

The Papal and Hierarchial System - Part 1

by Joseph John Gurney

Joseph John Gurney's sermon emphasizes the divine authority of Scripture while critiquing the Papal system's reliance on Tradition and human additions.

Scripture: Isaiah 7:20, Matthew 15:1, John 3:16, John 16:14, John 20:31, Romans 15:4, 2 Timothy 3:16, 2 Peter 3:16

Topics: "Scripture Authority", "Holy Spirit Guidance"

Description

Joseph John Gurney preaches about the divine origin and authority of the Holy Scriptures, emphasizing that the canon of Scripture was not arbitrarily fixed by man but recognized by Jesus Christ and the apostles. The Old Testament and New Testament writings were established through historical, critical, and internal proofs, with the New Testament canon being universally acknowledged. Gurney highlights the importance of Scripture preservation, the dangers of adding human traditions to the Bible, and the need for all to have access to and interpret the Scriptures with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Transcript

ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

No ONE who has investigated the subject can seriously entertain the notion that the canon of Scripture has been arbitrarily fixed by the authority of man. When our Lord Jesus Christ was upon earth, as a teacher and preacher amongst the Jews, it was his constant practice to refer to those books which were regarded by that people to be divine; and while he never failed to speak of them as such, he made no distinction between one book and another, as it relates to their authority.

The p2 law, containing the five books of Moses, the Prophets, including the historical books as well as the major and minor Prophets, from Joshua to Malachi and the Psalms, or Hagiographa, comprising the book of Job, the Psalms of David and others, and all the works of Solomon, were alike sacred in his view - an indivisible collection, from which nothing might be taken, and to which nothing might be added, except from the same immediate and plenary inspiration. This collection of writings all in the Hebrew language, and all studiously preserved among the Jews from ancient times and guarded, since the coming of Christ, both by Jews and Christians is unquestionably the same as that which is now in our hands, and which is universally known and accepted as constituting the Old Testament, These are the writings, to the exclusion of all others, to which the apostle Paul alludes, when he says to Timothy, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," &c.

The writings which comprise the New Testament are individually established to be the genuine work of the apostles and their companions, and therefore of divine authority, by a variety of historical, critical, and internal proofs, which have satisfied not merely the wisdom of the hierarchy, but the good sense of the world. And now at the end of about eighteen centuries from the time when these works were written, there is less dispute among men, respecting the canon of the New Testament, than in any preceding age of the church.

Under the gracious superintendence of a good Providence, the truth of that canon has been established on so broad a basis, both of learning and experience, as to be incapable of being ever again shaken. So early as in the days of Eusebius (A.D. 315), the four gospels, the book of Acts, the thirteen epistles of Paul which bear his name, and the first epistles of John and Peter, i. e. about five-sixths of the whole volume, (very generally diffused as these writings were, and freely read by all descriptions of people) were "universally acknowledged" as genuine compositions and Holy Scripture.

Some persons, indeed, in those days, doubted the authenticity of the remaining books, viz. the second epistle of Peter, the second and third epistles of John, the epistles of James and Jude, and the Revelation; while some little shade was thrown over the epistle to the Hebrews, by the uncertainty of the question, whether it was written by Paul. But all these doubts have long since been cleared away in the public mind of Christendom. It is now generally understood, that the weight of evidence in favour of the Pauline origin of that epistle is not to be resisted.

In the mean time, its apostolic date is unquestionable; and the scriptural wisdom and efficacy, both of this and the other excepted books, as contrasted with many spurious productions of the first, second, and third centuries false gospels, false epistles, and false visions are plainly such as proclaim them to be, like the other Scriptures, the work of God, given forth by inspiration, and stamped with the seal of direct divine authority. Let it be clearly understood, that in acknowledging the list of inspired books, both of the Old and New Testament, we do not follow the authority of any particular church, or of any ecclesiastical council.

With regard to the Old Testament, we follow the example, and depend on the authority, of Jesus Christ himself and his apostles. With respect to the New Testament, we abide in the first place, by its own testimony to the inspiration of its authors. Secondly, we follow the general consent of the Christian public, gradually developing itself from the first century downward; fixed with wonderful unanimity by the end of the fourth century; and since that period, unshaken by all the storms of infidelity, and confirmed, not only by the labours of a multitude of critics, but by the common judgment and feeling of mankind.

