemer!” And why not? Is not the same mercy and love, which manifests Christ unto the soul now, continually with us? Will there be no manna tomorrow Ah, but he wants to fix and secure the impression. He makes the crucifix; and now, instead of Christ, we have an expedient—an aid to devotion, which will soon become an obstacle, and then a substitute for the living Christ. For the process of deterioration is rapid; soon is Christ forgotten, and the crucifix becomes not a symbol, but an idol, and men think not merely of the crucifix, but attach importance to a special crucifix, with wood from such a place, and which has been used by such a Saint, etc.

But idolatry, in the large and spiritual sense, is not confined to “crucifixes.” The Bible may be the Protestant crucifix.

And then it is that, as with the Jews, so now-a-days, people will say: “If you take away the Sabbath and the Bible, what remains?” And that is just what I ask: “What *does* remain?” To a number of “religious people” so-called, what *is* left? Oh, when the Spirit of thy Lord came unto thee, and made thee see Jesus Christ, the Friend of sinners, and hear his blessed voice declaring peace in his blood, was thy consciousness that of a book or of a person, of a creed or of life, of written guarantees for God, or of that love which passeth knowledge and of that joy which is unspeakable? To us to live is Christ, and nothing else; and our safety is Christ and nothing else. And for this reason, the testimony, which nowhere but in Scripture we have perfect, full, and without error, is to us most precious.

The opinion of the world concerning us is, that we are guided by the Bible; and to defend ourselves and influence the world, we begin to show that we are right logically, and historically, and ethically, in believing the Bible. But what we ought to have impressed upon the world is, that we are guided by the Holy Ghost, and that Christ is our centre and our life. The Bible is our storehouse, where we obtain nourishing food (even this illustration is dangerous, for apart from the Spirit there is no nourishing food, even in the Gospel of John and the very words of Christ). The Bible is our armory, where there are swords and weapons for our conflict. But what we have to testify is, not that we have food, but that we have life, and that there is a Christ; not that we are equipped for war, but that we have strength, even the Holy Ghost.

And as for defending either the Bible or Christ, who ever asked us to do it? Certainly not Christ, for He told us to be his witnesses and not his advocates, and He has promised that the gates of hell shall not prevail against the Church. The defence is in his own hand, while He has left the testimony in ours. The whole testimony of the Church is Jesus Christ, and that testimony is by the Spirit of God; and those who are convinced and added to our number are so by the preaching, which is in demonstration of Spirit and power. But when the Church argues about and for Christ, and especially about “the Bible,” as if “the Bible” was God’s guarantee instead of God’s witness, she has insensibly got into a wrong position. The apostles were witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus—but how! Why did Jesus Himself not appear after his resurrection to the unbelieving Jews? The apostles preached—not evidence proving the miraculous fact of the resurrection but a risen Saviour: resurrection-power was theirs, and the Spirit convinced their hearers of that life in a risen Saviour! Our faith is not to stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. When the word of the Lord comes to the soul, it brings its authority, power, and attraction with it, and the response of the heart is, not “What is this Book?” but, “Who art Thou, Lord?”

Thus even the Bible may become dangerous. When we realize God, when we constantly remember that Christ Himself is All in All, and when we believe that according to the promise the Holy Ghost is the indwelling guide of the Church, then indeed the Bible is most precious to us, Word of the Most High, which we desire to receive with reverence, gratitude, and joy.

This, I believe, is what Edward Irving meant, when he said, “With shame I declare it, they talk more after the style of a

Mohammedan talking about the Koran, or a Jew about the Talmud, than of a spiritual Christian united to Christ speaking of the Word of Christ. For if I have Christ, I have more than his Word, I have Himself; He dwelleth in me, and I in Him.

“Hence cometh that bastard notion of faith, which I cannot away with, that it is merely the link which joineth the mind of man with the record of the Book. They go about—and men they are, many of them, most dear unto my soul—to speculate concerning Christianity, as they call it; how intellectual, how moral, how political it is, beyond all systems; how it is accommodated to the faculties of the understanding, to the feelings of the heart, to the well-being of the community; it will heal the distemperature of the moral atmosphere of society, and do a thousand fine things; for the sake of which they would pray men to be so gracious as to give ear unto their God. And thus they seek by smooth and flattering words, and well turned sentences, and well-built arguments, to produce that natural faith, which is no faith, but sight, intellectual, or moral, or prudential discernment. But I say unto you, ye cozeners of human nature, that faith is by pre-eminence the gift of God; and, wherever given, will fight against nature in all its courses; it will beat down the works of the natural man, and your beautiful nature it will conflagrate; your knowledge it will blow away into thin air, and sublime towards the limbo of vanity beyond the moon; your sentimentalists, your men of feeling, your songsters sweet, your novelists, your moral scaffolders (for build a wall or lay a stone in its true place they never did nor will do), the whole tribe of your naturalists, rationalists, and neologians, with which the sunbeam swarms, and the very glittering element itself in which they flutter, this gospel, whose suitability to improve them all you fondly prate and preach about, will first utterly

