

Gausewitz's Why I Believe That the Bible is God's Word

WHY I BELIEVE THAT THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD

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Why I Believe that the Bible Is God's Word.

By the late *Rev. C. Gauswirth.*

As a human being I possess God-consciousness. I know that there is a God. This knowledge is the common property of mankind. It is found, though frequently in only very faint traces, with all men, no matter to how low a level they may have fallen otherwise. This is the distinguishing characteristic which separates man from the rest of creation surrounding him: man retains the knowledge of God as an inalienable possession. No matter how hard I try to persuade myself that there is no God—even becoming a fool in the endeavor—so long as I am human I cannot rid myself of the consciousness that there is a God.

As a human being I am a thinking being, endowed with the faculty of reason. I observe the world in which I live and meditate upon it. And on every side, while studying my surroundings, I find support for my inborn conviction that there is a God who made and ordained all things. Witness the recent testimony of an infidel journalist of our day, who, reporting on the atheism of a famous horticulturist, pointed to the unfathomable grandeur of the universe, exclaiming: "There is a Master Mind back of it all." (I quote from memory.) The almighty and all-wise God is recognized by every one who stops to think about nature, about the universe. These cannot but confirm my God-consciousness. There surely is an Almighty One, a Wise One, overruling the world and me.

As a human being I have also a sense of right and wrong. I know that certain things are right and praiseworthy, while others are wrong, meriting punishment. In other words: in me is found the consciousness that there is a law concerning right and wrong, a law which I am duty-bound to respect. The imprint of this law, its exact wording and meaning, may be more or less indistinct and blurred in the case of some individual man or tribe: but it is there. There have been great teachers among men, even among the heathen, who have read and expounded this law, the so-called natural law, to their fellow-men with wonderful insight and beauty, while others hardly understand it in rough outline. In all of them, however, dwells the sense of right and wrong. If it were not so, whence came the laws of peoples and nations, approving the conduct of men or condemning it? In my heart dwells a law on right and wrong. Being human I have a sense of right.

And as a human being I have a conscience. My conscience tells me that I am accountable to God for my conduct, for doing right or wrong. It calls my attention to the law on right and wrong. It demands of me to give an account of myself. Oh, how I would like to be excused! How often I must condemn myself! And conscience constantly reminds me of the fact that I am responsible to God. Hence the evil conscience. Hence the attempts to silence conscience. And I cannot extricate myself. The thought of God terrifies me because my conscience terrifies me.

Little wonder, then, that men by reason of their natural knowledge of God attempt to adjust matters between themselves and the deity, thus building up their religious systems. In highly cultured Athens the ancients erected, among many others, an altar to the "Unknown God," and Paul could tell them, "I perceive that you are thoroughly religious." In Rome they built a Pantheon, a temple for the whole galaxy of gods. In the Roman Empire religious liberty obtained. Everybody might seek happiness after his own fashion. Though the Romans resented the attitude of the Jews, who maintained that all heathen gods are nothing, and they repaid them with the caustic remark, "Credat Judaeus!" (A Jew may believe such trash!); yet they excluded from the benefits of religious liberty, and branded as enemies of humanity, only those whom the people dubbed "Christians," because these refused to allow any of the man-made religions at all. That's reasonable, and must not be tolerated. We must have religion.

In fine: there is a God who created the world and governs it; who has determined what is right before Him and what is wrong; who has indelibly inscribed in my heart the consciousness of these truths. And my conscience challenges me and accuses me—before God.

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I take up my Bible now and find it bears out the ideas written in my heart and embodied in my natural consciousness.

The Bible speaks of God and testifies to His existence. It maintains: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God."

The Bible points to nature and to the universe as being a work of God. The very first sentence reads: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The Bible speaks of God as disposing and ruling over His creation. The second sentence reads: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." And furthermore: He is "upholding all things by the word of His power." And again: "In Him we live, and move, and have our being." And: "The living God hath made heaven and earth, and the sea and all that is therein. He hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth."

The Bible also tells me that God reveals himself by His work, that, therefore, we should seek the Lord if haply we might feel after Him and find Him. For the invisible things of God, His eternal divine majesty and wisdom, if only we take notice, may be clearly seen from the creation of the world. Thus God revealed himself in order that no atheist might hide behind the excuse: "I did not know whether there is any God" (Acts 17, 24—28; Rom. 1, 19.20). "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge." This is the teaching of the Bible.

