

# History

## of the Church of God

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### INTRODUCTION

**T**HE Bible is of incomparably more value than all the literature of the world. Composed of sixty-six books, which are not literally, but spiritually united, written in all the forms of literary composition, during a period of at least sixteen centuries, by about forty inspired authors, in all the ranks of society, from the highest to the lowest, in Egypt, Arabia, Palestine, Babylon, Asia Minor, Greece and Rome, indited in three languages, Hebrew, Chaldee and Greek, and translated into about three hundred languages, it unfolds the history of the world and of the church from the beginning to the end of time, contains "the spiritual biography of every human heart," authoritatively declares the character of God and of His salvation, and portrays the opposite conditions of the two divisions of the human race in eternity. It is of equal interest and profit "to king and beggar, to philosopher and child."

During the eighteen centuries that have elapsed since the close of the Scripture canon, not a single statement of the written word of God has been disproved by any human discovery. All the attempts of scoffers and critics and historians and scientists and philosophers to throw discredit upon the inspired volume have only rebounded upon themselves, and illustrated the impiety, virulence, ignorance, shallowness, and conceitedness of their authors. Next after the assaults of the first three centuries upon the Christian Church, the most vigorous, learned, and persistent efforts to undermine the religion of the Bible have been made by some votaries of (1) Criticism, (2) Science, and (3) Philosophy during the last hundred years. Led

on by the enmity of the unrenewed and unspiritual mind against God, and by the strategy of the prince of the power of the air, these assailants of divine revelation have left the solid ground-work of facts, and pretentiously soared into the aerial regions of speculation and conjecture, and, by the ordination of the Most High, they have become so bereft of that common sense or reason which they idolize, as to suppose themselves able by their unsubstantial gossamer theories to overturn the everlasting foundations of the Zion of our God. Eliminate the guess-work from their baseless fabrics, and all their splendid structures are at once reduced to airy nothingness. "The path of every possible hostile theory has been pursued to its utmost limit and has returned upon itself." The conjectures have been changed as often as the seasons, and are either admitted to be mere assumptions, or have been abandoned by their authors or their successors. Along all the lines of intellectual skepticism a disastrous retreat is sounding. As in ancient times, so now, a few men raised by God to occupy the very highest eminences of human thought have become valiant champions for the truth of the Scriptures, and are gifted with wisdom to rout the armies of the aliens. We know, however, from the Scriptures, that these broken hosts will be rallied by the arch-enemy again, but that their final overthrow by the power of God will be signal and complete.

1. CRITICISM—"Niebuhr, the founder of modern historical criticism, recognized the atheistic unbelief of his day as a species of demoniacal frenzy."

As the evening precedes the morning in each of the six creative days, so the Old Testament, the evening dispensation of the world, preceded the New Testament, the morning dispensation. Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, expressly predicts, in his last chapter, the rising of the Sun of Righteousness with healing in his wings. Four hundred years afterwards that blessed and glorious Sun did arise in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, the incarnate Son of God, and usher in the heavenly morning of the Gospel Day. Let it never be forgotten, however, that the Old Testament was the first or evening dispensation—shadowy, rudimentary, introductory, insufficient, imperfect, external, local, formal, temporal, typical and prophetic, though, with interruptions, continually rising in inwardness and spirituality, the feeble

light of God's revelation gradually increasing from the protevangelium in Eden to the perfect day. In the dim light of the old economy, men could not see clearly—"it was difficult to discriminate between evil persons and evil principles—there was much prevalence of personal revenge, a kind of wild justice less evil than torpidity of conscience—prudential motives and temporal rewards were prominent—the dispensation was, not wholly, but predominantly a system of law and justice, and achieved its triumph in demonstrating (as God had designed) its own failure, and in thus preparing the way for a better, a higher, a brighter, a perfect and a final dispensation." Under the inscrutable ordination of the Most High, the nocturnal heavens of the ancient heathen world were enshrouded in black and heavy clouds—the obscure rays of nature and providence, to their sin-blinded, proud, foolish, and idolatrous minds (Rom. 1:20-32) became almost totally eclipsed—and pandemonium reigned throughout Gentile civilization. But, in the land of God's chosen people, under divine ordination, the clouds were more or less rolled away, and the moon and stars appeared and poured down their heavenly light; the types and prophecies fragmentarily yet multifariously declared to spiritual Israel the nature of God and His salvation, and the old patriarchs and elders walked haltingly, yet trustingly, with God, feeling themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on earth, and looking for a better, even a heavenly country. Gradually the ceremonial law was distinguished from and subordinated to the moral law; mere formalism in religion was denounced in the most scathing terms; the necessity of a hearty spiritual worship of God was tremendously emphasized; and the poor, humble and needy soul was directed to the Holy One of Israel as the Lord his Righteousness, his Redeemer, his Strength, and his Salvation, who was to be manifested in human flesh, and smitten by the sword of divine justice for the transgressions of His covenant people, make an end of their sins, make reconciliation for their iniquities, and bring in for them an everlasting righteousness, and then to re-ascend, as the King of glory, to His eternal throne; and, in unchanging faithfulness, as time rolled on, to gather around Him all the jewels of His mercy in that blessed land whose walls are salvation and whose gates are praise; where the Lord shall be their everlasting light, and the days of their mourning shall be ended. "The unrivaled loftiness, authority, directness, and pungency of the Old

Testament Prophets, as well as of the New Testament Apostles, strikes the spiritual mind as a voice from within the veil."