destroy, as so many gewgaws, which Lucifer, the sun of the morning, hath made to mislead and destroy benighted men groping their way darkly on to death and destruction.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Works of Edward Irving, v., p. 357. Irving's words are very strong, and easily misunderstood. But the fact that they are easily misunderstood, is a symptom of the very disease which he described.

3. PRACTICAL CHARACTER OF THE BIBLE

If we remember that God has given unto us his Word, that we may find in it *Him*, and not food for our curiosity, material for the exercise of our skill and erudition, relief from feelings of gloom, and security in the superficial acceptance of doctrines and promises,—then we shall use the book for godly edifying in faith, and realize in our experience that it is *profitable*. The practical character of the Bible will then increasingly manifest itself to us. Practical in the true and full sense of the word, not in the conventional sense, which opposes it to doctrinal, and has reference merely to outward acts and habits of life.

Nothing shows more fully the peculiarity of our age than the meaning attached to the word “practical” in the sphere of spiritual life. In other spheres men fully appreciate the value of theory. The practical significance of mathematics, astronomy, and chemistry, is admitted by all; we constantly witness it, that a single idea, the discovery of a single law, is the fruitful source of the most important and manifold results. But while the world is becoming more philosophical in everything else, in spiritual things it is becoming more childish and superficial. The knowledge of God, of his counsel, of his love to the eternal Son, of Christ, his Divinity and humanity, of the work of the Spirit, of the Atonement, of union with Christ, of the Kingdom, of the return of the Saviour,—in short, Theology,—is considered a barren theory and speculation; the pointing out of isolated duties, and outward works and ” Life is expected from the dead, and a pure river from a polluted fountain. Morality, like a castle in the air, is constructed without the foundation of the fear of God. While Christ tells us, that to know God and Jesus Christ is *Life*, the world insists that

theology—the knowledge of God—is abstract, habits, is deemed “practical and has no immediate connection with the reality of life. It is the old story, the philosophy of the old serpent, of being good without God; of being like unto God without knowing, loving, and trusting Him. Formerly God was believed to be the source of all good, and men who were not willing to obey Him, said, “We love sin:” now men say, “We love virtue, but we can have it Without God.”

The great motives which God places before us, viz., the return of Jesus and the glory which He shall give to his servants; the great power by which God moves the heart, viz., the light of his love, his revelation of Himself, the whole counsel of God, which apostles preached, and through which men became the salt of the earth and the living epistles of Christ; all this,—is not “*practical*” in the estimation of many: they do not recognize the Divine power, full of vitality, which this teaching possesses. And thus it is, that they ascribe in reality more power to the word of man, to the exhortations of human wisdom and earnestness, to the oratorical enforcement of isolated duties and of ethical maxims (not growing out of “the Root”), than to the very words of God. They forget that God, after all, and God alone, is life; that He hath life in Himself, and his words have also life; and that his words bring with them not merely good things, but that which is the first and essential requisite of all good, viz., *Life*.

For the Word is living (“quick,” Hebrews 4:12); and when it is recognized as the voice of God, it is powerful. Christ’s words are spirit and life. They are therefore compared to the seed, which appears insignificant, but which, if received in good ground, soon shows its vitality. Often the seed springs and grows up, we know not how; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the

ear. The Word of God, received as such, does not remain in us as a dead and inert mass, a mere addition to our knowledge, but is continually active and growing in our thoughts and words, in our character and walk, bringing forth fruit in some a hundredfold, in some sixtyfold, in some thirty; while “again, it is written,” that we are to lay aside everything that hindereth, and receive with meekness the engrafted Word; we are to keep the Word, to hide it in our hearts, to give heed that the enemy take it not from our memory and our affection.

