**THE FUNDAMENTALS: A TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH**

**VOLUME 4; CHAPTER 19. "THE SCRIPTURES"**

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When our Lord said, "Search the Scriptures," every Jew to whom He spoke knew what He meant. There were other writings in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, but the Scriptures were a body of writings marked off from all others by their sacredness and authority as the Word of God. Their history can be traced from the time of Moses to Christ. In Exodus 17:14 we read: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua." As to the writing material Moses used we do not know, but we do know that in Egypt papyrus plant, linen and cotton cloth, the skins of animals and stone were used in making books of various kinds. The Ten Commandments were written on tables of stone, and with Egyptian mummies we have preserved even to this day cotton and linen cloth such as was frequently used for writing.

In Deuteronomy 31:9 we have the historic record of the fact that Moses obeyed the command of God: "And Moses wrote this law and delivered it unto the priests, the sons of Levi, which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord." And in verse 24: "It came to pass when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law and put it in the side of the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God." The book was finished and placed by the side of the Ark for safe keeping.

In Joshua 1:8 we read: "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." Now that the pillar of fire by night and of cloud by day has departed, the Book is to be the guide of Israel and their religion is to be to a large extent a book religion. God is speaking to them out of the "Book of the Law."

It is probable that the book which Joshua read was the identical manuscript which Moses wrote in the wilderness. There may have been copies made of it, but we have no record of the fact. Frequent mention of it is made through the books of the Bible. The same book, or a copy of it, appears again a thousand years afterward under the reign of Josiah, as we learn from 2 Kings 22:8: "And Hilkiah the high priest said unto Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord. And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan and he read it."

In Ezra we find it again in the hands of the prophet on the pulpit of wood in the open air, reading it and making its meaning plain unto the people. From these and other Scriptures three inferences may be fairly drawn:

1. The Bible is literature written by the command of God. He certainly commanded Moses to write the book of the law. To John on the Isle of Patmos a great voice as of a trumpet said, "What thou seest write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches." And before the vision vanishes he is commanded to "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." He is to write history, current events and predictions; and much of the "the Scriptures" may be classified under these three heads.
2. The Bible is literature written by the command of God, and under the guidance of God. In Peter 1:21 we read: "No prophecy ever came by the will of man, but man spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."
3. The Bible is literature written by the command of God, under the guidance of God, and preserved by the providential care of God. Moses commanded that the book of the law should be placed by the side of the Ark. No safer place could have been found, and the more I study the history of the Bible the more profoundly am I convinced that God has kept His book by the side of some ark all through the ages. As the Church has been under His care and protection, so has the Book.

It is not difficult for me to believe that the manuscript which Hilkiah found in the Temple was the identical book which Moses wrote in the wilderness, and that this very manuscript was in the hands of Ezra on the pulpit of wood as he preached in the open air. It is only one thousand years from Joshua to Josiah and only one hundred and seventy-five years from Josiah to Ezra. There are now in our libraries scores of manuscripts which we know to be over a thousand years old, and two or three which have certainly been preserved more than fourteen hundred years. With the kindly oriental climate and the care which the Jewish reverence for the book would naturally lead them to have, it is not at all improbable that the manuscript of Moses should have been preserved for more than a thousand years. And the history of the Bible from the time of Christ to the present confirms the proposition that it has been preserved by the providential care of God.

