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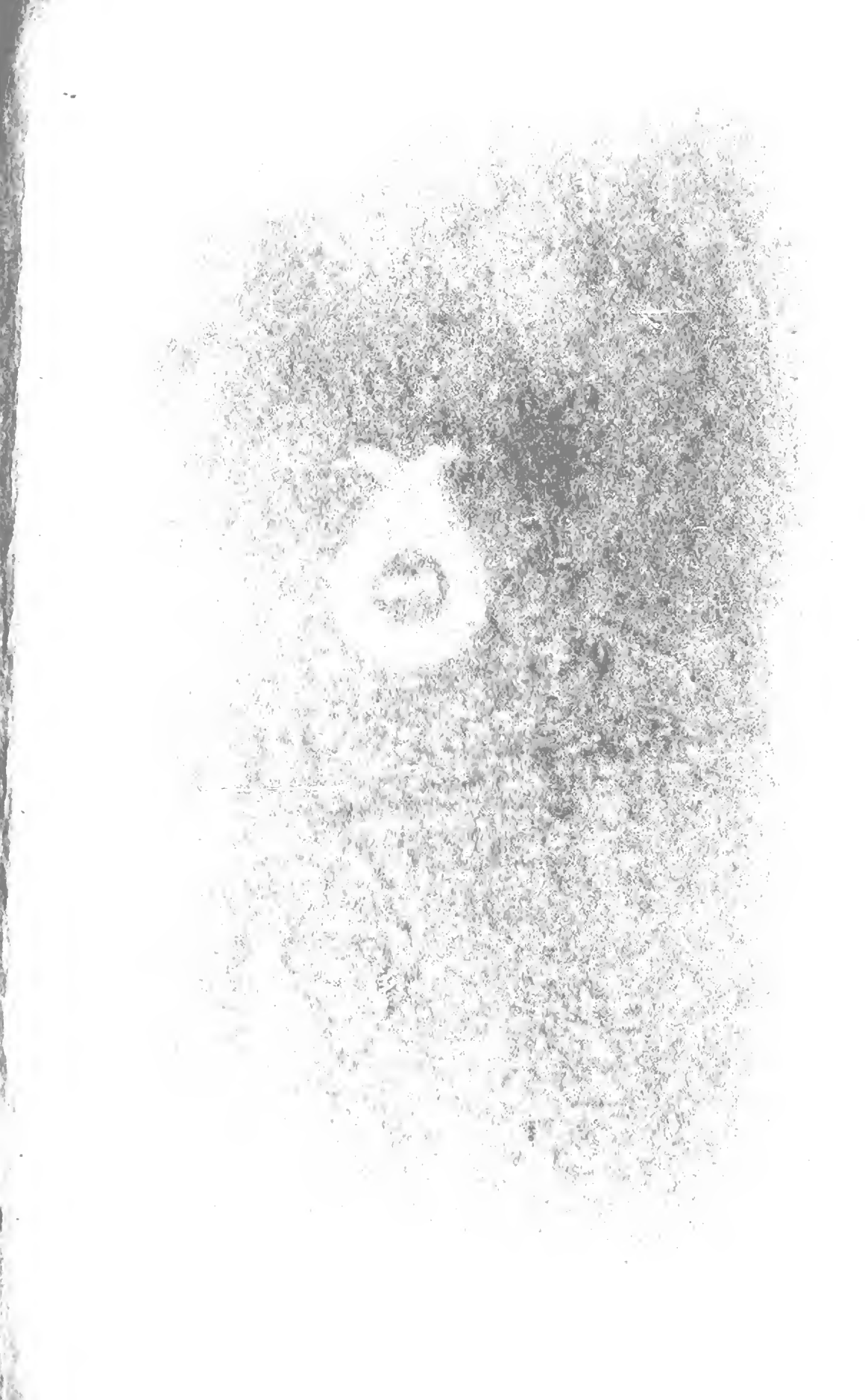
The Authority
of the Word of God



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The Authority of the Word of God

A TREATISE ON THE
CRITERION OF CHRIST-
IAN FAITH AND LIFE

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“Obey my voice and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.”—Jeremiah 7:23.

“O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.”—Isaiah 48:18.

“Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected.”—1 John 2:5.



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Preface

THE necessity of arriving at definite conclusions in regard to the question of authority in matters of faith and life is of paramount importance. Christian people need a permanent authoritative standard to govern their spiritual affairs. Because Christian faith unquestionably rests, builds, and abides on authority. But, on whose authority can saving faith rely with true assurance? Obviously, on the authority of him who gave to the world the Word of truth.

God's Word is authoritative in a twofold sense: first, because of the truthful information which God gives to the world; secondly, because of the unequivocal compliance with his will which God requires of men. The Christian Church from the beginning held and practiced that the Word of God is the authority of authorities for the faith and life of the Church. Among confessions of faith, the Formula of Concord first gave clear and definite expression to this principle. For it says, that the Prophetic and Apostolic Writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule according to which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged and esteemed. But in previous creeds, the same principle is implied, even though it was not expressed in so many words. In fine, the Church to this day teaches and believes that the Word of God is *the* authority in regard to the matters of which it speaks.

In publishing the little book in hand, I beg indulgence with what shortcomings may be discovered in the presentation of the subject. For, the great theme of divine authority of Holy Scripture has therein been but touched upon. That the Lord and Head of the Church may deign to use this humble work in whatever way it pleases him, is the prayer of its author.

W. C. HEYER.

Trevorton, January, 1907.

The Authority of the Word of God

Introduction

HOLY Scripture is the recorded Word of God. Written by divinely inspired persons, the Scripture is God's inspired Word. In contents, the Word of God is incomparably superior to any and all merely human literature: his Word is the authoritative information concerning spiritual things. As regards its essence, the Word of God is truth: it is the embodiment of divine truth in human language. Being perfect truth, it possesses corresponding authority: sovereign supremacy in revealed truth is the prerogative of Holy Scripture. God in the course of time has ever proved his Word faithful and effective, as is observable in its results. God's Word forever expresses and performs his will and pleasure.

I.

The Source of the Authority : God

Synopsis of Chapter.

THE source of the authority of Holy Scripture is God. He speaks to the world, because he is the Lord and God of all that live. This was clearly stated already when God made his covenant with Abraham, the father of believers, the Lord saying to him: "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be upright." In speaking to the world, God did so almost invariably through selected men. But whenever he spoke through his servants, what they said is his Word as truly and perfectly as though spoken by himself immediately without human instrumentality. "My covenant will I not break," says God, "nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips;" for God's Word though spoken by men, is nevertheless gone out of his lips. From the Triune God, then, earth has received the Word of Scripture by the divine inspiration of prophets and apostles. And their writings are the inspired Word of God, and are called Holy Scripture, or the Scriptures.

I.—THE AUTHORITY OF GOD.

God thrones in sovereign majesty far above the changes of time within the holy habitations of eternity. From the exalted throne of glory, he reigns over all the world because of his relation to the world as Creator, Redeemer, and Comforter. He is the Author and Ruler

of all authorities in heaven and earth ; consequently all true and rightful authority is ultimately derived from him who can say to heaven and earth : "I am the Lord thy God."³ Scripture testifies that "God is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords."⁴ He it is that set Christ at his right hand "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."⁵ Being the Son of God, Christ forever enjoyed with the Father the pre-eminence over all things. For he "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation ; for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers ; all things have been created through him and unto him ; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church."⁶ He therefore could indeed promise his disciples, "I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of truth."⁷ It is plain, then, that God, the Triune God, is the ultimate, efficient cause of all authority.

God exercises his authority by his will. For Holy Scripture witnesses : "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth : and none can stay his hand, or say to him, What doest thou ?"⁸ Again it says, "Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power : for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created."⁹ Jesus in his state of humiliation also declared : "My meat is

to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work."¹⁰

God expresses his will in his Word. That is what Christ refers to when he says: "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself."¹¹ God himself affirms of his Word: "It shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."¹² And St. James declares, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the Word of truth."¹³ Many passages of Scripture distinctly state what is the will of God; therefore, the Word expresses God's will.

God inspired his Word to his servants. Thus he explicitly spoke to various of the prophets words like the following: "I have put my words in thy mouth!"¹⁴ Amos moreover exclaims: "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy."¹⁵ Therefore what the prophets wrote, is what God "spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began."¹⁶ And the words and writings of the Apostles fulfill the promise of Christ: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."¹⁷ Jesus in the final revelations given to St. John, distinctly commissioned him, "Write: for these words are faithful and true."¹⁸

From the above facts it follows inevitably that God who dwells on high, exercises authority over all that exists. So, too, the Word which he has spoken and inspired, is authoritative as far as his kingdom extends. For, it is God's will to which the Word gives expres-

sion, and it is his power and authority that upholds and prospers the Word.

As a matter of most significant historical occurrence, God the Lord Jehovah himself is the first writer of Holy Scripture. When the eternal God had with manifest power and majesty descended from heaven to the summit of Mt. Sinai in the sight of the awe-struck people gathered at the foot of the trembling mountain, and when God had bidden Moses to ascend and come into his presence on the top of the Mount,—he handed to Moses the tables of stone on which he, God, had personally recorded his law and commandments. Those stone tables were the first Holy Scripture ever written. In the statutes thus divinely penned on stone, God gives precise expression to his authority over the people of Israel. He simply and solemnly declares: “I am the Lord thy God * * * Ye have seen that I have talked with you from heaven. Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold.”¹⁹ The right to charge the chosen people in this manner, God bases on the fact that he led them out of Egypt, the land of bondage, and that he had revealed himself before their eyes. But this is not the only reason why he proved himself their God; for when he had previously sent Moses to the Israelites, the Lord founded his right to deliver them on the fact that he is Jehovah, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Furthermore, God maintains his right in general to give laws and commandments on the ground that he is, in truth, the Lord, Creator, and Redeemer, not only of Israel, but also of the whole world; as he says by Isaiah: “I am the first and I am the last; and beside

me there is no God.”²⁰ Forever memorable is, still further, the word of Christ telling his disciples: “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth;” and on the basis of this power and authority, he charged them: “Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you;” and then added that great assurance: “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”²¹ No less weighty in this connection is also the admonition: “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed to the day of redemption.”²² Thus God himself has indicated the manifold reasons why he has authority among his chosen people as well as over the entire world. And the facts proving the authority of God are perpetuated in the written Word.

2—THE INSPIRED WRITERS.

For the successive recording of his Word, God in many cases carefully prepared the men chosen by himself. The leading inspired writers were men prominent also in other affairs of importance attending the rise and growth of the kingdom of grace. The fact that all writers of Scripture were inspired of God is amply testified by Holy Scripture. Every inspired writer is true to the time and place he holds in the development of the kingdom of God. Such time and place is the sphere in which the writer moves, from which he is caused to make references to the past and to give forecasts of the future. Where several writers are contemporary, each of them is made to give em-

phasis to some special phase in connection with the general events of the period.

The writers of Scripture are, from their own testimony, known to have been willing servants of the Almighty God. While God did, for instance, compel a Balaam to prophesy what God wanted, though Balaam would fain have earned the gold and silver promised by Balak; and again, while God made a Caiaphas unconsciously prophesy the divine decree concerning Jesus: neverthelless it is true, that the inspired writers were conscious and willing instruments of God. What reluctance undoubtedly at first existed in the case of men like Moses, Jonah, and Jeremiah, St. Peter and St. Paul, all such reluctance was overcome by the Lord, so that they willingly did the bidding of God. And since these writers were thus prepared and willing men, therefore, among other reasons and purposes, God selected them for the recording of his Word. It should also be noted that mere possession of even the most carefully gathered knowledge of current events in the history of God's people could not at all make a person of himself produce "inspired" Scriptures. Only persons moved and inspired by the Holy Spirit, are inspired writers. Therefore Jesus told even the Apostles, although they had been eyewitnesses of his eventful great life, that they should wait for the Holy Spirit, who was to recall to their remembrance the words of Christ and lead them into all the truth, and being thus endowed with the power of the Spirit of God, they were to be Christ's witnesses. Whoever, then, is inspired by the Holy Spirit, is an inspired, trustworthy writer of Scripture. But whoever is not inspired, is not a writer

of Scripture, whatever else he may be. All the writers of Scripture, accordingly, were instruments of the Spirit of God; and all the writings they produced, together constitute but one book: the written Word of God or Holy Scripture.

A few of the inspired writers may now be noted individually, so as to see how, notwithstanding the differing elements of personal character and endowment, and environment, guidance, and era—how all writers were nevertheless led and directed by the Holy Spirit, who performed his work and spoke his Word through each one as the Spirit would.

Upon handing him the stone tables, God instructed Moses to write all that the Lord had told him; namely, all things that pertained to the covenant of God with the Israelites. This fact proves Moses to have been the first of the inspired writers. He, the chosen leader of the covenant people, enjoying an eminence unparalleled in Old Testament times, recorded by divine inspiration the occurrences of his time in connection with antecedent history and with references to the Prophet who was to come. The singularly eminent advantages accorded to Moses, such as the impressiveness of the signs with which God overcame the timid reluctance of Moses, when God called the exile and said: "Who hath made man's mouth? . . . Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say;"²³ further, his being summoned on Mt. Sinai into the very presence of the God of heaven to receive the written law, plans for the tabernacle, together with other instructions; and again, his constant oral intercourse with God within the Holy of holies in the tabernacle—

these advantages explain why Moses stands so high among inspired writers.

King David, during whose reign the Israelites attained the height of their national power, is among the most notable of Scripture writers. He, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," testified of his inspiration: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue."²⁴ Once a mere shepherd boy, David had been elevated by God to the royal throne. From this favored position, which came to him only after years of conflicts with enemies round about, David was divinely enabled to view the coming of the King of glory, whose kingdom is everlasting, and who, foiling all enemies, would lead captive the captivity of the people of God, "that the Lord God might dwell among them."²⁵

When the national power of the covenant people began to wane after idolatry had become general throughout the land, there were sent a number of prophets who preached and wrote of impending dreadful visitations and a subsequent great deliverance; foremost among these prophets is Isaiah. He had already begun to prophesy, when his commission as prophet was very sublimely confirmed by a vision which he had of the Lord of hosts sitting on a high and lofty throne in the heavenly temple, and surrounded by worshiping and adoring seraphim. Isaiah's greatness in Scripture writing consists in his distinct comprehensive prophecies concerning the birth and reign of Immanuel the Prince of Peace, concerning the vicarious sufferings of the Redeemer, and concerning the great redemption which the Lord would bring to his people and to all nations of the world.

Some time after the ascension of the Lord Jesus, his life and ministry became a subject which many persons had "taken in hand to set forth in order": of the inspired writers, St. Luke best records the prevailing conditions and historical events of those days. From the Apostles, he secured careful information about the things connected with the Savior's birth, life, and work. And his faithful association with St. Paul, kept him informed also in regard to the labors of the Apostles. St. Luke's account of the coming of the Holy Spirit is the only extended record in Scripture concerning that most noteworthy event, and imparts special emphasis to the prominence of St. Luke as an inspired writer.

In a manner astoundingly singular, the young Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, was met on the road to Damascus by Jesus of Nazareth, whose Name and work, Saul wanted to exterminate. That appearance of Jesus gave him a glimpse of the wonderful glory of Christ, and drew him to the Savior. Henceforth calling himself Paul, he labored faithfully and untiringly at his new life-work: bearing the name of Jesus through the Gentile world. By word and epistle, he testified of the unsearchable riches of the grace of God in Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. In St. Paul, the Church was given her most active apostle and writer of inspired truth.