Again, this Word, living and powerful, is as a sword; it possesses a dividing, separating, piercing energy, which penetrates into the very depths of man, and discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. With a most faithful accuracy and searching minuteness it analyses our motives. It distinguishes between nature and grace, spirit and flesh, the old life and the resurrection life. It divides, where we in our blindness and self-sufficiency imagine that all is pure and pleasing to God.

Thus the Word is a mirror, true and clear, in which we may behold our likeness. And as a mirror is for the purpose, that we should look not at it, but into it, so the Word is not used by us according to God’s purpose, unless we look into it, to see in it ourselves; and all “objective” admiration of the Bible, as a wonderful mirror of the world and the Church, only increases our guilt when we neglect the subjective use. *We* are the subjects, “Thou art the Man.” “Know thyself” has, from remote antiquity, been the counsel of human wisdom. But the precept forgets one great difficulty. “The heart is deceitful above all things.” Who but God can know that mysterious fountain, out of which are the issues of life? God alone knoweth and searcheth the heart. We therefore need a mirror, such as man cannot provide. But while

this mirror shows us faithfully our true condition, we behold in it also the face of the Lord from heaven, who is our righteousness, and whose beauty thus shines on his believers, so that the Father delighteth in them.

Seed, sword, mirror,—these are three aspects of the practical character of Scripture. In reading it according to God’s purpose, in reliance on the Spirit, a wonderful influence is exerted on us. Impressions of an eternal character are received. The influence of the Lord is on the very heart, out of which proceed thoughts and works. Grace is our teacher, and its discipline is through the Word. And as God’s dealings with us may all be comprised under the two grand lessons, our sin and need, and his grace and fulness, so the Word continually kills and quickens; takes away our own life and gives us the Resurrection Life; discloses to us our nothingness, and unfolds to us Christ’s riches. Thus the ultimate end of Scripture is always *Comfort*. “*Comfort ye, comfort ye my people,*”¹²⁰ is the motto of the Bible. But God’s comfort is in righteousness and truth. Sin is condemned in the flesh; life is given through the righteousness of Christ. The consolation of the world and the natural mind is based on the imperfect view of sin (thinking it less evil than it is) and on a false view of the creature-life (regarding it with hope); it ignores sin and evades the cross; it does not humble man; it does not lead through death unto life. Not so God's consolation. It is the consolation of resurrection after the cross. And this is our temptation, to separate what God has joined. His promises and commandments; his blessedness and his holiness; the cross and the glory; his earnestness and his compassion; Christ representing us in heaven, and we representing

¹²⁰ ISAIAH 40:1-2

Him on earth; this constant combination, so harmonious, so vital, so immediately commending itself to the conscience, Satan is always anxious to dissolve, and thus render our use of Scripture to the flesh comfort, and to the spirit—terror; whereas God’s method is terror to the flesh and comfort to the spirit, that we may bear about the death of our Lord, and that in us may be manifested also the life of Christ.

The Word makes us wise unto salvation. The Word teaches us what it is to be wise. For the world often mistakes cleverness and prudence for wisdom, and sometimes calls unworldliness folly. But Scripture teaches us that wisdom is from above, that Christ is our wisdom, and that the end of wisdom is salvation. Yet this wisdom embraces true prudence in all earthly duties and relationships. And if we are guided by the Word, if we seek God’s kingdom and his righteousness, if we have our eye fixed on his promise, and our affections set on the things above, if we walk with Him in humility and faith, our minds will be clear and calm, our words sober, truthful, and kind, our actions straightforward and prudent; in our intercourse with our fellow-men we shall commend and adorn the doctrine of the Gospel. Oh, how beautiful and perfect are God’s directions in Scripture! If we obeyed God in all things, temporal as well as spiritual, inward and outward, how blessed and attractive would our lives be! What civilization attempts, and attempts superficially, God’s Word realizes, and realizes radically.

What true wisdom would he possess and manifest who

followed the Scripture rule!¹²¹ In his heart he loves God and hopes for heaven, loving and forgiving his brother and thinking no evil; his speech is yea, yea, and nay, nay; his words are in truth and kindness; in dress simple, as becometh one whose body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, and who knoweth what is the true ornament; in his behaviour taking the lowest place until he is bidden to go up higher; in business not slothful, yet not making haste to be rich, and not anxious about tomorrow; in sorrow not overwhelmed, in prosperity not elated; a man who instead of asking “Who is my neighbour?” always asks, “To whom may I be a helpful neighbour?” A lover of solitude, but ready to exhort and comfort the brethren as he has opportunity, and to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction; solemn and earnest, yet anointing his face when his soul is fasting before the Lord; a man faithful in that which is least, just and benevolent to all, fervent in love to the disciples of Jesus; a man whose heart is in heaven and in whose heart is heaven, who learns daily of Jesus to be like Him who is the Wisdom from above.

