

WHAT THINK YE OF THE BIBLE

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William Schoeler's apologetic work examining the Bible's general characteristics, arguing for its universality, literary excellence, justice, and remarkable unity across its many diverse authors.

6 Chapters

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WTY-1 No Other Book Like the Bible

CHAPTER I NO OTHER BOOK LIKE THE BIBLE Can the Bible lay any claim to specialty, or must it be considered as on a par with other textbooks of religion?

Here is a call to the study of comparative religions. We, if earnest men, should be in quest of the best book without asking who wrote it or by what authority it was written. Only if the Bible speaks to us as no other book can speak should we accord it a unique position.

There are many religions in the world. Bold enemies of the Bible are besieging the citadel of Christianity all around its circuit. The Christian religion is regarded as only one among many—springing from the same source. Ancient religions are blatantly proclaimed its equals. A host of religious faiths is challenging our attention and forcing us into comparison with our own. If the Bible is indeed the Word of God, we need have no fear of such comparisons. The study of other religions will broaden and deepen our knowledge and appreciation of Christianity itself. We do not value to the full the advantages and excellences of our modern electric lighting system until we go back in thought to the time when people endeavored to dispel the darkness with jets, with candles and tapers.

Gather up all the religions in the world in one view, extend the inquiry far and wide, through time and space, and the Bible will separate self from every other book by excellences that cannot be equaled. Other excellences are not disputed; other books are not denied. We are not so narrow-minded as to think that we dishonor the Bible by recognizing anything valuable that may be found outside of it; we only affirm that the Bible, after occupying common ground with many other religions, presents forces and qualities unknown to any of them. He who knows Christianity only does not know this. He is ignorant of its points of superiority. Only the unbiased student of comparative religions knows that all the vaunted moral truth and beauty of oriental and classical mythology and philosophy is found in our four gospels—and that in completer form, nay, in absolute perfection.

Max Mueller, the distinguished orientologist, once remarked: “The ancient religions were but the milk of nature, which was in due time succeeded by the Bread of Life.” The Bible itself throws out a challenge. It says through Moses, Deuteronomy 4:32-33; “For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from one end of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it? Did ever a people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?”

Never forget this challenge on the part of the Bible! It is a noble speech. The Bible will not remain with us one day longer than it can supply what no other book can furnish. It does not ignore the cults of the heathen; it is not afraid of comparison or competition; it awaits to be displaced.

“As soon as anyone can arise who can speak in a nobler eloquence, in a tenderer music, with a profounder wisdom, the Bible is willing that its old pages should be closed forever. There are good

men who have no Bible; there have been virtuous men who never heard of Christ; there are good writings which the world will not willingly let die that have not been baptized in the name of the triune God. This is acknowledged, and must be broadly and frankly and gratefully confessed; the question still remains, Does not the Bible by some quality stand out above all other books—the very pinnacle of the temple of literature? The inspiration of the Bible must be proved by the quality of the Bible!”

We are not afraid of an investigation.

WTY-2 General Characteristics of the Bible

CHAPTER II GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIBLE

It has been said that the Bible lives by its peculiarities. There is much truth in this. Individuality elbows itself through the commonplace—it stands apart; it forces the attention; it is a matter of specialty. This is what the Bible does. When all other books have made their speeches, the Bible rises as though no voice had been heard, clears away a space for itself, and by uniqueness of majesty, and sympathy, and singularity it forthwith claims the foremost place. A Book for Everybody The Bible is the people's book! Some men labor under the mistake that the Bible is a textbook for preachers, and nothing more. No conception is more erroneous—more contrary to all the Scriptures testify of themselves. Was the revelation of God made to mankind, or was it made to a few chosen individuals that towered intellectually above the “common herd?” We read in the gospels that Jesus says, “Father, I thank Thee, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes!” And again we are assured at another place that “the common people heard Him gladly.” No sophism is more subversive than the assertion that the Bible belongs to a professional class. A thousand times No! It belongs to humanity—to the poor man, the working man, the sorrowing man, the suffering woman, the little child; no human being on earth is excluded; like the sun in the sky it wishes to warm and bless and guide them all. In this the Bible differs from all other sacred books. Neither the Koran nor the Bhagavad Gita, neither the Veda nor the Tripitaka, addresses itself to the entire human race. They speak rather to the wise and the prudent, or to the courageous and strong. Thus slaves and serfs, soldiers, public officials, criminals, and children under twelve years of age are expressly excluded from the Sangha, that is the holy communion of Buddha.

How different the Bible! Christ's invitation is as wide as the world: “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden; I will give you rest.” And He has kept His promise. His Gospel has comforted the poor sick mother, as well as Isaac Newton, prince among the scientists; the blind beggar to whom it was read, as well as king Charles I, before his execution; the negro in Africa, as well as the cultured European.

Let no man say that the Bible can be understood only by a certain kind of men to whom exceptional privileges have been granted. That is equal to robbing the common people of their God-given birthright!

There is nothing in the Bible, necessary to salvation, which the people cannot find out for themselves. Priests who take away the Bible from the laity under the holy pretense that its perusal would confuse and poison their minds, are thieves and knaves! More Bible is what is wanted; a fuller reading of the Book itself. Now that we have the Bible in our mother tongue, let no one dare to say, “Touch not; read not; handle not!” The fire will proceed from out of the sanctuary and burn him!

Too long has the Bible been considered as belonging to a ministerial class. It is an open book for everyone—for all the world. Those who prevent, or try to prevent, the reading of the Scriptures, are the foes of Christ—the enemies of the truth. Nothing can exceed the egotism and impudence of the man who claims the right to investigate for himself and denies the same right to others. “Search the Scriptures!” says Jesus Christ. The words are addressed to the whole world. No Other Book Cares so Much for Man

There are people who neglect the Bible. There are millions of people in so-called Christian countries who never have read the Bible. It is not in the power of any man to do them a greater injustice than they inflict upon themselves. The man who says of the Bible, “I can do without it!” may be speaking sincerely, but he is speaking ignorantly. There is no man on earth who can afford to pass the Bible by.

Says J. Q. Adams: “I speak as a man of the world to men of the world; and I say to you, Search the Scriptures! The Bible is the Book of all others, to be read at all ages, and in all conditions of human life; not to be read once or twice or thrice through, and then laid aside, but to be read in small portions of one or two chapters every day, and never to be intermitted, unless by some overruling necessity.”

There are men who oppose the Bible. They ought to be ashamed of themselves! There is no other book whose beneficent influence approaches even approximately that of the Bible. Read in our families, it will keep the father in his place, and the child in his place. It will speak to the employer and the employed, to the mother and to the servant, and impart a blessing to each. Carried into our politics, it will teach men to do unto others as they would have others do unto them. Kept in our business, it will burn our false measuring rod and destroy our unequal balances—it will be just to persons on both sides of the counter. It is the Magna Charta of the civilized world.

“There is not in the whole compass of human literature a book like the Bible, which deals with such profound topics, which touches human nature on so many sides of experience, which relates so especially to its duties and sorrows and temptations, and yet which looks over the whole field of life with such sympathy and cheerfulness of spirit.” (H. W. Beecher.)