From the shores of the Galilean sea, Jesus called, among others, a fisherman named John to be his disciple and apostle. Attached to Jesus from the beginning, St. John gradually became the most devoted follower of the Lord. He was the beloved disciple. Like to none else, it was given him to write the truths that

solve the profound questions as to the person and natures of Christ, and as to the Holy Trinity. Equally remarkable is he because of the series of marvelous prophecies and visions, that were vouchsafed to him, which prophecies pertain to the future of the Church and the coming again of Christ. In brief, St. John is the greatest of inspired writers, because by him are given the clearest and fullest statements of God, of the Savior, and of the kingdom of heaven.

As with the more eminent writers of Scripture, so with all the inspired writers: they are living instruments called by God for his work and moved by him to record what he wanted written. Though the identity of several writers is not stated, their writings are quite as authoritative as the Scriptures whose writers are known. With reference to the degree of prominence of inspired writers, it may in general be noted that their importance varies in accordance with the contents of their writings. However, while the measure of inspiration differs in degree, it is always the same in kind. The inspired writers all, whatever the age and time in which they lived, all alike were but means employed by the Holy Spirit for making known in progressive order the facts of salvation. Men were instrumental as the writers of Holy Scripture, but its author is the Spirit of God.

In the inspiration, God simply put into their mind and their mouth, what his servants were to say and write. This is all that inspired men did; namely, they let God speak through them. For, as the human body is created of God, just as well as the soul that dwells within this temple; so the external Word is inspired of

God, just as well as the internal Word embodied therein. God's way of speaking through men indeed clearly brings out the divers characteristics of the writers; it also proves the power of God for his own purposes to utilize all gifts and talents, with which he has endowed men. It thus is clear what God meant when he said: "I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say;"²⁶ or again: "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth;"²⁷ and still further: "Speak with my words unto them,"²⁸—namely, that they simply were to express things as he verbally guided them. Moreover, plenary divine inspiration is proved invincibly by the most marvelous of all prophecies, the prophecy in other tongues, the chief instance of which occurred on Whitsunday, the day of the Holy Spirit. St. Peter expressly declares the speaking with other tongues on that day to have been prophecy. The same truth about prophecy in other tongues is taught by the passage which St. Paul quotes: "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of strangers will I speak unto this people; and not even thus will they hear me, saith the Lord."²⁹ Jesus himself had declared concerning his followers, "They shall speak with new tongues."³⁰ Furthermore, many quotations in the New Testament refer to the Old Testament simply as the Word of God; speaking of it as the "things whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began."³¹ To make the matter of verbal inspiration still clearer, St. Peter writes: "No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."³² And besides, it is distinctly claimed:

“Every Scripture is inspired of God.”³³ So it must be concluded that the Holy Spirit is the Author of Holy Scripture; whereas every prophet and apostle, who was by him inspired to write, was but a penman of the Spirit of God. His authority is the authority forever enjoyed by the writings divinely produced through the use of human writers as the chosen instruments.

3.—THE INSPIRED WRITINGS.

The writings which by divine inspiration perpetuate the Word that proceeded from the mouth of God, together with other relevant information, are rightly called inspired writings. All inspired writings have a common source of origin; that is, inspiration by the Holy Spirit. And God being the Author of the Scriptures, therefore they truly are, in a general as well as collective sense, the Word of God. Holy Scripture is a perfect record of all the essential substance of the revelations and teachings of God and of his purpose and dealings with men. Still it is not an exhaustively detailed summary of all that God ever said or did by prophets, by Christ, and by apostles. The last verse in St. John’s Gospel, for instance, declares: “There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.”³⁴ Nevertheless, what has been recorded in the Scriptures, is abundantly sufficient for the purpose of the Word as the authorized means of grace.

Though written part upon part, one after another, in the course of many centuries, yet the inspired writings possess unity of thought throughout. The coherence

and unity of Holy Scripture consists in the testimony that it gives of Christ and the redemption of the world by him. Therefore Christ says of the Scriptures written by the prophets: "These are they which bear witness of me."³⁵ And the Scriptures written by the Apostles are a direct fulfillment of the words of the Savior: "Ye shall be my witnesses . . . unto the uttermost parts of the earth."³⁶

The redemption of the world by God in Christ is coherently testified with ever growing clearness from Genesis to Revelations. Genesis already contains the theme of the whole subject-matter of Scripture. With the record of the fall of man, that book records God's promise of the Redeemer by whom the power of the serpent was to be crushed; and likewise, with the account of the call of Abraham, there is interwoven God's promise of him in whom all nations were to be blessed. The people of Israel, later on, were delivered from Egypt for the very reason that God might in time fulfill the promises made from the beginning. The offer of salvation by the law did not disannul the promises, but was to be an object lesson teaching the world the holy will of God, and the sinful, helpless condition of man; so that all might thereby learn the more faithfully to treasure the new and permanent offer of salvation by grace through faith in Christ the Redeemer. Thus the writings of the Old Testament show and record how God prepared the world for the day of redemption and the coming of the promised Messiah. The writings of the New Testament similarly record and establish the fact that the promises of God are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. All the Apostolic writings testify, that the day

of redemption is at hand; that the Redeemer of mankind is come; and that he will give eternal life to as many as will receive him the Christ, the Anointed of God. The Book of Revelations contains the concluding thoughts about the eternal redemption; speaking of the time, when all the nations of earth are become Christ's, and when redemption will be completed by the coming again of the Redeemer to gather together his ransomed people. From Genesis to Revelations, thus, unity of thought, plan, and purpose, based on the theme of redemption, is preserved throughout all the inspired writings. This essential coherence, unity, and power of thought and spirit proves all Scriptures to be the work and product of one great mind: the unsearchable mind of God.

The question with regard to the authenticity of each and every writing of Scripture is simply, Was that writing inspired? Every writing known to have been inspired, is authoritative Scripture. And wherever divine inspiration is known to have produced a writing, all other questions regarding it, such as of supposed sources, human authorship, and present condition of text, are at least subordinate in importance; and so far as the authority of the Word is concerned, they are immaterial: that much is evident from the attitude of Christ and his Apostles. Because, the authority of Scripture has its source solely in the fact of inspiration by God the Holy Spirit.

The inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures is attested by the attitude of the Savior in upholding them as the divine authority which cannot be broken and which must in every jot and tittle be fulfilled. The

Apostles, being, like Jesus, anointed and guided by the Holy Spirit, held precisely the same attitude. This attitude accordingly is the proper one for all who follow the Lord ; for, Christ, the Lord and Head of the Church, is the teacher sent from heaven and is anointed with the fulness of the Holy Spirit, so that he knows what he affirms and whereof he speaks. Concerning the New Testament, like testimony obtains that its writings were given by divine inspiration. Because, Jesus said the Holy Spirit would be given the Apostles to abide with them forever ; and further, because the Spirit of God inspired all true disciples, which includes the recognized colaborers of the Apostles. From the relevant facts, it is evident that the Holy Spirit, dividing gifts severally to each man as he will, selected several of the colaborers of the Apostles to write Scripture. In connection therewith a most important principle is clearly brought out ; namely, as the Apostles had to learn from Christ, before they were inspired by the Holy Spirit for their work of witnessing of Christ, so the companions of the Apostles had to learn from the eyewitnesses of Christ, before they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to witness like the Apostles. St. Luke, for instance, explicitly mentions the Apostles as the source of his information. They alone, in fact, had been with the Lord from the beginning ; and though not eyewitnesses of his birth at Bethlehem, they had a truly reliable witness in the person of Mary, the mother of Jesus, concerning the facts attending the birth and childhood of Christ. The inspiration of the writings constituting Holy Scripture is, moreover, conclu-

sively testified in the inspired Word by him who is its Author.

It may here be observed that the Spirit of God inspired not only the doctrinal and prophetic writings, but the entire Scripture: doctrinal, historical, and prophetic. In the first place, this is evident, because Scriptural history is inseparably interwoven with prophecy. Again, the real though hidden causes of events and the various motives of action, are fully known only to God; he alone, therefore, could communicate true historical records. Further, when Christ said, "Search the Scriptures,"³⁷ he referred to the whole Scriptures: he himself frequently quoted historical facts as well as doctrinal and prophetic statements. And again, by reason of divine inspiration, Scripture is an organic record of what God has said, done, and promised with reference to the redemption of man through Jesus Christ the Redeemer.

Some inspired writings contain parallel records of the same events. In these cases, each writing serves a specific purpose which could best be emphasized by a special writing. Yet, while diverging in certain details, they agree in a general aspect, because, the most important factor, which they have in common, is inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

Whatever slight variations, such as omissions or parenthetical insertions, may have occurred to Scripture by transcribing, such variations do not in the least derogate from the authority of the written Word of God. For, to Christ and his Apostles, the authority of the Scriptures recorded by prophets, was above all questioning; and in truth, present day disciples are not

above their Lord and Master: in this respect, just as with regard to the question of authorship and like matters, the attitude of Christ is decisive. Similarly, the authority of the writings of the Apostles remains in force permanently, till all Scripture is fulfilled. The inspired writings as they have been handed down to the present age, have precisely the same authority which they had in the day when the Holy Spirit inspired them.

Since the last of inspired writers laid down his pen, no more inspired Scripture has been forthcoming. After that day, prophets of Christ were not required; because, the Savior had come. And eyewitnesses were no more living; for, Jesus had ascended to heaven. As the statement of Jesus: "Ye have been with me from the beginning,"³⁸ applied only to the Apostles; therefore it was none but the Apostles whom Jesus made his chosen witnesses to the uttermost parts of the earth, and to whom he said: "The Holy Spirit shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you."³⁹ And again, none but their fellow-workers could claim to have received personal authoritative information from them "which from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word."⁴⁰ Thus the close of the Apostolic era marks the cessation of inspired writing and completion of Holy Scripture. Scripture itself bears the impress of completeness upon its sacred contents. Its opening pages speak of the creation; its middle pages witness the redemption; its closing pages prophesy about the restoration.

In conclusion, the source of the authority of Holy Scripture, the inspired Word of God, is the Lord God

of eternity. He himself is the great Author of the Word given by divine inspiration. While the authority of the Author endures, the Word of Scripture will continue as the unimpaired power of God unto salvation.

II

The Ground of the Authority: the Contents

Preliminary Remarks.

THE Authority of the Word has its ground in the contents of Holy Scripture. What souls need to know in order to obtain salvation, is the information which the Word contains. Therefore, the authority of the Word of God has a definite foundation; that foundation is the sum and substance of the subject-matter of Scripture. God has spoken the Word, revealed the mysteries of his kingdom, given the knowledge of his ways, shown his dealings with men, inspired the truths of redemption,—all for the reason that men should have clear, precise information by which to go in matters of faith, and on which to build.

Apart from the information recorded in the Word of God, there is nowhere any ground of equal authority in matters of the salvation of man. For, that which the inspired Word does not contain, include, and comprehend, is not a part of the Word of God, and does not share its authority, but is subordinate to Holy Scripture. And the divine guidance accorded to those of obedient faith in the Word, is something essentially different from the doubtful inspiration of those who are not obedient to the Word of Scripture. It is certain, that no one else than God could furnish like information of spiritual things—things past, present, and fu-

ture. He, then, being the Author, the contents of Scripture alone forever constitute the authentic ground and rock of authority in the matters of which God's Word treats. And he that said, "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images;"²¹ the same also says, "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word."²² Through and in his Word, God ever from the beginning gave to men whatever information he wanted them to have. Therefore, the Word leads to the wells of salvation, as St. Paul tells Timothy: "From a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."²³

Scripture is a treasury of information. Its contents are incomparably superior to those of any uninspired writings. Being the Word of God, it contains inexhaustible treasures of living faith, eternal life, and spiritual power. Into the Word, God has laid and enwrapped great depths, riches, and fulness of saving knowledge and divine wisdom. From the contents of Scripture, men learn truly to know God and rightly to know themselves. The Word mediates divine grace and spiritual life; it teaches believers how to worship God in spirit and in truth. Unapproachable and hidden indeed is God, the eternal Fountainhead of life; but of them that seek him with their whole heart, he lets himself be found by the hearing and keeping of the inspired Word. The key enabling the seeking heart to find God by means of the Word, is enlightenment by the Holy Spirit.

By noting the contents of Scripture, the nature of the ground that constitutes the vital authority of the Word, will become plain. Spiritual truth is what Scripture inculcates; and that is the kind of truth which the world needs most of all. The Word of God reveals the true relation of God to man, and of man to God, and the relation to both of the Mediator between them. Men are by the Word informed of the redemption with all that is implied therein, as seen in its doctrinal, historical, and prophetic development. The writings of Holy Scripture, accordingly, may be arranged into three divisions: doctrine, history, and prophecy. This classification, however, is not exclusive or separative; for in each kind of Scripture, the others also are more or less extensively represented. It is merely the main feature of the individual writings, which enters into consideration in this threefold grouping of Scripture. Doctrine expresses God's will, works faith, and guides believing men; history shows the fate of the people, who, upon hearing the Word, either loved and accepted or disdained and rejected it; prophecy points to future events, offers promises, and strengthens the hope. The interrelation of doctrine, history, and prophecy is characteristic of the essential unity of Scripture.

In Scriptural religion, doctrine precedes history and prophecy. Doctrine constitutes the deepest foundation ground of the authority of Holy Scripture. "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."⁴ Moses, already, had exhorted the people:

“Hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers giveth you.”⁵ By the Psalmist, the Lord declares: “I will instruct thee and teach in the way which thou shalt go.”⁶ The writer of Proverbs says: “Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed: but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded. The law of the wise is a foundation of life, to depart from the snares of death.”⁷ By Ezekiel, God said: “I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them.”⁸ That knowledge of the truth precedes spiritual freedom is what Jesus taught his disciples when he told them: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”⁹ And St. Paul directed Timothy: “Take heed to thyself and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee.”¹⁰ The priority of doctrine is thus plainly and fully taught.

I.—DOCTRINAL CONTENTS.

Doctrinal principles are given first that the world may know God and obtain eternal life from him. On the basis of this knowledge is founded the life and development of godly people. The character of their life, so far as different from worldly life, is the effect produced by divine doctrines. Development in history of the people of God is conditioned upon the faithfulness with which they live according to the teaching of the Word. The degree attained in relative perfection of life, indicates how far doctrine has been assim-

ilated. While history suffers changes, doctrine enjoys the permanence of revealed truth.

The presentation of Scriptural doctrine was progressive. Truth, as revealed by God, is embodied in this doctrine. For God "willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth."¹¹ Spiritual truth comprises all things which are contained in the revelations of God as recorded in Scripture. As he gave them to his servants, by such degrees were the teachings of Scripture unfolded. It is by doctrine, that God informs the world of what his will is relative to the life of men; which implies the fact, that man received knowledge concerning God and his works, as well as knowledge of human nature with its need of redemption. The Scriptural doctrines show the way of life, which man is exhorted to seek; and they expose the way of death, which he is admonished to avoid. They also enable all men clearly to judge and discriminate what is true, right, and good from what is false, wrong, and evil. In plain instructions and general directions, in laws and commandments, in promises and prophecies; exhortations, admonitions, and warnings; hymns, psalms, and prayers,—the doctrinal principles of Scripture are promulgated. Since immeasurably important matters are involved in sound teachings, men are ever to treasure them. "With thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light."¹² And Jesus refers to the great reward of those that observe his doctrines, saying: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself unto him."¹³

Again, Scripture says: "Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold. For wisdom is better than rubies."¹⁴

Largely, but by no means altogether in a figurative style, doctrinal statements are presented by manifold parables, allegories, similes, metaphors, and other figures of speech. Figurative language serves to make more explicit and emphatic the truths that are thus expressed. Jesus, for instance, very frequently used parables, and St. Mark relates, "With many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it: and without a parable spake he not unto them: but privately to his own disciples he expounded all things."¹⁵

What, now, are the most fundamental doctrines of the revealed religion, Christianity? They are, God created the world; redeemed fallen man; and sanctifies man redeemed.