The religious books of the ancient Hebrews are utterly distinct in their tone and essence, their spirit and monotheism, from those of all other ancient peoples. The religions of the most cultivated ancient heathens, the Egyptians and the Greeks, degenerated into the most multitudinous and debasing polytheism, the Egyptians deifying brutes, and the Greeks making gods of such crimes as drunkenness, fraud, sensuality, and murder. The Decalogue is, on the other hand, the moral core of the Hebrew Scriptures which represent God as the High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity. The freshly exhumed and deciphered monuments of ancient Assyria and Egypt are furnished daily corroboration of the historical truth of the Old Testament Scriptures. The original Iranian or Persian religion of dualism, teaching that there were two original, uncreated, creative spirits, one good and the other evil, approached more nearly, both in theory and in purity, to the Hebrew monotheism, but it became mixed and corrupted with Magism, or the worship of the elements. "Monotheism and expiatory sacrifice," says Prof. George Rawlinson, of Oxford University, "were parts of the primitive religion, and except among the Hebrews, these principles were everywhere variously corrupted through the manifold and multiform deterioration of human nature in different races and places." "All the founders of the false religions of the world," says the Duke of Argyle in his magnificent work on the "Unity of Nature," "were themselves nothing but Reformers; and the reforms they instituted have themselves all more or less again yielded to new developments of decay. From Brahminical Pantheism Buddhistic Atheism was an extreme revolt; but the latter has become equally idolatrous and degraded. Scholars who have begun their search into the origin of religion in the full acceptance of what may be called the savage theory of the origin of man—who, captivated by a plausible generalization, have taken it for granted that the farther we go back in time the more certainly do we find all religion assuming one or other of the gross and idolatrous forms which have been indiscriminately grouped under the designation of Fetishism—have been driven from this belief by discovering to their surprise that facts do not support the theory. They have found on the contrary, that up to the farthest limits which are reached by records which are properly historical, and far

beyond those limits to the remotest distance which is attained by evidence founded on the analysis of human speech, the religious conceptions of men are seen, as we go back in time, to have been not coarser and coarser, but simpler, purer, higher—so that *the very oldest conceptions of the divine Being of which we have any certain evidence are the simplest and the best of all*—the very oldest Egyptian and Hindoo compositions speaking of God in the sublime language which forms the opening of the Lord's Prayer; and it has been ascertained that, to some extent, these pure, primitive, monotheistic conceptions still survive even among the degraded and idolatrous tribes of Africa."

Herbert Spencer, of England, the chief human god of nineteenth century infidelity, the impersonation of the most horrible blasphemy of the God of the Bible, the man who pretends to be the most earnest and successful of all seekers after truth, in his last book, entitled "Ecclesiastical Institutions," published in 1886, wherein he professes to derive the religion of mankind from dreams and ghosts, shows an utter ignorance or a willful suppression of the fact of the primitive monotheism of the human race—a fact now thoroughly established and admitted by the ablest scholars in the world—a fact which completely undermines and annihilates the very foundation of all his false theory of the evolution of religion.

The composition of the New Testament in the first century of the Christian era inevitably implies not only the pre-existence of the Old Testament for hundreds of years before that time, but the reverent belief of Christ and His Apostles in the divine inspiration of the Old Testament. Christ is both the main substance and the chief witness and guarantor of the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures. Believers before the flood dimly beheld Him as the suffering but victorious seed of the woman. Abraham rejoicingly saw Him as his own seed in whom all the families of the earth were to be blessed. Jacob viewed Him as the descendant of his son Judah, the Shiloh, unto whom the gathering of the people should be. Moses saw Him as the Prophet whom the Lord God would raise up like unto him, from among his brethren, to whom they were to give ear. Job, in the depth of his affliction, beheld Him as his Divine Redeemer, who should stand at the latter day upon the earth. David saw Him as his own Son and the Son of God, the anointed King of Zion, yet

agonizing before God, and pierced in His hands and feet by the assembly of the wicked, and going down into the dust of death, but not seeing corruption, and rising from all the humiliation of His earthly life, and passing, as the King of Glory, within the everlasting gates, and sitting down on the right hand of God, the almighty and gentle Shepherd of Israel, ruling in the midst of His enemies, making His people willing in the day of His power, making them lie down in green pastures, leading them beside the still waters, restoring their souls, leading them in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake, accompanying them all the days of their lives with His goodness and mercy, giving them the victory over every foe, even death, and making them dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Isaiah beheld Him as Immanuel, God with us, a child born, a son given, whose name was Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace, the sure foundation-stone laid in Zion, tried and precious, and as the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, bruised for our iniquities and healing us with His stripes. Jeremiah saw Him as the Lord our Righteousness. Ezekiel beheld Him as a man and yet as the Lord, of a bright, fiery appearance, seated upon a sapphire throne, and encircled with a rainbow. Daniel saw Him as a little stone cut out of the mountain, breaking in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold of Nebuchadnezzar's image, and as the Son of man coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days, and acquiring universal and everlasting dominion, and as Messiah the Prince, who should come to the holy city, and be cut off but not for Himself, and should make an end of sins, and bring in an everlasting righteousness, and seal up the vision and prophecy, a short time before the destruction of the city and sanctuary. Micah beheld Him as the Ruler of Israel, whose goings forth had been from everlasting, coming out of Bethlehem-Ephrath. Haggai saw Him as the Desire of all nations, coming to the second temple, and filling it with greater spiritual glory than the first temple, and in that place giving peace. Zechariah saw Him as the King of Zion, just and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon a colt the foal of an ass into Jerusalem, betrayed for thirty pieces of silver, pierced by the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but bringing them to mourn with a great and solitary mourning for Him, and opening to them a fountain for sin and for uncleanness—as the Shepherd of God, a man, and yet the equal of the Lord of hosts, smitten by the sword of God, who them

turns his hand of mercy upon the little ones. And Malachi beheld Him as the Messenger of the covenant, the Lord suddenly coming to His temple, and purifying the sons of Levi as gold and silver in the furnace, that they might offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness, and as the Sun of Righteousness arising, unto all that fear His name, with healing in His wings. And Jesus always refers, in the most reverential manner, to the Hebrew Scriptures as the infallible, the literally and perfectly true testimony of God. The same books of the Old Testament that we now receive were then received by the Jews and by Christ as canonical and inspired. Christ, in His sayings recorded in the New Testament, alludes to every period of the Old Dispensation. "He speaks of the creation of man, the institution of marriage, the death of Abel, the flood in the days of Noah, the destruction of Sodom, the history of Abraham, the appearance of God in the burning bush, the manna in the wilderness, the miracle of the brazen serpent, the wanderings of David, the glory of Solomon, the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, the sign of Jonah, and the martyrdom of Zechariah—events which embrace the whole range of the Jewish record." Whatever, therefore, may be said by self-constituted, pretentious, ungodly and ignorant critics in regard to what they presume to call the incredible myths of the Bible, the children of God may be as perfectly assured of the literal truth of every word of the Old Testament, as well as of the New Testament, as if every word had been written by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