There are few circumstances for which the friends of Christianity ought to be more grateful than the preservation of the text of Holy Scripture. We will not call it miraculous, but we may truly describe it as the special provision of an everwatchful Providence. Who was it that raised up the textual doctors among the Jews, who devoted their livelong hours to arranging the points and accents, counting the letters, and fixing the middle words of the several books of Hebrew Scripture?

To whom are we to return thanks for the following important facts 1; that a most accurate version of the New Testament was made into Syriac, so early as the second, or probably the first century; and that other versions almost equally exact soon followed; 2; that the early fathers of the church, even when animated with little better than controversial zeal, were induced to rifle the whole volume for quotations, which now, in their abundance and uniformity, form one principal criterion for the settlement of the text; and 3; that copies of this sacred book were multiplied in every direction with so little inaccuracy?

Surely we have to thank Him who is the Holy Head of his own church, and whose gracious will it was to bestow upon her a divinely authorized record of doctrines to be believed, and duties to be performed, which should remain unimpaired and indestructible to the end of time. It would be difficult to calculate the amount of learning and industry which have been applied to the investigation and settlement of the text of Scripture; viz. in the rigid and careful application of the three criteria now mentioned versions, quotations by the fathers, and manuscript copies; and certainly the Kennicotts and De Rossis, as it regards the Hebrew books; and the Mills, Wetsteins, Griesbachs, &c., as it relates to the Greek Testament, have not laboured in vain.

So extensively and p7 completely sifted have been the various authorities which apply to the subject, that we may consider ourselves to have now arrived at the final result; and what is it? Nothing less than this that both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures are cleared from every cloud of doubt; that from amidst a vast multitude of various readings of little importance, they have come forth uninjured, because essentially unaltered that they have not been deprived of a single historical fact, of a single doctrinal truth, of a single moral precept.

When Paul declared that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," he made no distinctions between the different kinds of writing of which the Old Testament is composed. Independently of all considerations respecting the writers their individual character or condition of mind, or the degree of consciousness which they severally enjoyed of a divine influence he simply avers that the writings which they produced were "given by inspiration of God," a view of the subject which is fully substantiated by the example and authority of our Saviour himself.

We cannot for a moment doubt that the inspiration of the apostles and evangelists had the same result; and that p8 their works also whether historical, prophetic, or didactic are, like the books of the Old Testament, all divine, and all equal in point of authority. It is matter of satisfaction and thankfulness, that the attempts which have been made by many modern critics to weaken the scriptural view of the inspiration of Scripture itself, the distinctions which some have drawn between part and part, and the notion that inspiration is more or less effective according to the nature of the subject in hand have very much disappeared.

All such wire-drawing has proved itself to be a failure; and Christians in the nineteenth century are evidently brought to a confirmed agreement that the Holy Scriptures, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation the actual writings the bulk, substance, and totality of the book are, as the early Quakers used often to express themselves, the WORDS OF GOD.[1] The divine origin of the Old and New Testament is a point on which the Roman Catholics, and all the orthodox denominations of Protestants, are (as far as I know) in full accordance.

I am not p9 aware that infidelity on this subject has ever been encouraged by the authority of the See of Rome; but it has often sprung up, as the practical consequence of the superstitious additions which have been made under that authority purely human as it is to the fabric of scriptural truth. These additions have arisen, as a natural consequence, from those which the Romish Church has made, in her own strength and wisdom, to the Scripture themselves. That church, in the first place, has added to the Old Testament a large proportion of the Apocryphal books, not merely as works tending to edification, but as actually divine, and as forming part of their canon.[2] Here then is a ground on which the hierarchy of Rome has found an opportunity of deriving or supporting doctrinal opinions, from a source additional to that of simple, authenticated Scripture.

But a far more dangerous addition to this storehouse of truth has been made under the undefined and comprehensive head of Tradition. Under p10 this head may be classed first, the voluminous writings of the ecclesiastical fathers during the first six centuries after Christ, containing a variety of strange notions and customs, wholly beyond the scope and limits of Scripture, which have been gradually augmented in their course, and have ultimately found an undisturbed seat in the bosom of the Romish Church.

Nor can it be denied that a divine authority, practically tantamount to that of Scripture, has often been claimed, among the members of that communion, for these writings very much as the Jews have regarded such an authority as belonging to that ocean of fables, the Talmud. In addition, however, to this new and most cumbrous *litera scripta*, is the ORAL TRADITION handed down from age to age from one generation of priests to another and even declared by the adherents of the Roman Pontiff, to be of equal authority, that is, to be equally binding on the consciences of all men, with the contents of Holy Scripture itself.