God created the world. He is taught to be the Creator of all things. Man also is his creature—a creature originally in his very image. How inexpressibly magnificent are the works of creation! What mortal mind can comprehend the vastness of the universe, the number of created things? Radiance of light and gloom of darkness, beauty of life and pallor of death; the countless living creatures inhabiting the earth and the myriads of stars of heaven, the happy hosts in heavenly realms and the sad multitudes in hell, who disobeyed their Maker; men and angels, worlds and heavens—all, all are the work of God. He himself declares, "I have made the earth and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their

host have I commanded.”¹⁶ Truly: “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork.”¹⁷ What marvelous evidence of the greatness and goodness and wisdom of God! And by his providence it is, that all these things are upheld. He knows the needs of every creature, the least as well as the greatest, and he supplies the wants of them all out of his great abundance; for “The Lord shall rejoice in his works.”¹⁸

Glorious as the works of creation are, yet who can adequately portray the transcending majesty of him that is the Creator and Lord of all? The most profound content of Scripture is none other than the testimony concerning God and the Savior. In the course of time, God himself by various servants progressively made known his nature and being. Scripture teaches, “God is a Spirit.”¹⁹ And he is thus taught to be triune and, among other attributes, almighty, eternal, omniscient, omnipresent, immutable, infinite, holy; and in relation to mankind he proved himself righteous, wise, just, true, as well as merciful, gracious, compassionate, good, loving. Knowledge of God is the highest information man can receive. Jesus says: “This is eternal life, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ.”²⁰ The Seraphim that circle about his throne with covered faces ever sing and say of God the Lord Jehovah: “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”²¹

God redeemed fallen man. Redemption is the surpassing theme of Scripture doctrine and, in fact, of the entire Word of God. By redemption, the restoration

of fellowship between God and man is purposed. On the ground of the information which the Scriptures give of the holy Triune God and of the sinful condition of man, the divine plan of the redemption of the world is unfolded with ever growing clearness and precision. It is only where the Word of God is heard and received, that men can learn to believe in God, and that they will begin to long for his mercy. Since the powers of human nature, which are spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, can in no case by works of law or efforts self-designed attain the righteousness of God's law and the newness of spiritual life, therefore God gave his Son to be men's "wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption." In the light of the divine Word, the unregenerate man learns what barrier is between him and God: sin with its curse. From the same Word, the believer gradually derives knowledge of the fact that there is but one divinely ordered way to fellowship with God: atonement with its blessings. So it is that all Prophets and Apostles witness the immutable truth that Christ by the sacrifice of his holy life, atoned for the sins of mankind. "While we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son."²² Christ is "the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."²³ The Lord Jesus himself says that his body and blood was "given and shed for many unto remission of sins,"²⁴ and consequently Jesus maintains, "He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live."²⁵ The Scripture furthermore declares: "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name every one that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins."²⁶ The

redemption, so far as atonement and reconciliation with God is in question, is solely and exclusively the work of the Savior Jesus Christ. He is the mighty Redeemer whose righteousness endureth forever and whose infinite grace is abundantly sufficient for each and every believer. Faith in Christ obtains the eternal righteousness and with it the peace of God.

God sanctifies man redeemed. By regeneration, the redeemed are received into the kingdom of God. Renewed spiritual life in the image of God the Savior is thereby granted to the human soul. Regeneration with its consequent sanctification is the way in which God the Holy Spirit continues and completes the work of redemption. This doctrine is indeed of deep significance. For, could the natural man, even though reconciled and justified, enter into the kingdom of God? No: it is impossible for flesh and blood to appear in the spiritual world; therefore Jesus says, "Ye must be born anew."²⁷ Hence the Holy Spirit, in the washing of regeneration, gives new life to all who are justified by faith in Christ, "that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life."²⁸ It is by their spiritual nature, which is renewed in true knowledge after the image of God, that believers are enabled to do the will of God and to live the new life hid with Christ in God. But without Jesus, even the regenerate cannot live, walk, or work in the spirit; as Christ reminded the disciples, "Apart from me we can do nothing."²⁹ Ever to keep believers in communion with the Lord Jesus, is the loving, earnest endeavor of the Holy Spirit. Only on this condition, Christians can preserve unspotted and pure the

newness of life in the earthen vessel. In one and the same person, the physical or carnal and the spiritual or regenerate natures exist together throughout the continuation of a believer's earthly life. After the death of the physical nature, the person and spiritual nature of the ransomed enter paradise. And on resurrection day, the elect are received into perfect fellowship with Christ and God in the kingdom of eternal glory.

What is true of these fundamental doctrines, applies to all other teachings of Scripture; that is, they describe the work of the Triune God in creating, and redeeming, and restoring the world. Many of these teachings which in the Old Testament are but partially developed, are presented with fulness and precision in the New. Especially the doctrines bearing on atonement and regeneration are more fully stated in the New Testament; while the Old more amply brings out those dealing with creation. In short, the teachings of both Testaments are supplementary to each other: the Old foreshadows the New, and the New fulfills the Old. Having reached their complete and final presentation in the inspired writings, the doctrines of Scripture are of permanent authority in all matters of theology and confession of faith; so that all Christian teaching must accord with the Scriptural ground.

2.—HISTORICAL CONTENTS.

Among the contents of Scripture, history serves very salient purposes. Inspired history shows the real underlying causes of recorded events and the effects which follow upon those causes. It is to be considered not so much a naive recital of mere superficial

circumstances and facts of events, as rather a true exposition of the marvelous way in which God, on the basis of his holy teaching, directs and molds the destiny of men and nations. Determined by the principles of divine doctrine, inspired history in its various stages frequently is at the same time the fulfillment of some previously given prophecy. Furthermore, inspired history clearly unfolds the plan and counsel of God concerning the redemption of the world. This history also proves that there is constant progress in the development of the kingdom of God; even periods of seeming standstill or retrogression serve to further the general growth by maturing inward life or by gathering reserve strength for days of greater advances.

The course of history, of entire nations and of every individual life, is directed by God. In Proverbs, for instance, it is written: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will."³⁰ And how expressive is the passage!—"The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations."³¹ God so guides events that the petition of his children may be fulfilled, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The information supplied by Scriptural history brings to light the true, hidden causes of historical occurrences, such as the divine will and counsel, plans and purposes; it also exposes the contrary schemes, intentions, and aims of the kingdom of darkness: likewise the nature and kind of human motives, designs and devices are plainly unfurled. In truth,

God not only plans, but also works out everything after the counsel of his will: sustaining all that is in harmony with his will and counsel; and overruling all that is contrary to his divine plans and purposes and that boldly defies him, thinking: "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?"³²

Seeing how complex the causes of history are, one may well ask, What man could give a faithful and adequate account thereof? Who could reveal the secret counsels, the divine and the human? "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together . . . Who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know? and beforetime, that we may say, He is righteous? Yea, there is none that showeth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words."³³ Surely, God alone, who searcheth the hearts and reins, to whom nothing is unknown, from whom no one can hide and nothing can be concealed, and who directs and orders all things, —he alone can know and present in truthful, perfect way the intricate causes underlying the history of the world.

In contemplating the general phase of history and its often so amazing developments, unsearchable happenings, and miraculous incidents, it should be remem-

bered that while God, as a rule, orders things after the general principles revealed in his Word, yet many, though by no means all, of his rules also admit of exceptions, where the circumstances or exigencies of a case justify special considerations to be made in the working together of his justice, mercy, and wisdom. That Satan, too, is a factor in history, because he has his work in the children of disobedience, ought be borne in mind by any one noting the complexity of human events. History, moreover, proves the wholesomeness of the divine laws and doctrines; for it vindicates the correctness of doctrine as well as the truth of prophecy. The undeniable facts of history in connection with their true causes, enlighten and instruct men; so that they may the more readily comprehend the truths of doctrine. Consequently, the ground of the authority of the Word of God consists not only of doctrine, but also inspired history with its richly illustrated information concerning especially the final causes of history controlled and ordered by the Lord of heaven and earth.

Scriptural history, then, shows how the life of individuals and nations developed in accordance with the revealed Word of God under the ever faithful guidance of the Holy Spirit. Whatever historical facts are recorded, have a connection directly or indirectly with the course of events that mark the unfolding of the plan of salvation. Foreseeing the attitude of men toward his Word, God planned most comprehensively the ways how to save and deliver his own; for "The Lord knoweth them that are his."³⁴ At their appointed time, the events of redemption took place; and no ac-

cident, that is, nothing unforeseen could occur and interfere with his eternal plans. While part of the historical record exhibits human unbelief as well as men's faith, still, those very things also were written to be for the learning and instruction, warning and admonition, comfort and edification of believers of subsequent ages. The course of history ever progresses. Inevitably, the last day is drawing closer, while one generation after another comes and goes.

The history recorded of the people who lived in the centuries from Adam to Moses, pictures the attitude which men at the beginning took toward God and his Word. The facts show that but few were believing, while the many were wayward and indifferent. Such men as Abel, Enoch, and Noah are typical of the best class of primeval believers. The reason why God caused the flood to come and destroy all people except Noah and his family, is that the world in those days, deeply sunk into wickedness, universally refused to be admonished by the Holy Spirit.

With Abraham begins a new epoch. Following him, the number of believers ever grew; and the prophecies of the Redeemer were being given with greater clearness. In the time of Moses, God still more perfectly revealed himself; fulfilled the promises of giving the holy land to the Israelites; and, by giving his laws and commandments, prepared the way for the eternal redemption through Christ.

The history of the children of Israel differs radically from that of other nations before the Christian era. "What one nation in the earth is like thy people, even like Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people

to himself, and to make him a name, and to do for you great things and terrible, for thy land, before thy people, which thou redeemest to thee from Egypt, from the nations and their gods?"³⁵ The Israelites were the only nation selected by God to prepare men for the salvation by the one Mediator and Redeemer of all the earth. Israel's destiny, for weal or for woe, depended upon the covenant made with them by the Lord Jehovah. He the eternal God had made and chosen Israel; not vice versa! "This people have I formed for myself; they shall show forth my praise."³⁶ Other nations might indeed devise and make themselves gods after their several fancy; but not so the Israelites: they knew and worshiped the only living true God, who so fully revealed himself to the covenant people, while to the other nations he remained "the unknown God." The children of Israel also had explicitly consented to be the chosen people of God and to comply with his words and statutes. On their fidelity to the Word, the laws and ordinances of God, their welfare was thenceforth conditioned. High as knowledge of the true God is above apprehension of humanly devised gods, so high was the inner life of the covenant people above that of the rest of the ancient world. Israel's leaders, judges, priests, kings, and prophets, notwithstanding the falling away of some and the desultoriness of others, were led by the Spirit of God in accordance with the divine counsel and will; similarly were guided all believers of that nation. In explanation of his long-suffering toward them, God said: "I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen,

whither ye went.”³⁷ With the coming of Christ the Savior, God had fulfilled to the Jews all the Messianic prophecies given from Abraham to Malachi. The special calling of the Israelites was thereby solved; for, all nations alike were promised to share the blessings of God in the divine Redeemer.

The details of the history of Israel point out the times of faithfulness as well as waywardness of the nation. They portray the faithful manner in which God by the prophets admonished them all and give a vivid picture of the causes whereby the backsliding nation of the Old Covenant forfeited the grace of God. By the Israelites' history, it is demonstrated, how manifold are the ways of the Lord; how glorious are his blessings and how terrible yet just are the judgments of God; who visits sin even upon his elect, and who rejects hardened transgressors, but guides repenting ones with long-suffering and kindness and crowns them with grace and mercy. Thus passed the centuries of the Jews. But the lessons conveyed, endure.

With Christ, an entirely new history begins on earth: the history of the new covenant people. Upon the dreary night of lonesome longing, there dawned the golden light that came from heaven. Jesus, the Savior of sinners, the Example of the regenerate, is the heart of New Testament history. “I am the light of the world,” he says, “he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”³⁸ All the precious prophecies are fulfilled in him, which speak of the Anointed One; as for instance: “Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise,

with healing in his wings.”³⁹ In person, Christ is transcendently exalted above all mankind; for he is Immanuel, the only-begotten Son of the eternal Father. During his earthly life, he refrained from revealing the infinite fulness of the glory of his eternal godhood. His sole purpose was to do the will of the Father by fulfilling all the law and the prophets in saving and redeeming his people. To accomplish this and make atonement for men, Christ, anointed with fulness of the Holy Spirit, humbled himself in obedience to the will of God even unto death, the death of the cross, following upon his rejection and repudiation by the house of Israel. Different from the attitude of the Jews as a nation, was the bearing of many individuals of that people. A number of believing men and women received and worshiped Jesus as the Messiah of God and Savior of their souls. “But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name.”⁴⁰

When Christ had ascended to heaven, he sent the Comforter the Holy Spirit to give new spiritual life unto his followers. The Spirit of God came to open the sealed door of the soul for the kingdom of heaven, to implant the image of Christ into each believer, and thus to dwell in the heart of faithful ones. Constantly more and more people became persuaded and convinced of the Messiahship of Christ; so that within a few decades after his ascension, Christians in large numbers existed throughout a great part of the then known world. This period presents the facts of the beginning and early development of Christ’s kingdom of grace, the Church. Being reborn of the Spirit of God, the

members of the Church constitute the holy people of God.

The life and character of Christians are best exemplified by the Apostles of the Lord and others of his close disciples. They typify the followers of Christ. What a blessed life they lived! How true was their faith, love, and hope! Today yet, their light shines brightly before the whole world. The earliest Christians are exemplary to all later times; for they were the first chosen and enjoyed in richest measure the grace of God, even apart from the special gifts of the Holy Spirit. What things are recorded of the various persons that accepted Christ, are such as indicate the course of life of Christian people, the faithful as well as unfaithful ones, the steadfast as well as the reprobate. Unto all, God manifested his mercy; upon all, he poured out his grace. They who treasured his grace, were sustained in faith till their end; but they who despised his mercy, were warned of God's wrath to come. "And this is the judgment that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil."⁴¹ But every faithful hearer and doer of the Word is "likened unto a wise man which built his house upon the rock."⁴² How precious the peace of divine forgiveness is and how abiding the joy of spiritual life, that is amply exhibited in what Holy Scripture relates of the early followers of Christ. Since the close of the Apostolic period, the Church has lived on under the guidance of God according to his Word: Christian people will continue on earth, till Christ appears in his heavenly glory; for Jesus says, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,"⁴³

Scriptural history records the events and facts of the preparation and rise of the kingdom of Christ, reflecting especially the beauty of its dawn; Scripture further reveals the complex causes that make and influence history; and Scripture also supplies the examples from life, which illustrate the doctrines and precepts of God. Therefore doctrine and history, each in its own way, embody divine authority in matters of Christian faith and life. The historical information of Scripture which for all times carries with it the greatest weight, consists of such salient facts as present the spiritual attitude of men, the consequences of good aims and evil ones, and the final causes of history determined by the plans of God.

3.—PROPHETICAL CONTENTS.

Most vitally significant of all the contents of Scripture is prophecy. Divine prophecy is an outline of what God has in store for the future. Prophetic utterances are found throughout the Word of God, like jewels strewn in precious ground or imbedded in strata of rock. In doctrinal and historical books of Scripture, the prophecy that occurs is just as pure as that given in books specifically prophetic, where it appears in richest and fullest measure.

