

The Traditions and The Deposit

A STUDY IN THE
AUTHORITY OF
THE SCRIPTURES

BY

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A STUDY IN THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

THE readers of this paper will not expect me to lead them into any adventures, or to attempt to open up new fields. My ambition is that of the Apostle Peter, to stir up their sincere minds by way of remembrance. And if I succeed in refreshing your recollection of certain simple, and well known and characteristic facts as to the relationship between the Lord Jesus and the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the end I have set before me will be accomplished, not, it may be hoped, without profit to ourselves, and not without honour to Him in Whom and for Whom we work.

We have in our hands a volume—a double volume—to which we seek a line of approach that we may understand what it is, what its claims are, and whether those claims are well founded or not. We seek a point of vantage from which to survey the whole Bible. This we find in the Forty Days that intervened between the Resurrection of our Lord and His Ascension to “where He was before.” Here the atmosphere is pure, the light clear; we are back to primitive simplicity. There are no complications, for as yet there have been no developments. We are listening to the words of the Lord Jesus as He speaks of the work long foretold and foreshadowed, and now at last accomplished. Chiefly He directs us to look back to the Old Testament, the record of the revelation of God and of His promise to send a Deliverer to the world. But He also looks forward to a further record and exposition of the new revelation that He Himself had made. This He promises, and for this He prepares us.

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PART I.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.**Christ's Testimony.**

Christ the Son of God Incarnate—why is He here ? What is His object ? What are His qualifications for the attainment of that object ? The answer is that His object in coming into the world is that He might reveal the Father and that He might redeem mankind. He came to do both, and it is readily perceived that an intimate and complete knowledge of both God and man is necessary if this double purpose is to be attained. Now there are on record two separate statements as to His knowledge of God. In the Gospel of John (7. 29) He declares, " I know Him, for I am from Him." The word denotes immediate perception (*eidein*), the note of the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son. In John 10. 15 the word of experience (*ginōskein*) is used, " I am the Good Shepherd...I know the Father." The difference between the two words is attractive, but I do no more than throw out the suggestion and pass on.

Christ's Knowledge.

In the second chapter of the same Gospel John tells us it was not necessary that anybody should bring an introduction to the Lord Jesus, for He, knowing (*ginōskein*) all men, knew already what is in each man. Thus His knowledge of God and man is complete. It follows that this complete knowledge of the Father involves knowing all the Father had done prior to the Incarnation—that He knew, for instance, the contents of the Old Testament, their origin, purpose, authority, and whether the claims

made by and for them were well founded or not. This, surely, would be essential for the carrying out of His mission. He based His own claims to a large extent upon the Old Testament. If that was itself an unsafe guide, those claims would be unstable to that extent at least. Assuming then, as it seems to me we must assume in the nature of the case, that He knew what God had done, and all that God had done, in the preceding ages, we ask, what was His attitude to the Old Testament? The answer is written plainly in the Gospels; it was an attitude of unqualified acceptance. He used it, spoke of it, treated it, as coming from God, as carrying God's authority, and that not only as a whole, but in all its parts. And if it is suggested that in this He shared the convictions of His time, this, no doubt, is true; but they were His convictions too. He shared them because they were true convictions. When a question arose between the two main groups of the Jews as to resurrection, some denying, some affirming it, He unequivocally associated Himself with those who affirmed it. The Pharisees' convictions about resurrection were true, and therefore He shared them; rather, He confirmed them. The conviction of the Sadducees were untrue, and therefore He repudiated them (Matt. 22. 23-32).

What is the alternative? It is not merely that if the case were otherwise, the Lord's knowledge was defective, but that He was misinformed on a vital matter. What He did not know, He knew that He did not know, as is recorded in Matthew 23. 36, "Of that day and hour knoweth (*eidein*) no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." Reverence demands that we accept these words with unhesitating confidence. He did not know the time of the catastrophe that awaits the world, so He was careful lest the disciples should suppose that He did know; hence He declared explicitly that He did not know. His language concerning the Scriptures was entirely different. Every reference He made to them left the impression

that He knew them to be the authoritative Word of God. Was He mistaken? The question is vital, for, as already remarked, this was an essential qualification for the fulfilment of His mission, that He should be fully informed as to what dealings of God preceded it, prepared the way for it, made it possible. They were among the witnesses He called in support of the authenticity of His claim to be the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Their testimony to Him may be as soon impeached as His testimony to them.

