

THE BIBLE.

“The Bible is the oldest and best book in the world. It is translated into more languages and read by more people than any other volume ever written. Its history and its prophecy comprehend the entire destiny of the world. It presents to us man in his natural, preternatural, and supernatural conditions and characteristics. It records the three great ages of the world by developing three dispensations of religion--the Patriarchal, the Jewish and the Christian. Man as he was, man as he is, and man as he shall hereafter be, are its three grand themes. It reveals God by unfolding the mysterious relations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in the three great works of creation, providence and redemption.”

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The Bible is divided into two great departments, usually, but improperly called the Old and New Testaments. The former of these contains the inspired writings of Moses, the first of historians and the greatest of lawgivers, together with those of the ancient Prophets; while the latter contains those of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ. Regarded as the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures, it comprehends sixty-six distinct and independent treatises. Thirty-nine of these constitute the Jewish, and twenty-seven the Christian records. The Christian Scriptures are the work of only eight persons, six of whom were Apostles, and two of them Evangelists of Jesus Christ, and companions of the Apostles. The Jewish Scriptures were written by more than thirty persons, all of whom, save one, were Jews. We put down the immediate authors or writers of the Bible at not less than forty, as the lowest number, though we can not with absolute certainty name them all. From the birth of Moses till the death of John the Apostle, is a period of full sixteen hundred and sixty years. These volumes were, therefore, in progress of completion not less than fifteen hundred years, and grasp in their historic outlines a period of forty-one centuries. A volume of such immense compass, exhibiting details of persons, places and events, so numerous and various, and of such transcendent interest to mankind, seems to possess claims upon the attention and consideration of every human being capable of appreciating its history, its biography, its prophecy, its doctrine, or even its general literature, above those of any other volume in the world.

The Jewish Scriptures comprehend history, law, and prophecy. The Jews were wont to distribute them into "the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms." The Christian Scriptures pre-eminently consist of historical and epistolary compositions. Of all the Jewish writers, Moses, and of all the Christian writers, Paul, is the largest and most conspicuous. Both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures begin with history and end with prophecy. Facts or events, past and future, are, therefore, the main subjects on which inspired writers dwell. The historical books of the Old Testament are, in all, seventeen. The prophetic books are also seventeen; while the properly didactic and devotional are but five. The first five books of the New Testament are also historical, the last prophetic, and the rest epistolary. These last are miscellaneous in their character, containing sometimes history, doctrine, precepts and exhortations. The whole volume, indeed, in its spirit and tendency, is devotional. Whatever God has said in the form of declaration, *precepts*, promise, or threatening, is designed to make the man of God pure and perfect, and thoroughly accomplished for every good word and work.

The *plan* of the Bible, as an instrument or means of salvation, is admirably adapted to the human constitution and to the circumstances which surround man. The end to be obtained is happiness, but that end can not be accomplished without sanctification or personal devotion to God. It is, indeed, as impossible for God to make any man happy, without making him holy, as it is for him to lie. Now the Bible is all arranged with a supreme reference to this fact. And as piety or holiness consists in a course of action correspondent with the divine will and character, and is not natural to man as he now is, it must be preceded by a change of heart. But this change of the affections being the result of faith or a belief of the testimony of God, that testimony for such a change must necessarily furnish motives. But these motives presuppose gracious acts of kindness on the part of God. Sacred history, then, records these facts--whether in the form of things said or done, commanded or promised by God. Faith apprehends and receives this testimony concerning these facts. These facts, when believed, produce corresponding feelings or states of mind, sometimes called *repentance* or *a new heart*; and this new heart leads to those good actions denominated piety and humanity, or holiness and righteousness. The links in this divine chain of moral and spiritual instrumentality are, therefore, five--*facts, testimony, faith, feeling, action*:--the end of which is salvation. The whole revelation of God is arranged upon this theory or view of man's constitution. Thus God acts, the Holy Spirit testifies, man believes, feels, and then acts according to the divine will. Thus becomes he a new creature. This view of man's constitution explains why the Bible is a volume of facts historical and prophetic--why it begins with history and ends with prophecy--why, in one sentence, God works, then commands, then promises.