"The Fourfold Gospel is the central portion of divine revelation. Into it, as a reservoir, all the foregoing revelations pour their full tide; and out of it, as a fountain, flow all subsequent revelations. The genuineness of the Four Gospels is attested by a mass of evidence, external and internal, altogether unparalleled and quite overpowering. No work of classical antiquity, even the most undoubted, is half so well attested, or can lay claim, one might say, to a tithe of the evidence which the Gospels possess. Every ancient writer referring to the Gospels possessed all four of them. Their genuineness and apostolic authority are attested by the evidence, in the second century, of Papias, Irenaeus, the author of the Muratorian Fragment, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen, who expressly name them; and by the evidence of the Syriac and the old Latin versions of them; and by the evidence, in the latter part of the first century and in the second century, of

Clement of Rome, Barnabas, Ignatius, Polycarp, the author of the Epistle to Diognetus and Justin Martyr, who quote from or refer to them; by the Jewish Greek in which they are written, and which could have been written only in the first century; by the accurate and numerous incidental allusions which they make to the geography and topography of Palestine; the mixed political condition of the people, their manners and customs, religious principles, observances and prejudices, and the sects and parties into which they were divided; by the great number of undesigned coincidences between them; by the altogether unprecedented character of Christ, as the Divine and suffering Savior of men from sin, which they describe, and which no human mind could ever have imagined unless it had been a reality; by the fact that, outside of the Christ whom they portray, there is no harbor of refuge for the tossed and weary soul; and by their fresh and undying vigor triumphantly surviving every form of antagonism for eighteen centuries.”—David Brown, in Jamieson, Fausset and Brown’s Bible Commentary.

It seems certain that at least the Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, thirteen Epistles of Paul, the first Epistle of Peter, and the first Epistle of John, were in general public use in the churches after the middle of the second century.

The fundamental hypotheses of the (German) Tubingen criticism—the most respectable and formidable critical assault ever made upon the New Testament—have entirely dissolved under later and more careful researchers, so that the members of that theological school have fled to secular fields. The composition of all the four gospels, as well as of the epistles, must be referred to the first century, to eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of the life of Christ; not Paul, but Jesus, was the author of Christianity, and there were no radically antagonistic Pauline and Petrine parties in the Apostolic Church.

In his “Beginnings of Christianity,” Prof. G. P. Fisher, of Yale College, clearly points out three unmistakable “water-marks of age” in the New Testament writings, proving that they were composed in the first century of the Christian era: 1st. The Apostles’ fleshly expectation of the speedy coming of Christ in final judgment upon the world. 2nd. The entire absence

of any distinction between the terms presbyter (or elder) and bishop (or overseer)—such distinction arising early in the second century; and 3rd. The New Testament allusions to only two formidable perversions of Christianity, the Judaizing and the Gnostic, both of which developed into open heresy in the second century.

As admitted by the highest legal authorities, thoroughly trained in examining evidence, the few trifling variations (apparent but not real contradictions) of the evangelists confirm, instead of weakening, their testimony, by proving them to have been independent witnesses, between whom there was no collusion. "More formal analytical biographies could not possibly have equaled the four gospels in presenting an authentic and vivid portraiture of Christ; the authors are lost in the subject; they attempt no studied delineation of Jesus, but allow Him, in all their narratives, to stand in the foreground, and speak and act for Himself." This is of course the very next thing to the reader's living on earth when Christ was in the flesh, and actually hearing His words and seeing His deeds.

The latest and ablest scholars place the four gospels in the following chronological order of composition: Mark, Matthew, Luke and John; Mark and Matthew having been written before A.D. 70, Luke before A.D. 80, and John before A.D. 100. "They are plain, unadorned reports of facts in the life of Christ, impressed by a fourfold repetition; especially the great facts of the death and resurrection of Christ are rehearsed to us four times in the minuteness of circumstantial detail. The sense of reality revives within us in reading the gospels, which furnish an effectual antidote against abstraction and speculation. The gospels give us four aspects of Christ, though but one portrait; in Matthew He is, predominantly, the Royal Lawgiver; in Mark, the Mighty Worker; in Luke, the Friend of man; in John, the Son of God. Matthew, the Hebrew gospel, is the true commencement of the New Testament; it represents Jesus as the son of David, the son of Abraham, and continually refers to the fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Mark, Peter's gospel, represents Jesus, as Peter said to Cornelius, as anointed with the Holy Ghost and power, going about doing good and healing all oppressed with the devil; it is the gospel of action—rapid, vigorous and vivid. Luke, Paul's gospel, presents Jesus, not as the son of Abraham only, but as the

son of Adam; it seems broader in its human sympathy, and is pre-eminently a gospel for the Gentiles—the gospel of the Son of Man, its key-note being mercy; the gospel for women, dwelling upon Elizabeth, the Virgin Mary, Anna, Martha and her sister Mary, and the female disciples who ministered to Christ and His Apostles; the gospel for children, dwelling upon the birth and youth of John the Baptist and of Jesus; and the gospel of sacred poetry, the first two chapters being a paradise of fragrant flowers, where the air is resonant with the sweet melodies of heavenly gladness and thanksgiving; the gospel of Luke, says the infidel Renan, is the most beautiful book in the world.”—T.D. Bernard.

The gospel of John dwells especially upon the divine and eternal glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because of this fact, and of its recording the astounding miracle of the resurrection of Lazarus, and on account of its containing several long spiritual discourses of Christ, the especial malevolence of modern skeptics has been most learnedly and laboriously attempted to relegate its composition to the latter part of the second century and to some unknown and unreliable author. But critics have been forced to retreat from A.D. 170 to about A.D. 100, as the time when it was known and used by the church—that is, to the lifetime, if not of John himself, of many of his friends, upon whom such a work, if spurious, could not have been imposed. The internal proof of its authenticity is stronger than that of any classical work of antiquity. Its general structure and contents furnish a convincing argument for its strict historical truth. It contains more touches of an eye-witness than any other of the gospels; it is more observant of chronological order, and, confessedly, the most valuable for consultation in the scientific construction of the Savior’s history. It alone gives an adequate explanation of the manner and time in which Christ’s death was brought about (by His raising Lazarus from the dead, near Jerusalem, after the latter had been dead four days, and thus presenting the strongest proof of His own divinity, and offending the Jewish rulers more than ever before). Even Baur, the founder of the Tübingen school, admits that the author of the fourth gospel was a man of remarkable mind, of an elevated spirit, and penetrated with a warm adoring faith in Christ as the Son of God, and the Savior of the world, and he compares him with the Apostle Paul. Surely such a man could not have fabricated a life of his Master. Baur and Keim give the gospel of