We therefore accept His statements concerning the Old Testament, not as the expression of popular convictions that may have been right or wrong, but as convictions which were shared because they were right and true. He deliberately confirmed the conviction among the Jews that the Old Testament Scriptures were the record of God's revelation to man, inspired by God Himself.

Our Lord's Testimony in Resurrection.

In Resurrection He reaffirmed His former testimony to the Old Testament as recorded in the 24th chapter of Luke. What was that testimony? Take an instance. On one occasion in dealing with family life, He condemned the teaching of the rabbis about Corban, and called the words of Exodus 20. 12; 21. 17, "the Commandment of God," prefacing them with, "God said." Nothing could be more simple or less mistakable than that. He used such expressions as: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them;" "The Scripture cannot be broken;" "Ye err...ye know not the Scriptures...ye do greatly err;" "One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished" (Matt. 15. 1-5; Luke 16. 29; John 10. 35; Mark 12. 24, 27; Matt. 5. 18).

Consider, too, the place the Scriptures had in the Lord's own life. In the 110th Psalm it is written: "He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall He lift up the head." It was of this living water

of this brook by the way, the Lord drank during the days of His flesh. And the Scriptures were to Him not only the water of life, they were also the bread of life ; for, as He said, not with a general reference merely, but specifically of Himself, " Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God " (Matt. 4. 4). In the wilderness, an hungered and exposed to the assaults of Satan, the weapon He grasped was the sword of the Spirit, which He found in the Old Testament. And in that hour of crisis, when the darkness had gathered round Him on the Cross, when He looked death in the face, the inmost thoughts of His heart were poignantly expressed in words drawn from the same source.

Then, too, He made the Old Testament the basis of His teaching. Take for example the Sermon on the Mount ; see how it is saturated with the Old Testament. Notice particularly the long section given to the interpretation of the Law, and the assertion that the Law can never pass away. When He is teaching the disciples, He appeals to it. When He engages in controversy with lawyers and scribes, He still appeals to it. He elicits its implications in an entirely original way. For example, the Sadducees asked Him a curious question, and in reply He deduced an argument for resurrection from the words, " I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob " (Luke 20. 37, 38). The Scriptures are always to the Lord the vital thing ; they matter ; they count. There is power in them, the effect of which He expects to see. They are the Word proceeding out of the mouth of God. To Him they are not merely a record, so much material for historical criticism. Theirs is a living message, coming to each new generation of men in living power from the lips of Him who caused them to be written for a generation long since passed away.

The Old Testament in its entirety is the Lord's legacy to us. Notice in Luke 24 how the word " all " is repeated ; in verse 25, " He said unto them, O

foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken ! ” and in verse 27, “ Beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” Once more, in verse 44, “ All things must needs be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me.”

This, then is the character of His testimony to the Old Testament ; this is the place it held in His own life. And it may be worth while to notice here the consistency between this testimony of our Lord and the testimony to Him which came out of Heaven at His baptism, “ This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” These words are taken from the 2nd Psalm and the 42nd chapter of Isaiah. Later, on the Mount of Transfiguration, they were repeated and supplemented by another from the same passage in Isaiah, “ My chosen,” and another from Deut. 18. 15, “ Hear ye Him.” Thus it is in words drawn from each of the three divisions of Holy Scripture, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, He is introduced to His ministry ; the same Holy Scripture to which He Himself afterwards so frequently appealed for His authority, and in which He found His instrument of instruction, and His weapons alike for attack and defence.

What conclusion are we to draw from all this ? Surely it is that whatever the Old Testament was to the Lord Jesus, that it must be to us. Under normal conditions it must be the stay of our souls, our bread and water. It must be our weapon against Satan, however he may attack us. It must be our stay and succour in the hour of death ; the treasury from which we bring our teaching ; our sole weapon in controversy ; and if we use it as He used it we too shall find that light and truth will shine out from it for us as for Him.

Was the Lord's Old Testament Ours ?