Especially does the Bible confirm my sense of right, the law inscribed in the hearts of men, as God's own law. It touches

up the badly obliterated script, so that I may readily read the will of God. It deepens the understanding of the divine Law. It shows the real burden of the law: we should seek after God alone, trust in Him, fear and love Him above all things, and in this manner devote our entire life to the service of God. It sums up all in one demand: "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength—and thy neighbor as thyself. Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord, your God, am holy. Ye shall be perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."

The Bible tells me that above the Law, and behind it, there stands the holy, just, pious, all-seeing and all-powerful God, before whom no evil may stand, that He will fearfully punish all iniquity, every transgression of His commandments; that He alone can speak with authority in this matter, and that His word is final; that He has reserved for himself the knowledge of good and evil, the right to determine what is good and evil, and that He simply demands obedience of me. The Bible tells me in direct words, and illustrates by numerous examples, how God punishes sin: that therefore the demands of the law must not be trifled with, every word is a very serious matter.

The Bible thus quickens my conscience, and upholds its verdict of "guilty" over me. It tells me that in this respect there is no difference: all are guilty before God. To impress this truth upon my heart the Bible frequently makes mention of terrible and abominable sins committed by men, even by the very best, and thereby holds up a mirror to me that I may realize that all works of man, yea, every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, also of mine, are only evil before God continually. At the same time it reminds my heart of the sovereign greatness of God: "If our heart—our conscience—condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." It shows me that before God all things are perverted and under the curse. It includes all things under sin, and above all, condemns me. Thus the Bible becomes to me a veritable fire burning within my soul, which I am unable to quench, a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces, a sword piercing through the soul, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, so that I, though I were the best man in the world, must accuse myself in my conscience, and tremble. The Bible condemns me, a sinner.

O Lord and God,
 What dreadful load!
 My sins, indeed, do grieve me.
 No brother can,
 No fellow-man,
 Of my great guilt relieve me.

In short, the Bible condemns me and fully confirms the verdict of my conscience.

But I find other ideas in the Bible, ideas which are entirely foreign to my natural God-consciousness, ideas which even the most painstaking study of the work of creation does not reveal unto me, ideas that neither my natural sense of right nor my conscience could ever have discovered—a truth which the Bible tells me is *the* truth, the real revelation of God on account of which, and in the interest of which, the whole Bible was written, the great all-important fact which I am to learn out of the Bible—that doctrine that the great God has condescended, and still condescends to me, accursed though I stand before Him as a sinner, in order to rescue me from sin, curse, and damnation; that doctrine that His glory and His real name is: The Lord, the Lord God, merciful, and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands (forever), forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, although before Him there is no one without guilt; that this is the true God before whom I, like Moses, must bow the head, and worship. The Bible tells me that this God says: "I am the Lord, thy God, thy Savior and thy Redeemer. Look unto Me, and be ye saved. I, even I, am the Lord, and beside Me there is no Savior." The Bible tells me that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life; that God was made man in order to restore to men, to sinners, the proper relation to Himself by His work of redemption; that I am justified before God without any merit or worthiness on my part by His grace through the redemption achieved by Jesus Christ; that I am justified before God by faith without the works of the Law, simply by believing that in the blood of Christ I have redemption, the forgiveness of my sins.

And the Bible teaches that by its glad tidings of God's grace and the salvation which He has prepared for me God himself comes to me and pardons me, announces and awards to me salvation, even sealing it to me personally with external signs (in baptism and in communion).

Thus the Bible proclaims as the great central truth: the Gospel of God, grace and truth which came by Jesus Christ, the ordinance of grace, the word of life, the wonderful mystery of godliness. And it shows me that, since sin is in the world, God has at divers times and in divers manners again and again revealed to man the mystery of His saving grace. And the Bible itself also reveals it to me.

This Gospel of the Bible has exercised a wonderful power and influence over me. It has created in me the conviction that I have been received into favor with God as His child, that in spite of my sin He takes pleasure in me, so that I may have a good conscience again, and may actually begin to walk in His truth, delighting in His ways.