John the highest praise as a philosophy of religion. "Going from the first to the second century," says Professor Fisher, "is passing into a far different atmosphere, descending from the heights of inspiration to the level of ordinary and often feeble thinking, so that setting a work like the fourth gospel in the second century is a literary anachronism." No man but the Apostle John could have written it. "If he did not write it," says Neander, "then its authorship is the greatest of enigmas." "Through the Fourth Gospel, while the Apostle John is never mentioned by name, there moves an unnamed, veiled form, which sometimes comes forward, yet without the veil being entirely lifted; the author must have well known who this person was, and he must have been the person himself, whom it was the whole joy of his life to know that Jesus loved, but who modestly and delicately suppresses his own name." The authenticity of this Gospel was abundantly acknowledged in the second century, and was not disputed till the nineteenth century; the first epistle of John is remarkably similar, and must have been by the same author. The most radical critics admit that the Apocalypse or Revelation was written by the Apostle John; and they maintain that the Fourth Gospel is so much purer, calmer, and more grammatical Greek, that it could not have had the same author. But the latest and profoundest scholars believe that the Apocalypse was written by John, as Boanerges, a son of thunder, about A.D. 69, after the Neronian persecution (Rev. 6:9-11), and amid the terrible and portentous events just before the destruction of Jerusalem (Rev. 11:1-14); and that the Fourth Gospel was written by him some twenty or thirty years afterwards, when he had been residing many years in the Grecian cities of Asia Minor, and had acquired a much freer use of the Greek language, and when he was in extreme old age, and, with memory refreshed by the Divine Spirit, according to Christ's latest promises, he was occupied with tranquil and delightful reminiscences of his beloved Lord. Similarly, Paul's Thessalonian Epistles, which are eschatological, like the Apocalypse, and are, in our New Testament, appropriately the last in order of his epistles to seven churches, were written first. The Apocalypse was, expecting the gospel and epistles of John, and possibly the gospel of Luke and the Acts, the last written of all the books of the New Testament. The John of the Apocalypse and of the Fourth Gospel differ no more than the Socrates of Xenophon and of Plato. John was the first and last of the glorious company of the Apostles, the chosen one of

the chosen three of the chosen twelve, the bosom friend of Jesus, the protector of His widowed mother, the survivor of all the Apostles, and Apostle of love, which is the greatest of Christian virtues. "He was pre-eminently qualified to give to the church the inside view of that most wonderful person that ever walked on earth. In his early life he had absorbed the deepest words of his Master, and treasured them in a faithful heart; in extreme old age, yet with the fire and vigor of manhood, he reproduced them under the influence of the Holy Spirit, who dwelt in him and led him into the unerring truth." "John's Gospel," says Prof. Philip Schaff, in his most valuable "History of the Christian Church," is the golden sunset of the age of inspiration, and sheds its lustre into the second and all the succeeding centuries of the church. It is as simple as a child and sublime as a seraph, gentle as a lamb and bold as an eagle, deep as the sea and high as the heavens—the most original, the most important, and the most influential book in all literature. It lifts the veil from the Holy of Holies, and reveals the glory of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. It unites in harmony the deepest knowledge and the purest love of Christ. While pure Greek in vocabulary and grammar, it is thoroughly Hebrew in temper and spirit, even more so than any other book, and can be almost literally translated into Hebrew without losing its force or beauty. It has the childlike simplicity, the artlessness, the imaginativeness, the directness, the circumstantiality and the rhythmical parallelism which characterize the writings of the Old Testament. The sentences are short and weighty, coordinated, not subordinated. There are no involved periods, no connecting links, no logical argumentation, but a succession of self-evident truths declared as from immediate intuition. There breathes through this book an air of calmness and serenity, of peace and repose, that seems to come from the eternal mansions of heaven."

The first century of the Christian era was, above all others in human history, the age of miracles. Many miracles are recorded in the Old Testament, but many more, performed by Christ and His Apostles, are recorded in the New. The denial of the possibility of a miracle or the supernatural in the universe, is a sheer assumption or arrogation of omniscience, and the equivalent of atheism. Science does not know what either matter or force is, and is therefore incompetent to deny what

Omnipotence can effect with or upon them. The will of man may change the combinations of natural laws to accomplish its purposes; much more may the Divine will. The high and worthy object of the miracles recorded in the Bible was to testify to the divine commission of those inspired teachers who wrought them. As to even the New Testament miracles being myths, as imagined by Strauss, whose theory would annihilate all history, later and deeper historical research has shown that the first century of the Christian era, when Christ and His Apostles lived on earth and the New Testament was composed, was the most critical and skeptical age of the world up to the sixteenth century after Christ—the age of Tacitus, the most philosophical uninspired historian that ever lived—the period of the old age and decline of the ancient world, when childish stories were not believed.

“No other gospels than our four canonical ones were accepted by the church teachers and the great body of Christian people in the second century; the silliness and clumsiness of the so-called apocryphal gospels, which deal mainly with the mother, the nativity and the infancy of Jesus, set off the perfection of the true gospels.”

The numberless undesigned coincidences in the Acts of the Apostles and in Paul’s epistles, as shown in Paley’s “*Horeae Paulinae*,” afford an unanswerable argument for the genuineness both of the Acts and of those epistles. No ancient history has so many surprising internal proofs of having been written by a careful and accurate contemporary author as the Acts of the Apostles. Even Baur admitted the genuineness of Paul’s four epistles, to the Romans, the Corinthians and the Galatians; and his successors have admitted the genuineness of several others of Paul’s epistles.

2. SCIENCE—If it was not below the dignity of God to do His wonderful works in nature as well as in grace, certainly it cannot be below the dignity of even His most intelligent and holy creatures to investigate such works in order to see in them the reflection of their Creator’s glory. The Scriptures make numerous allusions to the works of God in nature, and refer to the kingdom of nature as an image or type of the kingdom of grace. No discovery of science invalidates, but all corroborate and illustrate the truth of the sacred Scriptures. While the faith of God’s elect does not and should not

stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God, it is well enough, in order to help dissipate the vaporings of carnal reason, to know that in the Bodleian Library at Oxford is deposited a manifesto, drawn up and signed at the meeting of the British Scientific Association in 1865, by 617 scientific men, including some of the very highest eminence, declaring their belief in the truth of the Holy Scriptures and the harmony of the Scriptures with all the natural sciences. The most eminent professors in the Universities of Halle, Bonn and Berlin have taken an emphatic stand for the truth of the Bible against German rationalism and infidelity. While the utter falsity of all heathen religions is demonstrated by the absolute monstrosity of their cosmogonies or accounts of creation, the wonderful coincidence of the order of fifteen creative events in Genesis and in science furnishes, according to the law of permutations, 1,307,674,368,000 probabilities that God made a special revelation to Moses of the facts which the latter records, against only one probability that He did not make such revelation.