This vast item of tradition gives to the Romish church an undefined scope for superstitious additions, both to the creed and practices enjoined in the New Testament. In the mean time, what p11 becomes of the Holy Scriptures themselves? They are, according to the principles of that church, in the keeping of the hierarchy who alone are regarded as holding the true keys to their meaning alone gifted of God for the purpose of interpreting them. So far therefore, as any parts of them are laid open to the people, it is still with the virtual understanding, that for the interpretation of that which they read, they must depend, not on their own free judgment, under a divine influence, but on the teaching of their priests, and on the decision of bishops, popes, and councils.

But alas! how small has been the extent to which these keepers of the words of the Lord have permitted them to be circulated! How studiously were the Scriptures retained for many centuries in tongues which the unlearned could not read, and how uniformly has the general fact developed itself, that where the papal system prevails, there the Scriptures are not! Exist in the libraries of the priest they may; but where have they been found in the hands of the people? Since the clergy alone are supposed to have the faculty of understanding them, so it follows that the clergy alone may safely possess or read them.

Whatever is p12 at any time given to the people, must be doled out in such portions, and with such oral or written additions, as their spiritual lords may deem proper. With these views and practices, we now proceed to contrast what we apprehend to be simple truth even the truth of God with regard to this great subject. Great indeed it is, because fundamental. It is to the foundation on which alone the church is built, that the Scriptures lead us; "Search the Scriptures," cried Jesus to the Jews, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of ME."

The last verses of the sacred volume, although referring to the Book of Revelation in particular, develop a principle which must surely be applicable to the whole divine record namely, that nothing can be added to the words of the Most High, as therein written, and nothing taken away from them, without involving those who so offend, in the sin of presumption, and in awful peril to their souls. We do not indeed mean to assert that God will make no addition to the pages of Scripture.

We pretend not to dive into his hidden designs in this or any other respect; but p13 we know that hitherto he has not done so, and when we take into view the wonderful completeness of the book, we have strong reason to believe that he never will do so. In the mean time, man, on his own authority and wisdom, must abstain from all tampering with the Book of the Lord. He must take nothing from it, lest his own name should be taken out of the book of life; he must add nothing to it, lest the Lord should add unto him "the

plagues" which are appointed for those who transgress his will, and rebel against his government.

"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." The principle here set forth is, with equal force, insisted on in the Old Testament, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you:" Deut. iv. 2.

"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, p14 nor diminish from it;" xii. 32. "Every word of God is pure add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and THOU BE FOUND A LIAR:" Prov. xxx. 5, 6. I am not one of those who entertain violent prejudices against the Apocrypha, nor should I feel uneasy in contributing to those Bible Societies on the continent of Europe, which circulate the sacred volume with that addition it being understood that these ancient books are to be read, not as divine, but simply for general instruction and edification.

The fact is, that they vary exceedingly in their character some of them contain puerile stories others record true history; parts are bombastical and imaginative; other parts so solid and instructive, that we may surely conclude that the touches of divine grace were resting upon the writers a remark which particularly applies to the Wisdom of Solomon and Ecclesiasticus. But none of these books were written in Hebrew; they are the production of the last century, or perhaps the last two centuries before the Christian era, when the Hellenistic language, in which they were written, was prevalent in Egypt and Syria, and when the prophetic gift seems to have scarcely p15 existed among the degenerate children of Israel;[3] they were never acknowledged by the Jews as of divine authority, or included in their canon; and are not once quoted in the New Testament, either by our Saviour or his apostles.

"We must therefore conclude, that it is on the whole much safer to exclude them from the Bibles which we read in our families, and circulate in the world; but whether we so exclude them or not, one thing is certain that their contents cannot be fairly cited as binding and conclusive, in support of Purgatory or any other doctrine. Those who thus cite them are guilty of adding to the words of the Lord, and are in danger of being "found liars:" see Prov. xxx. 6. But if it is unsafe to add these ancient Hellenistic books to the Old Testament, what must be the peril to the cause of truth, of ascribing divine authority to the fathers of the first six centuries, whose multitudinous writings the world cannot contain (in the sense of reading, understanding, and digesting them) and who have been the p16 instruments of palming upon the church a vast mass of superstitions, to which the religion of Jesus Christ gives no countenance!