“The doctrine of the golden rule, the interpretation of the law as love to God and man, and the specific directions in it to husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, rulers and citizens, and the warnings against covetousness and sin are the best preventives and cure of all political diseases.” (F. C. Monfort.) The Bible is Full of the Spirit of Justice

Let me show this by an example. We read in Numbers 27 : “Then drew near the daughters of Zelophehad . . . saying, Our father died in the wilderness. . . . and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father be taken away from among his family, because he had no son? Give us possession among the brethren of our father.” The man who had died left five girls, but no boys. According to the existing law the girls could not inherit their father’s possession. So far no provisions had been made for a situation in which the five women found themselves. They were perplexed. They were greatly disturbed. One day they put their heads together and deliberated. They resolved to make a public speech. Now Moses might have pointed to all the precedents of Israel as the answer to their appeal, but he did not. Here was a special case. “He brought their cause before Jehovah.” “And Jehovah spake unto Moses, The daughters of Zelophehad speak

right: thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them."

Justice! We like the decision! "Give any nation the Bible, and let that nation make the Bible its statute book, and every class in the community will have justice; masters will be just to their servants; servants will be just to their masters: family peace will be protected; social relations will be purified; common progress will be guaranteed. This spirit of justice is the social strength of the Bible. No life is to be tampered with; the small cause as well as the great is to be heard; no kid is to seethe in its mother's milk; no fruit tree is to be cut down even in time of war; no bird's nest to be wantonly destroyed; all men are to be honored, helped and saved. A book with a tone like this should be protected from the sneers of persons who have never actually studied its ennobling pages." (Joseph Parker.) The Bible is Woman's Friend and the Child's

There are men who assert that the Bible has been the means of enslaving woman. That is one of Ingersoll's hobbies. He affirms it everlastingly. It appears in every disquisition of his. Nothing is farther from the truth. The Bible is woman's greatest friend! Never forget it—the applicants in Numbers were women; nay, they were orphans! Their father was dead. No brother was there to take their part. Nevertheless they received justice. God said, "They are right!" In no history, beside the Bible, can there be found an equal number of charming female portraits. Why not? Because the Bible recognizes the dignity and worth of woman beyond all other books. Everywhere woman appears as the helpmeet, the companion and friend of man. She is more than a bearer of children—more than a mere toy. She is "man's glory" (1 Corinthians 11:7), not his slave; she is the queen of the home, not a beast of burden—the tool and plaything of man. In China, woman is regarded as a necessary evil — men must have mothers. She has no rights the superior sex is under obligation to respect. Young maidens are daily sold into domestic servitude. Girls are bought to be trained for the stage by theatre-managers who acquire with each unfortunate the power to put her to death. Woman has no right whatever to fraternal consideration. That is Confucianism. The Buddhism of India is no better. Buddha was a hater of woman— a selfish deserter of wife and child; and today, any Buddhist who desires to make trial of a new mistress, has only to enter a retreat and remain celibate for a month. In this way he secures a legal separation from all female companions and is free to marry whom he pleases. For woman Buddhism has prepared eighteen hells; only if she lives virtuously through fifteen hundred incarnations, she may be born once more as an infant boy and thus attain Nir-wana. The climax curse of India is child marriage. Matrimony is enjoined as a religious obligation at the age of five or six. Babes are born to children of twelve. There are millions of widows under ten years of age. Widowhood is regarded as a punishment for crimes committed in a pre-existent state; hence these child-widows are treated worse than beasts—they are held responsible for their husband's death. Their lot is one of helpless, hopeless misery. That is Hinduism! As to Muhammedanism, it is just as bad. Muhammed was an unbridled libertine. He tempted his followers to war by promising them maiden captives. He encouraged the slave trade so that his devotees might find it easy to obtain mistresses for themselves. He married seventeen wives himself, and was the owner of hundreds of concubines. Marriage among the Muhammedans is nothing more than a business transaction. The price of a woman ranges from two to sixty dollars. A wife that cloy's the appetite or taste may be divorced by the husband on the instant. He needs only to say, in the presence of a third party, "I divorce you; be gone!" That is Muhammedanism.

How different are the teachings of Jesus Christ! There is no system of religion, ethics, or philosophy, that promulgates a conception of the marriage relation approaching in nobility that taught in the New Testament. In all the teachings of Jesus Christ there is not the slightest intimation of woman's inferiority to her husband; there is one moral code for both; the marriage tie is as binding upon the one as upon the other. These teachings have revolutionized the world; they have ennobled woman; they have procured her social recognition. In Christian countries woman is a new being. No wonder that Jesus won the warm and gentle hearts of Jewish women—no wonder that He continues to win the hearts of women everywhere. Every woman instinctively feels that a man like Jesus must be her friend. Yet Mr. Ingersoll says time and again that Jesus not only failed to elevate her position, but on the contrary, with word and example, forged chains for her! It is passing strange that in spite of this Jesus Christ should have the noblest women for an inheritance! The Bible is also the friend of the child. Jesus alone has taught us to treat children as though they were "little majesties." Confucianism gives the father absolute authority over the child; the child must bend or break; the New Testament says, "Parents, provoke not your children unto wrath!" Hinduism excludes the child from the holy communion of Buddha; it is ignored, regarded as unfit for salvation, looked upon as a negligible quantity: Jesus says, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Thus we might enumerate passages and draw comparisons ad infinitum. We know of no other religion that makes so much of the child, irrespective of sex—that speaks so highly of woman—as does Christianity. The Bible is Adapted to all the Circumstances and Necessities of Human Life Look at the range, the compass, the circuit, of the Bible! Is there a single aspect of life which lies beyond the circumference of the divine testimonies? Has not God anticipated everything, provided for everything? God has special messages for those who rule: He speaks of righteousness, equity, oppression, wisdom. God has special messages for those who are afflicted some of the richest and tenderest testimonies of the divine revelation are addressed to those whose eyes are blinded with tears, and in whose breast there is the anguish of a great sorrow—the tumult of a great woe. In the family circle, God calls Himself Father, and tells us of a love more enduring than all the affections of human kind. As to wickedness, God's testimonies burn unquenchably against all wrong: in short, the Bible provides for every exigency of human life, for every aspect of human experience, for every anticipation of human love and hope. Nothing has been forgotten; in this book every circumstance of life has been met. Here we find precepts for kings, and rules for the lowliest subject. Here we find psalms of joy, and dirges of woe; rest for the weary, and stimuli for the indolent; prescriptions for health, and balm for sickness ; words for the hoary, and hymns for little children; great trees are here and little flowers, mighty rivers and threading rills, great lights and glimmering sparks. This wealth of provision amounts to an argument! The Bible Shirks no Great Questions The Bible is not a book that contents itself with trifles; it is not a book that offers little mincing guesses to little riddles. No, it grapples with the highest subjects; it faces the highest lines of spiritual inquiry, and gives an answer—not a halting, uncertain, timid, subjunctive answer, but an answer that is final, an answer that admits of no appeal, an answer that is precise and imperative.

I do not wish here and now to decide whether the answer it gives to every question is right or wrong; I only desire to point out the fact that the Bible is the boldest book in the world as to its tone. No matter what the question—God, creation, invisible worlds, sin, death, immortality, hell or

life eternal, the Bible speaks positively and authoritatively. It never suggests; it always declares! "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth!" "The things that are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal." "Sin is the destruction of any people." "Death is the wages of sin." "The hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear His voice, and shall come forth they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." Is it possible for God Himself to speak more emphatic? After reading the works of Plato, Socrates, or Aristotle, we feel that the specific difference between their words and the declarations of the Bible is that between an inquiry and a revelation. The Bible Bold in Many Other Respects

It never flatters or courts any reader. It never extols the achievements of man. It never tries to make itself popular. On the contrary. It announces that sin infests the whole human family to such a degree that all are unclean, that all have come short, that there is none that doeth good in the sight of God,—no, not one! To the proud it says, "God will have nothing of you; He abases those who exalt themselves." The rich man it warns, "Woe to you who trust in wealth; it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." The self-righteous Pharisees are denounced as "a generation of vipers."