Prof. Arnold Guyot, of Princeton College, who has had no superior as a scientist in America, says in his last work (published in 1884) on "Creation, or the Biblical Cosmogony in the Light of Modern Science:" "The conclusions of the so-called modern, higher criticism, whose object is to shake the faith in the authenticity of the book of Genesis, have often been fully refuted by more competent men than their authors. The best explanation which science is now able to give of the creation of the universe and the earth, is also that which best explains, in all its details, the first chapter of Genesis, and does it justice. Whatever modifications in our present view of the development of the universe and the globe may be expected from new discoveries, the prominent features of this vast picture will remain, and these only are delineated in the admirable account of Genesis. The same divine hand which lifted, for Daniel and Isaiah, the veil which covered the tableau of the time to come, unveiled to the eyes of the author of Genesis, by a series of graphic visions and pictures, the earliest ages of creation. Thus, Moses was the prophet of the past, as Daniel and Isaiah and many others were the prophets of the future." Scientists, like the founders of the pagan religions, make constant mistakes even in their own chosen and limited departments of investigation; but the inspired writers of the Bible never make any mistakes in either natural or spiritual matters. Science simply measures the

conditions of natural phenomena, and differs, not in kind, but only in degree, from every man's knowledge, and does not at all solve the mystery of our relationship to the unseen and eternal. "These scientific individuals," says Thomas Carlyle in his "Sartor Resartus," "have been nowhere but where we also are; have seen some handbreadths deeper than we see into the Deep that is infinite, without bottom as without shore. Man knows not the Alphabet of the Volume of Nature, whose Author and Writer is God. This fair Universe is in very deed the star-domed City of God; and through every star, through every grass-blade, and most through every living soul, the glory of a present God still beams. But Nature, which is the time-vesture of God, and reveals Him to the wise, hides Him from the foolish."

Science goes quite beyond its province in attempting to explain the first origin or the final destiny of things, and destroys itself in substituting vain imagination for sober truth. Such a course marks the decay of the truly scientific spirit. Even Darwin admits that the actual transmutation of one species into another is not historical, but only inferential. The science of today, like the science of past ages, furnishes not the slightest evidence of the self-origination and self-maintenance of the universe independently of God. The drapery or setting of the supernatural in Scripture, the correctness of the numberless allusions to geography, chronology, history, literature, law and government, customs and manners, is receiving stronger confirmation every day by scientific research; and no skeptic has ever been able to satisfy himself, much less any one else, in his impossible attempt to dis sever the natural from the supernatural in Scripture. "The time over which scientific observations can travel," says Mr. C.H. Spurgeon in his "Clew of the Maze," "even if it be extended into ages, is but as a watch in the night compared with the eternity of God; and the range of human observation is but as a drop of the bucket compared with the circle of the heavens; and therefore it may turn out, in a thousand instances, that there are more things in heaven and earth than were ever dreamed of in the most accurate philosophy of scientists. If it ever comes to a matter of decision whether we shall believe God's revelation or man's science, we shall unhesitatingly cry, "LET GOD BE TRUE, AND EVERY MAN A LIAR.'"

3. PHILOSOPHY—The greatest supernatural event recorded in Scripture is the creation of the universe. As Immanuel Kant, the profoundest of German philosophers, demonstrates in his "Critique of Pure Reason," the universe pre-supposes, for both its origin and continuance, and almighty, intelligent, righteous, infinite, eternal Spirit, whose purposes embrace and provide for all events, and who is Himself a Person, and who may receive personal worship and affection, and reveal Himself to His creatures by personal manifestations. Every man of common sense, whether ancient or modern, heathen or Christian, sees design in nature. It would be far more reasonable to consider a watch an accidental coming together of pieces of metal than to regard the human body or the solar system or the universe as accidental. The vigintillions of probabilities against the fortuitous meeting of all the molecules in all the organs of all the creatures on the earth make it as certain as mathematics can make it that these creatures were brought into being by a wise and powerful Creator. A materialistic, pantheistic, atheistic or agnostic theory of the spontaneous evolution of all things out of nothing—a theory ignoring common sense, hypostasizing logical abstractions into real agents, obliterating all the distinction between Creator and creature, force and law, mind and matter, life and death, consciousness and unconsciousness, right and wrong, good and evil— instead of illuminating, intensifies the darkness which envelops the Great First Cause, by substituting a mysterious, uncaused, omnific stardust for God. A system of godless evolution is but a mass of unproved and unprovable assumptions, and is rejected by very many most eminent scientists as a bundle of romantic dreams. As ably shown by President Noah Porter, of Yale College, this theory destroys conscience, degrades man, strangles science, subjects all things to blind chance, makes the educated more selfish and the uneducated more discontented, is pretentious, dogmatic, specious, sophistical, incoherent and immoral; is not practically believed by those who maintain it, and who thus only amuse themselves with ingenious and frivolous speculations, brilliant but shallow kaleidoscopic fancies; and, finally, as plainly set forth by President J.W. Dawson, of Montreal University, it commits theoretical suicide, disproving itself, by exhibiting, in its present nominal acceptance, not a progression, but a retrogression to the crudest and most uncritical human cosmogonies found in ancient heathen philosophy and poetry, seeking to string all our vast stores of knowledge upon the

thread of an antiquated hypothesis, and indicating, if it were really believed, that the human mind has fallen into a state of senility, and in its dotage mistakes for science the imaginations which were the dreams of its youth. Agnostic or chance evolution rests on two subordinate hypotheses, equally unverified and unverifiable—spontaneous generation (pronounced even by Darwin absolutely inconceivable, and by Huxley and Tyndall altogether unproved), and transmutation of species (pronounced by the profound biologist Mivart irrational and puerile). It is impossible to prove the physical descent of species from each other. The unity between them is not material but immaterial—the unity of plan in the mind of the Creator. Dr. Beale, the foremost microscopist of the English-speaking world, declares that Huxley's protoplasmic theories are in flagrant contradiction with the facts; that no one has proved or can prove that life and mind are in any way related to chemistry and mechanics. The able and learned English scientist, Dr. Elam, says: "That such verbal hocus-pocus should be received as science will one day be regarded as evidence of the low state of intelligence in the nineteenth century." "If man is a materialist," says Professor Tholuck, "we Germans think he is not educated."