¹²¹ The words of the profound J. G. Hamann may interest the English reader: —

“I have tested the blessed Word of God, and found it the only light whereby we can come to God and to a knowledge of ourselves; the most precious gift of Divine grace, so far excelling all nature and all her treasures as our immortal spirit excels the tabernacle of our flesh and blood; the most marvellous and venerable revelation of the most sublime and profound mysteries of the Godhead, of the Divine nature, attributes, and great and stupendous counsels, specially in reference to us poor men; full of the most important discoveries, embracing all ages, even into eternity; the only bread and manna of our souls, more indispensable to the Christian than food to the natural man. Yea, I confess that this Word of God effects as great miracles in the soul of a Christian, be he learned or illiterate, as are narrated therein; that the meaning of this book, and faith in its teaching, can only be gained by the same Spirit who moved its authors; and that the unutterable groanings which He creates in our hearts are of the same nature as the ineffable symbols and pictures which He has formed in Scripture in greater abundance than all the seeds of nature and her kingdoms.”

The Bible is a book for life, and only he who desires to use it for life can enter into its true meaning. The Bible is profitable, but only when we read as disciples whose object is to “learn Christ.” The children of God thus read Scripture, not with the purpose of exhausting its fulness, but of receiving from it what they need for the present, though often they treasure up much which at the time is scarcely understood, but is unfolded in the future. In reading the Word in which Christ is the substance, the believer feels that the providence of the Father and the application of the Spirit make the Scripture to have a direct guiding, exhorting, and comforting meaning to him. He thus not merely sees green pastures, but God Himself maketh him to lie down in them, and he receiveth from the heavenly Shepherd what is salutary and refreshing for his soul.

In like manner he feels that he must read with diligence and meditation, not running hastily over the field in which is hidden treasure, but digging deep to discover the precious gold. Our hearts and lives must be framed in accordance with the great and solemn work. For we know that the difficulties in understanding the Word are not intellectual but spiritual—in the heart, and conscience, and will. Hence the study of Scripture is based on self-denial. In that wonderful 119th Psalm, the golden A B C of the Jews, as Luther calls it, we have a most instructive description of the attitude and discipline of one who loves the Word: “I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I may keep thy Word. Incline my heart unto thy testimonies and not to covetousness. I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love.” He who desires to see the hidden things of the Word, prays, “Cleanse Thou me from secret faults.”¹²²

¹²² PSALM 19:12

When we are thus combining the leadings of providence, the study of the Word, prayer, meditation and obedience, how blessed is it to receive the message from the Lord Himself. And how many passages stand out in the Bible of the believer, marked as it were by God Himself, and sent by Him for great purposes in affliction, in times of anxiety, in important turning points of life, in mental darkness and struggle. Such passages it is good for us to remember and to dwell often on them, even as we ought never to forget the Scriptures which were first opened to our hearts and consciences by the Spirit.

Scripture brings out the hidden treasures of affliction, even as affliction brings out the hidden treasures of Scripture.

Whatever the Word is, it is because of its relation to Christ. Is the Word of God quick,—that is, living? It is because Christ is the Life. Is it powerful? It is because Christ is the power of God. Is it sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow? It is because Christ is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; because Christ divides between Peter who confesses Him as the Son of God, and Peter who savours the things of men. Is it a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart: It is because Christ knows what is in man; because He seeth Nathanael when He is under the fig-tree, and the Pharisees who think evil in their hearts. Is it said of the Word, *“Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do”*?¹²³ It is because the spoken and written Word is identified with the Lord Himself, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, even the Son of man unto whom