Thus the Bible has produced a new thing within me, so that all things present an entirely different appearance. It brought me to faith, to the firm conviction of faith,—a miracle which the Bible describes in metaphorical terms that indicate what power

the Bible wields. It is called conversion, a complete turn about; I was traveling the road to hell, the Bible message has started me on the road to heaven. It is called regeneration; formerly I was flesh born of flesh, and no good dwelled within me, the Bible made of me a new man, a child of God. It is called vivification: I was dead before God in trespasses and sins, the Bible has brought me back to life, for Christ, the living God and the God of my salvation, now lives within me. It is called repentance: a change of heart; for the word of the Bible has turned my mind away, and continues to turn my mind away, from sin, which condemns me, to faith in the Savior, to cleave to Him and to follow Him.

The message of the Bible has given me divine assuredness, undisturbed by anything that may be said against it: faith in Jesus Christ, whereby I am saved.

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Whence has the doctrine of the Bible this wonderful power, both when it convicts, and especially when it soothes and saves; I cannot but inquire of the Bible itself. Whom else should I ask? The world, my fellow-men, my natural knowledge of God—none of these were able to give me a satisfactory answer to the question, "What must I do to be saved?" The Bible alone answered that question for me; yea, the Bible actually saved me, convincing my heart of the fact. Concerning the question, then, whence the Bible derives this power, I can still less expect an answer anywhere except in the Bible itself. I will hear and believe, then, what the Bible testifies about itself.

Among the books of the Bible I find the epistles of the great apostle Paul. In the last one that we possess of him I read the following statements, addressed to his disciple Timothy: "The holy Scriptures are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." What the apostle sums up in the words of the first sentence: "salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," he presents in the second in its various details: every scripture given by divine inspiration performs the miracle, being given for that very purpose, and able to do it, that it teaches the truth about God; it reproves you that you are a damned sinner before God; but it also helps you out of your predicament, converts you, raises you up, and sets you right with your God; and trains you in righteousness. In short, the message of the Bible saves sinners by the way of faith in Christ Jesus. A book that can do that is a holy book, unique, different in character from all others: such a book is Holy Scripture. The Bible is in a class by itself. How so? The Bible is given by God through inspiration. Reduced to a syllogism:

Every scripture given by inspiration of God is able to save.
The Bible is the Holy Scripture which is able to save.
Therefore, the Bible is given by inspiration of God.

Or:

Wherever there is a scripture given by inspiration of God, it is able to save.

The Bible is the scripture given by inspiration of God. Therefore, it is able to save.

"Given by inspiration of God"—hence the term "inspiration" to express the truth that the Bible is the word of God. The Greek original reads literally, the Bible is "God-breathed," given by the Spirit of God. Whenever I read the Bible, I am reading the words of God the Holy Spirit. That accounts for the fact that the Bible possesses the wonderful power of which we spoke above: it is God's own word to man.—There are philologists who maintain that the Greek word used by the apostle means: "breathing God." Let the scholars argue. If the Bible is breathing God, it cannot be of human origin, it must be divine. As it is said of the Son of Mary: "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," so this term would actually imply: In Holy Writ, in the Bible, the Godhead dwells bodily. When the Bible speaks, it is God who is speaking. The Bible is God's Word.

But it is really superfluous to spend any time on such arguments and disputings about the word inspiration, much less am I to stake my faith on them. I shall ask the apostle directly about the meaning of his words.

Extolling the Bible as the divinely inspired, holy Scripture, the apostle evidently summarizes the views he holds concerning this book, and tries to impress them upon the minds of the readers of his last epistle. Let me briefly point out a few things.

When Paul reminds his pupil Timothy that he knows the Holy Scripture, it goes without saying that he is referring to the Old Testament, to Moses, the prophets, the psalms: the Scripture which the Jews had and preserved most carefully. How does he express his views on these documents in some of his other epistles? To the Romans he says: "To the Jews were committed the oracles of God." It is God who spoke in these sacred writings, they are God's word. Quoting from the Old Testament, Paul more than once introduced the quotation by a: "Thus saith God."

In the opinion of the apostle the writings of the New Testament stand exactly on the same level as those of the Old. Concerning himself and his fellow-apostles and evangelists he testifies to the Corinthians: "We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery. . . . God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit. . . . We speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." And to the Thessalonians: "When ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of man but—as it is in truth—the word of God."

Hence the term: "given by inspiration of God" is not restricted to the Old Testament, it applies to the New Testament as well: this also is God's Word, God's Holy Scripture.