Of course, the question arises, is His Old Testament

ours ? Is the Book to which we appeal the Book spoken of by our Lord ? The answer to that question may be supplied in the words of B. F. Westcott, " The Old Testament substantially as we have it was the Bible of the Lord and His Apostles." Or in those of James Denney, " The Scriptures of the Old Testament ...to all intents and purposes as we ourselves have them." This brings us to a striking illustration of the way in which the Providence of God co-operates with the Grace of God. He spoke of old " by divers portions in divers manners." In different scenes, too, and under different circumstances, now to His people in their own land, now to exiles. For it fell out that because of disobedience the people to whom the Word came were scattered abroad. The " times of the Gentiles " began under Nebuchadnezzar. Shortly his empire gave way to another, which in turn gave way to a third. All the wheels set in motion by God to accomplish these things had eventually brought about the exile of the Jews and the spread of Grecian culture and language, so that in the days of the Lord Jesus the Greek language was spoken throughout the known world. The scattered Jews were living amongst Greek-speaking people ; their children were bilingual. The Old Testament had already been translated into Greek for between two hundred and one hundred and fifty years. Thus, in the Providence of God, the Canon of Sacred Writings had already been fixed for more than a hundred years before our Lord Jesus came into the world at all.

In a word, we take the Old Testament from the hand of the risen Lord. And this is our authority for doing so. There are many important questions regarding the Old Testament which will always, and rightly, exercise the minds of believing men, but believing men will remember that the right line of approach to it is that along which the Lord Jesus moved. We stand beside Him during the Forty Days to receive His legacy, and His grace to make it to ourselves, what it was to Him, the Word of God.

PART II.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.**The Coming of the Spirit.**

THE New Testament must be approached in an entirely different way. Our ideas of its nature and purpose must be formed in another fashion altogether. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke to His disciples as they were able to bear it, and declared that much He had to say must be left unsaid. But only for a time. He would send the Spirit of Truth, Who would supplement what He himself had taught them. Four things the Spirit would do : He would teach them all things : He would bring all the words Christ Himself had spoken to their remembrance ; He would guide them into all the truth ; and He would declare to them things that were yet to come (John 14. 26 ; 16. 12-14). Soon after He left them, we find the disciples preaching the Gospel with the Holy Spirit sent from Heaven. For twenty years or so their ministry is, apparently, a ministry of the spoken word alone. The first known Christian document is preserved in the 15th chapter of the Book of the Acts, and I want to ask your attention not so much to the document itself, as to some of the things said about it.

The First Christian Council

was called together to deal with a new and somewhat perplexing situation which had arisen. After hearing the matter at length, James suggested that a letter should be written, and went on to say, " For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogue every Sabbath day." What was in his mind is readily perceived. This public reading, which was as old, at least, as Ezra's

day (Neh. 8. 1-8), gave to the Old Testament a place of authority. Let us, said James, in effect, put our decisions in writing, and let them be read publicly in the churches, and thus, in an unmistakable way, claim that our letter is upon the same level of authority as the writings of Moses. What a bold plan it was, bold in its simplicity! At one stroke this Council lifts its "decrees" (16. 4) into the same position as that conceded to Moses throughout the centuries! More than that. In the letter itself this implied claim to equal authority with Moses is justified by another and even more courageous claim, "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us." So this encyclical is sent out with the approval of the Church at Jerusalem as the mind of the Holy Spirit, through the Apostles and the elders. Accordingly the Apostle Paul and his companion, Silas, carried these decrees on their next journey, causing them to be read publicly in the Churches they visited.

The Epistles of Paul.

When, in the providence of God, circumstances came about in which the Apostle Paul could no longer speak to the converts the things they most needed to hear, another course was open to him: he must write to them. Of the ministry of his pen which has been preserved to us, the Epistles to the Thessalonians may have been the earliest, and were certainly among the earliest. Toward the close of the first of these, chapter 5. 27, he writes, "I adjure you by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the holy brethren." He adopts the expedient the elders at Jerusalem had adopted. In order that his Epistle might have its authority acknowledged in an entirely unmistakable way, he asks that the same thing shall be done with it in the Church as was done with the Old Testament in the Synagogue. That was a revelation from God: so was this. To claim for it the same public recognition was the natural corollary to his statement in chapter 4. 15 that what he wrote was a fresh revelation from the Lord. This seems

to be the explanation of the strongly expressed exhortation, "I adjure you by the Lord." He perceived how much it meant for the future that the New Testament Scriptures, when they came into being, should be received as in every respect of equal authority with those of the Old Testament.