¹²³ HEBREWS 4:13

the Father hath committed all judgment. Is the Word spoken of as the sincere milk, the nourishing food of the soul? It is because Christ is the Bread of Life. Is it commended as light shining into darkness? It is because Christ is wisdom. The essence of Scripture is that Saviour in whom are all things which pertain unto life and godliness. The soul that has found Jesus Christ, sees Him in Scripture—always and throughout. Jesus is the door, by which alone we can enter the sanctuary of the Word. And when we come to Jesus, we enter into possession of the Word, for He has the words of eternal life. They are his, and He only can give the Word (John xvii. 14). And as we have the Word through Him and in Him, so we find Him in every portion of Scripture. “When I listen to the accordant voice of all the holy prophets, and of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour, methinks I stand in Jerusalem at our Lord’s triumphant entry, and hear the multitudes of those who go before, and of those who follow after, crying, Hosannah to the Son of David I blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord to save!”¹²⁴

“Jesus only ” is the true centre of Scripture in all its manifold revelations; and hence all Scripture is new covenant, the gospel of grace. The law shuts us up to “Jesus only,” even as in “Jesus only ” it finds its true exposition and manifestation. The Kingdom is “Jesus only,” as glory; the Church “Jesus only,” as Head. The sinner is accepted, because it is “Jesus only;” the saint lives and grows, because it is “Jesus only.”

The Scripture method of sanctification is as much opposed to nature, as the Scripture method of justification. But how truly consoling is the way of God!

¹²⁴ Boyle

The saints of God whom we admire, David, Paul, John, are revealed to us, and the source of their life is disclosed before our eyes. Imagine not that they were free from difficulties and temptations, snares and falls; that they had not “another law striving in their members;” and that they had any confidence in the flesh. Beside the righteousness of Christ, beside the mercy of God, beside the strength of the Spirit, they had nothing in which they trusted and by which they lived; or rather, it was their constant prayer to know nothing and have nothing but Christ crucified. Their life was a life of faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us; and if they brought forth much fruit, it was not because there was some other principle in their heart beside the seed of the grace of God; it was not because they added some other power to impel them to labour and self-denial,—but exactly the reverse. It was because they knew that they were not under the law, but under grace; that they could do nothing without Christ or apart from Him; that empty sinners cannot fulfil the requirements of the law, but only take out of the fulness of Christ, and receive grace for grace. The legal soul transgresses the law and despises the gospel; the believer rejoices in the Saviour, and runs the way of God’s commandments. Faith is the victory which overcometh the world, and the sense of Christ's love is the strength of obedience. If we could only see Him constantly in his dying love, in his unchangeable faithfulness and grace—the Lamb, as it was slain—we should be his followers indeed, and bring forth fruit abundantly.

Hence, while Scripture abounds in exhortations to watchfulness, diligence, and zeal, it represents all good frames, words, and works, as fruit of the Spirit, and warns us continually against departing from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus. God,

as it were, says to us: “Do not use my gospel in a legal spirit. Whenever you wish to understand the manner of your growth, my gospel is changed into law. But you are to look exclusively to the fountain of your growth, and not to the mysterious process going on within you. Christ is to you grace, righteousness, wisdom, strength, without your being able to understand how the work is carried on in the soul. You do not understand how it is that the rain fructifies the earth and contributes to the seed and fruit. Through my Word you shall bring forth manifold fruit; my grace is sufficient for you. Rest satisfied that I assure you that my Word shall make you grow. All you have to do is to use my Word as a word of life, into which my Spirit, as a Spirit of repentance and faith, will guide you according to Christ's method.”¹²⁵ This is the most practical truth, the central and vital doctrine. The power of God is Christ. Law-power cannot do it (Rom. viii. 3). Adam-power is of no avail (Matt. xix. 26); Law and Christ cannot be combined (Gal. iv. 31); Christ, and Christ alone, is the power of God.

While Christ is thus the centre for us, Scripture leads us into Christ as the centre of the Divine, eternal, life in God. The Father loves the Son, and saith: “*Hear Him.*” The Spirit glorifies Christ, and his testimony is of Him. But Christ again leads to the Father, of whom his testimony is continually, that He sent Him. He declares his name, and finished the work He gave Him to do. And as Christ continually points to the Father, so He continually speaks of the Spirit as the gift of God; and his promise to the disciples is that the promise of the Father, even *the Spirit*, will be sent into their hearts.