To illustrate this by the gospel, it is only necessary to state the order of things narrated in the apostolic writings:--1. Jesus died for our sins. 2. The Apostles announced this, and it is proved by the Holy Spirit in his resurrection from the dead, and subsequent operations. 3. Jews and Gentiles believe these annunciations as reported to them by the Apostles and Evangelists. 4. They immediately repent of their sins, and inquire what to do. Their hearts are changed. 5. They then become obedient to the faith. They are saved.

The plan of the Bible can only be clearly understood when man's condition and constitution are clearly and fully apprehended. For, in truth, the Bible is a glorious system of grace--an absolutely complete and perfect adaptation of spiritual means to a great and glorious end. This, however, is not the only grand comprehensive view of the volume of God's inspiration which we

desire to lay before the reader. We wish to look into the mechanism of this sublime instrument of renovation and salvation.

Jesus Christ is the centre of the whole evangelical system. He is "the root and the offspring of David"--"the Sun of Righteousness"--"the bright and the Morning Star"--"the Alpha and the Omega" of the volume. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit" of all sacred history and of all divine prophecy. Now the history of the Bible is very rationally or philosophically arranged both in its prospective and retrospective character, with a single and sublime reference to Jesus Christ. Let us analyze it.

The first promise to fallen man respects a Messiah--in these words: "I will put enmity between thee," O Serpent, "and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. HE SHALL BRUISE THY HEAD, AND THOU SHALT BRUISE HIS HEEL." The whole Bible but demonstrates, illustrates, and applies this grand promise. Eve's son of blessings is now to be elicited out of the human race; and *just so much of the history of the human race as is necessary to his identification, development and glorification* is given, and no more. Let the reader take this lamp in his hand, read all the historical books of both Testaments, note every fact, incident, and document therein found, and see if they do not arrange themselves in a proper position, either to identify, develop, or glorify this benefactor of our race. We shall glance at Genesis for an illustration.

The single book of Genesis contains the only information we have of the human race for the long period of two thousand three hundred sixty and eight years. It begins with creation and ends with the death of the patriarch Joseph. The other books of Moses bring us down to the year of the world 2553. All this history antedates any authentic records of the human race now extant in any nation or language.

But the portions of Genesis assigned to the different epochs of human history, are most singularly and significantly disproportionate. Why is it that eight-fiftieths, or eight chapters of fifty, are devoted to the history of creation and of the flood, and to the religious and political conditions of the human family, for the long period of one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years; while the single history of one Abraham occupies thirteen-fiftieths, and that of his descendants Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, twenty-four fiftieths!--? Indeed, the fortunes of this Joseph occupy a larger space than that assigned to the first two thousand years of the world. This great disproportion in the details of things can be satisfactorily explained only in one way. That apprehended, and the plan and structure of the inspired writings can be properly understood and appreciated.

"The testimony of Jesus," says a divine oracle, "is the spirit of prophecy." It is, I presume, as truly the spirit of sacred history. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega of the Bible, because the Bible is the history of redemption. Everything takes precedence, occupies space, and engages attention in the direct ratio of its bearings upon the development and consummation of human redemption. Take, for example, the antediluvian age: from the moment the gracious intimation that the woman's offspring would one day "bruise the serpent's head" is given, its development becomes the all-engrossing theme both of history and of prophecy. Persons, places, and events occupy a prominence and conspicuity as they happen to be connected with that grand central

idea of the whole Bible. The altar, the victim, and the priest, appear in the history of Cain and Abel; while blood and faith triumph in his martyrdom. Cain's history, so far as it is given, is but the shade in the picture, and a few samples of his descendants illustrate the whole history of men in the flesh. From Enoch descended the sons and daughters of men. Polygamy was the consummation of his principles in the fifth generation. His offspring were brass and iron manufacturers, and the first that invented portable houses, instruments of music, and that handled the harp and the organ. Tubalcain, or Vulcan, and his sister Naamah, inventor of the distaff and the spindle, are amongst his renowned issue. Not one saint is named in the whole posterity of Cain, the first born of woman and the prototype of religious persecutors.