The views held by Paul are shared by the other great apostle, Peter. Concerning the writings of the Old Testament he says:

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Holy Ghost carried them along; their speech, their writings are God-breathed, inspired. They spoke and wrote as God the Holy Ghost gave them utterance. And in his first epistle Peter adds the thought: "These things are now reported unto you"—the addresses of the epistle—"by them that have preached the Gospel unto you which the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. . . . The word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you." The prophets and the apostles, including their assistants, evangelists like Luke and Mark, the Old and the New Testaments proclaim the Word of God. The entire Bible is the Word of God, given by inspiration of God the Holy Ghost, forming one grand homogeneous work.

And the third of the great apostles, John, adds that they, the apostles and evangelists, wrote exactly what they also preached orally. He says: "Of the word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. . . . And these things"—the very same things—"write we unto you, that your joy may be full."

In addition to, yea towering far above a Paul, and a Peter, and a John, there is my Lord Jesus Christ. Him the Bible has revealed unto me, and has led me to the conviction that He is my Savior and my Lord. In His mouth no guile was ever found. He is the star witness for the truth that the Bible is God's Word. What does He say about the Bible? What stand does He take?

It is not possible to cite more than a few of His utterances only.

Jesus calls His own doctrine God's doctrine, God's Word. In His high priestly prayer He says about His disciples: "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me. . . . I have given them Thy word. . . . Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth." And against the Jews He maintained: "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me." His doctrine, however, was the doctrine as it is written in the Old Testament: witness the marveling of the Jews who in this very connection were moved to ask: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" He always refers to the Scriptures as the Word of God. If the brethren of the rich man desire an oracle of God, He says: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." He tells the Jews who would not believe in Him: "Ye have not God's Word abiding in you. . . . Search the Scriptures! . . . They are they which testify of Me. . . . Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me." Here He plainly states that God is testifying of Him through the Scriptures. He quotes a passage, yea even a single word from the Old Testament, and calls it the word of God, adding: "And the Scriptures cannot be broken." He charges the unbelieving Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures. . . . Have ye not read that which

was spoken *unto you by God?*" Thus what they read in the Scriptures written by Moses, who had been dead for centuries, is spoken unto them by God.

Just as Jesus says: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away," so He also says concerning the Old Testament: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the Law to fail."

He quotes the writings of the prophet Isaiah as God's word, those of the prophet Daniel as the prophecy of the angel. With reference to the psalter He says: "David said by the Holy Ghost." He calls the writings of Moses, of which nothing is to pass away, the commandment of God which must be observed, and opposes his doctrine laid down in them to the commandments of men.

He discharges His duties as the great Prophet come from God by teaching the Scriptures. He performs His work of redemption in order to fulfil the Scriptures and to confirm them as the truth of God. Hence He declares in His great passion: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." Hence His phrase: "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said." Just as He says that His aim is to do the will of God, so He says likewise that He must fulfil the Scriptures.

In short, our Lord Jesus considers the Bible of the Old Testament as the very word of His heavenly Father.

Can it mean less for me?
And now as to the New Testament given to us by the apostles of Christ and their fellow-laborers!

What does our Lord Jesus say?

Let me briefly glean from His utterances: "He that heareth you heareth Me. It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. He that receiveth you receiveth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me. I will send unto you from the Father the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father: He shall testify of Me. And ye shall also bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning. The Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. He will guide you into all truth. And ye shall be witnesses unto Me unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Go ye and preach the Gospel to every creature."

This is the Lord's command, and His opinion concerning the word of His apostles and evangelists. And one of them says in one of his letters: "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. And these things write we unto you."

As the result we now possess also in the writings of the apostles and their fellow-laborers the word of the Lord Jesus, the testimony given unto them by the Holy Ghost, God's own Word. And thus these men, even now, after nineteen centuries continue to testify to us in this distant country, and they give us the Word

of God through their writings. Jesus put His seal upon the Bible of the New Testament in advance, pronouncing its word divine. Thus also we who possess the Bible of the Old and New Testament are included in the high priestly prayer of our Lord: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word (which Thou gavest Me, and I have given unto them)."

This is the testimony of our Lord Jesus for the Bible.