¹²⁵ Oetinger on Isaiah lv. *Etwas Ganzes*, p. 63

The separation in our thoughts, heart, and life, of the ever blessed and glorious Three, is the source of all error and weakness. Truly to dwell on the Father is not to undervalue Christ; to dwell on Christ is not to forget the Father, even as the influence of the Holy Ghost is fellowship with the Father and the Son. To speak exclusively of Christ, ignoring the election of the Father and the work of the Holy Ghost, is the source of Arminianism, and in reality ends in substituting an imaginary Christ for the true Lord, and a self-wrought faith for the faith which is the gift of God. To dwell exclusively on the election of the Father and the work of the Spirit (and by exclusively, I mean viewing Christ only in a secondary and subordinate manner to these), is to conceal Christ as the open door, the Saviour of the lost, the fountain free and open to "*whosoever*." It is to look at the outline and profile, as it were, and not to see Him as He presents Himself to the sinner, saying, "Behold Me, behold Me!" To dwell on the Father's love and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and not on the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, is the source of that want of assurance or fulness of faith which is always seeking for testimony and confirmation in that which is changeable, instead of recognizing the testimony of God's Spirit to our spirit that we are the children of God. In short, the living God is Three in One; and if we have communion with Him, we praise equally Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost,—and yet Christ has, according to the eternal counsel, the central position.

And thus only they who have received Christ, as made for them of God Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, have received Scripture as the Word of God. If the testimony of prophets and apostles centres as well as agrees in this, that in Jesus is forgiveness of sin and eternal life to all who believe, and

that there is no other name given in which we can be saved, then he who trusts not in “Jesus only” as his Saviour, rejects the whole testimony of Scripture. The expression, “I believe the Bible,” has no meaning in the lips of such. All it amounts to is, “I think those who believe in the truths of Scripture are right.” How is it possible, if Jesus is the sum and substance, the centre and kernel of Scripture, that there can be a reception of the testimony without a reception of the Person of whom it witnesses? In this error we Christians have encouraged the unbelievers, even by our false way of separating the Book from the Lord, and substituting intellectual sight for that beholding of the heart, which is faith. Receive Jesus, and thou receivest not merely the testimony, but thou thyself art an additional witness and seal to the truth of God. What is the truth of God? Ask not, “What?” as they do outside of Judah in the words of Pilate. Not “What?” but “Who?” “I AM THE TRUTH.”

4. CHRISTIANS THE BEST EVIDENCE OF THE BIBLE

If we receive Him and walk in Him, we are the best arguments for the Divine origin and power of Scripture. Jesus sends us into the world as his witnesses. We are to be his living Bibles; the resurrection-life of Christ is to be made manifest in us. If we assert that the Bible is the Word of God, and are not influenced by it as by a Divine, heavenly, glorious, message of peace and love; if we do not rejoice in God's salvation and walk in newness of life; if we do not possess that faith which is the victory overcoming the world, realizing the things that are not seen, and resting in the mercy and strength of God; then we ourselves are arguments against the Bible. But if in Scripture we have found Jesus the Anointed, and have received from Him the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind; if in Scripture we have heard a loving voice, even the joyful sound, and, rejoicing in the salvation of Christ, we walk in the light of God's countenance, then we ourselves are arguments for the Bible, even the epistles of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

The light which is to shine in the midst of darkness is *the Church*. "*YE are the light of the world.*" The centre from which is to sound forth the Word of God, is the Church of Christ. (1 Thessalonians 1) And the messengers who are to go forth into all the world, the dark places of our own land and the distant regions of heathenism, are the disciples of Jesus Christ, bearing the good news of God. Thankful as we are for the Society which spreads the Book of God, let us never forget that the Church of living Christians is the true Bible Society, through whom the Word of God grows and is glorified.

5. JOYOUS

Joyous is the Word of God. There is no other book in which reigns such calm peace, overflowing in joy unspeakable and full of glory. Here shines a light which triumphs over every darkness, and breathes that hope which is full of life (1 Peter 1:3) and strength. Paradise was not yet closed, but the voice of a Saviour God interrupted the dread silence which sin had introduced, by the promise of redemption and victory; and throughout the whole Bible we hear the joyful sound, that God hath given to us sinful men a Benjamin's portion, double—for all our sins (Isaiah 40), even abounding grace and infinite love. The triumphal song of heaven and eternity, "*Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,*" is already heard, though we are still crying in this vale of sorrow and temptation, "*Deliver us from evil.*" Here sound the peals of marriage bells—even the marriage of the Lamb and the Bride. Here is revealed to us God as our exceeding great joy. Glad tidings are here, such as even angels, accustomed to the bliss of heaven, call very joyous. Here is the gift of God; his own Son to be ours for ever. He, whom the Father regards as most precious and glorious, whom He loves, and to whom He hath given all things, is the gift of God to us, a gift never to be recalled. *For ever*, Jesus Christ is our Lord and Head.