What God intended to do, he previously made known by his servants. Thus God asks: "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"⁴⁴ By Isaiah, the Lord remarks, "Behold; the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them;"⁴⁵ and

again, "I have declared the former things from the beginning; and they went forth out of my mouth, and I showed them; I did them suddenly, and they came to pass."⁴⁶ Very emphatic is what Amos declares: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets."⁴⁷ The Revelation of St. John teaches: "These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show unto his servants the things which must shortly come to pass."⁴⁸

Prophecy sustains both the doctrine and history given in Scripture. The prophetic statements of the Old Testament anticipate the fuller presentation of the doctrines of redemption as given in the New; also the New Testament prophecies imply the necessity of maintaining purity and soundness of doctrine, because the development of God's kingdom is conditioned upon teachings given hundreds and thousands of years before. In reference to impending historical events, it is the prophetic utterances of both prophets and apostles, which are strongest evidence that the course of history is not only known to God in advance, but is also directed by his hand in such a manner as to assure the working out in detail of his eternal plans. "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."⁴⁹

The style of language in which prophecies are presented is to a considerable extent symbolical. For in-

stance, Jeremiah, presenting Judah by the symbol of two baskets of figs, one with very good figs, the other with very bad ones, shows thereby what was the character, from God's viewpoint, of the Jews pining in captivity as well as of those reveling at Jerusalem. Christ, when speaking of his death, used the three days' stay of Jonah in the fish as a symbolical sign for the stay in the sepulchre. In the Book of Revelation, much symbolical language is used; for example, such as this: "I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks one like unto the Son of man . . . And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth proceeded a sharp two-edged sword."⁶⁰ Where Scripture itself explains the meaning of symbols used, they are plain enough; others will no doubt become more precisely understood as the history of the Church progresses.

At the time foreseen and set by the Lord, occurs the fulfillment of prophecies. Indication of the exact time of fulfillment, however, is mostly withheld. The prophets themselves but seldom apprehended at what appointed time their prophecies were to eventuate. St. Peter distinctly declares: "The prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them."⁶¹ Still, there are sufficient distinguishing marks specified in every prophecy, which enable men to know and see, when promises of God, in their respective order, become fulfilled.

The various kinds of prophecy are given either in form of promises, or in form of visions, or again, as announcements to individuals and nations. Many are the instances that illustrate how God gave promises to individuals. Among such persons are Adam and Eve, Abraham, Jacob, and David. Of the nations, to whom special announcements were made, the covenant people of Israel received by far the most important prophecies; theirs were the great promises of salvation. But also the nations with whom the Israelites came in contact, had divers prophecies made concerning them.

That element of prophetic Scripture, which above every other proves Holy Scripture a living book, is the prophecy of the Redeemer and his kingdom. From the beginning to the end of the Bible in every form of prophecy, it pervades the sacred pages. As the revelations of God proceeded, this prophecy increased in vividness. In general, prophecy is for all eras of history. Far from having spent its significance, the entire world is yet to see the final, the crowning fulfillments of divine revelation. Those opposed to the kingdom and will of God, can do less to stay the onward course of fulfillment than a child can do to stay the tide of oceans. As a matter of fact, prophecy is even today in course of being fulfilled; for, every moment of the day of grace marks the forward movements of the kingdom of Christ. And the Church can live and progress only as the Lord directs and guides every generation of her members, which he ever does by means of the Word in the ways prophesied in Scripture. The decay of the dominion of Satan and the growth of the kingdom of Christ are distinctly foreshadowed in the prophecies

of God's Word. All eyes in heaven and on earth look as longingly for the second coming of Christ, as the true Israelites of old yearned for his first appearance. In the appointed day, at the moment foreordained, the glorious and awful fulfillment of all prophecy will take place, to the utter dismay of the lost and the unspeakable joy of the saved among mankind. Then prophecy will have found its perfect, heavenly realization.

For the authenticity of the Word of God, all prophecies give irrefutable proof and evidence. And those already fulfilled, vouch for the fulfillment of the remaining ones also. Of all the Scripture contents, prophecy most excellently vindicates itself as well as the entire Word.

It is obvious, in summary, that the deep, true, and abiding ground of the authority of the Word consists of the inspired doctrine, history, and prophecy interwoven into one grand divine fabric of thought by the Spirit of God. This ground, the contents of Scripture, will remain as long as the Word of God exists; that is, unto the end of the world, according to the words of Christ. For people on earth, the authority of the only true and great and eternal God has found full and complete expression solely in the information perpetuated by the recorded Word of God.



III.

The Essence of the Authority: Truth

Preliminary Remarks.

TRUTH is the essence of the authority of the Word of God. The Word is authoritative by reason of its truthful correspondence to the things of which it speaks. Hence, the divine authority of the Word is both rightful and truthful; for, Scripture is of authority not only because God, who inspired it, is rightfully exalted in sovereign majesty over earth and heaven; but also because of the inherent, essential truth of its contents. Ultimately, the authority of Scripture depends upon the omniscience and truthfulness of God; for he is the Author of Scripture. It is the truthfulness of God, which guarantees the truth of the subject-matter of the inspired Word. Being true in substance, form, and method, the Word of God is rightly termed the Word of truth.

As to the omniscience of God, abundant testimony obtains. "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me," David affirms. "Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways."¹ One of the clearest passages is the one in the Epistle to the Hebrews, which says that the Word of God is a discerner

of the thoughts and intents of the heart, and that "there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do."² St. John testifies, "God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things."³ Of Jesus, St. Matthew writes: "Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?"⁴ St. John also describes the meeting of Jesus and Nathanael, saying: "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and saith unto him, Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel."⁵ All the Apostles at another time said to Christ: "Now know we that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee."⁶ There are also specific statements showing that the Holy Spirit, likewise, searches and knows all things. Thus it was prophesied of his relation to the Savior: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord."⁷ And, speaking of the things which have not entered into man's heart, St. Paul declares: "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."⁸ Since God, then, and God alone, being omniscient, has perfect knowledge of all things, therefore he alone is able to speak with perfect authority concerning all things that refer to creation, redemption, and sanctification.

Moreover, besides rejoicing to know that God is omniscient, the true believer exults in the fact that God's holy love of truth is the eternal rock and invincible bulwark of the kingdom of heaven. For of Him, the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Scripture says: "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he."⁹ Further Scripture testifies: "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."¹⁰ And still further, "His truth endureth to all generations."¹¹ And again: "Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages."¹² St. John writes: "If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for the witness of God is this that he hath borne witness concerning his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in him: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he hath not believed in the witness that God hath borne concerning his Son."¹³ Christ expressly declares, "He that sent me is true."¹⁴ And God's truthfulness is irrefutably taught, too, by the passage: "The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God."¹⁵ Perfect truthfulness is justly ascribed also to Christ; thus the prophet says: "In mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David."¹⁶ Accordingly the Savior answered Pilate: "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born and

to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."¹⁷ What is true of God the Father and God the Son is true of God the Holy Spirit; for, Jesus told his disciples: "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth."¹⁸ In like words, St. John writes: "It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth."¹⁹

Therefore it must be concluded that the Triune God, enthroned in heavenly places of everlasting life and light and ruling over all that he has made, is sovereignly qualified, by reason of his omniscience and truthfulness, to teach the true relations, facts, and destiny of all things in his great kingdom, including all mankind. And if ever there is any contradiction between what God says and what man may say, then there applies the remark from St. Paul: "Let God be found true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy words, and mightest prevail when thou comest into judgment."²⁰ Because, "It is impossible for God to lie."²¹ Knowing that God had determined to give to the world knowledge and understanding of truth divine, therefore Jesus assured his disciples of the grand fact: "Ye shall know the truth."²²

I.—TRUTH IN SUBSTANCE.

The term truth as used in Scripture applies to the contents of the written Word of God; for it is this Word, which was given by divine inspiration. The Holy Spirit explicitly led the Apostles of the Lord into the knowledge of the truth and inspired them to write it in Holy Scripture. Christ himself terms the Word of God the truth, when he beseeches the Father,

“Sanctify them in the truth: thy Word is truth.”²³ Quite frequently, Scripture refers to the Word simply as the Word of truth. Self-evidently, therefore, the inspired Word is the truth. It is for this “Word of truth,” that believers do ever long and yearn: it alone truly answers the question, What is truth? Thus David implores God: “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy.”²⁴

Scripture is the essential, consistent, living truth which God by inspiration of the Holy Spirit has given unto men. The very nature of the contents of Scripture is essential truth, so far as it is the revealed and inspired testimony in regard to God, Christ, redemption, and the kingdom of heaven. For the facts, principles, and matters of the spiritual kingdom of God are in themselves pure and perfect truth. As Jesus said, “The Holy Spirit shall lead you into all truth.” Again, when Christ declares: “Search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me,”²⁵ he makes a distinct discrimination between the general contents of Scripture and the cardinal special contents interwoven with it. The special contents are the revealed testimony of Christ and eternal life through him; the general contents are affairs of history as well as general doctrine and prophecy—of course, divine inspiration is what all the contents have in common.

Words of Christ, like this, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father, but by me,”²⁶ imply that truth is so essentially characteris-

tic of his being and calling, that whatever the Holy Spirit reveals of him and his work of redemption, cannot but be divine eternal truth. For, the spiritual facts revealed are immutably true in themselves; they are, moreover, revealed and inspired by the Spirit of truth: the inspired testimony, too, is immutably true in itself. Such testimony is that, for instance, which St. John gives: "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth;"²⁷ again another Apostle writes: "In him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;"²⁸ and again, "This is the true God and eternal life."²⁹

So also, whatever the Holy Spirit witnessed of the kingdom of God and his righteousness, is pure essential truth, because of the very nature of the information. Objectively, spiritual truth, as personified in God and existing in his kingdom, is eternal spiritual perfection of divine being and divine order. Subjectively, it is the inspired Word of their nature and relations. "Thy righteousness," says the 119th Psalm, "is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth."³⁰ What is revealed in Scripture of divine spiritual things, enables men truthfully to apprehend the grace, beauty, and glory of the true God and his kingdom. "He that hath received his witness hath set his seal to this, that God is true."³¹ Thus the nature of the contents of Scripture insures the inherent spiritual truth of the testimony of Christ and redemption, God and heaven.

The Word of Scripture, besides being essential truth, is furthermore true, because of its consistency with the

facts to which it makes reference. In the accurate consistency of statements with facts, the Word of God is altogether trustworthy throughout. For all statements made by Holy Scripture, whether of things spiritual or temporal, things past, present, or future, things hidden or manifest—all its declarations and judgments of things are true to the actual state of affairs. The matters recorded in Scripture all have more or less direct bearing on the theme of redemption. The greatest and most vital fact of all truth made known unto men by Scripture is this: God the Father sent his Son to redeem unto eternal life men that believe. Around this central truth cluster all other truths of the Word of God.

The primary truths of the Word speak of the motive, manner, and purpose of redemption. Eternal love on the part of God is the true motive of the redemption. The life of Christ given in atonement of the sin of the world is its true manner. Everlasting life for every faithful believer, its true purpose. These truths find expression throughout the Scriptures, as, for instance, in the beautiful words: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."³² Like these fundamental truths, the whole body and substance of inspired truth in adequate fulness brings out consistently the real facts connected with the redemption wrought by God. In the days of the preparation of redemption, all things in doctrine, history, and prophecy anticipated the more complete presentation of saving truth in the day of Christ. The fact of redemption remains the supreme truth of the

ages. With Christ and his Apostles, the truth of redemption received its full and final presentation.

Accordingly, then, all doctrinal statements are in true harmony with the facts concerned. Doctrines that serve to give expression to the will of God, or that speak of the working of his heavenly grace, or that treat of his wrath towards children of disobedience, or that in any way refer to the being, counsel, and kingdom of God,—such doctrines are certainly true in every respect to the facts. The same is true in regard to what Scripture asserts about human sin with its consequent death and eternal damnation; as well as what it teaches of the forgiveness of sin, regeneration, and eternal salvation. And also the statements concerning Satan and hell are nothing but a precise, fair, and true presentation regarding the kingdom of darkness. For God who is omniscient and true, has testified these things through his servants. So the Palmist declares of the doctrines of God: “Thy testimonies are very sure;”⁸³ and again, “All thy commandments are truth.”⁸⁴

Historical matters are presented with an equal fidelity to facts. The true causes of events are faithfully brought to light by the Scriptural accounts. The motives that are mentioned as having prompted the recorded actions of men, and the plans and designs connected with them, are accurately shown. Moreover, Scripture in a clear and true way describes the majestic ways of God in his dealings with man: it truly proves that God is the One who builds human destiny; and the course of history brings into strong and grand relief the divine plan of redemption. Indeed, the whole description of that building of human destiny—a

building resting securely on the eternal foundation of God's plans, fitly framed together in its construction during the centuries, and rising upward to the ever more manifest glory of God: that description, the inspired record, is the truest and most adequately consistent account of the history of mankind. The things which God inspired concerning the deeper causes and attending circumstances of any event, are a perfectly correct statement of that event. The causative factors are of most vital moment in occurrences, because they serve instructively to explain the effects which in their various relations constitute history.

Matters of chronology, being subordinate in importance to the events themselves, received sufficient attention in the inspired Word to show truthfully the order and connection of the facts of redemption. Though chronology is subordinate, still Scripture amply enough testifies that God determines and therefore even beforehand knows the day as well as the hour when his works are performed, the length of life allotted to each person, and the true time and duration of the epochs of earthly history. From the viewpoint of redemption, Scripture has given enough consideration to chronology without thereby diverting attention from the general aim: redemption. God's omniscience and truthfulness are perfect also in this regard; hence, Jesus also said unto the disciples: "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority."³⁵ The same is true of statistics, which usually are given but in a general way. Though round numbers are oftener found than precise ones, it must not be inferred that God had no precise knowl-

edge of the facts. The truth in such matters is that God made known the things that are to be known: he who has numbered the hairs on human heads could easily have supplied exhaustive information in regard to such matters, if in his wisdom he had seen it desirable to do so.

What God did make truly known, is: "He hath showed his people the power of his work, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen. The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness."³⁶ St. Peter remarks: "I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and are established in the truth which is with you. For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty."³⁷ Therefore Scriptural history is the perfectly consistent truth of historical facts.

The truth of Scriptural prophecy is as evident as the truth of its doctrinal and historical matters. Prophecy gives a true and consistent outline of the facts of an event, before the time of its occurrence is at hand. By the fulfillment of prophecy in accordance with the words foretold, clearest proof is furnished for the fact that God with certainty knows all things. Though divine promises may stand so long a time before being fulfilled, that one might ask, "Lord, where are thy former loving kindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?"³⁸ nevertheless, because of the immutable truth of prophecy, one may confidently say: "O

Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness unto thy servant."³⁹ Consequently, the prophecies of Holy Scripture are thoroughly consistent with the facts at issue, and are therefore true.

In addition to being essential and consistent truth, the Word of God is also living truth. As Christ says, "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life."⁴⁰ Scripture truth has the power to reproduce within human souls true spiritual life in accordance with the divine type, Jesus Christ. It is in the Word itself that this power of spiritual truth dwells and inheres. It is not merely various experiences of bygone ages and life as it was lived in the past, which are presented by the Word for the instruction of believers, but eternal vital truths are perpetuated therein. For, the day of salvation is still with men and the fountain of grace is open and accessible through the means of grace. Therefore, spiritual power and gifts are truly communicated by the Holy Spirit to them that believingly keep the Word. Because, "The Word of God is living and active."⁴¹ Again, when Jesus declares, "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ,"⁴² it is obvious that the knowledge of God given by Holy Scripture is ever quickening in its effect. The Word of God will go on in its course among men as the living truth, until the whole counsel of redemption has been fulfilled. Well does the Psalmist pray, "Lead me in thy truth and teach: for thou art the God of my salvation."⁴³ Again David says "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."⁴⁴

From what precedes, it is conclusive that the substance or subject matter of Scripture is essential, consistent, living truth. And so long as the Word of God remains the truth which it is, even that long its authority is invincibly established. This divine inspired truth, the soul may calmly and confidently accept; it will faithfully guide one to Christ, the divine way and personified truth and eternal life.