It never begs or entreats to be read, it never appeals to the mighty and distinguished to give it a kindly hearing. The wise it takes in their own craftiness, and human wisdom it esteems foolishness. Where is a book like unto this? This book writes the history of the wicked as graphically as it writes the history of the godly. The Bible hides nothing, covers nothing up, does not call darkness light, or sour sweet. It makes no pretense whatever to be restrained by what is called taste or delicacy. It uses words which make the cheek burn. There are many things in it which no man dare read aloud. Calmly and without shame it moves right on, amid the miscellaneousness of our life. It makes no apology, draws no curtain, makes no excuse, never turns aside to stammer or blush; on it goes; taking life as it is, and describing it without flattery or fear. In this we see the dazzling honesty of the book!

"The Bible is true to the very root and reality of things. The book does not ignore facts with a goody-goody blindness, but faces them, names them, proposes remedies for them, and searches into the root and core of the whole of them. No man in this country dare publish certain separate chapters of the Bible, and show them in his window. How then? They are right in their setting. Pick them out with a foul spirit, and they are foul; let them alone in the order and rhythm which God has appointed, and we cannot do without them. Evil be to him that evil thinks. These things belong to a greater whole; they must not be detached; the part that would be intolerable is essential to the whole that is beautiful." Who are the men and women of the Bible? Are they a galaxy of artistic figures — dramatic characters, put up, painted, and arrayed for the purpose to play their part aesthetically, without fault and beyond criticism? That is what many think. It is for this reason they cover their holy faces with their holy hands when they come upon chapters in which the Bible describes moral depravity, beastly lasciviousness, satanic wickedness.

No. The men and women of the Bible are no puppets—they are living men and women! As the Bible paints them, so they were—and we are not one whit better!

"That the open enunciation of truth is repulsive to us, ought to make us ashamed; for it proves how little we are in the truth, and how little we can bear the truth. We are a poor, proud, hypocritical,

virtue-dissembling generation, which is ever trying to cover its nakedness and leprosy with beautiful rags; is ever adorning and painting itself, in order to play its part on the stage of life and society, and whose members are ever complimenting one another on their beautiful, flourishing, and healthy appearance. Our incessant endeavor is toward appearing better than we are, toward making as favorable an impression as possible on others, and toward avoiding at all events to let others see the filthy dregs of our hearts. There is no person, the history of whose life and soul is not immoral, and this true history will some day come to light. 'We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.' Of our revelation before the judgment-seat of Christ the Bible gives us a prelude, and says sternly and coldly, 'Such are you, even the best among you'." (Bettex.) The imperfections which we notice in Bible characters enable us to take heart—they become a source of comfort when we ourselves have stumbled and fallen. The Bible as the Best Antidote for Race Prejudice At this hour we find the nations of the earth divided into opposing camps. One division flings at the other division epithets of bitter hate and scorn. One people denounces the other people as beasts and savages. One race exalts itself above the other with unbecoming pride.

Race hatred is as old as races. Race prejudice antedates the deluge—it is as old as unregenerated human nature. It is wrong! It must be stamped out! It must be overcome! We should recognize in all the nations of the world one common human nature—one vast family. This the Bible does—the Bible alone of all the sacred books! It is free from race prejudice—the Old Testament as well as the new. It says, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth." A great truth! It prevents us from limiting our life to families, clans and sects. It joins us all together. It broadens our sympathies, enlarges our ideas, corrects our conceptions. We begin to see that mankind is one —derived from a common source. "This conception is both humbling and elevating. It is humbling to think that the cannibal is a relative of ours; that the slave couching in an African wood is bone of our bone; and that the meanest scum of all the earth started from the same foundation as ourselves! On the other hand, it is elevating to think that all kings and mighty men, all soldiers renowned in song, all heroes canonized in history, the wise, the strong, the good, are our elder brothers and immortal friends."

We learn from the Bible that the people of every race have distinctive qualities which we ourselves lack, and which will make valuable contributions to the kingdom of God. One race supplements the other. This is confirmed by experience. We lack the stability and reverence of the Chinamen; the alertness and loyalty of the Japanese; the devotion and contemplativeness of the Hindu; the sunny optimism of the negro. Each of these virtues is a stone in a great arch. The arch is the kingdom of God; and it is not completed until every stone is contributed. If people anywhere are inclined to look down upon the peoples of other races, it is an unhealthy symptom. They need the Bible! Its Language With reference to its literary qualities, and in its relation to other books, the Bible has not only no superior, but no peer. Everywhere do we find sinewy language—unequaled nobleness of speech, great massiveness, incalculable solidity, ineffable dignity. This Bible is not afraid of critics—it asks that the earth may hear, and the heavens may listen!

Men of letters on every hand have praised the literary beauties of the Bible. Many of its compositions are bold, grand, sublime, thrilling; some of them have never been excelled in simple pathos and profound sympathy. Notwithstanding the fact that language is thousands of years older now; that it has grown upon every hand; that its power of expression has been carried to its very highest point,—still the eloquent strains of Hebrew speech and song make up the best parts of our

sermons and discourse today.' I report this as a fact.

Those who are fond of literature I refer to chapters 24-27 in the Prophet Isaiah. I advise them to read this specimen in one sitting. I assure them that they will come across eloquence than which there is none more exalted on earth. This book was written by some thirty or forty people who, speaking generally, never saw one another. Those men were probably unaware of the fact that other people were writing parts of the book! They were not children of the same age—the same country. Some of them lived a thousand or more years apart—some of them were separated by thousands of miles. Few of them had what we now call schooling or education. Some were statesmen, some were shepherds, some were fishers; one was a physician, one a tax-collector. Now these men, differing vastly in gifts, in talents, in education, in accomplishments, have put their contributions together in one book—all within the same canvas! What is the result? Chaos? Confusion? Disorder?—No! Matchless harmony! Sublime unity!

Collect the writings of any thirty or forty writers on any subject. I do not even ask you to separate them by distance and time. Collect, I say, their disquisitions on any subject and your result is bedlam! a veritable Babel! But the Biblical writers speak upon every question that ever engaged the attention of man—and agree!

Says Peter: "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower falleth: but the word of the Lord abideth forever." So be it! Other books come and go; this book stands forever. It endures forever, because the world forever needs it.

WTY-3 The Religious Need of the Bible

CHAPTER III THE RELIGIOUS NEED OF THE BIBLE

Though it is conceded by many that the Bible is in many respects a good book, it is not so readily granted that it is indispensably necessary—not even for religion. It is positively affirmed that there is but one revelation—the Book of Nature; that this revelation is sufficient, that its teachings are clear and ample, and that man needs no more.