The Word of God is joy from heaven to the souls which are in darkness and the shadow of death. It speaks of sin, but in order to declare full pardon; of our misery and bondage, to declare our redemption; of death, to announce resurrection life; of our nothingness, to bring to us the All-in-All—Christ. When people accept God's Word, they rejoice. Oh that in all declarations of God's message, we may be pre-eminently evangelists! And oh that

the prominent as well as deep impression of our preaching may be: He has brought us good news from a far country. He has spoken to us of the wonderful salvation of God, far exceeding all our thought and all our hope. He has spoken of God rejoicing over the sinner redeemed and restored; and of Jesus Christ dying for the ungodly, and living in the heart of the believer. He has shown us that we are now in heavenly places, accepted in the Beloved, complete in Him, and sealed with his Spirit; and that we are to be manifested with Him in glory. Then is our testimony Scriptural, when it testifies of Jesus as the Lamb, of God as the Father, of the Spirit as the Dove; when it speaks to the heart of Jerusalem, declaring grace and glory; when it has its source and end in this: *“GOD IS LOVE.”*¹²⁶

¹²⁶ 1 JOHN 4:8,16

APPENDIX

“Salvation is of the Jews;” and to Gentilise (Platonise) Jewish facts and ideas, is to falsify the Gospel, in order to please the Greeks who desire wisdom. (Footnote 24)

“JAPHETIC AND SHEMITIC”



Most of the divergences from scriptural truth in our days have their origin in the attempt to translate Shemitic ideas into Japhetic language, or to interpret the doctrine of the apostles, not according to Moses and the prophets, but according to philosophy. The most distinct expression of this tendency was given by Bunsen:— “The Shemitic nation had never the desire, and never felt mental power, to view history as the mirror and realization of the Divine world-government.” And he has even given us a specimen of a Shemitic-Japhetic Dictionary (Hippolyt. 4, 211, etc.), in which he translates Bible expressions into their corresponding philosophical ideas. Thus, “*eternal life*” is, in Japhetic, “The infinite factor in man's intellectual life, independent of the finite.”

A strict analysis of the teaching of this school shows that we have here a more serious and important change than the substitution of a vague, metaphysical terminology for the concrete and simple words of Scripture. Here is a radical subversion of Bible teaching, eliminating its supernatural character, and thereby destroying its simplicity and power.

Thus, the doctrine of substitution, the peculiar importance assigned to the blood in connection with expiation, both in the law

of Moses and throughout the apostolic writings, is especially repugnant to the Japhetic European mode of thought. Translated into our philosophical language, what remains of the “*offence of the Cross*”—that Cross which is the power of God? As Archer Butler remarked (*Sermons*, vol. 1, p. 215):—

“Did the volume of the Old Testament witness to an atonement as the foundation of an eternal life? There are those who boast themselves followers of Christ, and yet deny this characteristic. The impatience of mystery, which is so strangely short-sighted when men have to deal with the substance of a communication from heaven, has disabled them from discovering a propitiatory sacrifice in the New Testament; and the same spirit has usually advanced (on grounds of perfect consistency) either to waive the Old Testament altogether, as antiquated, local, and irrelevant to modern purposes; or to deny, by natural explications, everything miraculous, and everything typical in its pages.”

But, we may ask, what is the source from which such misinterpretation of the Gospel facts and doctrines arises? When fundamental doctrines, such as the Atonement, are emptied of their real and vital meaning, the orthodox are justly alarmed. But we feel strongly convinced that the undervaluing and neglect of Moses and the prophets, which is the chief source of erroneous teaching, is a deep-seated disease of long standing in the Church, which manifests itself likewise in the defective character and weak tone of teaching, commonly called Evangelical. We have now-a-days a popular Christianity; and we know that the Gospel is not popular, but an offence to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks. We have prevalent among us a view of the character of the present age, and of the relation of the Church to the world, and of the prospects of the Church, totally at variance with the teaching and

the attitude of the apostles. We have a most painful absence of the New Testament liberty, assurance, and fulness of peace and joy, which in itself proves that, notwithstanding the neglect of the so-called "Old Testament" and apparent exaltation of the "New," there is (and for that very reason) little real possession of the full light and freedom of the New Covenant.