2.—TRUTH IN FORM.

As to logical form, the Word of Scripture is true and consistent. For simplicity of presentation, divine truth is as remarkable as for profundity of substance. So that, however deep Scripture is by reason of its contents, the simplest mind, when enlightened by the the Holy Spirit, can rightly apprehend the thoughts presented, because of the clear and plain terms, statements, and arguments.

Holy Scripture, in its terminology, is true to the objects denoted. This is particularly observable in the formation of words in the original languages of the Word of God; but in effect, it applies also to the translations of Scripture. Terms that, for instance, denote God, as Jehovah, Immanuel, Jesus, are so correctly formed and so true to the idea to be expressed, that no terms could be more correct in form of construction and definiteness of meaning than those of Scripture. Other objects and matters are designated by equally accurate terms, many words used in Scripture having received an entirely new signification by the divine inspiration. Since he has absolutely perfect apprehension of all things, God denoted them by names

expressive of the real nature of the things. God knows by name all that he has made; as Isaiah declares with reference to the host of stars: "He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might."⁴⁵ And Scripture says of Jesus, "He calleth his own sheep by name."⁴⁶ In the Revelation, St. John writes what Jesus promised: "I will give him a white stone, and upon the stone a new name written, which no one knoweth but he that receiveth it."⁴⁷ All terms and words of Scripture, being its component parts, owe their place and meaning in the Word of God to the inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

The propositions of Scripture truthfully express the thought or idea to be conveyed. This applies not merely to indicative propositions, but to the various kinds of logical statements. The use of the divers propositions is manifold. Imperative statements expressing the will of God, for example, do not simply state laws and principles of God's kingdom, but also make obligatory the compliance with them on the part of hearers. Scripture records judgments of all manner of people to show how men think and judge. But above all it correctly, consistently states the thoughts of the infallible mind of God concerning things of human life as well as the spiritual kingdom. And propositions are true, when they in consistent logical form express true acts of judgment. Moreover, the statements of Scripture must be true on account of its attitude; for, it can not do what it condemns in others when it says: "Woe unto them that call evil good and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for

bitter."⁴⁸ Besides, it is explicitly stated of the Word: "The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold."⁴⁹ And God himself says: "A law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people."⁵⁰ Having been inspired by the Holy Spirit, the propositions of Scripture are infallibly true.

Founded on correct and true antecedent judgments, the argumentation of Scripture is obviously perfect in truth. Comparative consistency of propositions, which is the vital requirement of formal truth, prevails throughout Holy Scripture. Therefore, the reasoning of Scripture is firm as a rock, clear as a light, and enduring as heaven: its conclusions follow with inevitable certainty from their respective premises. As syllogistic precision of form, which scarcely ever occurs in any discourse, is not requisite to perfect consistency of propositions, so also logical exhaustiveness of argument need not be carried beyond the purpose in view in order to assure the truth of whatever information is consistently elicited; in this respect, too, Scripture reasoning exhibits true form. The Word of God, further, is no less remarkable for wealth of argumentation than for its richness of figurative language. And the unrivaled strength of Scriptural truth consists in the perfect manner in which its statements are brought to the proper conclusions. So that men may learn from Scripture properly to apply to themselves and their environment the eternal principles of the kingdom of God, and also to guard themselves against deceptive principles and erroneous inferences: the Word

of truth is the only safeguard against fallacy and error. Indeed, "Every Scripture 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."⁵¹ The argumentation of Scripture, which the Holy Spirit inspired complete in terms, premises, and reasoning, is manifestly true and final and infallible.

Being consistent and true in form as well as substance, Scripture logically is the Word of truth. This Word cannot be altered by men, because both substance and form, the internal and the external Word, have been received through inspiration by the Spirit of God. Holy Scripture teaches authoritative, immutable, eternal truth.

3.—TRUTH IN METHOD.

The Scripture method of presenting truth unfolds progressively the plan of redemption. That plan determined the growth of the revelation and inspiration of divine truth. On the basis of the eternal plan, the unfolding of truth proceeded in accordance with definite laws and principles. Development of truth does not evolve and determine plan and laws, but the plan and laws are made to produce and determine the development: "God worketh all things after the counsel of his will."⁵² This thought is maintained throughout Holy Scripture: as, for instance, by Isaiah: "The Lord of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?"⁵³ In the spiritual kingdom as in the natural

world, God's plan determines all laws of growth and development, everything has its season, period, and properties from him, and by him all things are upheld and sustained according to his will, within their more or less strictly set limits of existence: hence, a lily is a lily; an eagle, an eagle; a star, a star; and even of man as regards his ways of thinking, Scripture says, "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working;"⁵⁴ but most evident of all, divine truth is and remains divine truth, because it is revealed and inspired of God in wonderful sequence. Temporal conditions and exigencies did not and could not produce the truth; they were simply the foreseen occasions, when the truths of redemption were to be revealed. Thus having delivered the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, God revealed himself in their sight and taught them his great laws, saying: "I am the Lord, thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt."⁵⁵

Indeed everything connected with the promulgation of divine truth concerning redemption, was ordered and timed by God. This may be seen from what Daniel was told: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."⁵⁶ Neither can any accidents interfere with God's plans; he foresaw everything. Whatever opposed the truth, was overcome or overruled: men "can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth;"⁵⁷ because, God is "great in counsel, and

mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doing."⁵⁸ Moreover God's plan and counsel is permanent and immutable; the writer to the Hebrews, namely, says: "God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us."⁵⁹

By degrees, the true information of God and his kingdom was given at various epochs in the history of mankind. In the ages preceding the day of redemption, only such truth was revealed as is preparatory to the work of redemption. Afterwards, in the day of grace, all the fullness of truth was unfolded. As St. Paul says: "By revelation was made known unto me the mystery . . . which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit;"⁶⁰ the reason for this gradual revelation being "to the intent," he says, "that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God."⁶¹

It must be observed, also, that identical truths are oftentimes inspired to various writers; thereby truths are presented in divers connections and in manifold relations. Furthermore, a writer sometimes speaks of certain truths in more than one of his writings. But,

whatever truth or doctrine is thus frequently and variously stated, becomes the better known in all its completeness and its vital relation to other truths. Consequently, as silver and gold pervade the ore containing it, so divine truth in richest abundance fills the inspired pages; for, even human events are made to illustrate spiritual truths.

Truth in general concerns God and his kingdom. Truth in a specific sense refers to redemption by faith in the atoning death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Truth in particular concerns the doctrines which collectively form the sum of revealed and inspired information.

All divine truth having been successively made known by degrees, has been presented by a perfectly true method. For this method was ever progressive in depth and range of knowledge, it was opportune to time and needs, and was productive of true results. Many centuries, in fact, passed by, before the truth was finally and fully made known. But that does not in any way detract from the perfectness of the method of presentation; it rather emphasizes the completeness and maturity of the truth.

The method by which truth was inspired and the manner in which it accordingly is contained in Holy Scripture, determines the mode in which the truth is to be found and proved. Truth exists in Scripture not as a classified science, but in the order as the revelations, facts, and events themselves occurred and were inspired. "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth; but which the Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual."⁶²

Particular truths being frequently expressed in a number of books of various inspired writers, the true method of teaching complete Scriptural truths consists in gathering and collating from all such writings the respective statements of whatever doctrine is to be established. This method is the one followed by the Lord Jesus and the writers of Scripture. By Scripture, it is called the rule or analogy of faith; and it denotes the statements and teaching of the Prophets, of Christ, and the Apostles as contained in the inspired Word.

The key for complete and irrefutable statement of truth in doctrinal form is contained in the word: "Search the Scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me."⁸³ By searching the Scriptures is meant to note and examine identical statements and facts in order to determine the precise teaching concerning truths to be learned from the Word of God. Moreover, the analogy of faith on the one hand implies every part of Scripture to be consistent with the other parts. And on the other hand it requires that every teaching derived from Scripture must be consistent with all Scripture passages bearing on that doctrine. Now, while many single passages are in themselves clear enough to give distinct expression to their inherent teaching, yet complete demonstration of doctrine necessitates a sufficient number of passages to be adduced that show conclusively the essence of all relevant Scriptural statements on the subject or matter in hand. Interpretation of Scripture indeed requires that texts and passages be treated one by one; but complete proof of doc-

trines requires that an adequate number of texts and passages be cited, whose combined testimony is thoroughly conclusive.

Besides the already quoted verse, "Search the Scriptures," many other passages speak of the method of finding and establishing the truth. Thus God instructed Joshua to make the Word his norm and rule: "Observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left."⁶⁴ Psalm 119 declares: "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."⁶⁵ Isaiah asks, "Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."⁶⁶ Again he writes, "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them."⁶⁷ To the disciples of Emmaus, Jesus spoke as follows: "Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself."⁶⁸ Precisely the same way, he convinced and reassured the Apostles: "These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures."⁶⁹ St. Paul, speaking to the Romans about true prophesying, says: "Let us prophesy according to the proportion of our

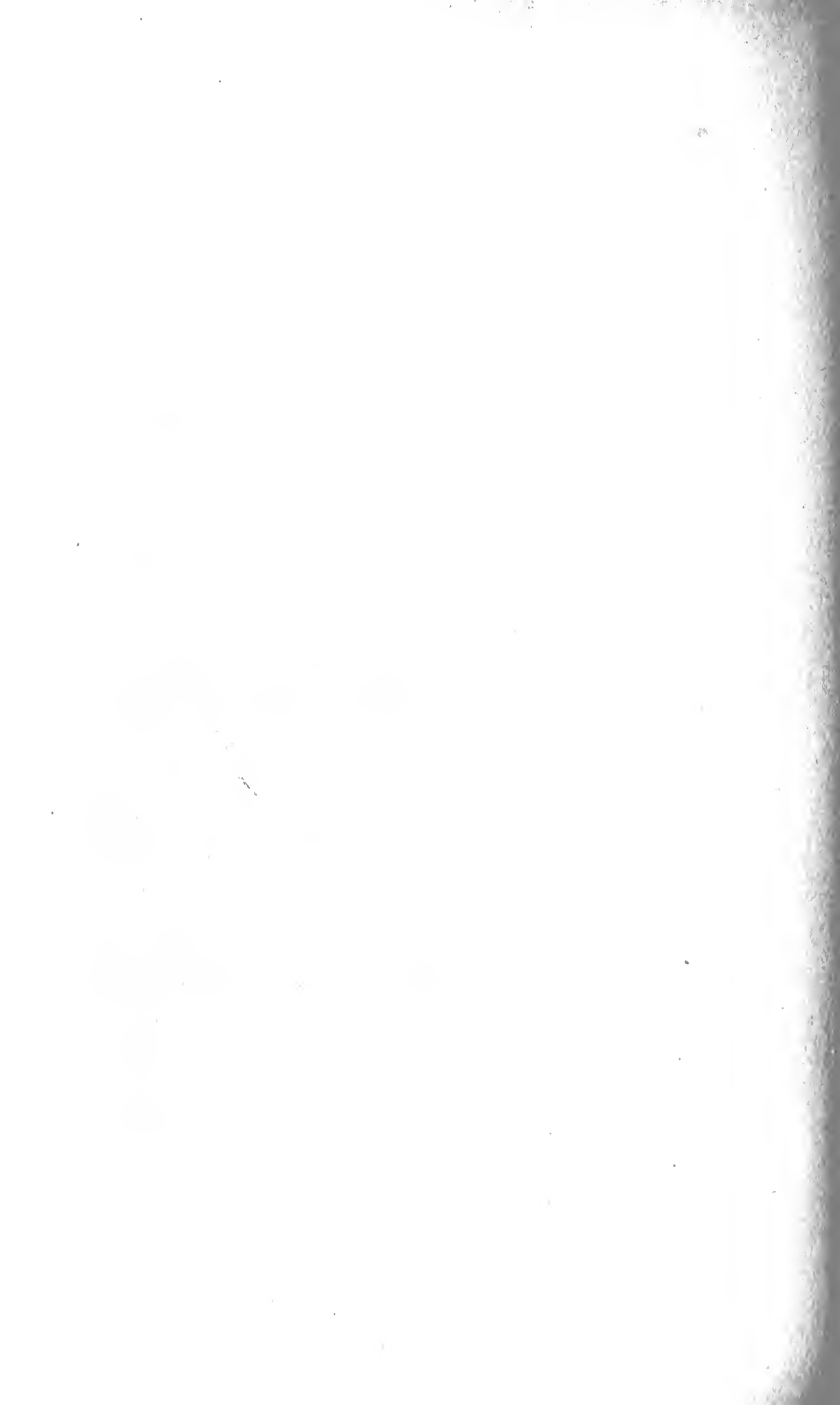
faith.”⁷⁰ At another place in the same Epistle, he writes: “To him that is able to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal, but now is manifested, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, is made known unto all nations unto obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory for ever.”⁷¹ Furthermore, he tells the Galatians: “As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema.”⁷² And he exhorts the Philippians: “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you: only whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let us walk.”⁷³ One of the finest exemplifications of how to apply the rule or analogy of faith, is contained in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the nature of faith is established by reference to examples of believers given in Holy Scripture. St. Peter, too, calls attention to the rule or proportion of faith, by saying: I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance; that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.”⁷⁴ Telling his readers to try the spirits, St. John reminds them: “He that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God, heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.”⁷⁵ St.

Jude exhorts: "Beloved, remember ye the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁶⁶ And Revelations concludes: "Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book."⁶⁷

Proving doctrine by this rule or analogy of faith brings out Scriptural truth in completeness. For, combined passages which treat of the same doctrine enable inevitable conclusions to be drawn concerning such doctrine. The full and complete teaching regarding matters of faith and life may therefore be ascertained wherever judicious care is used in searching the Scriptures. Safely and conclusively, the results of this method exhibit what is Scriptural truth whether in a general, specific, or particular sense. Hence the Word is the authoritative standard and criterion of truth. Though a few statements or facts of one or another writing may seem inconsistent with relevant truths expressed in some other part of Scripture, nevertheless such statements or facts will after all be found truly consistent when rightly understood in the light of the Word. Again, it may be somewhat difficult precisely to ascertain all the principles and rules pertaining to conditions and affairs of the kingdom of God on earth; for instance, because certain exceptions at times exist alongside of various rules. But when the principles and rules have been accurately established, the exceptions to them also can be distinguished. With regard to such matter difficult to be understood, St. Peter observes: "Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto

you ; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things ; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”⁷⁸ It remains unquestionably true, that, if the Holy Spirit opens the understanding of men, they may correctly understand the Scriptures. The Word of God will forever be found the truth, pure and perfect truth, by all whom the Spirit of God leads into the knowledge and understanding of spiritual things. “But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God ; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God.”⁷⁹

The Word of God, to summarize, is the Word of truth. Resting on the omniscience and truthfulness of God, its substance, form, and method are altogether true. The subject-matter as given in Scripture, corresponds to all things and facts at issue. As to form, the Word is logically true. By true method, the various books of Scripture promulgate the inspired truth. Therefore Holy Scripture in every way embodies the authority, with which God has endowed his Word. Pure truth constitutes the ever abiding essence of the eternal authority of God’s Word.



IV.

The Goal of the Authority: Supremacy.

Preliminary Remarks.