The history of Cain and Abel being given, because of its connection with the altar and the sacrifice, the historian, prompted by the spirit of revelation, opens the illustrious lineage of the promised seed of woman; and that becomes, from this moment, the backbone of the whole Bible--the grand meridian line of all divine history and prophecy. Seth is born to fill the place of Abel, and his progeny is counted, one by one, down to Jesus of Bethlehem and of Nazareth. Thus the patriarchal chain of Messiah's ancestors down to the Flood, are Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, Noah. From the Fall of Man to the Flood, all that is transmitted to us of human affairs or of divine providence connects itself with these ten patriarchs. After the Flood Noah's three sons engross our attention. Their connection with all the ancient nations of the earth is briefly but most interestingly sketched. But so soon as reasons are given in the history of Shem, of Ham, and Japheth, for a special providence in dispersing them over the whole earth, and in selecting the younger of these three to stand at the head of the postdiluvian line of the child of promise, the historian confines himself to the royal and sacerdotal line of the Messiah. He next counts off ten other progenitors of our Lord. These are Shem, Arphaxad, Salah, Eber, Peleg, Reu, Serug, Nahor, Terah, Abraham. The promise given to Eve and repeated to Shem, is still farther developed and committed to Abraham. To the end of Genesis we have five other noble links in this patriarchal chain. These are Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Phares, and Ezrom. Genesis then gives us in all five and twenty of our Lord's ancestors, and just so much of human affairs as is necessary to their favorable introduction to our notice. Joseph's history, so pre-eminently connected with the whole drama of man's redemption, and terminating in the migration and settlement of the symbolic nation in Egypt, is more minutely and particularly detailed than any one individual history in the five books of Moses. His other books, occupying but forty years' incidents, adds no new names to the illustrious line. After the books of Joshua and Judges, the book of Ruth is inserted to connect Judah and the promise made to him with David through Boaz, Obed, and Jesse--making the line from Ezrom to succeed thus: Aram, Aminadad, Naashon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David.

The beautiful story of Ruth, the Moabitish saint, inserted for the express purpose of connecting David with Judah, Abraham and Seth, and of completing through him the illustrious line down to the Virgin's Son, is itself a demonstration of the truth of our assumption, viz.: that the plan of the Bible is to reveal God to man and man to himself, by placing one family under a special providence, and in making all its fortunes first the subject of prophecy, and then of history, from the beginning to the end of the world. God meant more than any man has yet comprehended when he said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. This is my name forever and my memorial to all generations." The history of that family is, then, a documentary revelation of the attributes of God, and especially of his truthfulness and

covenant-keeping character, while all other histories of all other families serve as night to day in the contrast, to present his people in all the most favorable attitudes before us, and to induce all men to place themselves under the wings of his almighty protection.

Soon as David ascends the throne and his family obtains the scepter of the twelve tribes, the royal lineage is in safe keeping. The books of Samuel, the Kings, and the Chronicles, down to the end of Old Testament history, not only faithfully preserve the records of the nation, but afford a thousand developments of human nature and of divine providence, full of instruction to all mankind in all ages of the world.

Matthew and Luke open the New Testament history by giving from the archives of the nation and the rolls of lineage the ancestry of Jesus up to Adam; the former, by his legal father, Joseph; the latter, by his natural mother, Mary. By the legal paternal line he is the sixtieth in descent from Adam; while by the maternal line he is the seventy-sixth. The apostolic writings give the history of the Jews down to the crucifixion of their promised Deliverer, the repudiation of them as the nation and people of God, and the adoption of believing Jews and Gentiles as one in the Lord Jesus in their stead; while the prophecies of the New Testament indicate the destiny of Israel according to the flesh, as well as Israel according to the spirit, till the final consummation. Such is the plan of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

From the plan of the Bible, as well as from its philosophy, its claims upon the faith and admiration of mankind may be strongly argued. Its philosophy is, that without piety no man can be happy; and that with it any man in any outward circumstances may be happy to the full extent of his capacity for human enjoyment. But *human* enjoyment is neither *animal* nor *angelic* enjoyment. Animal or sensitive enjoyments are supreme and exclusive in the brutal creation, but subordinate in man. Intellectual pleasures are necessarily dependent upon the ministry which the intellect performs. If the intellect is made subordinate to the animal instincts, passions or propensities; or if the intellect is subordinate to moral and spiritual enjoyments, its pleasures are essentially different. In the former case they are but refined animalism; in the latter case they are spiritual and divine. In this view all human enjoyments are reduced to two classes: the one is spiritual, and the other carnal; the one is moral, social, and refined; the other is selfish, exclusive, and gross; the one rises, the other sinks to all eternity.