There is among us an uneasy feeling, a secret consciousness of something being wrong. The development of doctrine which is clearly opposed to that Gospel which has proved itself to the heart and experience of man the power of God, is one cause of alarm; and a return to the bulwark of the Reformation-creed and theology is naturally the remedy suggested. But against this, two considerations are to be urged. In the first place, Israel ought never to look and turn back. The Lord Himself (and not an image of Him) is a wall of fire round us. Life alone can combat the errors of death. But in the second place, if the creeds could not even retain and preserve life (as history proves they were not able to do), how much less will they be able to rekindle a dying flame, or to bring life to the dead! It is out of these very creeds that the present state of things has come, either as a development or as opposition; and our aim ought to be to find out whether, in these creeds, the absence of some scriptural element, or the false representation and emphasis of some scriptural element, be not the root of the disease which is manifesting itself.

And here it is evident that two parties meet which may be essentially and radically different: those for whom the creeds contain too much of the scriptural element, and those for whom they contain too little of that element, or do not contain it in sufficient purity. The objectors to the creeds may be such, either because the creeds are to them too Shemitic, or because they are

not Shemitic enough.

Very instructive is the development of religious thought in Germany since the Reformation. The great defect in the “Reformation” soon showed itself in the production of a dogmatic scholastic theology, in which the historical, biblical, or Jewish element was lost sight of. This naturally led, in course of time, to the rejection of the “Old Testament.” Authority cannot long be exercised by anything which has ceased to have a vital meaning and importance to us. And when the true position of Israel in the counsel of God, and the relation subsisting between Christ and the nation, were so little understood, we cannot wonder that a dead and inert reception of the “Old Testament” soon gave way to a practical rejection of the antiquated book. Then apostolic teaching was purified from what men regarded as Oriental dross; the deep doctrines emptied of their supernatural contents; all that the Gospels and Epistles contained which was “of the Jews” (that is, salvation), was thrown aside, and the “New Testament” (but *not* “in my blood”!) reduced to ethics (that is, after all, the Old Covenant, the Ten Commandments!).

However, matters could not remain thus. For the Epistles, which contain more clearly the Gospel or New Covenant than the Gospels (for Christ crucified, as revealed by the Holy Ghost since Pentecost, is the Gospel), were soon set aside, and the four Gospels exalted as of superior importance and authority. The expositions of Paul were not authoritative; his view of Christ's death was Jewish, metaphorical, etc. The history and the words of Jesus, it was alleged, contain the real essence.

Of course, this also was only a makeshift; for, although the Epistles contain the Gospel more fully than the writings of the

Evangelists, there is still, in any one chapter of the Gospels, more of “*salvation*” and the “*offence of the Cross,*” than was consistent with this improved edition of Christianity. The next step, therefore, was to view Jesus, not as the Messiah of the Jews in his connection with Israel and prophecy, but as the Ideal of Humanity, the Perfect Man; in which sense the words “*Mediator,*” “*Saviour,*” can be used without attaching any Scriptural meaning to them. Having thus substituted man’s idea of Jesus for the real Jesus, the next step was easy. The connection between the ideal Jesus and the Gospels’ Jesus was inconvenient, and some bolder spirits said, “Keep the ideal, the human and Divine in one, but do not connect it with any historical individual. Humanity is the Christ.”

That men have left even this low position, and have fallen into Materialism, is the last, the most recent “development.”

There must needs be a downward career, when we do not receive “*the whole counsel of God*” as revealed by Him in his Word. Jesus, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, and He only, is the Light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. Japheth cannot be blessed except by abiding in the tents of Shem. The tents of their own making afford no safety and shelter. But the Church of Jesus Christ, built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, is a witness in the world, of that other world or age, in the *spirit* of which we already live, and which we wait for, because we wait for *Him* who has promised to come again. The sun, which has set in the west, will never *there* rise again: in vain we gaze, expecting the light to reappear there. And since the fall of man, there is no other hope of day and blessedness but from that new and marvelous sunrise in the east, the day-spring from on high, which, through the tender mercy of God,

hath visited us. Ours is not the rest or power of the First Creation, but the life and power of the Resurrection, separated from the wisdom, and strength, and hope of the first Adam by that Cross of Christ; and God forbid that we should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ! Determined not to know anything save Jesus the Messiah, and Him crucified, may the Church declare Him in demonstration of the Spirit and of power. The *Holy Ghost Himself, by whom the Book was given, is the in-dwelling power of the Church, and His power is Christ, even THE CHRIST OF THE SCRIPTURES.*

THE END

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