THE goal set for the authority of the Word of God, is supremacy. God's Word in itself indeed is true supreme divine authority; but in its course on earth, this authority is being ever more widely recognized and acknowledged. In matters relevant to the kingdom of God, authoritative supremacy belongs only to the Word given by divine inspiration. Being the inspired truth, Holy Scripture is the rule and standard of faith and life. As it is the only authoritative expression of matters concerning God and his kingdom, inspired Scripture is the only authoritative criterion of such matters. The Word truly teaches what is the revealed will of God. Solely the Word of God can bring the will of man to true obedience of faith according to the will of God. Therefore Holy Scripture is the sovereign guide of the human conscience. All information, principles, and rules necessary to salvation, are abundantly given with great clearness and completeness. Things not given by divine inspiration, are altogether subordinate to the Word of Scripture. Though God ever led his Church through the course of centuries, he has given no further inspired Scripture since the last of the witnesses of Christ ceased writing.

Christ's earthly kingdom depends on the Scriptures and grows in conformity with their teaching, for "the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Whatever contradicts Holy Scripture, is erroneous and has no authority from God. To contradict the Word of God in any part is to destroy the unity of faith. The plan of redemption determines all true development of the Church; and that plan has been revealed completely and finally through Christ and his Apostles as recorded in Scripture. In the working out of his plan, God uses only his inspired Word as the authorized means of teaching the relevant truths and facts. The attendant guidance and providence, which God accords to the living Church, is truly consistent with the inspired Word; and he affords such guidance only to them that hear and keep his Word. All men who would come to saving faith, must own and heed the authority of the Scriptures. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," Christ affirms, "He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life."¹ Abraham answered the rich man who wanted his brother to be warned by Lazarus: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead."² Christ declares again: "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"³ This in effect is what the Apostles realized vividly when they said: "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."⁴ And so all are admonished by Scripture: "Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls."⁵

To Scripture belongs sole supremacy in matters of the kingdom of God on earth, because its authority is positive, sovereign, and permanent. Only the Scripture supplies the inspired truth of spiritual things, whether considered purely in themselves or in connection with the history which they determined. The Word of God alone of all earthly literature is sure to outlast the present order of heaven and earth.

I.—POSITIVE SUPREMACY.

Supremacy belongs to the Word of God, because its authority is positive. The Word expresses the truths of the kingdom of God, presenting its light and life, its holiness, power, and glory. The knowledge which it furnishes, is essentially positive throughout. Affirmation of truth is characteristic of the Word. This is pre-eminently discernible from the teaching of redemption. Isaiah, among others, affirms: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!"⁶ Christ, in truth, is the beautiful Savior and good Shepherd, who journeyed to and fro across the mountains of Judea, affirming the good tidings: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel." Where the way for the Redeemer is prepared by repentance, he brings eternal redemption and peace with God. That these are positive truths is plainly to be seen from the words: "God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more

then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”⁸ Therefore, on resurrection day, Christ brought to his disciples the greeting: “Peace be unto you.”⁹ Because its truths are divinely positive, the Word of God affords faith, love, peace, joy, hope, and every spiritual virtue to all that hear and do the will of God, whose will Jesus loved to do. St. John, for instance, says: “We know and have believed the love which God hath in us. God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him.”¹⁰ More or less closely connected with the tidings of redemption, all truths of Scripture contribute their share of testimony concerning the great affirmative spirit of the kingdom of God.

Things, however, which are the necessary negative of the pure truth of God, are essential negation. Sin, which needs to be taken away; the world, which must be denied; the works of the Devil, which must be destroyed: are things which constitute the essential antithesis of all that is righteous, true, and divine. Therefore, while the kingdom of light is positive in nature of being, the kingdom of darkness is negative in character. Accordingly, the Word of Scripture gives expression to facts and truths that are purely and perfectly positive. The authority grounded therein, is likewise positive.

Scripture again is positive in the sense that it furnishes certain and definite information. The Word of God is not a system of knowledge founded upon

presuppositions, assumptions, and hypotheses. It simply is straightforward and direct testimony of truths and facts fully and completely known to God who inspired them. Christ for that reason says to Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and bear witness of that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness. If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?"¹¹ Whatever knowledge is perfectly known, need but be definitely taught and testified. Since Scripture testimony is positively true, even with regard to what it says of the future, therefore its authority abides supreme. It will always be in advance of the times, till all things are fulfilled.

Moreover, since Holy Scripture presents truth as inspired by the Spirit of God, its information is absolutely trustworthy and correct. In this respect, also, the Word is positive. Scripture is uncompromising regarding its statements, because it is infallible. The constitution, nature, and spirit of the heavenly kingdom; the immutable plan and counsel of God; and the divine inspiration of the Word,—conclusively determine the contents and attitude of Holy Scripture. God's Word serves one sublime object: to make known divine truth. St. Paul, therefore, declares of himself and his coworkers: "We are not as the many, corrupting the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ."¹² It is obvious the Word of God to be true to itself, true to its origin, and true to the work it is to accomplish, cannot countenance even the least compromise of the positive position of divine truth. For,

the work of atonement is finished. The counsel of God stands secure. Spiritual truth is immutable. Scripture as a matter of fact is positive in position far above all compromising of the eternal truth. All that the world is asked to do, is to hear and accept the Word. Isaiah exclaims, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken."¹³ Like him, Jeremiah pleads: "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."¹⁴ And Jesus says: "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice."¹⁵ Again, when he declares, "The scripture cannot be broken,"¹⁶ he calls attention to the infallibility of the Word. The inherent positiveness of Scripture thus consists of its absolute truth.

The Word of God, then, is truly positive affirmatively, formally, and inherently. It alone presents to men the perfect positive truth. Its supremacy in authority is consequently manifest.

2.—SOVEREIGN SUPREMACY.

As the Word is in itself sovereign to reason, tradition, and symbols of faith, its goal can be none other than to remain supreme authority and become ever more clearly recognized as such. Over reason, the Word of God is obviously sovereign. For, when it comes even to mere deductive reasoning about spiritual things, there are so great limitations set to the natural intellect, that they cannot possibly be overcome save only by the work of the Holy Spirit.

Christ significantly states that the things he taught, were not comprehended by all: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst

hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight. All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him."¹⁷ For that reason, also, when Simon Peter had confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus answered him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."¹⁸ To the same effect are the words of St. Paul: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged."¹⁹ To discern spiritual things is therefore not the function of the natural reason; because, it is only where reason is guided by faith that spiritual things can be received and apprehended, known and judged. Faith is indispensable to guide and enlighten reason. By faith in Christ, which is the result of the work of God's Spirit in human souls, spiritual things become discernible to man; since by faith the understanding is opened. Human natural reason is thus altogether dependent upon the inspired Word and the accompanying guidance of the Holy Spirit. Only in this way can man come to faith and thereby to real spiritual knowledge of spiritual things. Therefore the aim of God's Word is, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."²⁰ All men do not

arrive at the faith which enables them to discern spiritual matters, because they do not obey the Gospel, the Word of God; as St. Paul writes: "They did not all hearken to the glad tidings. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So belief cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ."²¹ While the things that God has prepared for them that love him are hidden to natural reason, they are understood by souls whom the Holy Spirit guides; as the Apostle to the Gentiles says of those spiritual facts, "Unto us God revealed them through the Spirit."²²

How impotent, consequently, is flesh and blood to discern what are spiritual things! how dependent the reason of natural man!—he cannot even receive the things of the Spirit of God! And, if unable to comprehend, how then can the natural man investigate the spiritual truths of the kingdom of God? Truly, since the natural man by deductive reasoning without the Holy Spirit cannot discern nor know spiritual things, how much less can natural reason by methods of inductive thinking essay to observe, investigate, and establish the knowledge that has become known only in the order in which God revealed, inspired, and taught it to the world? What man cannot experience by receiving and apprehending, he can in no wise of himself establish, like knowledge gained by human powers of reasoning. (But to say, What one cannot experience, one need not believe, is a flat contradiction of Scripture and of all believers. "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen,"²³ and Jesus says: "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."²⁴)

Surely it is plain that the information given to the world by revelation and inspiration of God, was not in any sense attained by human investigation. The true knowledge of those things is closed and sealed against the natural mind—unless, indeed, man will learn it by hearing the divinely inspired Word. To teach and convince that human reason is unable to furnish the truth of divine things and ways, Scripture challenges: "Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them."²⁵ The answer is: "Who hath declared from the beginning that we may know? and before-time, that we may say, He is righteous? yea, there is none that showeth, yea, there is none that declareth, yea, there is none that heareth your words."²⁶ It is the spiritual nature of the contents of Scripture that precludes reason from empirically making its own inductions of the facts inspired. Even the divine determining causes of the course of history cannot be ascertained by investigation of the external facts of events. There is nothing in the material, external facts that will of itself enable natural reason to draw spiritual truths therefrom. Yet the divine determining causes are most vital and indispensable factors in order to an adequate understanding of inspired history. Everything in true investigation of such matters depends upon obtaining the very knowledge of the plans of God, which constitute the irresistible primary causes that shape the course and destiny of God's kingdom. Without knowledge of the counsel and plan and mind of God, all explanations are mere presuppositions and

assumptions. Yet, who could search these things? "Who hath stood in the counsel of the Lord, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word and heard it?"²²⁶ In like words, St. Paul asks: "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counselor? or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever."²²⁷

Reason cannot as much as see God. For, while Moses, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, St. Paul and St. John did behold the majesty of God; it was not because of any investigations on their part that they saw his glory, but solely because of the gracious condescension of God, who revealed himself in such a manner that they could see spiritually. But apart from such exceptional cases, the rule remains: "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour."²²⁸ And Scripture distinctly says that God "only hath immortality, dwelling in light unapproachable; Whom no man hath seen nor can see."²²⁹ St. John moreover asserts: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him."²³⁰ How completely the natural mind is barred from things pertaining to the spiritual kingdom of God, is indicated in the words: "Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him."²³¹

But the fact that the natural man is precluded from making any inductions of spiritual things, becomes most obvious when one remembers that even the Holy

Spirit spoke and revealed only what he heard from God the Father. Christ said of the Holy Spirit: "He shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you."³² And with reference to Jesus, John the Baptist said: "A man can receive nothing, except it have been given him from heaven"; and again, "He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure."³³ How exclusively and reservedly, then, does the Triune God determine what is to be revealed and made known! These facts show conclusively that the natural man of himself cannot establish anything concerning spiritual things; it being a methodological impossibility for reason to presuppose something about facts and things which it does not discern and cannot receive.

Nor can man by his natural reason do as much as to make verification of spiritual things. Because all the salient facts at issue far transcend the narrow bounds of mere natural reason. Since spiritual things must be spiritually discerned, they must also be spiritually verified. Having no access to the world of spiritual facts and truths, natural man can verify nothing about the things of the Spirit of God. It follows that the Holy Spirit alone can supply knowledge of spiritual things; and therefore the inspired Word holds sovereign authority over reason.

The Word of God has supreme authority also over tradition. Outside of the Word, any tradition that obtains to this day, has not been given in verbally in-

spired written form, like Holy Scripture. Certain traditions of church practice and life are clearly traceable to the Apostolic days; nevertheless, traditions which are not explicitly included in the inspired Word, are simply tradition, but not Scripture. Consequently, Holy Scripture has this decisive prerogative over even the purest and best tradition; namely, the verbally inspired form as it exists in the written Word.

True and authentic tradition can always be tested by its consistency with the Word of God. That is the only criterion which Holy Scripture does countenance, and it is the test upon which Scripture insists. For, whatever tradition originates from the guidance of Christ the Savior and the Holy Spirit will in every respect agree with the Word given by inspiration of God. As St. Paul says: "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye are otherwise minded, even this shall God reveal unto you: only whereunto we have already attained, by that same rule let us walk."³⁴ In no case, souls are to accept or believe anything that contradicts the written Word given by inspiration. The above quoted Apostle, for instance, writes elsewhere: "Be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled; either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is now present; let no man beguile you in any wise."³⁵ If any tradition be found to contradict the rule of faith, such tradition is spurious. In order to protect believers against that which is deceptive, Scripture says: "If any man teacheth a different doctrine, and consenteth not to sound words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is ac-

ording to godliness; he is puffed up, knowing nothing."³⁶ To distinguish what is true from what is false, a standard of comparison ever is necessary; that permanent standard is the Word of God. That which is consistent with Scripture, is true tradition, and that which is inconsistent therewith is not true. Therefore, since Holy Scripture is the divine truth revealed as well as verbally inspired by God, its supremacy in authority over tradition is sovereign.

Symbols of faith are likewise subordinate to the authority of the Word of God. Because symbols of faith express human subjective experiences of the divine objective faith. Those experiences indeed differ, on account of the differences in human receptivity of the Word; nevertheless, truly Scriptural expression of faith remains identical as long as earth and heaven abide: moreover it is a fact that the experiences of faith by many individual souls agree concerning general doctrines, whenever Holy Scripture alone is the guide of faith. Such doctrines, when properly expressed by representative believers, constitute symbols or confessions of faith. In case these general doctrines truly express the correct Scriptural teaching, then there is agreement, consistency, between the subjective faith of believers and the objective faith of the Word of God. But if there should be disagreement between the faith expressed in confessions of faith and the faith taught by Holy Scripture; then it is the confessions of faith which are wrong and not the Scripture. For there is this distinction ever to be observed: Holy Scripture is verbally inspired of God; but confessions of faith are not so inspired.

Symbols of faith are subjective, so far as they express the experiences of faith; but objective, so far as they represent the position of the Church. It is self-evident, furthermore, that since the facts of Scripture faith are the source and cause of the experiences of faith in souls, therefore the human faith should be truly consistent with the Scriptural faith that produced it. For that reason, it is necessary to verify symbols of faith by comparing them with the only rule and standard God has given for that purpose; namely, the Word of God. In this way, the Samaritans verified and confirmed what the woman whom Jesus instructed at Jacob's well had told them: "Many more believed because of his word; and they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking: for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."³⁷ Confessions of faith are capable of such verifications, because they are the expression of experiences that are subject to constant growth and development as centuries come and go. And Holy Scripture forever is the true criterion, as it is the only rule and standard divinely ordered and given for such purposes. Thus, when Christ told his Apostles to make disciples of all nations, he expressly added: "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."³⁸ And he said in prayer to his heavenly Father: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word."³⁹ In correspondence with these words, St. Paul writes: "Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching."⁴⁰ The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews enjoins: "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to

the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them."⁴¹ St. Peter obligates Christians to abide by the Scriptures, saying: "Remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles."⁴² Seeing, then, that Holy Scripture is of God made the only criterion in matters of faith, it is the only and sovereign rule and standard by which all doctrines and confessions of faith are to be esteemed, judged, and determined.

The authority of the Word is sovereign in supremacy, since the Word alone was given by verbal inspiration of God. As the natural man cannot know anything of the things of the Spirit of God, his only relation to the Word of God is one of dependence. Tradition, lacking divine inspiration into permanent form, is subordinate to the inspired Word. Symbols of faith, being but the expression of faith derived from the means of grace, are dependent upon Holy Scripture. It is clear that the goal of Scripture authority is to enjoy among men sovereign supremacy in spiritual things.

3.—PERMANENT SUPREMACY.