Now what are the facts? Could man really dispense with the Bible? Would he without it come to any adequate conception of God, of the world, or of himself? The Attainable Knowledge

Nature is unquestionably a book which, if read with an understanding eye, will afford much instruction. Coming from the hand of God, it must everywhere reveal glimpses of His glory. Therefore men are admonished to investigate nature, “to seek God, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him” (Acts 17:27). The apostle to the Gentiles declares that “the invisible things of Him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even His everlasting power and divinity; that they might be without excuse; because that, knowing God, they glorified Him not as God, neither gave thanks” (Romans 1:20-21).

We may, through a rational contemplation of the works of nature, arrive at the knowledge of the existence of God, a knowledge so complete that it deprives of all exculpation those who reject it. Furthermore, as to moral and religious knowledge, man through rational contemplation is able to recognize himself as a dependent creature and to realize that it behooves him to worship God; which is abundantly demonstrated by the various forms of religion, however imperfect, of all heathen nations. In addition, man will find that he is falling far short of what he ought to be, the law in his heart bearing witness and accusing him, in consequence of which a certain “fear of death” will take hold of him, and his life will be a life “subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:15). The Unattainable Knowledge

Although there is a natural knowledge of God, which we arrive at through an intelligent investigation of nature, this knowledge is little more than an obscure presentiment. Being fully persuaded that there is a God, we would from nature learn little about this God. His essence would forever be hidden from our cognition. The June morning brimful of gladness, with the meadows glistening with the dew-drops of the morning, might tell us that God is loving and good. But what about the dark December night, when ships go down at sea? What about the hurricane that destroys and shatters? What about the Galveston flood? The Messina earthquake? The late world war? As nature leaves us entirely in the dark regarding God’s nature and essence, so it leaves us altogether at sea respecting God’s will toward us. Knowing instinctively that we ought to serve and worship Him, the harassing question would forever be: “How must I worship Him?” And in all eternity reason and nature would furnish no answer. Whence would we derive any information, for example, concerning the introduction of sin, the gift of the Savior, the doctrine of atonement by His death, the descent and work of the Holy Spirit, the provision and ordinances of the Gospel? Nature

is dumb as to all these things. Nor can reason, without the aid of revelation, solve the enigma of our own existence. It is bold enough to allege that it can, but the history of philosophy gives it the lie. This science has ever desired, without the aid of revelation, to solve the questions: "What am I?" "Whence am I?" "What am I here for?" "Whither am I and the world tending?" Till this day, in spite of all the labor expended, no satisfactory answer has been supplied. Here is clearly fulfilled what the Scripture says: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Perversions of the Heathen

Let us turn to the races of antiquity, destitute of a special revelation. Let us see where reason, apart from revelation, led. Let us look at the religions of the nations. Are they not a miserable compound of absurdity, superstition and corruption? Let us consider their divinities. Are they not, for the most part, monsters of wickedness, vindictive and sanguinary, jealous, wrathful, cruel, and obscene? The reason of the heathen world never attained to the simplest truth of all, namely, that God is and can be only One. It will not do to point to India. Its monotheism was attained only by the surrender of the living character and personality of God, and so was essentially pantheistic.

Again, reason left to itself never arrived at those other fundamental truths, that God is and must be absolutely good and holy. The divinities of the heathen, being the creations of their fancy, were subject to all the temptations and passions of man, and were without number. Every phase of nature, sky, sea and earth, every phase of human life, its habits, accidents, and impulses, was in time provided with a special guardian and controlling deity. As no people can be expected to be better than their gods, the moral life of the heathen was and is miserably defective. They, having changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness. Their sensuous hearts were darkened. They wallowed in vice. They became so perverted as to think it an acceptable form of worship for virgins in the very temples of their gods to surrender their virtue! Ponder over the fearful description of heathen vices in Romans 1:21-32.

Regarding the conception of the right worship of God, we find that the ignorance and perversion is indescribable. One heathen aims at deliverance from sin by means of a bath; another thinks to purify his heart by the use of an emetic (North American Indian); a third sets prayer-mills in motion; a fourth pours out libations of wine or tea; again, another offers his darling child as the most acceptable sacrifice. In consequence of the labors of missionaries this subject is from year to year better understood. Not a missionary journal or paper is published, touching the religious rites of the heathen nations, which is not a standing testimony of their need of a revelation from heaven.

Confessions of the Heathen That nature and reason and conscience are not sufficient sources of knowledge is apparent from the confessions of many a heathen philosopher. Plato complains that it is hard to find the Father of the universe. Socrates, though deeming it the greatest happiness for man to know the will of the gods, nevertheless despairs of its ever being discovered. A prayer in Aeschylus reads: "Zeus, whoever thou art, and by whatever name it please thee to be named, I call on thee and pray."

Sextus Empiricus declares nothing to be more certain than the uncertainty of everything, including the existence of the gods. Some of the impressive songs of the Indian Rigveda have the ever-recurring refrain, "Who is the God to whom our gifts belong?"

Everywhere we find established what the ancient Greek poet says: "Except the gods themselves to thee unveil,—search as thou wilt the world, thou seek'st in vain!" Consider the altar at Athens, dedicated "To an Unknown God" (Acts 17:23). But even if the heathen philosopher might in some measure recognize the will of the gods, whence would he derive the power to put it into practice? Lacking the efficacious influence of the gospel to restrain and curb and subdue the power of sin, his actions always fall short of his knowledge. Says Marcus Aurelius: "I should have lived better than I have done, had I always followed the monitions of the gods!"

Thus it has always been in the case of everyone who has rejected the aid of revealed religion in his moral conflicts. No one has been able to get beyond a feeling of guilt, which, in consequence of the contradiction existing between our knowledge and our actions, is ever asserting itself. Even so free-thinking a theologian as Dr. Schwartz of Gotha allows this: "Oh, do not tell me that to act uprightly, and to do one's duty, and to have a good conscience, is sufficient. I ask you, ye virtuous ones, who among us does his duty and has good conscience in the highest sense of the word? Not one among us all. We all are and remain striving and struggling ones, who in manifold ways err, and stumble, and fall short." The Bible Indispensable

Now let us condense and summarize what we have found. Our investigation proved that though reason and nature supply us with many a valuable hint as to God and the world and our religious life, they are absolutely inadequate to satisfy our spiritual need. They leave us ignorant of many a subject most essential to our spiritual happiness in this world and the next. They do not afford the strength necessary to resist the evil and to perform the good.

It follows, therefore, that the Scripture is right in denying to the natural man the power to perceive the things of the Spirit of God, and in demanding that he must be born again, "not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, through the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever" (1 Peter 1:13). Says John: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him!"

He who rejects this eternal truth will forever remain in ignorance and grope in darkness. In confirmation of the statement let me conclude with the testimony of a man who is noted as a great opponent of all revelation. Revising his opinion, Fichte declares: "A higher Being undertook the charge of the first members of our race, just as an old and venerable document, containing the deepest and sublimest truths, represents Him to have done; and to this testimony all philosophy must in the end revert."

WTY-4 Is the Bible Authentic?

CHAPTER IV IS THE BIBLE AUTHENTIC?

What belongs to the Bible? The question is very pertinent and timely. We find that many people today are doubtful about an answer. Why, for instance, does the Protestant Church exclude the Apocryphal books, which, by the Romanist Church, are reputed to be canonical? Have they ever belonged to the Bible? If so, why and by what authority were they eliminated from the sacred volume? Is there any truth in the allegation heard so often in these days that a council, called in the first centuries to determine which books should go into the Bible and which should not, decided by but a majority of one in favor of the books that are now received by the Protestant Church?