These fathers, various as they are in point of talent, character, and mode of writing, do not appear ever to have claimed a scriptural authority for their own works; and any one who will take the trouble of comparing them with the New Testament, will soon find that in the simplicity, brevity, comprehensiveness, and weight of the latter, as contrasted with the profuseness, bombast, and jejuneness of the former, we are furnished with a powerful evidence of the divine origin of the writings which are really sacred I mean those of the New Testament; while the others, so far as relates to the authoritative settlement of doctrine and practice in the church, may be safely scattered to the winds, or for ever sleep, unheeded, on the shelf of the schoolman.

Yet I am far from denying that parts of these works are worthy of an attentive perusal, and that much advantage may arise from observing the sense in which the fathers generally Greeks themselves were

accustomed to cite the words of the Greek Testament: their writings afford important p17 critical aids, and some sound theological instruction; but that they do not flow forth from the well of inspiration, themselves afford abundant internal evidence. Those who are the most accustomed to dive into them, will be the best prepared to acknowledge, that whatever of piety and truth any of them may breathe, (so far as they are conformed to the doctrines and precepts of Scripture,) they are, as a whole, undoubted part and parcel of the cumbrous, complex works of man!

If we disclaim the addition to the Bible of the works of the fathers, which, with all their faults, are *litera scripta*, and therefore liable to the check of a close scriptural scrutiny, how much more evidently does it become us to make a Christian stand against that undefined and undefinable something which glides down, unperceived in its course, (though manifested in its unwholesome fruits,) from generation to generation, from spiritual father to spiritual son to the end of time -- I mean oral tradition!"

The truth and discipline of the Catholic church are comprehended both in the sacred books, and in the traditions which have been received from the mouth of Jesus Christ himself, p18 or of his apostles, and which have been preserved and transmitted to us by an uninterrupted chain and succession." So declared the Council of Trent early in the sixteenth century, and so aver the true friends of the Papal system (under whatsoever guise or profession they may be acting) in the present day.

In order to take a just view of this subject, we must first examine the passages of Scripture which speak of tradition in a favourable point of view. We know that our Saviour communicated many things to his disciples in private, which they were afterwards to declare upon the house-top; and the apostles committed the doctrine which they preached, to their children and followers in the truth. Thus Paul not unfrequently alludes to those matters which he had himself received of the Lord, by divine inspiration, and which he had delivered to the churches; and sometimes he calls them by the name of traditions.* "Now I praise you, brethren," said he to the Corinthian Christians, "that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances (in the margin, as in the p19 Greek, traditions) as I delivered them to you:" 1 Cor. xi. 1.

Again, to the Thessalonians, "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle:" 2 Thess. ii. 10; comp. iii. 6.

By "traditions," in these and other passages i.e. matters handed down or delivered to the churches the apostle evidently denotes the doctrines and precepts of Christianity. These were the truths which he and his brethren had proclaimed, as on the house-tops, for the conversion and edification of the people. "God be thanked," says he, "that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed[4] from the heart, that form of doctrine which was delivered you," Rom. vi. 17; and again, to the Corinthians, "Moreover p20 brethren I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain; for I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how 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 Cor. xv. 1 4.

It was of the highest importance that these precious truths should be handed down from age to age, incorrupt and uninjured. No wonder then that the same apostle should say to one of his gifted followers, "Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called," 1 Tim. vi. 20; and again, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that

is in Christ Jesus; and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also:" 2 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

The trust committed to Timothy was, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; the truths of that gospel were, p21 "the things" which he had heard from the lips of Paul before many witnesses, and which it was to be his high duty to commit, in his turn, to other faithful brethren, who might be enabled still further to disseminate the joyful tidings. On a calm review of these several passages, it is surely very clear that they relate to communications which were open, public, and notorious.

They evidently contain no allusion whatsoever to the secret, oral handing down of certain articles in religion, besides those which are contained in Scripture. Rather do they relate to that mighty plan of redemption and salvation, in all its parts, which formed the subject of our Saviour's instructions to his apostles, and of their public teaching and preaching; and of which a complete record, a record requiring no addition was gradually formed, in those days, through the special providence of God, and is now to be found, exact and uninjured, in the volume of the New Testament.