The authority of God's Word is permanently to hold supremacy. Not only for one age or generation, but for all the world, Holy Scripture is to bear witness of the redemption of Christ. Its authority is permanent: the doctrines of Scripture express principles and laws that are spiritual; the history of Scripture presents facts of life long past and irrevocable; and the prophecy of Scripture continues in force till all be fulfilled. St. Peter says of the Word that it liveth and abideth:

“For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower falleth: but the word of the Lord abideth for ever.”⁴⁸

Scripture authority is permanently supreme, because its doctrines are for all time. Eternal truths are expressed by the teachings of the Word; namely the immutable truths of God, of the kingdom of heaven, and of eternal salvation. Though Scripture indeed also contains temporal laws and regulations; for instance, chiefly those given to the Israelites to regulate the affairs of their theocratic government, yet the spiritual laws and principles which the Word of God teaches are imperishable truths and are as enduring as the kingdom of heaven. What Scripture inculcates of the holy will of God is permanent truth, because God’s will is perfect in every respect. Further, what it teaches of the creation of heaven and earth, of the creation and fall of man, of the promises given to Abraham and all the promises and revelations,—is about facts, truths and principles that are forever true. By the Law of Sinai, the world is permanently taught the perfect righteousness and true holiness required of man; which requirements Christ alone was able to fulfill. By the Gospel of Christ, all mankind is taught that as many as believe in Jesus, do by grace of God obtain eternal righteousness, and are regenerated to true holiness. These and all related truths are permanent teachings. Knowledge of the truth which Holy Scripture thus teaches, brings the kingdom of heaven within the reach of any person that hears the Word. God therefore wants this knowledge and information

to be communicated even unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Holy Scripture restores to the world the true concepts of God and of man, of the kingdom of heaven, of righteousness and holiness. The spiritual concepts which the world gradually lost, are thus restored by the inspired Word. That Adam knew his God and Creator, that people at the time of Seth called on the name of the Lord, that Noah and others before him believed in God, are indeed facts. But it is also a fact that, with few exceptions, the whole world gradually had lost all definite concepts of God, till in the days of Abraham, God began more fully to reveal himself. Wherever darkness yet covers the earth, the Word of God proves itself a light shining in a dark place, till the day of redemption dawn around the whole world. The Word is to abide to the end of time that all may come to God. For God says, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else."⁴¹ Scripture again declares: "All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God."⁴⁵ The same is expressed in the words: "God willeth that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth."⁴⁶ Accordingly Holy Scripture is to continue to bear its witness, in order that all who are yet to live, may know the whole counsel of the salvation of God. "It is easier," says Jesus, "for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fall."⁴⁷

Inspired history is of like permanent authority. For, the facts recorded are indissolubly connected with the past development of the kingdom of God. Events and occurrences that are past, are irrevocable. They ever

remain as they have transpired. Scripture permanently records the facts of the history of man, beginning with his creation in the image of God and the fall into disobedience and sin, that every one may know these undeniable facts. Showing the course of mere earthly life to be nothing but vanity, Scriptural history teaches mankind that the chief duty of man is to seek the kingdom of God, according to Christ's prime rule of life: "Seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."⁴⁸ It is from the examples of inspired history that young and old of every century may learn how the good fight of faith is to be fought; so that where sin did abound the grace of God may abound much more, and that the covenant of a good conscience with God may be preserved unsullied. The experiences of faith and those of unbelief exhibited in the lives of persons and the history of nations are enduringly set forth in the Word of God for the learning of all who hear and read the Word. "These things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come."⁴⁹ Whatever facts exemplify sins, such as disobedience, transgression, and unbelief, are facts that serve as a perpetual admonition and warning for others lest they fall in the same manner of sin, provoking God's anger. "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience."⁵⁰ And whatever things exemplify righteousness, faith, and love are to be a perpetual exhortation and encouragement to others to emulate the example of a life pleasing to God. "Therefore let us also, see-

ing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith."⁸¹ Inspired history truthfully presents for all ages and times the facts of human sin, its vileness, guilt, and curse, as they appear in the course of the development of the human race, and particularly, of the chosen people; and this history just as truthfully presents for all generations the facts of redemption, its atonement, righteousness, and blessings as they become manifest in the growth of the kingdom of God. Holy Scripture gives an indelible account of what is human life, and especially, the spiritual, eternal life hid with Christ in God. The facts of the history given in Scripture are irrevocable and their consequences endure to eternity. Alike enduring and supreme is the authority of the inspired Word recording those facts.

The permanent supremacy of Scriptural authority is furthermore assured by the divine prophecy. From prophecy, one can clearly ascertain the progress and duration of the plans of God. For since the promises and prophecies of God show what God has foreordained, the permanence of his counsel is vividly presented. Prophecy emphasizes the fact that all nations are yet to share the blessings of redemption by Christ. So far as fulfilled in the past, prophecy shows what the Word of God has already accomplished; prophecies at present in course of fulfillment prove the continuous growth of God's kingdom; and the prophecies reserved for future fulfillment, show that the plans of God con-

cerning the redemption of the world are not yet completely fulfilled. The Word of prophecy remains in authority wherever the will of God is to be obeyed and done: God says, "They shall know that I am the Lord."⁵² Regarding the duration of the great plans of Almighty God, it is sufficient to know that God has appointed seasons and days of fulfillment. If in the meantime thousands of years do pass, it need but be remembered that "the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."⁵³ None should think that when God waits centuries before fulfilling certain prophecies, that his Word therefore has lost authority. He often fulfills his promises when least expected. "Faithful is he that calleth you, who will also do it."⁵⁴ Believers have ever and always been taught to retain their confidence in the Lord God, who constantly speaks to his people through Holy Scripture. "Thou wilt perform," says the prophet, "the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham, which thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old."⁵⁵ The Epistle to the Hebrews exhorts: "Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise."⁵⁶ The standing promise of Scripture is: "He which testifieth these things saith, Yea: I come quickly. Amen: come, Lord Jesus."⁵⁷ Christ still has in his hands the keys of life and death, heaven and hell, salvation and condemnation. His Word continues to perform its work till the whole counsel of God is fulfilled.

Its authority therefore is permanently supreme: "the Word of the Lord endureth forever."

In concluding, it is seen that Scriptural authority is supreme. Its supremacy in spiritual matters is positive, sovereign, and permanent. Wherever the Word has been unreservedly received and faithfully kept, its goal is attained among men. By the authority of the Word, the kingdom of God is everywhere extended on earth. When Christ shall have come again, when the Jerusalem on high shall have appeared in heavenly beauty, when the new heaven and earth shall have been established, then the goal of the authority of God's Word will be completely attained and its supremacy unquestioned for all eternity.

V.

The Results of the Authority: Growth of the Kingdom of Heaven.

THE results of the authority of Holy Scripture appear in the rise and growth of the kingdom of grace. Christ's Church is the evidence of the ages that the Word of God accomplishes what it says. Whether accepted or not, the Word is followed by inevitable consequences. Especially, by the fact that Christ the Redeemer is truly believed on, do the Scriptures prove their abiding authority. Various individual phases of Christian history likewise clearly attest the results of the authority of the Word of God. Whatever Scripture accomplishes among men, abides forever.

I—GROWTH IN A GENERAL WAY.

Results seen in the gradual growth of God's kingdom on earth, amply prove the great authority of Scripture. The events and occurrences of the heavenly kingdom witness in truth that the Word does prosper in the thing whereto God sent it. Without the Word of God, the kingdom of grace never comes; aside of the Word, it never grows; apart from the Word, it never abides. Already in the ages preceding the long foretold coming of Christ and his kingdom, the results of the authority of Holy Scripture are manifest. For,

it is only the Word of God, written and spoken, that prepared the world for the day of redemption.

Ever since God's Word is known, it proved to be a savor of life to them that believe and keep it, and a savor of death to them that despise and ignore it. By Moses, the complete authority of Scripture over faith and life of the people of God is emphasized in passages like the one: "The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it. . . . I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing."¹ The things, therefore, that occurred in the history of Israel from the day they were brought out of Egypt, are the clear outcome of the working of the Word. The times when the Word was heeded by the Israelites, were the periods of truest progress towards redemption. For then they realized their utter inability to be saved by the law, and consequently prayed for the coming of the Redeemer. They that heeded the Word, cheerfully confessed: "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies."² But the times when the Word of God was ignored by the people, were the periods of backsliding from the ways of God and from the promised salvation. Where the people openly rejected the Word, God withdrew his mercy and help. Nehemiah, for example, confesses with reference to the captivity at Babylon: "Thou art just in all that is brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly: neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and

thy testimonies wherewith thou didst testify against them.”³ But though the people broke the covenant of law, yet the covenant of promise remained in force to be fulfilled in the appointed time. Accordingly, Isaiah writes: “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.”⁴ For the sake of the promises solemnly assured by his Word, God saved a remnant of the Jews until Christ the Messiah should come, because he declared: “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Surely, shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: even to him shall men come.”⁵ As much as Holy Scripture records of the history preparatory to Christ and his kingdom, demonstrates definite results of the authority of the Word: God has abundant power to do what he has said.

When Christ in the fulness of time brought the kingdom of heaven, the authority of Scripture received the complete recognition due to it. All that he did was in fulfillment of law and prophecy, and in compliance with the words given him of God. Christ was guided not by his own will and inclination, but by the will and pleasure of God as expressed in the inspired Word. Holy Scripture was the rule and standard of Christ’s teaching and life; Scripture together with the Word God spoke by him, was the sole guide of Christ. He says, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished.”⁶ What Christ accomplished on earth, was the result of the Word of God. “I can,” Jesus says, “of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.”⁷ The same thought, he expressed in the words: “That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.”⁸ So far, then, as Christ’s life and work in bringing God’s kingdom is concerned, everything was accomplished through the Word of God. The guiding purpose of Jesus always was so to labor that the Scripture might be fulfilled and the will of God performed.

Through the ministry of the Apostles, the kingdom of Christ was completely established according to the Word of God. Theirs was a ministry of the Word. With the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the doors of the kingdom of heaven were thrown ajar to all that believe in the Gospel of Christ as presented by the Apostles. The Word of promise which had slowly sprouted during the long night preceding the day of Christ, grew and blossomed into full splendor in the acceptable time and day of salvation. Indeed, from the day of Pentecost, the growth of Christ’s kingdom is synonymous with the growth of the Word. The disciples themselves, in compliance with the word and command of Christ, were gathered in Jerusalem awaiting the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. And of them that were added to the Church on that day, Scripture

says: "They then that received his word were baptized."⁹ Subsequently, wherever the Word of God was preached the kingdom of Christ grew and increased. Thus it is further recorded: "The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith."¹⁰ Among the Gentiles, too, God's Word produced remarkable results; for instance, at Ephesus occurrences took place that show how "mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed."

God moreover accompanied his Word with signs and wonders to confirm it. Especially in the time of Moses and the days of Christ were marvelous miracles given to establish the authority of the Word. Miracles serve to show that the results following the inspired Word are performed by him who "worketh all things after the pleasure of his will." Signs and wonders are irrefutable proof that he who performed the works is also the God who inspired the preceding Word. Even unbelievers are by miracles constrained to confess: "This is the finger of God."¹¹

The object of having signs and wonders accompany the Word is on the one hand to punish the wicked, like Pharaoh and his people; and on the other hand to encourage believers, like the Israelites and the people in the day of Christ and his Apostles. People of all eras, remembering the miracles which God has performed, are with all confidence to receive the Word, not as men's word, but as the Word of God, which it is in truth. "Remember what the Lord thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt; the great temptations

which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out.”¹² By his magnificent divine works, Christ convinced the disciples and other people of his authority as Messiah; thus, having fed the 5,000 men, when “the people saw the sign which he did, they said, This is of a truth the prophet that cometh into the world.”¹³ Jesus expressly claimed his works as evidence of his authority: “The words that I say unto you, I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake.”¹⁴ Of course, the Word most spontaneously and gloriously attained its results where men, believing in the power of God and in the authority of his servants, could truly ask, like the centurion: “Only say the word, and my servant shall be healed.”¹⁵

Miracles accompanied also the Word spoken by the Apostles. And they ascribed those results to Jesus, whom God has given all power in heaven and earth. “They went forth,” St. Mark says, “and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed.”¹⁶ St. Luke writes in the Book of Acts, saying: “Long time, therefore, they tarried there speaking boldly in the Lord, which bare witness unto the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.”¹⁷ The Word of God, signally proved and confirmed at the time when it was revealed and inspired, is ever working the will of God. He himself sustains the Word by his grace and power. Though signs and wonders performed by

God have seldom transpired on so grand a scale as at the time of Moses and Christ when the Word was chiefly given, yet they all are nevertheless just as true; since it is God that makes "all things work together for good to them that love God," and with temptations and afflictions prepares the way of deliverance for them that believe. Since the days when Holy Scripture was completed, the Word has ever proved the divine means of accomplishing the purpose of God. The great power of God to confirm the Word by miracle will be manifest when one contemplates words like the following: "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counselor hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed to him the way of understanding? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing."¹⁸

Through the centuries from the Apostolic days onward, Holy Scripture has sustained the Christian Church in her growth and development. All nations to whom the Word was preached, gradually were added to the kingdom of Christ: and all people to whom the Word is unknown, are still heathen. Furthermore, in those epochs of Church history, where truth had to contend against error, Holy Scripture ob-

tained the victory for the truth. In the age of the Greek and Latin Church Fathers, for instance, the very fact that some persons quoted from various kinds of writing, whether inspired or not, constrained the Church to ascertain what writings were really known to be inspired and consequently were true Scripture: it follows that the Church of those days took the inspired Word as the sole determining guide and rule by which to establish the divine truth. Again, in the age of attempted reforms within the Church, only that attempt developed into a successful reformation, which made Holy Scripture the sole guide and standard in all questions of faith; for, when the faith of the Church is truly Scriptural, her life can readily conform to the will of God. To the end of time, the growth of the kingdom of heaven is continuously dependent upon the Word of God. Only there does Christ's kingdom exist and abide, where the confessions of faith are truly Scriptural, and where Christians do the will of God. That also some insincere persons will associate there, is but the compliment which deception renders to uprightness. However when Christians depart from the Word of truth, they are branches that bring forth no fruit and that finally wither. Christ says, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples."¹⁹

The kingdom of God, then, grows wherever the authority of the Word of God is acknowledged and the results of the Word are observable. Beginning small among kingdoms, like the mustard-plant among herbs, the kingdom of Christ has grown to be the greatest realm known. Growth and development of the kingdom of grace will continue, until all nations

are become "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ."

2.—GROWTH IN A SPECIAL SENSE.

Knowledge and acceptance of Christ is what marks the growth of God's kingdom in a special sense. For Christ is the only Redeemer of the world, the only Mediator between God and man. Only through him, the way, the truth, and the life, can a repentant soul obtain the divine blessings; such as, forgiveness of sins, eternal righteousness, spiritual life. Without Jesus, none can come to the Father, nor enter the kingdom of heaven. "In none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved."²⁰

The redemption of the world by Christ is the most divine triumph God's Word has won on earth: Christ perfectly obeyed the Word and will of God. Jesus permitted nothing to swerve him from the inspired Word. The Word of God was the absolute objective criterion of his work and life. He ever rightly interpreted the true and deep meaning of Scripture, especially where men previously had not correctly or precisely grasped the sense. But he never criticised the least jot or tittle of the law or prophets.

Where persons acknowledge the divine authority of the Word as implicitly as Christ did, it will produce similar blessed results. The great blessings of redemption are to be obtained only by them that accept Christ. "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."²¹ Scripture teaches the correct and true facts about Christ, and shows how men accepted

him by believing in him. There are three irrefutable facts involved in correct and true knowledge of Christ, which must be recognized and believed, if one would accept him so as to obtain the eternal righteousness and divine peace. These facts are: first, that Jesus is Immanuel, true God and true man; secondly, that he gave his blood and life in atonement of the sin of the world; and thirdly, that he is in fellowship with regenerate persons. So vital to redemption are these facts, that none of them can be denied or ignored without forfeiting connection with the kingdom of God. For, whoever does not believe that Christ the Son of God is come into the flesh, is not of God; and whoever does not believe that the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sin, does not obtain the righteousness that availeth before God; and again, whoever does not believe that Christ is in living fellowship with the regenerate, does not abide in Christ nor Christ in him. "Take heed therefore how ye hear,"²² Christ admonishes. And the Book of Acts reaffirms the words of Moses: "To him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you."²³ God himself exhorts from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."²⁴

The Word of God gives abundant testimony showing how Christ was known and accepted by believing men of Scripture days. Thus its testimony concerning Christ as true God is clear and convincing. For instance, what Psalm 2 says, "Thou art my Son," is amply corroborated in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Isaiah's reference to the Immanuel is completely sustained by St. Matthew. Moreover, the Triune God

witnessed that Christ is God's Son. And with equal clearness, Scripture maintains that Christ is true man, the Shiloh of the tribe of Judah, the root and the offspring of David. That is the way in which prophets and apostles knew and believed in Christ.