Formation of the Old Testament Canon By way of introduction it would probably be in place to explain in a few words how it came that the Bible was divided into the Old and New Testaments, and called by these names. At the time of Christ the Old Testament was either called "Scripture" (John 7:38), or "The Scriptures" (Matthew 21:42). Scripture it was called when the Old Testament was referred to as one book; Scriptures, when reference was had to the various manuscripts that constituted the book. Moreover, Christ would call it "law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms" (Luke 24:44). The name "Old Testament" has been derived from passages like 2 Corinthians 3:14. Paul here says that "at the reading of the Old Testament/" or covenant, the veil that covers the eyes of the Jews "remaineth unto this day/" The term "New Testament" has been gotten from such passages as Hebrews 9:15; Hebrews 12:24; where Christ is designated as the "Mediator of a new covenant," or testament. The Greek word employed in these texts signifies both covenant and testament and is in some Latin Bibles translated "testamentum"

Formation and Preservation of the Old Testament A very steadfast tradition of the Jews ascribes the formation and preservation of the Old Testament before the Exile to Moses and the prophets. This tradition is supported by Scripture itself. We read in Deuteronomy 31:9 : "And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi." And Deuteronomy 31:25-26 : "Moses commanded the Levites . . . Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of Jehovah your God." Samuel also is said (1 Samuel 10:25) to have "laid up the book before Jehovah." And 2 Kings 22:8, Hilkiah the priest is said to have "found the book of the law in the house of Jehovah." Isaiah for corroboration of his own prophecies points the people to this book when he says: "Seek ye out of the book of Jehovah, and read; no one of these shall be missing, none shall want her mate" (Isaiah 34:16). Daniel tells us that he "understood by the books the number of the years of the desolation of Jerusalem." Who Closed the Old Testament?

According to their own testimony the books of the Old Testament (as also of the New) are of divine-human origin. In other words: they are inspired of God but have been reduced to writing by men. As has become clear already, they were composed not at one certain period of the world's history, but in various times and ages. They are continued revelations from the time of Moses until about the year 300 B. C. The question that now obtrudes itself is: Who collected all these various and separate books into one body, and when was it done? The Jews in the Talmud (Pirke Aboth)

assert that after Moses and the elders the books were guarded by the prophets, until, at last, the canon was closed by Ezra and Nehemiah and the men of the Great Synagogue. There is no reason why this testimony should be doubted; since it is, as we have seen above, even supported by Scripture. Furthermore, when the Jews returned from the Exile the need was almost imperative that a competent body of men declare what books belonged and what books did not belong to the canon.

Again, the men of the Great Synagogue were the last of the prophets. If with them the time of prophecy was to cease, who should fix the canon if they neglected to do it? The fact that the separate books are not arranged according to the time in which they were written, that is chronologically, but with reference to their contents, renders it almost impossible to believe that the canon closed itself, as some have said, but postulates the mediation of some qualified man or body of men. It is highly probable, therefore, that the men of the Great Synagogue had a God-wrought conviction that they were the last of the prophets, and, therefore, for the welfare and benefit of the people, determined, and fixed the canon. Had they left this work undone it could not very well be explained why such books as Sirach did not find their way into the canon.

Christ and the Canon Did the Old Testament, as it existed in the days of the Savior, receive His sanction? We are able to answer this important question with a joyful "Yes!" Christ received and sanctioned what He usually called the "Scriptures," regarded them as the "word of God" and as of binding authority. Ever and again He appeals to them. From them He draws all His ammunition in the conflict with earth and hell. He knows of no better weapon to foil and defeat not only His human adversaries, but even him that walks about as a roaring lion.

Here are some of his utterances: "The Scriptures cannot be broken." "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life." "All things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." "It is written!" It is a fact beyond dispute that our Savior sanctioned in the most explicit terms a class of writings held among the Jews, speaking of them as "the word of God which must be fulfilled." He who believed in "Moses and the prophets," He declared, would soon also believe in Him. Is Our Old Testament Identical With Christ's? This is another burning question. If it can be shown to our satisfaction that His Old Testament agreed with that which we have now in our homes, then I insist that as Christians we should ask no more questions. The following considerations prove that the Scriptures which Christ confirmed and sanctioned were the same as those contained in our Old Testament.

1. The Septuagint version (that is, a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek) which was begun in the reign of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt, about 280 B. C., and completed not long after, contains all the present canonical books. Some Apocryphal writings it is true, have since been bound with the Septuagint, but it is at least doubtful whether they made any part of it in the days of Christ.

2. Josephus, who lived in the First Century, and also Origen, give account of the sacred books of the Jews. They indeed speak of but twenty-two books, whereas our Old Testament has thirty-nine; but the number twenty-two was obtained by joining some of the books together; as Judges and Ruth; Ezra and Nehemiah; Jeremiah and the Lamentations and all the minor prophets. The idea was to have the number of books of the Old Testament answer to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

3. Since the time of Christ Jews and Christians have been spies upon each other; so that, if either party had attempted to disturb the canon of the Old Testament, instant exposure would have been the consequence.

We may accordingly be assured that the Old Testament which Christ sanctioned and that which we now possess agree entirely. Consequently, the authority and authenticity not only of the Old Testament in general, but of each and every book comprised in it, is settled beyond a peradventure.

Apocryphal Writings In connection with the canonical books of the Old Testament the Romanist Church has received the so- called apocryphal books and accords them the same reverence. The question naturally arises why the Protestant Church rejects these writings. I mention three of the many reasons that could be given.

1. They are not found in the Hebrew Bible. They were originally written not in Hebrew, but in Greek, a language which was not in vogue among the Jews until long after the canon of the Old Testament was closed.

2. They contain many things which are fabulous, absurd, and false. In the Second Book of the Maccabees, for example, we read: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins" (2Ma 12:43; 2Ma 12:45). The Romanist Church needs this passage to prove the doctrine of the Mass. Again, in Tob 12:9, it is declared: "Alms delivereth from death and shall purge away all sins." This statement militates against the Scripture doctrine of the atonement. Many more texts of such a nature could be cited.

3. Christ, as also the apostles, though quoting scores of times from almost all canonical books, entirely ignore the apocryphal writings, which goes to show that they regard them not as possessing divine authority.

It follows that, though some of the apocryphal books possess a high value, considered as ancient Jewish writings which throw light upon the history and manners of the East, they have no claim to be admitted into the sacred canon, or to be regarded as of divine authority. Luther's definition is correct. They are, for the most part, good to read, but are not to be received, as on a par with the holy Scriptures. The New Testament Canon

Having considered the formation, extent, and preservation of the Old Testament, we now turn to the New. Though we have the Gospels as the first part of our New Testament, they were not written first, but last. The Epistles appeared before any Life of Christ was composed. The apostles, to begin, preached the way of salvation, going from place to place. The young congregations that were everywhere founded had the gospel at the outset only in its oral promulgation. Nothing had been reduced to writing. The oral tradition sufficed as long as men were living "who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." The Epistles Appear In the course of time the congregations multiplied. The apostles were no more able personally to attend to all of them. Accordingly men, qualified as teachers, acted as the substitutes of the apostles. But now the door was also thrown wide open to all kinds of heresy. Many untrustworthy persons arose, who though claiming divine authority for what they said, palmed off questionable doctrine, such as that the resurrection had already happened, that Christ was not really risen from the dead, that one must remain in an unmarried state and abstain from certain kinds of food, which latter teachings

Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1, brands as doctrines of “seducing spirits and demons.”