The philosophy of the Bible is, therefore, the philosophy of human happiness, and the only philosophy which commends itself to the cultivated understanding of man. No mere rationalist, philosopher, or sage, ever proposed such a view of happiness to man. It is peculiar to the Bible. It is an original and divine conception, and proves the divine authorship of the book. From the object and character of the book of revelation, its divine authority can be most triumphantly argued. It is a book equally worthy of God to bestow and of man to receive. Dictated by infinite benevolence, characterized by supreme intelligence, and perfectly adapted to the genius of human nature, it is worthy of universal reception and of the most profound and grateful homage.

Its plan is superhuman and divine. No one class of men of any one age could have formed such a plan as that of writing the history of one family for seven thousand years, and of incorporating with that history a scheme of eternal redemption from sin. And yet it is as clear as the sun in a cloudless sky, that Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Ezra, Nehemiah--with all the Jewish

historians, prophets and poets, during a period of fifteen hundred years, were, without concert, conference, or voluntary co-operation, prosecuting just such an object without seeming to comprehend it. And not they only, but all the patriarchs before Moses, all the renowned fathers of mankind from Adam to Moses, were orally transmitting such information to their descendants; and all the scribes of the Jews, from Malachi to Matthew, were in their chronicles of Jewish times recording such incidents and events as make out the entire history of the family of Jesus Christ from Adam to Joseph, his legal father, and to Mary, his natural mother. This was done but once in all time, and for a purpose just as peculiar and singular as the Bible itself.

A skeptic or an infidel might as well argue that king Hiram's thirty thousand woodsmen and builders, and king Solomon's one hundred and fifty thousand hewers, stone-cutters, and carriers of burdens, with his three thousand three hundred supervisors and directors, were severally and individually working each one after a plan of his own; and that without concert or prearrangement, all their materials were fitted up into a temple the most splendid and magnificent that ever stood upon this earth--the wonder of the world and the glory of the architecture--as that shepherds, husbandmen, fishermen, artisans, historians, lawgivers, kings, living in different countries, in ages very remote, speaking diverse languages, and of every peculiarity of character, could have, either by accident or design, got up such a volume as the Bible, marked in every page by a peculiar originality of character, a most striking unity of design, pervading an almost infinite variety of circumstantial details, and in a style the most simple, artless, and sublime. The fortuitous concourse of atoms into a universe indicative of designs and adaptations as innumerable as the stars, as countless as the sands of the sea, would be a rational hypothesis, a plausible and credible theory, compared with such an assumption.

The divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures is indeed fully proved by the divine wisdom and knowledge contained in the record itself. The author is known in his works. God's book is full of divinity. It reveals what human wisdom can not fathom, but what human wisdom must believe and approve. God has not only affixed his sign manual to the mission of Apostles and Prophets in the miracles which they wrought, and in the prophecies which they uttered; but he has stamped upon the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which it contains, and incorporated with all its gracious and sublime developments, its holy doctrine, its heavenly spirit, and its divine precepts, the indubitable indications of its superhuman, supernatural, and divine origin. But we shall, for the present, only attempt to prove its divine origin by the indirect method of reducing to an absurdity a contrary hypothesis, Paul is my example and my authority for an occasional assault upon the fortress of error by showing what will result from its admission to be truth, or, which is the same thing in other words, by assuming the truth to be a lie. He says, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ raised. If Christ be not raised, then all men are in their sins--preaching is useless, faith is vain; we Apostles are all liars, and all that have died in attestation of it have voluntarily destroyed themselves." So let us reason in this case as few words as those found in that admirable argument in proof of the resurrection. We assume that the gospel is true or not true. If it is true, it ought to be obeyed; if it is not true, it ought to be disproved and repudiated. All the world so far agrees with our postulata. Well, now, say it is not true; in other words, it is a falsehood--a lie. What then?