For another suggestive association of a Christian document with the Old Testament, we may look at the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, verse 2 : "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the Gospel of God, which He promised afore by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures." Thus he connects the Gospel with the revelation that had preceded it. Now look at chapter 16. 25 : "According to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets . . . is made known." Literally, the words run 'through prophetic writings.' Here, not the Old Testament, but the New, is intended. In this way the Apostle connects his exposition of the Gospel, on the one hand with the completed Old Testament, and on the other hand with that which was still in process of production, namely, the New. In each case the writings are prophetic in the larger sense of the word, not as being prediction, but as being the utterances of God recorded by the pens of men.

Turning next to 1 Timothy 5. 17, 18 we read : "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially those who labour in the Word and in teaching, for the Scripture saith, "Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn," and, "The labourer is worthy of his hire." The earlier word comes from Deuteronomy, the latter is found in the tenth chapter of Luke. Apparently the Gospel according to Luke was already in circulation at that time, and the Apostle brackets it with the Book of the Law, which had long been acknowledged as of Divine origin and authority, thus emphasizing once more his claim for the new revelation.

The Teaching of Scripture Concerning Itself.

However we may read 2 Timothy 3. 14-17, the passage is an important factor in the teaching of Scripture concerning itself. This is one of the cases in which the old is better than the new; but, please note it, the older translation of the opening words of verse 16 is that found in the text of the Revised Version, the translation in the Authorised Version is the newer, as comparison with the earlier English versions reveals. Here is the passage as R.V., M., gives it: "But abide thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of what persons thou hast learned them." "The things" are the facts of the Gospel, the Life, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ, with which Timothy was made acquainted by Paul and his fellow-workers. He proceeds, "And that from a babe thou hast known the Sacred Writings (letters, *grammata*) which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Clearly the reference is to the Old Testament Scriptures, in which Timothy had been instructed from his early infancy by his mother and grandmother, the function of which was to make him "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." He continues: "Every Scripture (writing, *graphē*) inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.* That is to say, as the Old Testament is profitable to bring a man to Christ, so the New Testament, then in process of writing, but not yet completed, inasmuch as it had the same origin as the Old Testament Scriptures, had the same authority as, and would be equally profitable with, the Old Testament, "that the man of God may be complete." These latter words I would like to paraphrase, 'That

* The statement is not that "Every Scripture which is inspired of God is also profitable," for that would be so obviously superfluous as to be absurd.

the man of God may be up-to-date (*artios*), fully equipped for every good work.' The man whose mind is stored with the Scriptures will never fall behind the times, will never become a "back number;" the only man always up-to-date in every age is the man who stands perfect and complete in the will of God as revealed in the Old and New Testaments. Thus once more does the Apostle prepare the way for those writings, not then completed, and so far as written not gathered into a volume, which, in the fulness of God's time and in the carrying out of His purpose, became the New Testament.

The Deposit.

In 2 Thessalonians, chapter 2. 15, we read, "So then, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye were taught." See also 3. 6, 8; 1 Cor. 11. 2. These are among the earlier letters of the Apostle, and in them he speaks of the faith as "the traditions," for so far, apparently, preaching and teaching were the only methods of propaganda; the ministry of the Word had, so far as we know, been exclusively oral. In his latest Epistles, 'the traditions' have become 'the deposit,' as in 1 Timothy 6. 20. There the revelation was in course of production, the Word of God was coming to men. Here it is complete, or at least approaching completion. It is no longer a tradition being passed on by word of mouth; it has become a written deposit, the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. In 2 Timothy 1. 12, the Apostle writes: "For the which cause I suffer also these things: yet I am not ashamed; for I know Him Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to guard that which I have committed unto Him (lit., "my deposit") against that day." Are we to understand him to mean 'I have committed my soul to Him until that day? Does he not rather intend, 'I know that He (God) is able to guard that which He has committed to me against that day?' This, certainly, is what the word means, as in the margin of the 14th verse

"That good deposit which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us." These three are the only passages in which it (*parathēkē*) occurs. The same Holy Spirit who caused this Word to be written is with and in the believer now, to work conviction of the origin and truth of the Scriptures, to give him some experience of their power, and to enable him to guard them as a good deposit, alike against neglect and attack, until the Lord returns. We need not be anxious for the Bible. It belongs to God, and He is able to take care of it until it has fulfilled all His purposes.

