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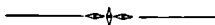
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A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

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not permit any power or person to remove the ancient landmarks which our fathers have set.

W. B. RUSSELL-CALEY.



#### ART. V.—THE VOICE OF GOD IN HOLY SCRIPTURE.

WHAT is the reason why we educated Englishmen, living at the end of the nineteenth century, in an atmosphere of cosmopolitan ideas, with all the latest productions of criticism on our bookshelves and on our library tables, and able to make easy personal acquaintance with every religion of interest which has had its day in the world's history, attribute with all our hearts and souls supreme importance to the old sacred literature of the Jews?

Did not Voltaire prophesy that the Bible would not be read in the nineteenth century? Did he not say, more than a century ago, that in less than 100 years Christianity would have been swept from existence, and would have passed into history? Certainly the infidelity which he did so much to promote ran riot through France, red-handed and impious. More than a century has passed away. Voltaire himself has passed into history. But it is a curious coincidence that his own printing-press has been used to publish the revelation at which he scoffed; and the very house where he lived is packed with Bibles, as it has become the depot of the Geneva Bible Society.

Did not Tom Paine, in this country, think he had demolished the Bible by his "Age of Reason"? What is the fact? Since Tom Paine went despairingly to a drunkard's grave in 1809, more than thirty times as many Bibles have been produced and scattered through the world than had been produced since first Moses began the Pentateuch. Why is this?

It is because, without prepossession or predilection, on a calm survey of the facts, we have made up our minds that this unique and extraordinary literature is actually the transcript of God's message from the unseen world of spirit, thought and eternity, into the world of time, space, sense and action. There is no other book or literature like the Holy Scriptures in the whole history of mankind. It is of no use to mention the Egyptian Ritual of the Dead, or the Assyrian Tablets, or the Maxims of Confucius, or the Hindu Vedas, or the Homeric Hymns, or the Mohammedan Koran. The religious literature of all countries and ages has been brought into one focus by a great literary publication. Even a cursory

glance will show that there is no possibility of comparison of these ancient documents on the one hand, and the Holy Scriptures on the other. It is a mere fact of literary history that the Holy Scriptures are unique because they are the record of the progressive stages of Divine revelation to the only race who in the ancient world understood religion in its true sense as the reign of righteousness and the kingdom of God. Every great nation has contributed some gift from the Divine omnipresence for the welfare of mankind; but none has had it in them to contribute such a gift as the wonderful race of the Hebrews. The Egyptians had their long centuries of science, civilization, ceremonies and architecture. The Assyrians had a grand idea of the consolidation of power. The Greeks had arts and literary perfection which have never been surpassed or even equalled. The Romans had unrivalled skill in law-making and administration. It was the glory of the race of Abraham to be the mouthpiece and human interpreter of the great omnipresent Spirit of Righteousness. What advantage, to use the words of St. Paul, had the Jew in his little country, so open to attack, so frequently invaded and conquered by powerful neighbours, so poor in the endowments that made other nations great and famous? Much every way: chiefly that unto them were entrusted the oracles of God.

We believe deliberately, on an impartial survey of the whole facts, that this literature is absolutely unique in being the record of God's dealings with men, concerned from beginning to end with a unique person, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Bring the book," said Sir Walter Scott, when he lay dying. "What book?" asked his friend. "There is only one book," said the dying man—"the Bible." We do not say that God did not deal at all with the Egyptians, or Assyrians, Hindus, Chinese, Greeks, Romans, Arabians. "Be wise, O ye kings," said the Hebrew psalmist to the rulers of the pagan empires. "Be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." Or again, "It is He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers, that bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." Nowhere did he leave Himself without witness. "The heavens declare the glory of God. There is neither speech nor language where their voice is not heard." The eternal laws of right and wrong, justice and injustice, were silently working wherever man was to be found, and were speaking to man of God; but it was the Hebrews who had the privilege of recognising those laws in a way in which no other people recognised them, recognising their Almighty Author in a way

in which no other people knew Him, and so of rising from one step of inspiration to another.