1st. *There is not a credible history in the world;* because no history possesses so great a number or variety of the attributes of truth or reasons of faith as the gospel history. The original

witnesses were plain, common-sense, ordinary, matter-of-fact men. They were eyewitnesses and ear-witnesses of the facts which they attest. Their occupations of life were favorable to having good eyes and good ears. They were chiefly fishermen. The facts which they relate, and which constitute the gospel, were *sensible* facts--subjected not to one sense, but to several senses. So speaks one of them:--"That which we have *heard*, which we have *seen with our eyes*, which we have *looked upon*, and *our hands have handled* of the word of life, declare we unto you." They have nothing to gain, but everything temporal and fleshly to lose by the proclamation of these facts. They made themselves "of all men the most miserable." Their life, if their doctrine be not true, is more marvelous than their doctrine: no men ever gave stronger evidence of truthfulness than they. If they can not be believed, no historian can. *There is, then, no credible history in the world.*

2d. In the second place, *there is no sincerity in martyrdom.* It is an indisputable fact that the Messiah and most of the Apostles were martyrs. They died for what they said, and not for what they did. Mankind in all ages concur in the opinion that the strongest proof of any man's honesty or sincerity is his dying voluntarily in attestation of the truth of what he affirms. We allege that martyrdom does not prove the truth of a man's opinions, but only that he sincerely believes them. Sincerity is no test of truth in any matter of theory or speculation. But in all matters of sensible facts tested by the senses, seen or heard by many persons and on many occasions, sincerity in the avowal of them is proof of the certainty of them. Now as martyrdom proves sincerity, and sincerity on the part of witnesses of sensible facts proves the facts--the gospel, being founded on sensible facts, seen often, and seen by many, is true or there is no sincerity in martyrdom.

3d. If the gospel facts are false then *learning and talent are of no value.* The value of talent and learning consists in the power they impart to their possessor to acquire and communicate truth. Now it needs not to be proved that innumerable multitudes of the most talented and learned men in all the ages of Christianity from its first promulgation till now, have been enrolled amongst the friends and advocates of the Bible. Nay, indeed, in all ages the literature and science of Christendom have been on the side of the Bible, and mainly employed in its service. If, then, the Bible be not true, learning and talent neither protect us from error, nor assist us in the acquisition of truth!

4th. But, again on the admission that the gospel is not true, there is *no connection between goodness and truth--no excellency in truth.* The best men in the world have always been those that believed in the Bible. The most humane, benevolent, public-spirited, philanthropic, and virtuous men that have ever lived, whose virtuous examples have been an honor to human nature, have been believers in the truth of the Bible. Now if the Bible be a cunningly devised fable, then there is no necessary connection between truth and moral excellence, any more than between error and virtue. There is, then, no excellency in truth.

5th. Still farther, if the Bible be not true *falsehood imposture, and error are better than truth.* The reason is obvious--the Bible is either true or false. If false, those who believe it believe a lie. But that lie has done more to civilize, refine, purify and adorn human nature, than all the atheism, infidelity and philosophy of Egypt, Chaldea, Greece and Rome. Surely, then, the Christian lie is better than all the philosophic truth of all ages and all nations. Hence we infer that if the Bible be false, error and fraud work better for mankind than honesty and truth.

6th. But, again--If the Bible be false, as all who reject it affirm, then *there is no reason in the universe*; or, what is the same thing, *creation is a maze without a plan*, and *nature works in vain*. We must judge of the unknown by the known. Now the fortunes of our planet are our data for the fortunes of all other planets. The fortunes of its inhabitants are, so far as nature or reason is our guide, the fortunes of the inhabitants of all other planets. Amongst earth's inhabitants there is one class of beings for whose creation and comfort all others do exist. *Man* is the name of that class of beings. He is the end of this terrestrial creation. If he be lost--forever lost, all is lost. Crops of vegetables annually spring out of the earth, and return to it again. Races of animals feed upon them, and die. They, like their food, but enrich the earth. Day and night succeed each other. Years revolve. The earth turns upon its axis, wheels around its orbit, feeds and buries all its tenantry. Man himself and his food alike perish forever.