Thus are we placed in possession of a test, by which all doctrines and practices in the church, from age to age, may be safely tried; and not only are we bound by the most sacred obligations to reject whatsoever is contrary to this test, p22 but no man living, or any set of men, can have any right to impose upon us any articles of belief, or principles of action, which are not contained in the volume of inspiration. "To the law and to the testimony," may the Christian say in every age of the church, "if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them:" Isa. vii. 20.

So far then as tradition is favourably mentioned by the apostles, it is in effect, identical with Scripture. But no sooner does it exceed this holy limit, than it becomes intangible and imponderable. It has neither shape nor substance, and being wholly destitute of any evidence of a divine origin, it soon follows the course of this world, and becomes the ready instrument of human error and pollution. The history of the Jews furnishes us with an example precisely in point. Not content with the written law of the Lord, they invented the oral law, which they declared to have been given forth from God to Moses, simultaneously with the written code.

They alleged that Moses delivered this law, by word of mouth, to the elders of the people, and that by these it was transmitted, from generation to generation of the spiritual guides and rulers of p23 Israel. Such were the pretensions of the Scribes and Pharisees at the Christian era. Soon after that period, this oral law was reduced to writing in the work, called the Mishna which with the Gemara, or commentary of one set of doctors, forms the Talmud of Jerusalem, and with that of another school of Rabbins, the Talmud of Babylon.

Although these Talmuds are regarded by the Jews of modern times, as of an authority equal to that of Scripture itself, it is certain that they abound in the most puerile absurdities; and when tried by the test of actual Scripture, are found to be, in general, unworthy of support. It was doubtless to this oral law that the apostle Peter referred, when he spoke of "the vain conversation" which the Jews "received by tradition from their fathers," (1 Pet, i. 18;) and Paul speaks of the same tissue of error and falsehood, when he warns the Colossian church against the arts of their Judaizing teachers "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ;" Col. ii. 8.

And what was the language of our Saviour himself p24 respecting these traditions, which the Jews had presumed to add to their Holy Scriptures, as of equal authority, because originating as was supposed, with God himself? Did he afford them the least degree of countenance or support? Far otherwise he freely spake of them as the mere invention of man, and even as subversive of the true law of the Lord. "Then came to Jesus, Scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.

But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God BY YOUR TRADITION? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother, &c. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, (or temple-offering) by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his father and his mother, (he shall be free.) THUS HAVE YOU MADE THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD OF NONE EFFECT BY YOUR TRADITION. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophecy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but p25 their heart is far from me.

But IN VAIN do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the COMMANDMENTS OF MEN:" Matt. xv. 1 9. This passage is of the most definite character, and overturns the very principle of oral additions to the written law of God. A similar recital is given in the gospel of Mark, describing the traditions of the Jews as relating to a variety of ceremonial particulars of the most trifling character, and as a base substitute for the moral law. "Laying aside the commandment of God," says the Lord Jesus in that gospel, "ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups; and many other such like things ye do.

Full well ye REJECT THE COMMANDMENT OF GOD THAT YE MAY KEEP YOUR OWN TRADITION:" Mark vii. 8, 9. Human nature is the same in every age; it is far too prone to error and deceit, to be intrusted with the oral handing down of doctrines and precepts, without the test, the check, the security, of Scripture. The infallible consequence of such a system is, that the doctrines and commandments of men gradually usurp the place of the revealed will and truth of God. Errors of the most serious character p26 pervade the professing church; vital religion gives way to countless forms and ceremonies, and the motto which the Lord's professing servants wear on their foreheads, is no longer Holiness, but Superstition.

It is now, I hope, sufficiently clear to the candid reader, that the additions which have been made to Holy Writ, under the influence of the Papal system, are destitute of divine authority, and while they open a door for error, have an obvious tendency to lower the character of the Christian religion, and to lessen its efficacy. These remarks are, to a certain extent, applicable to the Apocrypha due allowance being made for the wisdom and piety of some of its contents; they bear with far greater force on the written works of the ecclesiastical fathers; but above all, they are unquestionably true of oral tradition.

Regarding these points as settled, we will advance to the question, What use, are we, on scriptural principles, permitted and bound to make of the Scriptures themselves? Are we to commit them to the hands of a hierarchy, to be kept under its key, subjected to its sole interpretation, and doled out in fragments to the people, in such a measure, and on such occasions, p27 as the priesthood may deem advisable! or are we rather to regard this precious gift of God, as being free as the air which we breathe, to be disseminated, without hesitation or reserve, among the whole family of man?