These circumstances necessitated the writing of the Epistles. For one thing, their purpose was to lay a good, solid foundation. Men were to become so thoroughly established in the truth that they might promptly give to anyone that asked them “a reason of the hope” that was in them. For another, they were to overcome and banish false doctrine. Deceivers should find it hard to gain a foothold. “If anyone cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching of Christ, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting; for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works” (2 John 1:10). The Gospels are Written

Shortly after the appearance of the Epistles the Gospels were given to the church. Because Christ had admonished His followers to be vigilant, since the end of the world would come as a thief in the night, the young congregations, as also every individual, had day by day been waiting for His return in power and glory. But when after the year 60 A. D. one apostle after the other died and still Christ did not usher in His kingdom, the church must prepare for a time when no instruction could any longer be had from divinely authorized persons. To have waited longer with a publication of the exact life of Christ would have meant to endanger the truth; the more so since many incompetent persons had already “taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which had been fulfilled among” the people of Christ (Luke 1:1). There was, accordingly, a deeply felt need that trustworthy eye-witnesses of Christ “trace accurately the course of all things from the first.” So the gospels came to be written. The several Evangelists afford us a four-fold picture of Christ: Matthew shows in Christ the promised Messiah of the Jews, therefore his many citations from the Old Testament; Mark depicts Him as the King of the World; Luke emphasizes that He is the Savior of sinners; John describes Him as “the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” The Revelation of St. John When the apostolic age drew near its close, the last book of the Bible, the Revelation, was added to those already extant. The church in its earlier days, and always when laboring under great difficulties and bending before the storm of savage persecution, has realized how great a treasure it possesses in this little book. It is a guide and light in gathering darkness, a source of consolation and comfort in time of trouble and distress. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of the prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein; for the time is at hand” (Revelation 1:3). An Important Question From the foregoing it has become evident that the twenty-seven books of the New Testament have been written by various writers at various times and places, and were sent to various churches. The interesting question that now arises is: Who undertook so vast and important a task as to gather all these different manuscripts and bind them up into one volume? In other words: Who settled the canon? Who said that such and such books were authentic and genuine and others were not, that such and such belonged to the Bible and others had no claim to be there? Was the authority of the several books of the New Testament established by decree of any council, or by any formal act of the whole church? The Settling of the Canon The last-named mode is always cited by infidels, and it is said that the men present at the council were prejudiced and biased, selecting from a mass of literature what suited their individual ends, and rejecting what they disapproved. But the story is a fiction of modern unbelief. The assertion can never be proved. There never was such a decree of council. The books were rather received on the testimony of competent witnesses and various well founded evidences. The council of Laodicea, which assembled about the year 350 A. D. (Meusel), indeed published a catalogue of received books; “but its decree was not so much legislative as

declaratory, setting forth what was and had been the mind of the church in this important matter” (Enoch Pond).

It was impossible that the various books of the New Testament should everywhere have been recognized from the very beginning as authentic, and bound together in one volume, for the reason that they were scattered through many congregations, the one possessing this letter, and the other that. Only in the course of time did the whole church, through an interchange of the manuscripts, become acquainted with all the Epistles and Gospels written by the apostles or their attendants. Thus we read in Colossians 4:16, that Paul charges his readers: “And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and that ye also read the epistle from Laodicea.” From 2 Peter 3:16, we gather that Peter was acquainted with the epistles of St. Paul and placed them on a level with “the other scriptures,” presupposing that the congregations in Asia to which he wrote had read them. Eusebius tells us that John knew the other three Gospels, sanctioned them as authentic, and indicted his own as a supplement to them; which accords entirely with the contents of his Gospel. So it happened that about 100 A. D. there existed already a so-called “original canon,” or Canon Muratori, containing the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles of Paul (except Hebrews), the First Epistle of Peter, the First Epistle of John, and the Revelation. Papias (102 A. D.), Justin Martyr (140 A. D.), and the Gnostic Marcion (150 A. D.) supply testimony in abundance that these books were everywhere regarded as inspired, and the works of those whose names they bear, carrying with them the authority of God.

Why Some Books Were Not Everywhere Looked Upon as Authentic The remaining writings, however, were not from the beginning everywhere accorded canonical authority. The reasons are various. The last two Epistles of John are very short and of a personal character. This may have given rise to the thought that they were not intended for the public. The Second Epistle of Peter and that of Jude, and also that of James and that to the Hebrews, were designed for particular occasions and for particular places. This may have prevented their readers from exchanging and circulating them. But, though these letters were not universally known, doubt as to their authenticity or canonicity was never for a moment entertained by the congregations to which they were originally written. However, since they had not till the end of the First Century for lack of information concerning them gained universal acceptance in the church, it happened that for a time following they were not by all reckoned as belonging to the canon. The councils of Hippo Rhegius (393 A. D.) and Carthage (397 A. D.) finally provided a definite solution of this matter. They did not decree the canonicity of the writings in question—that had long before been a matter of firm belief of the churches to which they had been sent—but merely declared that, being such books, they had a claim to a place in the canon, and should from that time everywhere be regarded as authoritative and binding. The Apocrypha of the New Testament

There are Apocrypha not only of the Old Testament but also of the New. The reason why the church has always rejected and does still reject them from the canon are similar to those brought to bear against the Apocrypha of the Old Testament. Not one of them belonged to the original canon. Not one of them was written by an apostle, or a direct attendant of an apostle under his supervision. Not one of them was acknowledged or quoted as of any authority by the early Christian fathers. In fact, most of them were written at a late age and had no existence until the middle of the Third Century. This explains why they were neither attacked nor cited by the earliest

enemies of the church, Marcion, Cel- sus, Lucian; which would certainly have been done had they been extant and generally received by Christians. Moreover, these apocryphal writings not only contain many flagrant anachronisms, things being mentioned which occurred later than the time in which the books profess to have been composed; but they also contradict, in many points, the doctrine and practice of Christ and the apostles. In addition, they teem with statements which are ludicrous, absurd, and even profane, and their style is exceedingly diverse from that of the canonical writings and inferior to it. Though some of them are good to read they have no claim to a place between the covers of our Bible. In Conclusion The New Testament as it is received by the Greek Church, the Latin, the Roman Catholic, and the Protestant, contains only such books as could be proved to have been written either by the apostles themselves, or, in the case of Mark and Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, by their attendants under their inspection. We may rest assured, therefore, when reading the sacred volume, that we are brought face to face with the glorious gospel which Christ commissioned His disciples to preach to the whole world. There is abundant reason for us to “continue in the things which we have learned and have been assured of, knowing of whom we have learned them” (2 Timothy 3:14-15).

WTY-5 Is the Bible Trustworthy?