"The assumption of atoms," says the distinguished philosopher, Sir William Thomson, "can explain no property of body which has not previously been attributed to the atoms themselves." Says Prof. J.C. Maxwell, of Cambridge University, England: "No theory of evolution can be found to account for the similarity of the molecules throughout all time, and throughout the whole region of the stellar universe; for evolution necessarily implies continuous change, and the molecule is incapable of growth or decay, of generation or destruction (so far as human observation extends). The exact equality of each molecule to all others of the same kind precludes the idea of its being eternal and self-existent, and proves that matter must have been created. The molecules of matter continue this day as they were created, perfect in number, and measure, and weight; and from the ineffaceable characters impressed on them we may learn that those aspirations after truth in statement, and justice in action, which we reckon among our noblest attributes as men, are ours because they are the essential constituents of the image of Him who in the beginning created not only the heavens and the earth, but the materials out of which heaven and

earth consist." "Such is the true outcome of the deepest, the most exact, and the most recent science of our age. A grander utterance has not come from the mind of a philosopher since the days when Newton concluded his Principia by his immortal scholium on the majestic personality of the Creator and Lord of the Universe." "How came the atoms or molecules to be what they are? Who preserves to them their absolute identity, notwithstanding their infinite variety? Who endowed them with their inalienable properties? This and every other fact in nature must previously have been a thought of God. Nature is full of plan, and yet she plans not; she is only plastic to a plan. Morphology and teleology are but revelations of plan, and, as such, have guided to the most splendid of scientific discoveries. Where science assumes a use, religion affirms an author. The prints of divine forethought are scattered over the face of universal nature, and the convictions of a Great First Cause which they engender, are ploughed into the very subsoil of the human mind."—S. Wainwright.

"The process of the negative philosophy," says the Duke of Argyll, "systematically suppress more than one-half of the facts of nature; and as systematically they silence more than one-half of the faculties of man. Moreover, the faculties which they especially try to silence are the very highest faculties of discernment which nature gives to us. In the physical sciences, we know what results would follow from such methods of treatment; every fact has to be carefully kept and weighed, and even then our results are imperfect. Yet in the far more difficult work of interpreting the vast system of nature, with all its immeasurable wealth of mind, the agnostic philosophy deliberately sets aside everything that is kindred with the highest parts of our own moral and intellectual structure. These are all absolutely excluded from the meanings and the sequences—from the anticipations and the analogies of creation. To those who have grasped the great doctrine of the unity of nature, and have sounded the depth of its meaning and the sweep of its applications, this method of inquiry will appear self-condemned."

"Men of science," says Mr. Charles Kingsley, "are finding more and more—below their facts, below all phenomena which the scalpel and the microscope can show—a something nameless, invisible, imponderable, yet

seemingly omnipresent and omnipotent, retreating before them deeper and deeper, the deeper they delve—the mysterious and truly miraculous element in nature which is always escaping them, though they cannot escape it—that of which it was written of old, ‘Whither shall I go from Thy presence, or whither shall I flee from Thy Spirit?’” In the modern doctrine of the conservation of energy, and the convertibility of forces, science insists, with increasing emphasis, that all kinds of force are but forms or manifestations of some one central force, issuing from some one fountain-head of power. Sir John Herschel has not hesitated to say that it is but reasonable to regard the force of gravitation as the direct or indirect result of a consciousness or a will existing somewhere. Such an omnipresent and omnific will is required much more to account for the world of mind than even the world of matter. In his masterly discourse, “As Regards Protoplasm,” bristling in fact and crushing in argument, Dr. J.H. Stirling, of Edinburgh, finely and axiomatically remarks: “This universe is not an accidental cavity, into which an accidental dust has been accidentally swept into heaps for the accidental evolution of the majestic spectacle of organic and inorganic life. That majestic spectacle is a spectacle as plainly for the eye of reason as any diagram of mathematics. That majestic spectacle could have been constructed, was constructed, only in reason, for reason, and by reason.”

The entire agnostic literature is, but a demonstration of the truth of the Apostle Paul’s declaration, that “The world by wisdom knows not God,” and that “The natural man cannot know the things of the Spirit of God, for they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 1:21; 2:14). A godless human philosophy is a wilderness, in which “the pupil’s hold the sieves while their masters milk the he goats,” and which ends in darkness and death and nihilism. We need the light of heaven to shine in this darkness, and direct our footsteps to a “land of rest, with green fields and living rivers.”—J. McCosh. “It is true,” says Francis Bacon, “that a little philosophy inclineth man’s mind to atheism; but depth in philosophy bringeth men’s minds about to religion. For while the mind of man looketh upon second causes scattered, it may sometimes rest in them, and go no further; but when it beholdeth the chain of them, confederate and linked together, it must needs fly to Providence and Deity.”

“The evidences of the truthfulness of the Bible are written where its enemies can never destroy them—in the very framework of the universe; in the earth and in the sky; in the stones and in the stars; in the experiences of millions of human hearts, and in all the records of human history.”—G.S. Bailey.

President J.W. Dawson, in his “Origin of the World,” presents the following learned summary of the religious history of the human race:

“The Turanian or Hamitic races (including the Mongolians of Northern Asia, the American Indians, and the oldest historical populations of Western Asia and of Europe), are remarkable for their permanent and stationary forms of civilization or barbarism, and for the languages least developed in grammatical structure. These people had and still have traditions of the creation and early history of man similar to those in the earlier Biblical books; but the connection of their religions with that of the Bible breaks off from the time of Abraham; and the earlier portions of revelation which they possessed became disintegrated into a polytheism which takes very largely the form of animism, or of attributing some special spiritual indwelling to all natural objects, and also that of worship of ancestors and heroes. The portion of primitive theological belief to which they have clung most persistently is the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, which in all their religious beliefs occupies a prominent place, and has always been connected with special attention to rites of sepulture and monuments to the dead. Their version of the revelation of creation appears most distinctly in the sacred book of the Quiches of Central America, and in the creation myths of the Mexicans, Iroquois, Algonquins, and other North American tribes; and it has been handed down to us through the Semitic Assyrians from the ancient Chaldaeo-Turanian population of the valley of the Euphrates.