There may have been other men in Ur of Chaldees to whom intimations came of the unity of God; but it was Abraham alone who understood them and obeyed their direction. To the people that had, more was to be given. Because there was an Abraham, with his absorbing belief in the goodness and oneness of the Divine Being, who obeyed the call, and became in virtue of that the father of all men of faith, there could be an Isaac, a Jacob, carrying the tradition on, a Joseph with his exalted typical protest for purity. Because of the acceptance of the revelation by the patriarchs, however dimly and imperfectly, there could be a Moses, the moulder of the thoughts and customs of God's people to the end of time, the founder in the dim ages of primeval darkness of the sublimest, completest and most enlightened legislation that ever nation has enjoyed. Because there was a Moses, David was prepared for yet clearer visions, could live still nearer to God, could pour forth aspirations of devoutness which would be the chosen words for the piety and penitence, the hopes and struggles, of every future generation of sorrowing and believing souls, could descry more clearly the outlines and the office of the coming Deliverer. And so the stages of the revelation succeeded each other, each increasing in definiteness and truth, till at length there appeared the visible glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God made flesh and dwelling among us, full of grace and truth; and none can say that He is an inapt or incomplete fulfilment of the ancient lessons and predictions.

From stage to stage the revelation came from the Divine Spirit, speaking through human minds, and human hands, and ordinary human affairs through the history of an inspired race rather than as a series of isolated oracles philosophically systematic, manifesting itself in different ways and through different intelligences, but with one purpose; in unity, though not in uniformity; in infinite variety, in constant growth, in terms intensely human, that it might be understood by human minds and might touch human hearts, shining more and more until the perfect day of Christ.

Thus we are compelled to treat the sacred literature of the Hebrews as something holy and unique, and of a value entirely by itself. Some of it is of local importance. We do not care about lists of clean and unclean animals, or the traditional ages of the patriarchs, or the pedigrees of the tribes, or the disasters of the apostate kings of Northern Israel. The interest of these things is past. But it is of supreme moment to us because it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God,

the Lamb taking away the sin of the world. It is because we find the whole Old Testament leading up to Him, and the New describing His coming, His life, and His lessons. It is because it brings light to those that sit in darkness, and can get no other light; because it gives the only satisfactory answer to the riddle of existence; because it appeals, as no other book appeals, to the best aspirations of the human conscience; because it brings to those who are in doubt a reasonable hope, wisdom and clear guidance to those in perplexity, to the troubled well-assured comfort, peace to those whose hearts are vexed with hatreds and agonies of which they cannot otherwise be rid, the promise and experience of forgiveness to those who are weighed down by the consciousness of sin; because it has, when taken at its own meaning and its own value, as a matter of fact, supplied strength to innumerable men and women who were weak, and rest to the weary; because it contains all that we know, the life and words, of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Founder and Head of the Christian Church; because it contains all that we know, the life and words, of the twelve Apostles, on whom as a sole foundation the Christian Church was built; because it has spoken to the dying of the home in the blessed mansions with a calmness of conviction that is all-persuasive; because it has, in very truth and deed, brought the fainting soul of man into touch with the eternal life of God. Nothing but the words of Holy Scripture itself will bring home to the wayward human heart the fulness and power and unshakeable truth of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

The Bible, says Dr. Westcott, contains in itself the fullest witness to its own Divine authority. If it appears that a large collection of fragmentary records, written, with few exceptions, without any designed connection, at most distant times, and under the most varied circumstances, yet combine to form a definite whole, broadly separated from the books—if it further appears that these different parts, when interpreted historically, reveal a gradual progress of social, spiritual life, uniform, at least, in its general direction—if, without any intentional purpose, they offer not only remarkable coincidence in minute details of facts (for that is a mere question of accurate narration), but also subtle harmonies of complementary doctrine—if, in proportion as they are felt to be separate, they are felt also to be instinct with a common spirit, then it will be rapidly acknowledged that, however they came into being at first, however they were united afterwards into a sacred volume, they are yet legibly stamped with the Divine seal as inspired by God in a sense which can be said of no other writings.

In the same way Dr. Pusey: "It has been for thirty years the deep conviction of my soul that no book can be written on behalf of the Bible like the Bible itself. Man's defences are man's word . . . the Bible is God's Word, and by it the Holy Ghost, who first spoke it, still speaks to the soul that closeth itself not against it."