Now what is gained by the whole operation? If man lives not again--if the Bible be not true; nature labors in vain: and if there be a Creator, he works without a plan, and toils for no purpose. Nature is an abortion, and the whole machinery of the universe a splendid failure. There is no reason for creation--for nature; and there is no reason in either. If, then, the Bible be not true--if the history it gives of man, his creation, his fall, his recovery, be not true--in one word, if the gospel be a lie and the Bible false, no living man can give one good reason for the existence of our planet, or that of any sun or system in that collation of worlds and systems which compose this mysterious and sublime universe.

But if the Bible be not true it is not enough to say--1st. That there is not a credible history in the world. 2d. That there is no sincerity in martyrdom. 3d. That human learning and talent are of no value. 4th. That there is no excellency in truth. 5th. That falsehood, imposition, and error, are better than truth. And 6th. That there is no reason in the universe; but we must also add, that THERE IS NO GOD!

Nature ends in ruin--the world is full of sin and misery--there is no reason for anything--man lives for no purpose--no kind intimation has been given him of any great and good FIRST CAUSE; which is but equivalent to saying there is no good being above man--no one of almighty power, who could speak to him, enlighten him, or comfort him, touching his origin, his nature, his relations, his obligations, or his destiny; and that is equivalent to saying that there is no supremely Good One, no Creator or Proprietor of man. For who can imagine a supreme intelligence, of almighty power and of infinite benevolence--who made man and inspired him with such desires after the knowledge of himself--with such longings after happiness perfect and complete--and who has himself the faculty of speech, the power of communicating the knowledge of himself to man; and yet has never spoken to him, never enlightened him on the only point vital to all his interests, his eternal destiny; and compared with which all other enjoyments possible to man as he now is, are not in the proportion of *an atom to a universe*, or *a moment to a boundless eternity!* Such an hypothesis is at war with every oracle of reason, with every decision of common sense, and with all the analogies of the universe. It can not be: it is impossible. There *is* a God--there *is* a Book of God--there *is* truth in history--there *is* sincerity in martyrdom--there *is* value in talent and learning--there *is* an excellency in truth--truth *is* better than error, falsehood and imposture--and there *is* reason in the universe, and a glorious destiny for man.

The Bible has been proved to be a divine revelation as many millions of times as there are individuals who have believed it to the salvation of their souls. But it never has been proved to be false to a single individual of the human race. Nor can it ever be so proved. No man who understands what he says, can in truth affirm that he believes it to be false. Who can believe anything to be false without oral or written testimony? But no living man has either oral or written testimony contradicting the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets: therefore, in the absence of such testimony, he can no more believe it to be false than a blind man can see the sun. A man may doubt whether it be true; but to believe it to be false, or to be assured that it is not true, is altogether impossible.

Some persons object to the Bible--because, as they say, its divine inspiration is yet a subject of debate. Such thinkers and reasoners are grossly defective in reason and education. Did ever anyone hear of anything that has been proved by all the world? Is there a single historic fact that is believed by every human being? If there be not one, then every historic fact is yet in debate. But shall we say that no proposition is proved, because it is not proved to the whole world! The gospel will never be out of debate while there is one infidel or skeptic in the world. This is, however, no more a disparagement of its truth, or its claims upon all mankind, than it is an argument against any proposition, fact, or testimony, that all the world has not yet acquiesced in its truth.

We can not believe by proxy, as nations, as empires, or as worlds. We must each one believe for himself. Hence the evidence must be considered, understood, and appreciated by every individual for himself. But the fact that millions of all orders of mind, the greatest and most gifted of our race, have believed it to be true--multitudes of them even to martyrdom for its sake; and that not one individual can believe it to be false, is a consideration that ought to silence every modest inquirer, and, were it possible, cover with shame those reckless and senseless dogmatists who declaim against a book of whose contents and whose history they truly comprehend nothing, because it is yet in debate. On their showing, there is nothing credible or worthy of universal acceptance, because there is nothing that is not a matter of doubt or disbelief with some person. But we argue not the question of the Bible's truth with such opponents. We have not given a tithe of the topics from which its truth is irrefragably argued. Enough, it is presumed, to convince the candid whose minds can discern the force of argument, is contained in the preceding hints and reflections.