The fact of atonement, also, is taught and accepted throughout Scripture. Isaiah, for example, who had prophesied of Christ's afflictions, declares they were vicarious. God indeed "foreshewed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer."²⁵ And the significance of their testimony consists in this that the Messiah should by his sufferings "make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness."²⁶ The Lord and all his Apostles fully and positively testify that God's new testament is by the blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse men from all sin.

With reference to the indwelling of God in the regenerate, prophetic writers, like Moses, Ezekiel, and Zechariah say that God would dwell in the midst of those who keep his Word. The full meaning of their words is brought out by Apostolic writers, like St. John and St. Paul, who teach that Christians are the temple of the living God. Christ reassuringly says that God would come and make his abode with his faithful people. Christ ever sustains an intimate spiritual relation with his people in that he is the eternal, living, present Head of the Church. "He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence."²⁷

Thus men knew and confessed Christ in the days when the Scriptures were being written. To all that

believed in Christ and accepted him, power was given to become the children of God and be members of his kingdom. For his kingdom is within believing, regenerate souls.

Holy Scripture alone, presenting the true knowledge of Christ, enables men savingly to accept him by faith; for, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever."²⁸ From the earliest time, the Christian Church has held and confessed this faith. And by the authority of the Word, the Church has been sustained in her faith through all subsequent generations. Though misleading views did assail the truth, the negation of faith never prevailed over the affirmation of sound faith in Christ by the Church. From Gnosticism to Rationalism, all contradictory tendencies were frustrated by the testimony of the Word of God. Millions of men to this day believe in Christ like the Apostles themselves; and like the Church that from them heard the facts of redemption.

Christ is the cornerstone of salvation. His kingdom is solely of God, it grows through his grace, and is made unto his glory: the joy and glory of the ransomed is the reflection of the love and majesty of the Eternal Redeemer. By the authority of Scripture, the Christian Church is upheld in her faith and the growth of the kingdom ever prospered through knowledge and acceptance of Christ.

3.—GROWTH IN PARTICULAR PHASES.

Though times and epochs may greatly differ, the influence of the Word on man remains the same; because, human nature is human nature and the Word of God is the Word of God. There are many particular

phases observable in connection with the growth of God's kingdom, that illustrate the blessed results of the Word. Such phases enable one to see how the authority of Scripture reaches into the manifold affairs of Christian faith and life.

One of the most evident phases attending the growth of the kingdom of Christ is the attitude of its members toward the Word of God. The attitude of all true members ever has conformed to that of Christ and his Apostles; that is, their attitude was uniformly one of willing reception of the Word. Christ designates them as true members of his kingdom, who hear and do the Word. "My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it."²⁹ Jesus further says: "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father."³⁰ This faithful, obedient attitude towards the Word is what makes men's prayers acceptable with God; so that Jesus assures his disciples: "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you."³¹ But of them that ignore the authority of the Word, he declares: "He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me."³² It is therefore not criticism of the Word of God, which Jesus commends as the proper attitude; but obedience: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."³³

Since Holy Scripture is verbally inspired by the Spirit of God, since God the Father himself gave the

things which the Holy Spirit should speak and communicate, since Jesus Christ from childhood to the death on the cross obeyed and fulfilled the Word of God, therefore the true attitude towards the Word obviously is to hear carefully and obey willingly the voice of the eternal God. The words which God spoke through Moses and the other prophets, through Jesus and the Apostles, and which were by divine inspiration recorded in Holy Scripture, constitute the voice of God. By this Word of Scripture, men can expose things that are not of God; and by it, they can prove what things are of God. True believers ever made the Scriptures their standard of judgment in such matters, because they knew the Scriptures to have divine authority. St. Paul therefore approved of the people of Berea, who received the Word with all readiness of mind, and who also searched the Scriptures to compare and prove the correctness of what they had heard. Even by people to whom they came as strangers, it could thus be conclusively ascertained that St. Paul and his colaborers were divinely inspired: the signs accompanying the Word proved that, and the testimony of the Scriptures sealed the proof with invincible certainty. Regarding the other Apostles, the people already from the day of Pentecost knew that they were as truly inspired as Moses and all the prophets. Therefore the words of the Gospel spoken and written by the Apostles were known to be the Word of God and so received by men whose hearts were open to the Word of truth. The same Apostle who commended receiving the Word with readiness of mind and searching of Scripture to con-

firm it, more plainly still commends ready faith in God's Word, saying: "So then, my beloved, even as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure."³⁴ The attitude of readiness to receive the Word is characteristic of all faithful believers. Though there be some things which they do not yet understand, still they believe, remembering it is God's Word. The age or century in which true minded people live, matters nothing so far as the manner of their receiving the Word is concerned. Christ forever indicates the distinguishing property and attitude of his true followers, when he says: "That in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience."³⁵

Another phase attending the growth of Christ's kingdom, in which the results of the authority of God's Word are seen, is the agreement of believers in general doctrines and precepts. In matters of faith as well as life there is fundamental unanimity among all them who own and acknowledge the Word of God as the sole and only authority in determining doctrines and teachers. For Holy Scripture informs the world of the things which are to be believed that men by such knowledge gained through faith may be transformed by the renewing of their minds and the regeneration of their souls. Therefore Christ, in his parting words, enjoins the Apostles: "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."³⁶ Scripture doctrines,

when taught completely true to the Word, cannot but meet acceptance with believers. In all doctrines, there was harmony among the early Christians of whom Scripture speaks; although that does not say human infirmities were absolutely absent: it simply says that those believers were likeminded in the principles of faith and life so long as they continued steadfastly in the teaching which the Apostles gave them.

The agreement of subsequent ages expresses itself chiefly in the confessions of faith, from the briefest, the Apostles' Creed, to the most complete, the Formula of Concord. All Christians who acknowledge only the Word of God as the rule and guide of their conscience in matters of Christian faith and spiritual life, have also agreed at least in the fundamental doctrines of Christianity; for Scripture teaches consistently concerning all things. While the general principles of the Christian Church were by no means all simultaneously framed into confessions of faith but as the exigencies of times or epochs required such statements, still, whatever is truly and completely Scriptural in symbols of faith permanently through the ages expresses the agreement in faith of the Church of Christ. Thus leading men of the most prominent nationalities of the Christian eras, like Athanasius of the Greek, Augustine of the Latin, Luther of the German, exhibit truly oecumenical agreement in the general principles of their theological position, because their position is Scriptural. These nationalities became leaders for cognate nations sharing with them the general confessions of faith; and the men

referred to are merely the most representative of many like minded eminent and great Christian men. Thousands and millions of souls have shared and still share these men's respective presentations of Scripture doctrines and precepts. All Christendom ever held the general principles of Christian faith and life; for, if any depart from the primary principles, they have made shipwreck of their faith. In fact, the more completely Scriptural principles of faith are, the more thorough and complete is the agreement between men; the Word has the divine power to dissolve differences between nation and nation, race and race, Jew and Gentile, and bring them all to the true spiritual harmony in Christ. However, it is not by methods of casuistry that agreement of faith is attained, but by the spirit of believing love which God has shed abroad in Christian hearts; the Word produces that spirit, wherever its authority is heeded as unquestioningly as by Christ and his Apostles, by Christians of Apostolic days, and by true believers of all centuries. For that reason did Christ ask of the heavenly Father: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one."³⁷

Still another prominent phase in the Church's growth showing the authority of the Word, is the bearing of Scripture on the theological standing of Christian pastors. Where the Word of God is the only rule and standard for judging and esteeming theologians with respect to their doctrinal standing and attitude, Scriptural views are the result. As theological works are not all alike in spirit or in tendency, and as, moreover, every pastor is responsible to God for his own

position in teaching those entrusted to him for spiritual guidance, he must conscientiously examine his position to see whether it is truly consistent with the principle, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth."³⁸ From Christ and his Apostles, one may observe that the correct tendency of theological science is to ascertain and establish the true interpretation and presentation of the wealth and riches of divine knowledge and wisdom contained in the Word of God; so that to the faithful pastor applies the parable: "Every scribe who hath been made a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old."³⁹

It is the pastor's privilege and duty in his ministry to contend for the faith as delivered unto the saints by Holy Scripture, and also for the sound and Scriptural confessions of faith transmitted through the centuries by the Church for the guidance of her pastors. As St. Paul instructed Timothy: "Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou wast called and didst confess the good confession in the sight of many witnesses. I charge thee in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and of Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed the good confession; that thou keep the commandment, without spot, without reproach, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴⁰ Again he tells him: "Charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine, neither to give heed to fables and endless genealogies, the which minister questionings, rather than a dispensation of God

which is in faith.”⁴¹ Theological tendencies of sound Scriptural development and growth, a pastor can always safely follow; but tendencies that disintegrate sound Scriptural positions are what the Word of God warns against. Where the authority of the Word is the authority that a pastor follows without mental reservations, he will be in harmony not only with all true Scriptural theology of the past and present; but what is worth more, he will also be in conformity with the will and authority of God.

From many other particular phases of the growth of God’s kingdom, results of Scripture authority can be observed. What has been considered, brings out with clearness the blessings of the Word of God. Whatever is Scriptural in doctrine and life and all things, has invincible power and authority.

Thus the results of the Word are seen in the working out of the plan and counsel of God. The general growth of the kingdom which has ever continued since the great Whitsunday in Jerusalem, is still observable. Equally obvious is the fact that Christ the Redeemer is being truly confessed and accepted in all parts of the world. And on every hand, in private and public life, particular evidences of the authority of God’s holy Word are seen. In fine, the Word that proceeded out of the mouth of God is ever more manifestly producing the results designed by the Lord of heaven and earth.

Conclusion

THE authority of the Word of God has for its realm and sphere the things and affairs of the kingdom of God. These things and affairs are of a spiritual nature. With God originates all the authority predicated of him in the Scriptures: the executive, legislative, and judicial powers of the kingdom of heaven repose in him and are exercised by him. God is the Alpha and Omega of all authority in his kingdom. "Of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever."⁴²

The Spirit of God selected the men through whom the truths of the kingdom of God were revealed and given to the world. The Word of God thus is the divinely given constitution of his spiritual government, because all the principles in any way relevant to the redemption by Jesus Christ are permanently laid down in the Word; it is further the criterion of all Christian teachers and doctrines, because the Word is the rule of faith; finally, it is the touchstone of the conscience of man, because the Word, by reason of its living spiritual power, is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. God gave all authority over the kingdom of heaven into the hands of Christ; as Jesus states: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth."⁴³ This authority Christ exercises on earth through the means of grace in the Church by the ministry of the Word, whose only rule and stand-

ard of authority is the inspired Word of God as found in Holy Scripture in permanent inspired form.

The Word of God, being eternal truth, possesses eternal authority. And this authority of Holy Scripture is sovereign in all matters and questions of the ministry of the Word concerning Christian faith and life, in teaching and practice. Truly to reverence the authority of the Word of God, is the supreme obligation of every Christian. All other authoritative writings and statements of the Christian Church are dependent upon the authority of Holy Scripture, are subordinate to it, and are of derived authoritative value only to the extent in which they are consistent with the Word. Inferring from the Word of God the greatness of its Author, one is constrained to testify: "Great and marvellous are thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are thy ways, thou King of the ages. Who shall not fear, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all the nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy righteous acts have been made manifest."⁴⁴

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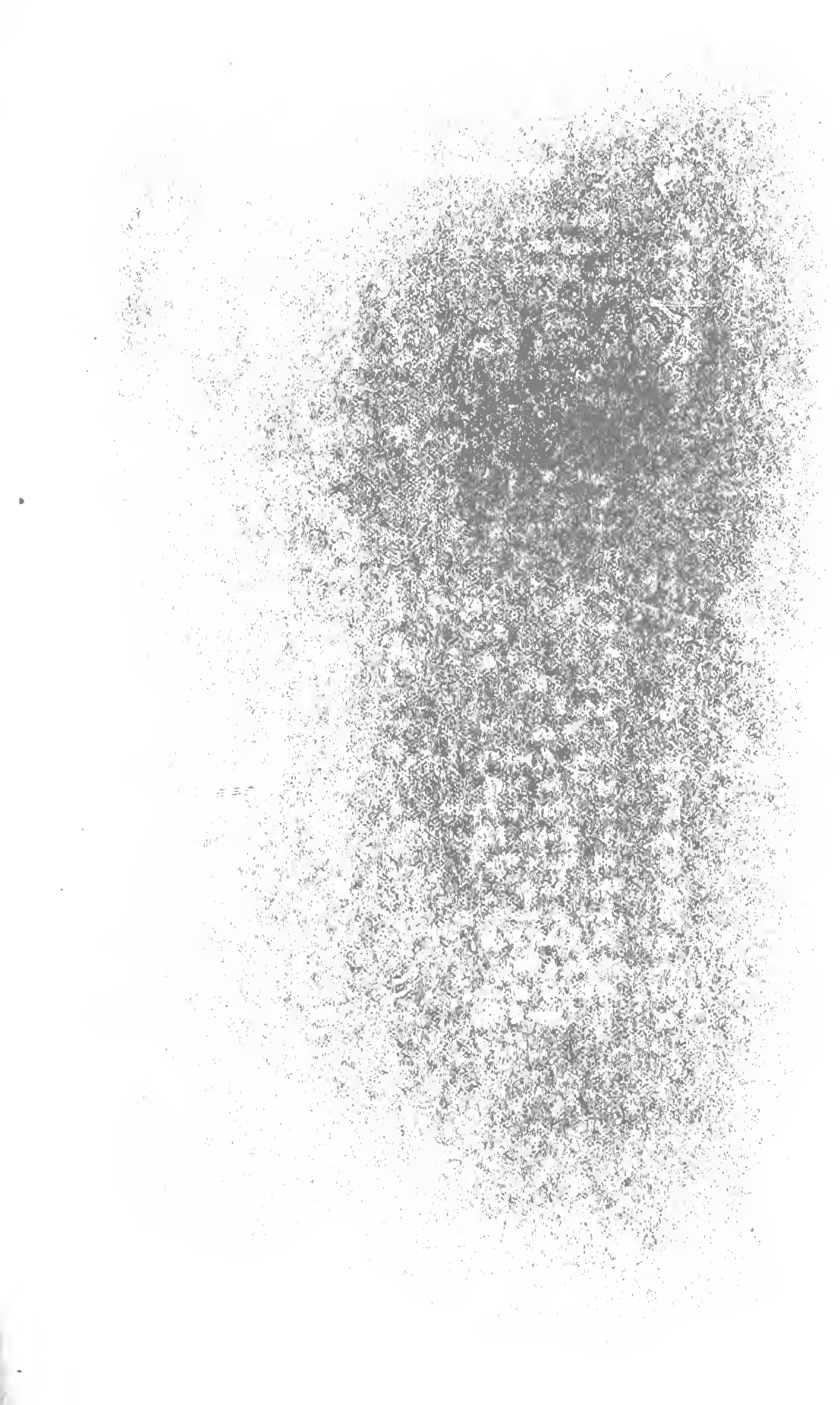
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