To take only the first and earlier portion of Holy Scripture: however much may be discovered about the authorship and structure of the books of the Old Testament, the fact that underlies them all is sure and unassailable, and it is contained in the words of our Lord Himself: "Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me."

That was the way in which our Lord and His Apostles regarded the Old Testament. It is sometimes said that the Christians in apostolic times were dependent on oral teaching and repetitions, and had no Scriptures. Such a misstatement entirely disregards the obvious facts of the case. They used the Old Testament as the oracles of God with as much zeal as the Jews, and with greater enthusiasm, because everywhere they found in them the preparation for the Incarnation. "Had ye believed Moses and the prophets," said our Lord, "ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" All types and sacrifices of Moses were to be fulfilled in the person of the Redeemer and the sacrifice of Calvary. "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Once more, to the eleven disciples, He said: "These are the words that I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me. Then opened He their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures."

"Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." It is the voice of the Apostles as well. In the New Testament there are 165 direct quotations from the Old; when those that are indirect are added, it brings the number up to 700. "All Scripture," writes St. Paul of the Old Testament, "given by inspiration of God, is profitable also for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." St. Paul, you will observe, gives the true key for the interpretation. It was not intended for the teaching of science: scientific truth in all its various branches man must discover for himself by

patient and reverent investigation; the revelation of God through the Old Testament writers was moral and religious. Listen again to St. Peter: "We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not of old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." So St. Peter had said to Cornelius: "To Him bear all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins." And again: "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you." To all the Apostles, to all the Christians, throughout the New Testament the written Word of the old sacred oracles is the very breath of the spiritual life, the ground and confirmation of all their hopes, the sanction and authority of all their beliefs.

"Search the Scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." It is the voice of all the Fathers. If you ask, What about the early Church after the time of the Apostles? did they treat the writings of the Apostles with the same awe and reverence with which Christ and the Apostles had treated the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament? the answer is the same. Nothing is more remarkable than the consciousness which the Fathers who succeeded the Apostles show of the immeasurably superior authority of the inspired writings. The earliest of any, Clement, who is mentioned in the Epistle to the Romans, apologizes to the Corinthians for writing to them at all; he is unworthy even to address those who have been taught by St. Paul. "Look carefully into the Scriptures," he says, "which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit." And again: "Take up the Epistle of blessed Paul the Apostle; what did he write to you in the beginning of the Gospel? In truth divinely inspired, he wrote to you Corinthians." We have a letter of St. Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, a disciple of St. John, addressed to the Philippians; he declares that "neither I, nor any one like me, is able to attain perfectly to the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, who, when he

was with you, before the men who were then living, taught the word of truth perfectly and surely." St. Ignatius of Antioch, writing to the Romans in A.D. 107, assures them: "I do not command you like Peter or Paul, they were Apostles." The famous writer and Bishop, St. Irenæus, who in his early days was connected with St. Polycarp, the pupil of St. John, speaks thus of the inspired writers: "After that our Lord rose from the dead, and the Apostles were clothed with the Spirit of power from on high, they were filled with a perfect knowledge of all things." And again, "The Apostles, being disciples of truth, are beyond all misstatement." Tertullian, the ablest and in some respects the greatest of the Latin Fathers, put the distinction with great force: "The four Gospels are built on the certain basis of Apostolical authority, and so are inspired in a far different sense from the writings of the spiritual Christian. All the faithful, it is true, have the Spirit of God; but all are not Apostles." And the famous Alexandrian master, Origen, whose marvellous and brilliant teaching has always been a subject of the deepest study and attention in the Church, tells us that "the Holy Spirit inspired each of the saints, prophets and Apostles. . . . The same Spirit was present in those of old times as in those who were inspired at the coming of Christ." And again, "There is nothing," he says at the end of one of his homilies, "whether in the law, or in the prophets, or in the evangelists, or in the Apostles, which does not descend from the fulness of the Divine Majesty."