CHAPTER V IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

Here is a vital and paramount question. If the Bible contains mere speculations which may or may not be true, or if there should be falsehoods found in it, we would forthwith lose rock-bottom and sink into quicksand. On the other hand, if it can be proved that the Bible is true, we too can exult with St. Peter: "We have not trusted in cunningly devised fables, but in a sure prophetic word!" We may in a general manner infer the veracity of the Scriptures from the fact that often in it Appeal is Made to Men's Experience

Moses writes, Deuteronomy 11:7 : "Your eyes have seen all the great works of Jehovah which He did." Now, suppose that God had not led them out of Egypt by an outstretched hand; suppose that the Egyptians had not drowned in the Red Sea; imagine that the people had not been fed with manna from heaven and satisfied with water out of the rock, and Moses had told them: "Your eyes have seen all these things"—would they have had the stupidity to receive all that Moses wrote as unquestionable truth? So also the apostles, when speaking of the resurrection of Christ, refer to eye-witnesses yet living, who might be consulted as to the truth of the things stated in their Epistles. (Hebrews 12:1; 1 Corinthians 15:6). The Character of the Statements

These statements made also indicates the incontestable truth of the Scriptures. They are in large part so mortifying to human pride, so humiliating and offensive to those to whom they were addressed, that they would never have been received and promulgated if they had not been known to be true. For example Abraham was the father of the Jewish nation; but the Bible records that a heathen king chided him for telling a lie. Jacob was another patriarch; but the sacred pages relate, among other things, that he cheated Esau out of his birthright. Aaron, too, was renowned as coleader with Moses yet the Bible narrates his making the golden calf in Horeb. David was the Israelites' great and illustrious king; but the Scriptures in no wise cover up his adultery.

Now, would the Israelites ever have received the Old Testament and have clung to it even unto death had they not been fully assured that the things rehearsed therein were facts? In the Fulfilled Prophecies

Here we have the most irrefutable proofs of the exactitude and veracity and reliability of the Scriptures. "There shall not be one remaining to the house of Esau" (Obadiah 1:18), say the Scriptures; and the descendants of that Esau before whom Jacob of old had to flee have perished from the face of the earth. Their very name has been forgotten in the country they lived in. In like manner the doom of extinction was pronounced against the Philistines (Ezekiel 25:15-16), ancient enemies of the Israelites. When one today seeks for them, they can no more be found.

Against Egypt Ezekiel thundered that it should no more lift itself above the nations, but that it should be diminished, that its foundation should be broken, that the pride of its power should come down, and that "there shall be no more a prince out of the land of Egypt" (Ezekiel 30:13). When in these days we open the pages of ancient history we read: "From about the middle of the fourth

century B. C. to the present day no native prince has sat upon the throne of the Pharaohs.” (Myers.) As against nations, so the Bible is full of prophecies regarding ancient cities, which have all been fulfilled. Tyre was to be cast into the midst of the sea and become a place “for the spreading of nets” (Ezekiel 26). The historian of today can find no better words to describe its appearance.

Thebes was to be “broken up” (Ezekiel 30:16). Strabo (25 B. C.) testifies to the fact that it was; and even now the once majestic city is broken up into nine hamlets.

Memphis was to be destroyed together with its idols and images (Ezekiel 30:13). The traveler who today visits the place finds, beside two broken statues and a few large rubbish heaps, not a trace of the temple-city once so renowned.

“Ekron shall be roted up!” cried Zephaniah, and the place where it once stood is now a region of plowed fields, “and the only evidences that a city ever existed there is found in the stones of hand-mills and the ancient cisterns which are occasionally met with by the cultivator.”

“Baldness is come upon Gaza,” declared another prophet (Jeremiah 47:5). The event proved that the words were no mere threat. Gaza is now a series of sand-hills and so bald that not even a blade of grass grows upon it.

Babylon, “the beauty of the Chaldeans’ excellency,” was to become heaps and should never again be inhabited. It is simply startling to find how clear and minute these prophetic pictures are.

Archeology As another source of testimony archeology might be mentioned. I confine myself to but one interesting find. In Exodus 1:11, we read that the children of Israel built for Pharaoh store-cities, Pithom and Raamses. In connection with the building of these cities the oppression of the children of Israel reached its climax. When Moses came to lead them out of Egypt, Pharaoh supposed that not enough work had been assigned them and commanded that no more straw should be given them, but that they should go and gather stubble for themselves. This they did. Finally, when even the stubble failed, they were commanded to make brick without straw.

Critics formerly impugned this story. They do not so today. Why not? Because the cities have accidentally been uncovered, and a perfect circumstantial confirmation of the Bible account has been obtained. Investigation proved that the lower layers were built of brick which contained straw, the middle layers of brick in which stubble instead of straw had been used, and the upper layers of brick, without straw altogether. The Science of Astronomy This too, affords proof for the truthfulness of the Scriptures. Let us note but one thing. In Jeremiah 30:22, we are told: “The host of heaven cannot be numbered.” This was not the sentiment of astronomers. They all thought that they could be numbered. Hipparchus, living about 150 B. C., counted 1,022 stars. Ptolemy at the beginning of the second century of the Christian era said there were 1,026. We can with the naked eye on a clear winter’s night see about 1,160; or in the whole celestial sphere some 3,000. But when Galileo some three centuries ago pointed the telescope toward the sky he counted hundreds of thousands. Next came Lord Rosse with the great mirror. Now the number of visible stars increased to nearly 400,000,000. Presently John Herschel and other modern astronomers resolved the nebulae into suns, and found in the scarf about Orion “a gorgeous bed of stars the Milky Way, too, they tell us, is but a grand complex of stars without number. Who revealed this fact to Jeremiah millenniums ago?

Evidences in the World Around Us

It is a fact that all the nations relate a story of a universal flood. We have a minute record of this flood in the Bible. Some have said that the occurrence was merely a local inundation. But how does it happen that neither the races of the world nor the Scriptures narrate any story of a universal earthquake? There have probably been more local earthquakes than local inundations, yet we nowhere find it so much as hinted at that there was ever a universal earthquake.

Again, a most singular mode of propitiating and worshipping the Deity prevailed over the whole earth. Even today traces of it may be found in Mexico, India, Africa, and other parts of the world. I mean that of bloody sacrifices. Whoever established this mode of worship? Man? Never! It is against all reason.

Some time ago it happened that a man in my hearing pronounced the sacrifices with which the Old Testament abounds as foolish, absurd, and ridiculous. The mere light of reason and nature would never have led to such a mode of worship. There is no possible connection in man's reason between the killing of an innocent dove and the acceptable worship of the Most High. Yet this mode of worship prevails universally. How are we to account for this strange phenomenon? Reject the explanation which the Bible gives, and who can give us another?

Turning to the Jews we find that they even today celebrate a festival called the Passover. Suppose they had never been led out of Egypt as the Scriptures relate, would they ever have commemorated the event? As little as America would commemorate the Fourth of July if American independence had never been declared!

Take also the early and almost universal division of time into weeks. Who decreed that it should be instituted? There are natural reasons why time should be divided into months and years; but there are no natural reasons whatever why it should be divided into periods of seven days. Reject the explanation of it which Moses gives, and again you are at sea.

Still, these external arguments in favor of the veracity of the Scriptures are but crutches. There is one remaining which is decisive to him whom it concerns. It is the testimony of the Spirit! A Christian knows the Bible to be true from his own experience. He knows that a great moral change has taken place within him, that a new force has entered his life. Proofs? He needs none. "He has the witness in himself."

WTY-6 Is the Bible Inspired?

CHAPTER VI IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED? In our days the inspiration of the Bible is a much-talked-about subject. Nevertheless, great ignorance is manifested as to what is meant by inspiration. The doctrine is not so difficult and perplexing a matter. It must only be reverently approached. Childlike faith must be sustained as to the utterances of God's word. Then all is simple and plain.