Let us now look at "the Scriptures" in their own light. In John 5:39 Jesus said: "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." And in 2 Timothy 3:16 we read, "All Scripture is God-breathed, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." In these Scriptures are four things:

**I. A BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF THE BIBLE**

The phrase, "the Scriptures," suggests a synthetic definition of the Bible. There were other writings, but these were the writings. They had them in the Hebrew tongue, and also a translation into the Greek, known as the "Septuagint," made nearly three hundred years before Christ. But it takes our second Scripture to complete this definition of the Bible - "Every Scripture is God-breathed." A noted scholar has taken the pains to collate the texts in the New Testament where this Greek idiom occurs, and he declares that the King James version, and not the Revised, is the correct translation, and several eminent scholars on the Committee of Revision agreed with him. "All Scripture is God-breathed" is evidently what the Holy Spirit meant to write. Of course, the writers were inspired. "The Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David" (Acts 1:16). "The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel" (Ezek. 1:3). But the writings as well as the writers were inspired, because "all Scripture is God-breathed." God, who "breathed into man the breath of life and he became a living soul," has also breathed into His Book the breath of life, so that it is "the Word of God which liveth and abideth forever."

There are many writers, but one Author. These writers were not automatons. Each one shows his own style and personality which the Holy Spirit uses.

**II. A BIBLICAL USE OF THE BIBLE**

It is four-fold:

**1.** "Profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." "Doctrine" is the teaching, not of the man as he may express his opinion in social converse, but of the ambassador who carries with him the weight of his government's authority; and in the Bible we find God's official proclamation of love, pardon, cleansing, righteousness and peace.

**2.** The word "reproof" comes after doctrine, because it has to do with the character which doctrine makes. The Bible is profitable not only for the doctrine which we get out of it, but it is the standard by which we try our doctrines. It proves and reproves. It is the plumb-line that we drop by the wall to see if it is straight. It is the yard-stick by which we measure every creed.

**3.** The word "correction" means restoration, and gives a thought in advance of doctrine and reproof. It has in it the thought of making right what we have found to be wrong. The plumb-line may show that the wall leans, but it cannot straighten it. The yard-stick may reveal that the cloth is too short, but it cannot lengthen it. The Bible, however, not only shows us wherein we are wrong, but it can right us. When Canova saw the piece of marble which, at great expense, had been secured for a celebrated statue, his practiced eye discovered a little piece of black running through it, and he rejected it. He could discover the black, but he could not make the black white. The Bible discovers the black and makes it white.

**4.** The fourth word, "instruction," means literally "child-culture," and has in it all that the parent needs for the growth, development and maturing of the child. The Bible is a training school in righteousness. Other books give training in music, rhetoric, oratory, but the specialty of the Bible is training in righteousness.

**III. A BIBLICAL METHOD OF BIBLE STUDY**

It is suggested by the two words "search" and "profitable." Whatever is profitable is apt to cost labor. The worthless we can get without effort. Hence the strength of the phrase, "Search the Scriptures." It means to "look through and through." It is the word used in the Scripture, "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." As God searches our hearts so let us search the Bible.

The Bible unsearched is a mine unworked, the difference between the Klondyke years ago and the Klondyke enriching its industrious owners today. To learn the Word of God requires diligent and persistent searching. A man who died in an English almshouse several years ago gave to his relatives an unproductive piece of land, so worthless that he did not have to pay taxes on it. The relatives searched it, and as a result they are today millionaires. The pauper was rich without knowing it, and he was ignorant of the fact because he did not search his possessions.

Every Christian with the Bible in hand is rich whether he knows it or not. Let him search and find hidden treasures. This search implies sight and light. There is need of spiritual discernment. "The natural man discerneth not the things of God." And hence the need of inspiration which comes from trusting the Holy Spirit as the Revealer of Truth. When Galileo turned his little telescope to the heavens, he found that he really had a new pair of eyes. He could now see the mountains of the moon, the satellites of Neptune, and the ring around Saturn. So we read the Bible in the light of the Bible, and as more light comes, better sight is imparted; while, on the other hand, as better sight is imparted, more light is revealed.

The Christian with spiritual discernment can afford to "search the Scriptures" with the Holy Spirit alone as his guide. Commentaries are good, but not good as substitutes for independent search. When Alexander the Great stood before Diogenes as he sat by his tub, the general asked the philosopher what he could do for him. The rather grim reply was, "Simply get out of my light." And any searcher has a right to say "Get out of my light" to every one whose shadow comes between him and the Truth.