It was this fundamental distinction between what is inspired and what is uninspired that made the members of the four great General Councils of the assembled Churches of Christendom appeal in every case to the exact words of Holy Scripture. Every one of the Fathers who has left writings behind him proves every one of his opinions by quoting Holy Scripture. St. Augustine was the strongest of all upholders of even literal and verbal inspiration. Of modern writers I have only time to quote here the estimate of our present Archbishop, a man who has looked as thoroughly and deeply as any into the claims of scepticism and the claims of revelation. "The more the Bible is spread," he says, "the more the Bible is studied, the deeper, the profounder the thought that is spent upon it, the more careful the criticism, the closer the examination. All the more shall it stand out conspicuous for the spiritual nature, the marvellous power, which breathes through all its pages, and shall tell mankind of the truth. I fear not any examination to which it can be subjected. I fear not criticism of its history nor any investigation of its sources. I fear not any examination of the details of its meaning. I



know that whatever else shall go, this shall stand. This is indeed the message of God Almighty to man; and as long as man remains here on earth, still shall he find, in ever-increasing measure, the power which the Book has to uplift his soul. It is always, for that reason, a matter of joy to me that the Church of England should put forward this Book so prominently before all her sons, should provide that it be read publicly from end to end, should provide that so large a portion should be read in every service that she offers to God; should tell all her members to look there for the authority for everything that she teaches, and should rest the proof of her claim to be indeed commissioned by Almighty God on the evidence that she can collect from the pages of God's Holy Word."

And so Sir Walter Scott wrote :

Within that awful volume lies  
 The mystery of mysteries !  
 Happiest they of human race  
 To whom our God has granted grace  
 To read, to fear, to hope, to pray,  
 To lift the latch and force the way ;  
 And better had they ne'er been born,  
 Who read to doubt, or read to scorn.

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." It is the voice of the living Church of to-day. The Bishops, in the encyclical letter issued from the Lambeth Conference of 1888, uttered some grave words to us on the subject of the study of the Bible. "The study of the Holy Scripture," they said, "is a great part of the mental discipline of the Christian, and the Bible itself is the main instrument in all teaching of religion." After noticing some reasons for the neglect of the reading of Holy Scripture, they urge that the central point of all our interpretation of the Bible must be "our Lord Jesus Christ, as the sacrifice for our sins, as the healer of our sinfulness, the source of all our spiritual life, and the revelation to our consciences of the law and motive of all moral virtue. To Him and to His work all the teachings of the Old Testament converge, and from Him all the teachings of the New Testament flow in spirit, in force, and in form."

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." It is the voice of Christ to ourselves. I conclude by earnestly asking that we should place a higher estimate on the value of the privilege which we have in holding in our hands the Word of our Lord, and of His prophets and Apostles. Let no lesson be read in church without our diligent attention to its meaning.

Too often it is read and listened to like the drone of the bag-pipes. We should follow the words in our own copies as we hear them. When the lesson is over, we should ask ourselves what we have learnt. Let no day pass by without the reading of some short passage with our families. Through it God has a message for the souls of all. The words will come back to the hearers during the day, and will be a witness and a warning against every form of evil. They are, indeed, a living message from the unseen world of eternity. We must read some passage also by ourselves—some psalm or lesson for the day; some well-chosen fragment of instruction and importance. It will be a lamp to our feet through all the hours of work and relaxation. Boorhaave, the great scholar and teacher, was once asked how he was able to acquire so much knowledge and overtake so much business. It was his custom, he answered, on rising to spend the first hour of the morning in reading the Bible, and in meditation and prayer. This gave him spirit and vigour for the engagements of the day; the consciousness that he was at peace with God—that a reconciled God was present with him—prepared him for everything that might happen. So it will be with us. We cannot spare so long a time, but one draught from the well of life will refresh us for the whole of the day's march. Above all, when we come to die—when we become aware that we have a mortal illness from which we cannot recover—what shall we not then feel of comfort, hope and consolation if we know that we have before us the living promises of the Son of God Himself! They are spoken to us as vividly as they were to those who heard His very voice. Like evening bells, sounding softly over the woods and fields, and bearing with them the immemorial message of peace and salvation, will fall on our ear, so soon to be closed to every earthly sound: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you." And with life-long conviction and proved experience our fading voice, soon to be silenced in the grave, replies: "Lord, to whom shall I go? Thou, Thou, Thou hast the words of eternal life!"

WILLIAM SINCLAIR.