Christianity has stood erect in the midst of all sorts of adversaries--Jews, Pagans, Turks, infidels, etc.; and, like the pillars of Hercules, the rock of Gibraltar, or the everlasting mountains, bids defiance to all the billows of the ocean, and to all the tempests of Satan, to shake it from its immovable basis. To those who desire to understand it for their salvation, we intend in another tract to make a few suggestions on the best method of reading the Bible for edification and comfort.

A. C.

Millennial Harbinger (1845)

THE BIBLE.

I. One God, one moral system, one Bible. If nature be a system, religion is no less so. God is "a God of order," and that is the same as to say he is a God of system. Nature and religion, the offspring of the same supreme intelligence, bear the image of one father; twin sisters of the same Divine parentage. There is an intellectual and a moral universe as clearly bounded as the system of material nature. Man belongs to the whole three. He is an animal, intellectual, and moral being. *Sense* is his guide in nature, *faith* in religion, *reason* in both. The Bible contemplates man primarily in his spiritual and eternal relations. It is the history of nature, so far only as is necessary to show man his origin and destiny; for it contemplates nature, the universe, only in relation to man's body, soul, and spirit.

II. The Bible is to the intellectual and moral world of man, what the sun is to the planets in our system;--the fountain and source of light and life, spiritual and eternal. There is not a spiritual idea in the whole human race, that is not drawn from the Bible. As soon will the philosopher find an independent sunbeam in nature, as the theologian a spiritual conception in man, independent of THE ONE BEST BOOK.

III. The Bible, or the Old and New Testaments, in Hebrew and Greek, contains a full and perfect revelation of God and his will, adapted to man as he now is. It speaks of man as he was, and also as he will hereafter be; but it dwells on man *as he is*, and *as he ought to be*, as its peculiar and appropriate theme. It is not, then, a treatise on man as he was, nor on man as he will be, but on man as he is, and as he ought to be; not as he is physically, astronomically, geologically, politically, or metaphysically; but as he is and ought to be *morally* and *religiously*.

IV. The words of the Bible contain all the ideas in it;--these words, then, rightly understood, and the ideas are clearly perceived. The words and sentences of the Bible are to be translated, interpreted, and understood according to the same code of laws and principles of interpretation by which other ancient writings are translated and understood; for when God spoke to man in his own language, he spoke as one person converses with another, in fair, stipulated, and well established meaning of the terms. This is essential to its character as a revelation from God; otherwise it would be no revelation, but would always require a class of inspired men to unfold and reveal its true sense to mankind.

V. We have written frequently and largely upon the principles and rules of interpretation, as of essential importance and utility in this generation of remaining mysticising and allegorizing. From our former writings, we shall here only extract the naked rules of interpretation, deduced from extensive and well digested premises; fully sustained, too, by the leading translators and most distinguished critics and commentators of the last and present century.

VI. *Rule 1.* On opening any book in the sacred Scriptures, *consider first the historical circumstances of the book. These are the order, the title, the author, the date, the place, and the occasion of it.*

The *order* in historical compositions is of much importance; as, for instance,--whether the first, second, or third, of the five books of Moses, or any other series of narrative, or even epistolary communication.

The *title* is also of importance, as it sometimes expresses the *design* of the book. As *Exodus*--the departure of Israel from Egypt; *Acts of Apostles*, &c.

The peculiarities of the *author*--the age in which he lived--his style--mode of expression, illustrate his writings. The date, place, and occasion of it, are obviously necessary to a right application of any thing in the book.

Rule 2. In examining the contents of any book, as respects precepts, promises, exhortations, &c., *observe who it is that speaks, and under what dispensation he officiates.* Is he a Patriarch, a Jew, or a Christian? *Consider also the persons addressed; their prejudices, characters, and religious relations.* Are they Jews or Christians--believers or unbelievers--approved or disapproved? This rule is essential to the proper application of every command, promise, threatening, admonition, or exhortation, in Old Testament or New.