Is that blessed book, which contains a full revelation of divine truth, and of the will of God towards man, to be concealed from the fallen race on which that revelation has been bestowed; or is it to be freely opened, and read, and considered, by people as well as priest? Is it the peculiar possession of the clergy of the

church of Rome, or of the whole body of the church universal? It seems strange that any need should arise, in the present day, for the consideration of such questions as these.

Yet it cannot be denied that very narrow and dangerous views, plainly tending to the withdrawal and concealment of Scripture, have of late been obtruded on the public, from unexpected quarters; and Christians are again driven to Scripture itself, in order that they may be fully assured in what manner, and to what extent, the sacred volume is to be used among the rational children of God. Let us then, in the first place, consider the subject p28 as it relates to the Old Testament.

In what way did our Saviour and his apostles make their appeals to it? Always in such a way as to mark it as divine; always in such a way also, as to shew that it was open to the inspection and consideration of all whom they addressed the common property of the people of God, and indeed of mankind in general. The law and the prophets were publicly read in the synagogues every sabbath day, not only in the Hebrew tongue, which was then understood by the learned alone, but in the Chaldaic dialect, which was spoken by the people at large.

This part of the synagogue worship was fully sanctioned by our Lord, who sometimes acted as public reader on these occasions. So also, in his own discourses, (whether in the synagogues, or on the mountain's brow, or by the way side, and whether he was addressing his own disciples, or the scribes and Pharisees, or the people in general) he made his appeals without the smallest reserve or hesitation to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. He said, "Search the Scriptures, for they are they which testify of me."

The proofs which they contained of his own divine mission were p29 open to the examination of all men, and he was accustomed to adduce them on the ground of their being so. On two occasions, he explained to his disciples the things which were written respecting himself, in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms or, in other words, in the whole of the Old Testament, of which these were, at that time, the recognized divisions. He never thought of holding back any part of the sacred treasure.

He used the whole of it in its true character of the free gift of the God of light, to a dark and fallen world. Just similar was the practice of the evangelists and apostles. Whether they were addressing the Jews or the Gentiles, individuals or bodies of men, particular churches, or the whole society of believers who were scattered abroad, they never hesitated to appeal to Holy Scripture, as an authority binding upon all the common property of all. The Bereans were described as more noble than the people of Thessalonica, because they searched the Scriptures daily, that they might know whether the things which Paul declared were indeed the truth.

The views of that apostle on the present subject, were of the most comprehensive character. When p30 he spoke of the use as well as authority of the sacred volume, he excepted no part of the book itself; and when he mentioned the effect which it was intended to produce, he excluded from its operation no part of mankind. "WHATSOEVER THINGS were written aforetime," said he to the Romans, "were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope," Rom. xv. 4; and again to Timothy, "ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is PROFITABLE for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness:" 2 Tim. iii. 16. 17.

These are benefits of which all mankind stand in need, even as they stand in need of the gospel itself. Therefore the Scriptures, which contain the gospel, are intended for all men. "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, (according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the

SCRIPTURES OF THE PROPHETS, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, MADE KNOWN TO ALL NATIONS for the obedience of faith,) p31 to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever, Amen:" Rom. xvi. 25 27.

On the great day of Pentecost, when the miraculous gift of tongues was poured forth upon the infant church, "Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in parts of Lybia about Gyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and Proselytes, Cretes and Arabians" ALL THESE heard, in their own tongues, the wonderful works of God ALL THESE listened to the apostles and their brethren, while they adduced their proofs from the Old Testament, that Jesus was the Christ.

This marvellous display of the riches of the bounty and liberality of God, in spiritual things, sanctions the great principle of the universal diffusion of Scripture, and of the free translation of it into all languages; that thus "according to the commandment of the everlasting God," the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ the great mystery of redemption may be made known, on his own authority, to the whole family of man. The principles which are thus plainly recognized by our Saviour and his immediate followers, respecting p32 the use of the Old Testament, bear with redoubled force on the New Testament itself.

The Old Testament was laid open not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles, chiefly because of its testimony to Christ; and every one knows that it is this very testimony, which forms the main subject of the four Gospels, the book of Acts, the apostolic Epistles, and the Revelation. Most of these sacred books were addressed to public bodies such as the churches of Rome, Corinth, &c.; or to the universal church; or (as is the case with the gospels in effect) to mankind at large; and even the few epistles inscribed to individuals, are full of instruction suited to the many.