“The Aryan or Japhetic races (including the Hindoos, Persians, Medes, Scythians, Thracians, Greeks, Romans, Celts, Teutons and Slavonians—the modern Europeans, in general, and their descendants), have been remarkable for their changeable and versatile character. Their religious ideas in primitive times appear to have been not dissimilar from those of the Turanians; and the Hindoos, Persians, Greeks, Scandinavians and Celts have

all gone some length in developing and modifying these, apparently by purely human imaginative and intellectual materials. But all these developments were defective in a moral point of view, and had lost the stability and rational basis which proceed from monotheism. Hence they have given way before other and higher faiths; and at this day the more advanced nations of the Aryan or Japhetic stock have adopted the Semitic faith; and, as Noah long ago predicted, 'dwell in the tents of Shem.' No indigenous account of the genesis of things remains among the Aryan races, with the exception of that in the Avesta, and in some ancient Hindoo hymns, and these are merely variations of the Turanian or Semitic cosmogony. God has given to the Aryans no special revelations of His will, and they would have been left to grope for themselves along the paths of science and philosophy, but for the advent, among them of the prophets of 'Jehovah, the God of Shem!'

"It is to (the Hebrew branch of) the Semitic race that God has been most liberal in his gift of inspiration. Gathering up and treasuring the old common inheritance of religion, and eliminating from it the accretions of superstition, the children of Abraham at one time stood alone, or almost alone, as adherents of a belief in one God the Creator. Their theology was added to from age to age by a succession of prophets, all working in one line of development, till it culminated in the appearance of Jesus Christ, and then proceeded to expand itself over the other races. Among them it has undergone two remarkable phases of retrograde development—the one in Mohammedanism, which carries it back to a resemblance to its own earlier patriarchal stage, the other in Roman and Greek ecclesiasticism, which have taken it back to the Levitical system, along with a strong color of paganism. Still its original documents survive, and retain their hold on large portions of the more enlightened Aryan nations, while through their means these documents have entered on a new career of conquest among the Semites and Turanians. They are, however, it must be admitted, among the Aryan races of Europe, growing in a somewhat uncongenial soil; partly because of the materialistic organization of these races, and partly because of the abundant remains of heathenism which still linger among them; and it is possible that they may not realize their full triumphs over humanity till the Semitic races return to the position of Abraham, and erect again in the world

the standard of monotheistic faith, under the auspices of a purified Christianity" (Rom. 11:12-15).

It is a mournful prediction of the inspired writers that, in the latter days, formal godliness should increase, while vital godliness should decline; and yet the entire New Testament is a fervent protestation against the bondage of forms as a species of self-righteousness, and a declaration of the all-sufficiency of Christ and the essential spirituality of His religion. To represent our acceptance with God as conditioned upon human works, either apart from or along with faith, Paul regarded as a fatal error, as a dishonor to Christ, because setting the ground of salvation, either in whole or in part, outside of Christ; it would imply that man might truly believe in Christ and still be in his sins and unsaved; it would imply that the work of redemption was not finished by Jesus on the cross. "The false Jewish theory of the law as a source of life and salvation, is deeply imbedded in every natural heart; and, therefore, to combat this fundamental, universal and capital error, God raised up His most eminent Apostle, who was designedly born out of due time, and who did not even know Christ after the flesh, but only was Him in glory, that he might give the church the highest spiritual instruction—who had full experience, in his own heart and life, of the false Judaistic theory—and who was suddenly converted to the gospel that he might teach, with the greatest distinctness, the contrast between salvation sought by law through works, and salvation found by grace through faith, and the mighty change in the world within when the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes a man free from the law of sin and death."—T.D. Bernard, in "The Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament."

"A believing and attentive reader of the New Testament could not have expected that the history of the church after the close of the Scripture canon would have been essentially different from what it has been. The closing words of Paul, Peter, Jude and John forbode direful tribulation for the people of God; the distant hills are black with the gathering multitudes of Apollyon's forces; and the last exhortations of those faithful soldiers, as they are about to fall at their posts, call on their comrades and those who are to follow them to endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, to be faithful unto

death." Opposed and persecuted by the world and its religions, they have, like the prophets and Apostles of old, been slandered, reviled, tortured, put to death, with every imaginable device of cruelty; the survivors have wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, in deserts and mountains and dens and caves of the earth, destitute, afflicted, tormented. But by heaven-born and heaven-bound faith they endured, as seeing Him who is invisible, and choosing rather to suffer affliction in the service of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, having respect unto the recompense of the reward. Thus has the Most High never left Himself without a witness on the earth.

The period of the history of the church of God from the creation to A.D. 100 is not only more than two-thirds of the entire period from the creation to the present time, but it is incomparably the most important part of church history; because we have the infallible light of the Holy Scriptures to guide us during that period, pointing out, without any mistake, the path of the true servants of God, their labors and sufferings, their errors and chastisements, their repentance and salvation. During the remaining period, from A.D. 100 to 1885, I have earnestly endeavored, in tracing the footsteps of the flock of Christ, to be entirely guided, not by the unscriptural writings and opinions of fallible men, but by the light of Divine revelation. The humanly ascribed titles of spiritual father, confessor, doctor, rabbi, pope, cardinal, archdeacon, archbishop, reverend, etc., which are utterly out of place, and unscriptural, and worthless in the kingdom of God, have exercised no influence in the composition of this volume. The tracing of God's spiritual or hidden people through the wilderness of the eighteen centuries since the apostolic age is of course a most difficult undertaking; and I do not suppose, neither do I claim, that I have made absolutely no mistakes in this delicate and important delineation. The Scriptures mentioned under "Footsteps of the Flock," before the Preface, have been, with the aid of the Divine Spirit, as I hope, my chief guide. As for a nominal, natural, outward, or mechanical succession, the God of providence and grace, eighteen centuries ago, forever buried all such claims in the dark, impenetrable gulf of the *seculum obscurum*, or obscure age, immediately succeeding the death of the leading Apostles and the destruction of Jerusalem, A.D. 70, and extending to A.D. 100, as freely acknowledged by the ablest scholars of Europe; the irreconcilable