Definition of Inspiration

Inspiration is not revelation. Revelation is the direct impartation of God's truth to the mind of a prophet. Inspiration is the impulse to make known what has been imparted, and the assistance afforded in the utterance of God's truth, or in the recording of what God chose to have committed to the sacred pages. Some Old Testament men were granted revelations, but they were not induced to record them; they lacked the inspiration. In Moses both experiences met. Having received revelations, he was also inspired to make an infallible record of what God chose to have written for our instruction in righteousness.

Inspiration must also be distinguished from illumination. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined" in the heart of every Christian, "to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6) But not every Christian is inspired. Only a few men, the writers of both Old and New Testament, were inspired, while millions upon millions were illuminated. One easy way to distinguish between inspiration and illumination is this: Illumination is subject to degrees, inspiration is not; one Christian may be more illumined than another, but no Biblical writer excels another in inspiration. Nor must inspiration be confounded with mere human genius. The latter is merely a natural qualification. One man towers over another in gifts, in talents, faculties, capabilities; but all these are natural powers. Inspiration is supernatural throughout. Human geniuses never agreed; the authors of the various books of the Bible all agree most wonderfully. To define then: Inspiration is a dynamic divine influence coming upon both Old and New Testament writers, moving, urging, directing, enabling them to reduce to writing in God-suggested words, all those things which God chose to have recorded. The objective point of inspiration is not the author but the book, not the writer but the writing. The words inscribed upon the sacred pages are God's words. Some two thousand times we read in Scripture the phrase, or its equivalent, "Thus saith the Lord!" The human authors are but the hands, the amanuenses, of the Spirit.

"But," says someone, "is not man's personality thereby suspended, destroyed, encroached upon?" By no means. Though the instrument of the Spirit, the inspired man is more than a typewriter operated by an author. The prophets and apostles, far from being reduced to the level of mechanical pieces of machinery, sustained an elevation of their personality, and absorbedly participated with God. Was the personality of Moses annulled, undone, annihilated, when on the brink of the Red Sea he stretched out his hand and parted the waters? Indeed not! But the power employed was God's. In the same way, when later committing to writing Jehovah's revelation he

moved his hand upon the parchment, but the words that were penned were God's. Notwithstanding, his whole soul was engaged in the work.

We have proof of the plausibility of such union of the divine agency and the human in the fact that it conforms so entirely to God's usual method of operation. It is in God that we "live, and move, and have our being yet in giving us life, breath, and being, He does not interrupt the regular exercise of our own natural powers, but rather sustains them.

Again, the conversion and sanctification of the soul is the work of God; but who would say that in them man's personality suffers annihilation. So in the matter of inspiration, God supervises, assists, restrains, suggests, and does all in His power that that may be recorded which is according to His will, and yet the human author thinks with his own mind, exercises his own faculties, and speaks or writes according to his own method and style.

Necessity of Inspiration

We need inspiration. Objectively we need it to assure ourselves of the stability and certitude of revelation. It is not enough that at certain periods of the history of the world God has vouchsafed revelations to the human race. They must be recorded, so that later generations may have a "sure prophetic word." Oral traditions are not trustworthy records. We all know this from experience. Every society, congregation, organization has its protocol, so that there may be no doubt as to proceedings of the past. So also with the facts of revelation. If they were not reduced to writing, who and what would attest their verity? There would be no rock upon which to plant the feet. Consequently, revelation imperatively involves and postulates the sacred writings and must be in operation till their completion, just as an important enactment of legislature is not complete until recorded. So important is the authentic formulation of a code of laws that it is not left to the reporters, though they may be honest and capable men, but it is framed by the legislators themselves, formally adopted, and attested by their signatures.

Thus with the Bible. God Himself is the author of it. His providence attended its construction from Genesis to Revelation. The threat contained upon the last page of the Scriptures is applicable to all its separate books and parts: "I testify to every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto them, 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 from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book." The inspiration of the Bible is necessary not only objectively for the stability and security of the revelation, but also subjectively as a guarantee and pledge of the dependableness and sufficiency of our faith for salvation. The sum total of our faith is justification by faith in Christ. How do I know that God has pronounced me guiltless and declared me just? May I rely upon my feelings, the inner joy and happiness that are mine? What if they fail? Would it be safe to stay one's heart on such unstable, changeable inner experience?

No. As soon as my faith begins to reflect and inquire as to its ground and foundation, an authentic, codified revelation is demanded. Again, when doubts and difficulties arise; when the way seems rugged and steep, and the darkness is gathering fast; when temptations confront and peace seems banished from the heart; then something more is needed than the by-gone subjective experience. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." We need the solid

objective declaration of Scripture that we are “justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The Fact of Inspiration From beginning to end the Bible asserts its inspiration. To Moses God said: “Now, therefore, go, and I will be with thy mouth, and I will teach thee what thou shalt say” (Exodus 4:12). David asserts: “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue” (2 Samuel 23:2). To Isaiah Jehovah says: “I will put My words in thy mouth” (Isaiah 51:16). And to Jeremiah: “Thou shalt be as My mouth” (Jeremiah 15:19). Likewise Ezekiel is addressed: “Thou shalt speak My words unto them” (Ezekiel 2:7). So all the Old Testament writers make it plain that they are but the mouthpieces and the penmen of God. Not less emphatically do the writers of the New Testament assert their inspiration. “I certify to you,” says Paul, “that the gospel which was preached of me was not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it but by the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11). And again: “Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual words” (1 Corinthians 2:13).

Thus the apostle could write because Christ said: “I will give you a mouth and wisdom which no adversary can gainsay or resist.” “When He, the Spirit of truth is come, He shall guide you into all truth.” “When they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” The most unique argument for the inspiration of the Old Testament is the relation which Jesus Christ bears to it. There is no escaping the issue that He receives it wholly as the word of His Father. So did His disciples. “We have a sure prophetic word,” cries one; while another exclaims: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” and a third “God, who at sundry times and in diverse manner spake in time past by the prophets, hath in these latter days spoken unto us by His Son.”

If language such as this does not prove the inspiration of the Bible, no language can. The Position of the Early Fathers The early fathers—the immediate successors of the apostles, all believed in verbal inspiration. I adduce the testimony of a few:

Clement of Rome says in his first epistle to the Corinthians: “Give diligent heed to the Scriptures, the true saying of the Holy Ghost.”

Justin Martyr declares: “I think not that the words which you hear the prophet speaking are uttered by himself. Being filled with the Spirit, they are from the divine Logos which moves him.”

Origen asserts: “The sacred books breathe the fulness of the Spirit. There is nothing, neither in the Law, in the Gospels, or in the Apostles, which did not descend from the fulness of the divine Majesty.”

Gregory the Great opines: “It is needless to inquire who wrote the book of Job, since we may surely believe that the Holy Ghost was its author.”

Conclusion

Let us study the Scriptures—the time spent with them is time well spent. “Do you know a book that you are willing to put under your head for a pillow when you lie dying?” cries Joseph Cook, the great Boston lecturer. “That is the book you want while you are living. There is but one such book in the world!” That book is the Bible!

“The most learned, acute, and diligent student cannot, in the longest life, obtain an entire knowledge of this one volume. The more deeply he works the mine, the richer and more abundant he finds the ore; new light continually beams from this source of heavenly knowledge, to direct the conduct, and illustrate the work of God and the ways of men; and he will at last leave the world confessing, that the more he studied the Scriptures, the fuller conviction he had of his own ignorance, and their inestimable value.” (Walter Scott.)

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