Rule 3. To understand the meaning of what is commanded, promised, taught, &c., *the same philological principles, deduced from the nature of language; or the same laws of interpretation which are applied to the language of other books, are to be applied to the language of the Bible.*

Rule 4. *Common usage, which can only be ascertained by testimony, must always decide the meaning of any word which has but one signification;--but when words have according to testimony (i. e. the dictionary,) more meanings than one, whether literal or figurative, the scope, the context, or parallel passages must decide the meaning: for if common usage, the design of the writer, the context, and parallel passage fail, there can be no certainty in the interpretation of language.*

Rule 5. *In all tropical language, ascertain the point of resemblance, and judge of the nature of the trope, and its kind, from the point of resemblance.*

Rule 6. In the interpretation of symbols, types, allegories, and parables, this rule is supreme: *ascertain the point to be illustrated; for comparison is never to be extended beyond that point--to all the attributes, qualities, or circumstances of the symbol, type, allegory, or parable.*

Rule 7. For the salutary and sanctifying intelligence of the Oracles of God, the following rule is indispensable--

We must come within the understanding distance.

There is a distance which is properly called *the speaking distance*, or the *hearing distance*; beyond which the voice reaches not, and the ear hears not. To hear another, we must come within that circle which the voice audibly fills.

Now we may say with propriety say, that as it respects God, there is an understanding distance. All beyond that distance cannot understand God; all within it, can easily understand him in all matters of piety and morality. God, himself, is the centre of that circle, and humility is its circumference.

The wisdom of God is as evident in adapting the light of the Sun of Righteousness to our spiritual or moral vision, as in adjusting the light of day to our eyes. The light reaches us without an effort of our own; but we must open our eyes, and if our eyes be sound, we enjoy the natural light of heaven. There is a sound eye in reference to spiritual light, as well as in reference to material light. Now, while the philological principles and rules of interpretation enable many men to be skillful in biblical criticism, and in the interpretation of words and sentences; who neither perceive nor admire the *things* represented by those words; the sound eye contemplates the things themselves, and is ravished with the moral scenes which the Bible unfolds.

The moral *soundness* of vision consists in having the eyes of understanding fixed solely on God himself, his approbation and complacent affection for us. It is sometimes called a *single eye*, because it looks for one thing supremely. Every one, then, who opens the Book of God, with *one aim*, with one ardent desire--intent only to know the will of God; to such a person, the knowledge of God is easy: for the Bible is framed to illuminate such, and only such, with the salutary knowledge of things celestial and divine.

Humility of mind, or what is in effect the same, contempt for all earth-born pre-eminence, prepares the mind for the reception of this light; or, what is virtually the same, opens the ears to hear the voice of God. Amidst the din of all the arguments from the flesh, the world, and Satan, a person is so deaf that he cannot hear the still small voice of God's philanthropy. But receding from pride, covetousness, and false ambition; from the love of the world; and in coming within that circle, the circumference of which is unfeigned humility, and the centre of which is God himself--the voice of God is distinctly heard and clearly understood. All within this circle are taught by God; all without it are under the influence of the wicked one. 'God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble.'

He, then, that would interpret the Oracles of God to the salvation of his soul, must approach this volume with the humility and docility of a child, and meditate upon it day and night. Like Mary, he must sit at the Master's feet, and listen to the words which fall from his lips. To such a one there is an assurance of understanding, a certainty of knowledge, to which the man of letters alone never attained, and which the mere critic never felt.

VII. The Bible is a book of facts, not of opinions, theories, abstract generalities, nor of verbal definitions. It is a book of awful facts, grand and sublime beyond description. These facts reveal God and man, and contain within them the reasons of all piety and righteousness; or what is commonly called religion and morality. The meaning of the Bible facts is the true biblical doctrine. History is therefore the plan pursued in both Testaments; for testimony has primarily to

do with faith, and reasoning with the understanding. History has, we say, to do with facts--and religion springs from them. Hence, the history of the past, and the anticipations of the future, or what are usually called history and prophecy, make up exactly four-fifths of all the volumes of inspiration.

The Christian System