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And what does the Bible say about itself? For if I am to believe that the Bible is God's Word, the Bible itself must tell me so. That the Bible is God's Word is an article of faith, and the church, from its earliest days, confesses in the Nicene Creed: "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord, who spake by the prophets." But articles of faith must be drawn from the Bible, and founded in the Bible.

What does the Bible say about itself? In the strict sense, this question has already been fully answered in the foregoing: for all quotations have been taken directly from the Bible.

But not only do Paul the apostle, Peter the apostle, John the apostle, declare that their writings and the writings of the prophets and of the evangelists were given by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and hence are God's Word; not only does our Lord Jesus testify to the same truth; not only does Moses in addition report that he put the words of the Lord in writing in order that the people and their children and their children's children might read the Law of the Lord, concerning which God testifies that it is His own book; not only does Isaiah begin his powerful prophecy with the words: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken," and Jeremiah: "The words of Jeremiah, to whom the word of the Lord came," and similarly the other prophets; not only does the psalmist, David, declare: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue," and the epistle to the Hebrews: "God spake at sundry times and in divers manners in times past by the prophets, and in these last days also by His Son";—in fine, not only do we read in the Bible, in addition to the solemn declarations of the Lord and His apostles, such casual remarks of the holy writers: "God says"—"Thus saith the Lord," and in an untold number of cases the reference is to the written word of the Bible: "It is written"—"Thus saith the Scripture."

Not only that. Throughout, the Bible speaks as with divine authority. Almost on every single page it demands obedience, demands faith and invites to faith, reveals God's holiness and man's sinfulness, announces in the name of God His grace and His salvation, and promises to them that accept it eternal life, and condemns the gainsayers. Nowhere does it make any exception, so that in such a case we might ask: "Yea, hath God said?" On

every line it claims to be the Word of God. (To show this in detail, I would be forced to read practically the whole Bible to you.)

To sum up, according to the testimony of the Bible, which is upheld by my Lord Jesus, and which through faith in Christ Jesus has made me divinely wise and divinely sure, the inspiration of the Bible is a fact no less than any other act of God unto salvation recorded in the Bible. It is God-breathing because it is God-breathed, inspired, God's own Word. And mark well, in its entirety! Nowhere is it stated, or even remotely hinted, that the process of inspiration was interrupted, or that some parts were less inspired than others.

The Bible designates its own doctrine as the truth, and God the Holy Spirit, who gave it, as the Spirit of truth. And the word of this book is the word of God the Holy Spirit in all places and at all times. Whether I say, The Holy Spirit bears witness of himself, or say, The Bible bears witness of itself as the truth: in the last analysis it amounts to the same. The Bible says directly, It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the truth is the Spirit. God the Holy Spirit and the words of the Bible are found to be so intimately joined together as the divine and the human natures in the person of Jesus Christ. When the Bible speaks, God speaks. If I will hear God, I must hear the Bible. All else is superstition; here alone is God's "Law and testimony"—God's Word.

This is the doctrine of the Bible concerning itself.

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I have reached the summit. I pause and cast a look backward over the road that I have traveled, and over the different parts of the way. The last traveled stretch now it nearest to me; then my eyes wander back farther and review also the other, more distant parts. And in this inverted order I shall now state briefly what I see. I believe that the Bible is the Word of God:

1. Because the Bible itself tells me so.
2. Because my Lord Jesus Christ, in whom I believe, assures me of it.
3. Because the doctrine of the Bible proves its divine power in my own heart.

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How then shall I conceive of this truth, or explain it, that the Bible is the Word of God, that it was given by God the Holy Spirit, that it is inspired?

Answer: I am not expected to have a clear conception of this at all, or to explain it, but simply to believe it. The *method* is God's concern and His secret, incomprehensible to me and inexplicable. Of this mystery He has revealed to me in His Word, in the Bible, only the fact, revealed the fact abundantly that He is speaking through these writings, that He gave to the different authors the very words which they were to write and did write—that hence the Bible is His book.

Such is the case regarding God's acts in general and regarding His truth, which He reveals to me in His Word unto my salvation: so that I may receive all in faith. I cannot explain how Jesus, the Son of Mary, can be the true God and eternal life; it is a mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh; the Word was God and was made flesh and dwelt among us as the Only-begotten of the Father, of whose fulness I receive grace for grace. I cannot explain the mystery how the Holy Spirit has reborn me in faith so that I, a sinner, am become God's dear child forever. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof: but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." I have no conception how the Lord, when I eat the bread of the sacrament with my mouth and drink the cup, can give to me His body which was given for me into death and His blood which was shed for the remission of my sin and guilt. That is His secret. But I believe it because He tells me so. I do not require any of the thirty-five explanations which men have attempted to make of the words of Christ in the sacrament. The words themselves are plain enough for my faith. Taking my stand on the words of the Bible I am in a position to reject erroneous conceptions and false doctrines in this and other teachings of the Bible, and to prove them to be wrong; but I cannot explain the great deeds of God, I must receive and know them through faith only.

This is the case also regarding the truth that the Bible is God's Word.

It was written in human language—because God in His grace would give to man a word intelligible and fixed in writing—sometimes in a language which, from the viewpoint of grammar and rhetoric, may not be entirely according to rule; and at times in exalted diction, the like of which cannot be found elsewhere in the literatures of the world. Yes, the several books of the Bible have been composed by different men, at different times, in different surroundings, upon different occasions. Paul has a different style from Peter, John still another. Moses wrote in an entirely different language, and his style differs from that of David, or Isaiah, or Daniel, or Joel, or Nahum. In view of this fact the epistle to the Hebrews maintains that God spake in divers manners. Accordingly quotations from their books are introduced in the Bible with the words: "Moses says," "Moses writes," "David says," "Isaiah prophesies," "Jeremiah says," "Our beloved brother Paul hath written you," "We write unto you." But then again of similar quotations, yea of the very same quotations from the writings of Paul, of John, of Moses, of Isaiah it is said in the Bible: "God says," "The Holy Ghost says."

Does any one dare to raise the absurd objection: "If the books of the Bible are the productions of these various men in their peculiar style and diction, then they cannot be the Word of God; how could God, in His effort to give me His Word, use such human, such different language?" I counter with the question: What language and what style should God have cho-

sen? And who are you "that repleist against God?" If He has His Gospel written, say, by a Peter? Or when He employs a historian like Luke, a savant like Paul, a grandiloquent Isaiah or a plain Amos, or the poetic vein of David or the wisdom of Solomon, and chose the speech of men as His means of grace to men?—And I add, if He chose water to seal to you His covenant of grace, and bread and wine to give himself to you as your Savior! What is that to you? Paul performed miracles: but it was the Lord "who wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul." That is what the Bible says. And similarly it says that Moses wrote the Law, and that his book is God's book. The method is no concern of mine or yours, it is God's.

The so-called human form of the Bible does not alter the fact that it is God's Word. As the man who was born of Mary, who lived as a man among men in the likeness of sinful flesh, who was an hungry, fatigued, suffered and died, at all times and in all places remained the Lord of glory, Jehovah, my God: so the Bible, that was written by Peter, or John, or Joel, or Samuel, always and in every line is the Spirit, the Word of God. Through the instrumentality of human authors God has spoken unto me *His* own word. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.

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I cannot demonstrate the truth that the Bible is God's Word to any one by the use of human arguments. Repentance (metanoia) is the only way that leads to the conviction that the Bible is the Word of God. Only he who through the doctrine of the Bible has come to faith in Jesus Christ will accept also that particular doctrine of the Bible that it is the Word of God. Here the remark of our Lord Jesus comes into its own: "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God." A believer will say with Peter: "We believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And: "Thou hast the words of eternal life." Here the answer applies which Jesus gave Peter on a similar occasion: "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." Likewise the words of Christ in His high priestly prayer: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world. . . . Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given Me are of Thee. For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me."

All I can do about this truth, as well as about all Bible truths unto salvation, is to testify as the Bible itself testifies, adding: "He that believeth not shall be damned."

To be sure, this will elicit nothing but protest on the part of unbelievers, and they will gnash with their teeth, as did the opponents of Stephen when he testified to them: "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy

Ghost." The doctrine of the Bible cuts to the heart, and men resist the Word of God and deny the Bible because they will not repent. Again the word of Christ applies: "Ye would not." Then you believe that the Bible is the Word of God, because it is your *will* to believe?

Answer: Indeed. Praise be God for ever, who through the doctrine of the Bible has won my heart, and has turned me, and out of an unwilling one has made a willing one! God has fulfilled in me and in you, dear fellow-Christian, the prayer of the church: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." His good and gracious will has taught me to say: "I trust in Thy Word, O Lord. Order my steps in Thy Word. Teach me Thy way, O Lord, I will walk in Thy truth." And you also, believing child of God, believe that the Bible is the Word of your God, because God has won your heart through this very Word of His. In these matters it is God alone who does everything. Without Him I cannot but grope in the dark. The Bible is the light unto my path, because it is the Word of God.

* * *

No objections which men may raise against the Bible can make me waver in this faith. God and His Word are greater than men.

They point to alleged inaccuracies, errors, conflicting statements in the Bible.

I look up the passage, pay attention to the exact reading, compare Scripture with Scripture—and find that the error is with the critics, not with the Bible. And though in isolated cases I may not be able to find the solution, I admit my ignorance, confessing: "Thy Word it truth." If my eyes are being held, the fault is mine, not the Bible's. Only one contradiction is found a thousand times in the Bible, because it was put there on purpose by the Holy Ghost himself: when on the one hand the Bible solemnly declares: The holy and righteous God will condemn you, a sinner, because no evil can stand before Him; and on the other hand: The same God has procured salvation for you, and will pardon all your sins and grant you eternal life.

And both statements are correct. The first is preparatory for the second: the former huris you to the dust, making you realize that you cannot live without a Savior; the latter raises you up and inspires you with saving faith. Both statements are God's Word.

Some point to the fact that many non-essential, even trivial things are mentioned in the Bible; it is considered as unworthy of God that He should inspire also such things.—Granted; but how do you know that anything is insignificant and of no importance? It may seem a small matter to you to-day that Paul wrote to Timothy to bring him his cloak; but if to-morrow some "pious" Enthusiast should attempt to make it a matter of conscience for you, charging you with sin because you are wearing an overcoat, then this little bit of information will become of the utmost importance to you, so that you may retain a clear con-

science. God had it written for your benefit. It may seem highly superfluous to you to-day, that Isaiah, visiting the hopelessly ill king Hezekiah, in addition to assuring him that God would add fifteen years to his life, should mention the instruction regarding the lump of fgs on the boil for a plaster, but if to-morrow some fanatic scientist should attempt to convince you that the use of medicine is ungodly, this may become an important help. Who are men to declare anything worthy or unworthy of God!

Bible critics say: In copying the Bible again and again a considerable number of errors crept in. How then can I say that the Bible word for word is God's truth? Answer: First, the number of copyists' errors is not so great by far as they try to make you believe. And secondly: As my Lord Jesus, on whom they spat and whom they smote in the face, whom they lacerated with scourges and crowned with thorns, whose hands and feet they pierced, whom they disgraced and tormented by nailing Him to the cross, whom they maltreated and tortured by no form or comeliness—as He in spite of all this remains to me fairer than the children of men, the very Lord of glory: so also the Bible, though mutilated by the hands of men, remains the Word and Truth of God of which nothing shall pass away. Though the old copyists, either inadvertently or intentionally, in the passage I Tim. 3, 16 omitted or overlooked the little cross-bar in the letter T, thereby changing the name of God (Theos) according to their customary abbreviation into the relative pronoun, vice versa, yet the truth is thereby not affected that "God is revealed in the flesh." The words of our Lord Jesus Christ remain unshaken that of the content of the Bible not the smallest letter or the dot over an I shall perish.

And then what about science, especially Geology and Astronomy? I highly respect science, and am ready to listen to scientists as long as they tell me about their observations in the world in which we live, and when they arrange the results of their findings systematically into a science. But when they offer to me instead their own dreams and fancies about spontaneous generation and evolution and the like, and demand of me that I accept their theories and hypotheses in place of the Bible, then I lend my ear to God, who reminds me in the Bible: "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? I have created all things, and for My pleasure they are and were created, every creature after its kind—and man in the image of God."

God stands far above all men, far above the most learned of men, and with God stands the Bible, His Word. This fact will help me in taking my attitude towards the Bible: I will long for God's commandments that He may order my steps in His Word.

* * *

For this attitude my Lord Jesus has left me His own example. Let me, in conclusion, briefly point this out to you.

In the Gospel lesson for the first Sunday in Lent my Lord himself shows me how precious the Bible must be to me. By

word and example He reveals the unique importance, the wonderful light, the blessed and glorious content of the Bible: over against the Tempter His appeal is to the Bible.

The devil tempts Him with the words of doubt: "If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." What does Christ reply? Being the Son of God He might have used His divine authority, hurling into the teeth of Satan His almighty: "I tell thee." Or He might have pointed to the wonderful experience He had been granted only recently, that voice calling from heaven: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." He does nothing of the kind. He says: "It is written," i. e. the Bible says. He appeals to the Bible. This gives Him firm assurance and confidence in spite of the gripping hunger. He values the authority of the Bible higher than all else, and trusting to the Bible He stands unshaken through trial and temptation.

Should not I, then, much more cling to that same Bible? There, and there alone, I find assurance, divine assurance, for my faith. Because the Bible is the Word of God, it carries more weight, by far, than all human calculation and reasoning, more than all our own personal experience and the like. For that reason I will read the Bible, study it, embrace it with my heart.

The Bible contains pertinent information for all eventualities. Look at the example of Christ. The devil approaches Him with a second temptation—and supports his claim with a Bible passage. He places Christ on a pinnacle of the temple, saying: "If Thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written—the Bible says—He shall give His angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." Here the devil appears, as he in truth is, a model and leader of all false teachers and heretics. How they like to quote from the Bible! But the devil is a liar, he lies even when he quotes Scripture directly.

How does the Lord answer him? He does not offer any so-called interpretation or explanation. The Bible is clear in itself. Also the passage referred to by the devil is perfectly clear. No, the Lord answers this time again: "It is written." He points to that Word of God which actually covers His case, and which unmistakably tells Him what to do and what not to do.—When I read that Judas hanged himself, then the following word of the Bible, although very plain in itself, does not apply: "Go and do thou likewise." No, but that other word: "Thou shalt not kill," and: "My times are in Thy hand."—When Sicilian rovers first go to church to invoke God's blessing on their intended robbery, the passage does not apply: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," but rather that other word of the Bible: "Thou shalt not steal."

The Bible, indeed, does make one wise. Hence I will carefully study it, that I may be at home in it; and I will remember that very little may be gained by any interpretation that I or anybody else may offer. No prophecy or doctrine of the Bible is

a matter of my private interpretation, for the very reason that the holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Can it be that the Holy Ghost does not know how to make himself understood? Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, not excepting any philosophy about the Bible itself; rather, like the Bereans, search the Scriptures daily.

It will be time well spent. For blessed and glorious is the content of God's Word. Christ holds it up to our view. The devil tempted Him a third time: "All the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them—all these things will I give Thee, if Thou wilt fall down and worship me." Worship—an act of piety, indeed. Here we have religion, real religion! But what does the apostle say about religions of men? "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils!" Thus, in the last analysis, one religion is as good, or rather as bad, as the other. Which one shall I adopt? Whom shall I worship? What shall I do in order to be truly religious, or better, to be truly godly?

Christ said to the Tempter: "Get thee hence, Satan; for the Bible says: Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Abandon everything else. The Bible, God's Word, has a simple, blessed, complete answer covering the whole case. Christ shows it to us out of the Bible in the above quotation, which sums up the entire matter.

God: your Lord! The Lord: your God! Here you have the revelation, God's answer, the Gospel of your salvation, all in one word. Glance through the Bible. God tells you, a sinner: "I am your God, your Savior, your Redeemer, yours, yea, yours!" No other religion will give you this answer. And this Word of God inspires faith, so that I learn to say: God is mine. My God, I trust in Thee. The Lord is my Shepherd. The Lord is my Light and my Salvation. Neither is there salvation in any other. Dismiss all religions, and let the Bible give you the only instruction unto salvation.

And what shall we do then? The Bible says: "Thou shalt worship the Lord, thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." This is true piety, true godliness, true service of God, that on all occasions I say: God is mine, and I am His: this truth shall control all my thoughts, my words, my actions. Him will I fear and love. There I have both, Gospel and Law—God's truth.

O glorious book divine, which gives us assurance and establishes our hearts; which offers clear and simple instructions; which shows us God in His light and leads us on the path of righteousness to Him! Should we not read it with joy, search it, teach it, confess it and firmly hold it as God's Word?

And the outcome? "Behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." Glorious triumph, that God's angels serve him who hopes in the Bible, and lead him with rejoicing before the throne of God there to sing together with him eternal praises to God that He, the Holy One, did save a sinner—by His Word!

Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word! Amen.