To justify the statement on page 12, that in their rendering of 2 Timothy 3. 16, the Revisers of 1881 simply went back to earlier translations into English, four of these are quoted below.

WICLIF, 1380 : "for al scripture onspirit of god, is profitable to teache, &c."

TYNDALE, 1534 : "for all scripture geuen by inspiracion of god, is proffitable to teache, &c."

CRANMER, 1539 : "all scripture geuen by inspiracyon of God, is proffitable to teache, &c."

RHEIMS (DOUAY) 1582 : "all scripture inspired of God, is profitable to teach, &c."

The Genevan, 1557, was the first of the English Versions to place the verb after Scripture, and thus to make the Apostle assert the Divine inspiration of the Scripture, instead of assuming it, as the other versions, including R.V., do. An assumption is always stronger evidence than a categorical statement would be. This version was not followed entirely by A.V., however; it runs : "The whole Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable, &c."

None of the earlier versions took notice of *kai* (also), which the Revisers were the first to express in translation—a testimony to their care for words which the Holy Spirit teaches.

The writer of this paper is indebted to W. E. Vine, M.A. (Lond.), for the following note :—

Note on the Translation of 2 Timothy 3. 16.

The Apostle undeniably had no need to assert to Timothy the Divine Inspiration of the Old Testament ; that he had assumed in the preceding verse, in his reference to the " sacred writings " (*hiera grammata*). On the other hand, what was of the utmost necessity was to urge upon him the importance of discrimination in regard to professedly Christian writings, for already numerous attempts had been made to write narratives of the Lord's life on earth, which, as Luke's statement (1. 1) suggests, were unauthoritative and ill-informed. Moreover, forged letters to churches were in circulation, purporting to come from Paul himself, as is clear from one of his earliest Epistles (2 Thess. 2. 2, 15). Against these efforts to undermine his work he had therein uttered a warning, as here also he does, indirectly, in one of his latest Epistles. The policy of Rome, followed in a less robust fashion by Anglicanism, in including the Apocrypha with the Old Testament, as sharing its Divine inspiration and authority, shows how needful such warnings were, as indeed they are needful still.

From the point of view of Greek grammatical construction, no legitimate exception can be taken to the R.V. rendering of this verse. (1) as to *pasa graphē*, the translation, " Every Scripture " is equally possible with " All Scripture ; " the selection is dependent upon context and exegesis, and these matters have been adequately taken up in the paper to which this note is an Appendix. In John 15. 2, *pan klēma* cannot be rendered " the whole branch " nor " all (the) branch." In 1 Corinthians 11. 4, 5 the only rendering possible for *pas anēr . . . pasa gunē* is " every man . . . every woman." And this notwithstanding that in Ephesians 2. 21, *pasa oikodomē* should be rendered, as in the A.V., " all the building," and not, as in the R.V., " every building." It is incorrect

and unreasonable to say that the same construction in Greek must always be rendered by the same construction in English.

(2) There is no verb supplied in the original. As its presence somewhere is necessary in an English translation, we are again thrown back upon the exegesis to determine what place the verb should occupy. Some early Greek expositors themselves write the passage as it appears in the R.V., and translations into various other languages follow them, as, for instance, the Syriac, the Vulgate, the Coptic, etc. Among writers and translators, Luther, Wordsworth, Ellicott, and Alford agree with the foregoing in inserting *ēsti*, "is," not before *theopneustos*, "inspired-of-God," but after it. Grammatically either is possible.

(3) As to whether *kai* is adjunctive, signifying "also," or conjunctive, signifying "and," here again the context must decide. There are, it is true, certain passages in the New Testament in which the construction is the same as that of the text under consideration, but which would not make sense if they were translated in the same way. But that affords no argument against so translating the present passage. For example, in Hebrews 4. 13, the meaning plainly is not that "all things naked are also open," and in 1 Timothy 4. 4, the rendering "every good creature of God is also nothing to be neglected" is impossible. If a suggested translation of any passage does not make good sense, it stands self-condemned, and must of course be rejected. Now in 2 Timothy 3. 16 the translation "is also profitable" does give an excellent sense, and one of great importance for the building up of an adequate vindication of the doctrine of the Divine Inspiration of the New Testament.