inconsistencies and contradictions of the leading Roman Catholic authorities in regard to the pretended Romish succession during this period furnish a sufficient illustration of this fact. According to the entire tenor of the New Testament Scriptures, what we are to look for is, not such outward succession, but a spiritual succession of principles, of inward, vital, heartfelt religion. Names are nothing, principles are everything, in the true kingdom of God. In all ages and countries, that people who, in all spiritual matters, acknowledge Christ as their only Head and King, form a part of the true church of God. They have mostly been dissenters from "state churches" and political religions—Christ having declared that His kingdom is not of this world; and, like the prophets and Apostles and Christ Himself, and as he predicted, they have been hated, slandered and persecuted to the death by worldly religionists, not only by heathens and Mohammedans, but even far more numerous by professed Christians, both Papists and Protestants (Matthew 5:10-12; 13:34; Mark 10:30; Luke 21:12; John 5:16; 15:18-21; 16:33; Acts 7:52; 8:1; 9:5; 14:22; Gal. 4:29; 2 Cor. 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:11,12; Heb. 11:35-38; Rev. 7:14; 12:13; 13:7,15,17; 17:6; 20:4); and, instead of persecuting their enemies in return, they have returned good for evil and prayed for them (Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60; Rom. 12:14,18-21; 1 Cor. 4:12; 13:4-8; 1 Pet. 2:23; 3:9). So the inoffensive lamb and dove and sheep, used in the Scriptures to represent the Son and the Spirit and the people of God, are slain and devoured by predaceous animals and birds. These persecuted people of God have had, since the first century, a variety of names, generally given them by their enemies, and derived from their location, or from some of their leading ministers, or from some doctrine or practice of theirs which distinguished them from worldly religionists. Until the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, they were known as Montanists, Tertullianists, Novatians, Donatists, Paulicians, Petrobrusians, Henricians, Arnoldists, Waldenses, Albigenses, United Brethren of Bohemia, and Lollards; many of these were called by the general name of Ana-Baptists (or Re-Baptizers), because they did not acknowledge the scripturalness or validity of infant baptism, and therefore baptized (Paedobaptists said they baptized again) those who joined them on a profession of faith. While these various classes of people differed in minor particulars, and while some of them were in much darkness and error on certain points of truth, they yet held substantially to the same general doctrine and practice—insisting,

above all, upon the spirituality of the church of God and her heavenly obligation to walk in humble and loving obedience to all His holy commandments, both in an individual and a church capacity, and not in obedience to the unscriptural traditions and commandments of men. For the last 365 years (since A.D. 1520) they have been called Baptists (for about the first 100 years of this period, also Ana-Baptists), because they baptized (that is, immersed in water, in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost) all who, upon a credible profession of their repentance towards God and faith in Christ, desired to unite with them in a church capacity. The cardinal tenets of Bible Baptists, being also those held by the apostolic churches, as set forth in the New Testament, and those held, in the main, by the people of God in former times, are:

- The exclusive and supreme authority of the Holy Scriptures;
- The exclusive headship of Christ over His church;
- The three-oneness of God as Father, Son and Spirit; the total depravity of all mankind since the fall of Adam;
- The special and effectual electing love of God the Father, redeeming love of God the Son, and regenerating love of God the Spirit, manifested, in due time, to all the vessels of mercy;
- The baptism of believers, and the partaking of the Lord's supper by those properly baptized and in gospel order;
- Salvation by grace and faith alone;
- A regenerated and orderly-walking church membership;
- The universal priesthood and brotherhood of believers;
- The divine call and divine qualification and equality of the ministry, who feed and care for the flock of God among them, not for filthy lucre, but

of a ready mind, not as being lords over God's heritage, but as ensamples to the flock;

- The independence and yet cordial brotherly association of gospel churches;
- The separation of the church from the world,
  - The non-alliance of the former with the latter in any kinds of religious institutions; such corrupting associations being pointedly forbidden in both the Old and New Testament Scriptures (Ex. 12:38 with Num. 11: 4-6; Ex. 34:12-16; Deut. 7:1-11; 2 Chron. 18:1-3 with 19:2; Ezra 9:1-15; Neh. 13:1-3, 23-31; Ps. 26:4,5; 56:35-43; Isa. 8:12; Acts 8:20,21; 2 Cor. 6:14-18); the separation of church and state;
  - The liberty of every human being, so far as other people are concerned, to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience;
  - The resurrection of the bodies both of the just and the unjust;
  - The final and general judgment of the world by the Lord Jesus Christ;
  - The everlasting blessedness of the righteous, and the everlasting punishment of the wicked.

In giving the history of the church since the birth of Christ I have divided the periods into centuries, the oldest, simplest, and clearest method. All methods of division are more or less arbitrary, artificial and mechanical. The modern German periodologies are endlessly diversified, inconsistent, and confused, and almost destroy any profitable comparison with each other.

As portrayed by the Scriptures of infallible truth, how unspeakably solemn is the condition of man, as he stands upon these mortal shores, before launching upon the great ocean of Eternity! As testified by the Inspired Word, he has entered upon an everlasting career, either of happiness or of misery. Beyond the portals of natural death, into which he may at any

moment be ushered, his estate will be unchangeable. "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall he give in exchange for his soul?" is the momentous inquiry of God manifest in the flesh. May the Lord Jesus, by His blessed Spirit of grace, seal this most solemn question upon our hearts and upon those of our fellow-men; give us to realize the vanity of earthly things, and the supreme and transcendent importance of our spiritual and eternal interests; lead us, under a deep sense of our sinfulness, with weeping and supplication, to the throne of His mercy; enable us to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and to behold Him, by an eye of faith, as pierced and dying for our sins and rising for our justification; may He shed abroad His renewing and transforming love in our hearts, and elevate our thoughts and affections above the corrupting and fading shadows of this world to the pure and enduring realities of heaven; may He create within us a desire to identify ourselves with His afflicted, lowly, despised, and persecuted church and people; enable us to adorn the doctrine of God our Savior by loving obedience to all His holy commandments, and thus prepare us for a blissful and eternal communion with Himself in the General Assembly and Church of the First-Born, who are written in heaven.

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