Nothing of reserve, nothing of privacy, is indicated in any of these writings. They were not committed as a private treasure to the clergy, but as a public gift, to the church and to mankind. For the most part, the contents of these writings are simple, explicit, and intelligible; and if in the epistles of Paul, as in some other parts of Scripture, there are " some things hard to be understood, which the unlearned (or rather indocile) and unstable p33 wrest unto their own destruction;"[5] this was equally true of the discourses of our Lord himself, by some of which the Jews were offended, because they contained "hard sayings."

So also the apostles, in their character of preachers, were a savour of death unto death to some, as well as of life unto life to others. Indeed it is the inherent character of divine truth, that it should often have this operation in a dark, perverted, and fallen world. Nevertheless, the truth (mysterious as it is to the indocile and unstable) must go forth with- out reserve all the world over and so must the Scriptures which contain it. The Apocalypse is by far the most obscure and mysterious part of the New Testament.

Yet it was addressed not only to the angels of the seven churches, but to the seven churches themselves, (Rev. i. 4) and it is prefaced by this truly anti-Romish motto -- a motto in which all men have their part -- "BLESSED is HE THAT READETH, and they that HEAR the words of this prophecy, and keep these things which are written therein; for the time is at hand!" It is always to be kept in view, that amidst all the p34 variety of information and instruction contained in the Holy Scriptures, its main purpose, from Genesis to Revelation, is to testify of Christ.

The words of the Most High, written in the sacred volume, are still found to point in various ways and forms by the shadows of the law, by the types of the history, by the predictions of the prophets, by the narrations of the evangelists, by the doctrines of the apostles, by the figures of the Apocalypse to Him who is the

WORD. They reveal and portray Him who was with God in the beginning, by whom God made the worlds, who was incarnate in the flesh, died for our offences, rose again for our justification, ascended up on high, reigns above in glory, and will come again to judge the quick and the dead.

The words which the apostle John applied to his own gospel, are truly descriptive of the Scriptures as a whole "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name: John xx. 31. Now the Son of God was bestowed on the whole world; "God so loved THE WORLD that he gave his only begotten Son, that WHOSOEVER believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life:" John iii. 16. p35 Christ was the "propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the WHOLE WORLD:" 1 John ii. 2.

Thus it appears that all men, the world over, have to do with Him of whom the Scriptures testify, and whom they are intended to make known. All men, therefore, have their part in these Scriptures, just as they have it in the gospel which they contain, and which is to be preached to every creature. " God would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of his truth." Therefore all men are invited to possess, read, know, and understand those writings, which are able to make us "WISE unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus:" 2 Tim. iii. 15.

It may be hoped, that the scriptural view here taken of the intended use and universal application of the Holy Scriptures, will be found to accord with the best judgment of all who love the truth as it is in Jesus, and who long and pray for its universal diffusion. But what are we to say of the interpretation of the book? Are all men to explain it according to their own wisdom and liking? Certainly not; but all men are invited to p36 read and consider it, for themselves, in a devout and humble disposition, and in reverent dependence on the illumination and teaching of God's Holy Spirit.

The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost in his peculiar character of Interpreter or of Him who takes of the things of Christ, and shows them to his disciples, (John xvi. 14,) is bestowed not on the apostles alone, but on the servants of Christ in every age; and not on the hierarchy or clergy alone, but on the church universal on the whole people of God. The laws of grammar and philology, and the science of exegesis, in all its branches, are open to all mankind, and have actually led to the pouring in of so much light on Scripture, as very much to fix its meaning, for the permanent benefit of our race.

In the mean time the Lion of the tribe of Judah, who holds the key of David, is still pleased to "OPEN THE HEARTS" of his followers, that they may understand the Scriptures spiritually and savingly, and may thus find their pardon and cure, their peace and deliverance, their full and final rest in HIM.

[1] Footnote:

See an excellent work by Gaussin, entitled "Theopneustie," 1 vol. 8vo.

[2] Footnote:

The Council of Trent included in their canon the books of Tobias, Judith, Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, and Ecclesiasticus.

[3] Footnote:

Unless indeed some of them may be regarded as of a still later date.

[4] Footnote:

Or rather, "that although ye were the servants of sin, yet ye have obeyed," &c.

[5] Footnote:

2 Pet. iii. 16.

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