Any method of searching is good, though some may be better than others. The "grasshopper method" by which we take a word or subject and jump from one place to another, collating the texts which have the word or subject in them, is not to be despised. God shook the world through Dwight L. Moody, who was fond of this method. I have learned to love what, for lack of a better word, I call the sectional method, by which one begins at a certain place and goes through paragraph, chapter or book, gathering and classifying every thought. It reminds one of Mr. Spurgeon's saying suggested by the worm-eaten Bible which he found on the table of a Scottish wayside inn. Holding it up to the light, he noticed only one hole through which the light shone. One worm, it seems, had begun at Genesis and eaten through to Revelation, and Spurgeon prayed, "Lord, make me a book-worm like that." Such a bock-worm never turns into an earth-worm. It will have wings by and by.

But whatever be your method, do not fail to read the Bible by books. Read Genesis at a sitting. You can do it in less than three hours. Then take Exodus; then Leviticus, and so on through the whole library of sixty-six volumes. The astronomer should look at the heavens as a whole before he takes to his telescope. The botanist should look at the fields and gardens before he takes to his microscope. If you have not read the Scriptures, a book at a sitting, you may take it for granted that you do not know your Bible.

A study of words yields a rich harvest of knowledge and blessing.

Luther said that he studied the Bible as he gathered apples. First, he shook the whole tree, that the ripest might fall. Then he climbed the tree and shook each limb, and when he had shaken each limb, he shook each branch, and after each branch every twig, and then looked under each leaf. Let us search the Bible as a whole; shake the whole tree; read it as rapidly as you would any other book; then shake every limb, studying book after book. Then shake every branch, giving attention to the chapters when they do not break the sense. Then shake every twig by careful study of the paragraphs and sentences, and you will be rewarded, if you will look under every leaf, by searching the meaning of words.

**IV. A BIBLICAL MOTIVE LOR BIBLE STUDY**

This is two-fold:

**1.** That we may have right thinking about eternal life. "In them ye think ye have eternal life." In Christ we have eternal life, but in the Scriptures is our thinking about it. We have the blessedness of the man whose "delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night." My arch of salvation rests upon two pillars. The first pillar is what Christ did for me, and that is always the same length. Time was when the second pillar was assurance of salvation through my feelings. If I felt well and happy, that pillar was of the right length, and seemed solid enough, but when depressed feelings came, the pillar seemed shorter and threatened the arch. One day, however, I read 1 John 5:13: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." And I saw that I was expected to trust the Scriptures and not my feelings for assurance. From that day the pillar of assurance has been all the time of the same length, for God's Word never changes. Feelings may come and go, but "I keep on believing" the promise. I think I have eternal life, not because I feel so and so, but because God says so. Now the pillar of Christ's merit and the pillar of His promise are of the same length, and the arch of salvation is no longer threatened by changing feelings.

**2.** That we may learn of Jesus. "They are they which testify of Me." Few things are more interesting and none more profitable than tracing the Messianic idea through the Bible. It begins with the curse upon the serpent in Genesis, and closes with "the Lamb as it had been slain in the midst of the throne" in Revelation. In Christian character the image of Christ is marred by imperfections, but in the Scriptures the portrait is perfect. A friend described to me a painting which hung on the wall of his boyhood home. When you first saw it, it was a beautiful landscape with trees, streams, houses and people, but, while gazing upon it, all these beautiful things began to form into a human face. On a closer inspection you perceived that the whole picture was intended to give the face of Christ. The devout student of the Scriptures is constantly having experiences like this. He sees in the Bible trees of faithfulness, streams of truth, landscapes of loveliness in deed and character, but they are all so arranged in their relation to Christ as to bring out the features of His character. While we thus see Him as He is, we become more and more like Him, until by and by we shall see His unveiled face and be completely transformed into His likeness. "Search the Scriptures" for a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ.