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THEOLOGY

CLAVIS BIBLICA

by Adam Clarke

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CLAVIS BIBLICA

BY

ADAM CLARKE, LL. D. F. A. S.

Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake,

2 Corinthians 4:1, 5

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CLAVIS BIBLICA:

or,

A Compendium of Scriptural Knowledge:

Containing a General View of

the Contents of the Old and New Testaments;

the Principles of Christianity derived from them,

and the Reasons on which they are founded:

with Directions How To Read Most Profitably The Holy Bible

Originally drawn up for the instruction of

two High Priests of Budhoo from the island of Ceylon.

By

Adam Clarke, LL. D. F. A. S.

Thus saith the Lord; Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls,

Jeremiah 6:16.

ADVERTISEMENT

The following tract was originally drawn up, as the title expresses it, for the instruction of two high priests of Budhoo; of whom a few words may be necessary. In the year 1818, when the Hon. Sir Alexander Johnston, chief judge, of Ceylon, was obliged to return to England on account of his ladys ill health, the two priests in question, Sree Goona Munhi Rathana, and his cousin Dherma Rama, high priests of the temple of Doodandhuve, near Galle, in the island of Ceylon, applied to him with earnest entreaties to permit them to accompany him to England, that they might study Christianity in the place where it was properly understood, and where the people lived according to its precepts. This strange proposition, coming from two high priests of considerable learning, who by such a step must cut themselves off from all the emoluments of their temple for ever, and from all their acquaintance and kindred, did not a little surprise him. He saw plainly that they must be sincere,; and their readiness to abandon all secular good, without the smallest prospect of gaining any thing in return but spiritual advantages, was the proof. They had for a considerable time suspected the sufficiency, and even truth, of their own religious system; and having met with the New Testament, printed in Cingalese by the Wesleyan missionaries at Colombo, they carefully read it; and were greatly struck with the benevolent character and wisdom of Christ, and the dignified simplicity and purity of his religion. But, as they only saw divine things through a glass darkly, they did not like to avow their doubts and suspicions on the system of Budhooism, till they had examined the subject more minutely, and consulted the teachers of Christianity on the various doctrines it proposes.

After much hesitation, Sir Alexander consented to take, them under his care: and on their arrival in England they were kindly received by the Wesleyan Missionary Society, who, in conjunction with Sir Alexander, desired me to undertake their instruction. I did so; and in doing it encountered many difficulties, which, because the good hand of my God was upon me, I surmounted; and, after twenty months instruction under my own roof, I was fully convinced that they were sincere converts to the Christian religion, and that their minds were under a very gracious influence. At their own earnest desire I admitted them into the church of Christ by baptism.

Expecting that they might soon return to India, and being well aware that there were several points of Christian knowledge on which their information must necessarily be imperfect, I thought it best to embody and systematize those instructions which I had frequently given them, that they might be able at all times to have recourse, to them, and be the better qualified to speak with their enemies in the gate, of whom they expected no inconsiderable, numbers both in rank and learning. I have done what I intended, and made a copy for each to take with him on his journey; not having even the slightest thoughts of committing it to the press: but their own entreaties, as well as those of several judicious friends, who thought it might be useful as a tract for the foreign missions, and a profitable manual to many at home, have induced me, my own judgment on the whole concurring, to give it by means of the press a wider circulation.

That I see nothing in the Holy Scriptures but what is consistent with what is commonly called the orthodox faith, will not surprise those who know me: I quarrel with no man on account of the peculiarities of his religious creed; I believe my own to be the truth of God; and am, as I have long been, a hearty well wisher to all mankind, a servant of the church, and a friend to the public.

—*Adam Clarke*

LONDON, May 9th, 1820

CLAVIS BIBLICA

Millbrook, Feb. 14th, 1820

My Dear Friends, Having heard in your own country, though indistinctly, of that supreme God who is the sole object of the Christians worship; and of that Christ through and by whom he dispenses salvation to the human race; you took a long and painful journey from your native island to visit that favored nation where this God is more especially known and adored, that you might learn among his genuine followers to know his nature and the nature of that worship which himself has prescribed.

In the course of his unsearchable but gracious providence you were placed under my care; and it has been my earnest and anxious study to lead you to this God, through the Son of his love, who died for the offenses of a sinful world, and rose again for the justification of men; and has commanded repentance and remission of sins to be preached in his name among all nations. And it is with great satisfaction and gratitude to God that I hope I can say neither your application nor my endeavors have been in vain.

You have learned to know that God who is the Father of the spirits of all flesh; and who is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. You have sought his favor through the Lord Jesus Christ, and he has often afforded you the drawings of his Spirit. These he has granted you only as a specimen of what he will communicate if you follow on to know the Lord; that is, if you search the Scriptures diligently, and pray much to God, placing your whole confidence for salvation in the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. In short, he will give you to know and to feel that you are not only turned from idols to the living God; from vain hope and superstitious fears, to that hope which maketh not ashamed, and that fear which is the beginning of wisdom; but he will also give you to know and feel that you are adopted into the family of heaven, and become the sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

After long and carefully studying our holy religion, and finding that our blessed Lord commands his disciples to baptize all converts to Christianity with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, you have applied to me for that baptism; and after having

been well instructed in its nature, importance, and design, you received it in a most solemn manner in the public congregation, where prayers from more than a thousand hearts were offered up to God for your present and eternal happiness; and you there felt that, in answer to those prayers, and your fervent supplications, God did pour out his gracious Spirit upon you, so that you found such peace of conscience, such joy in God, as your tongues were incapable of expressing. Thus, then, by this public profession you have put on Christ: you have assumed the Christian name; you have promised to be his faithful, loving, obedient servants to the end of your days: in a word, to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful desires of the flesh; and to keep Gods holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life. Thus you have taken the true God to be your God; and he has taken you to be his children. You have promised to be obedient to him; and he has engaged to furnish you with that grace and strength without which no good act ever was or ever can be done. For this heavenly help you must continue to pray, humbly offering all your desires, prayers, and obedience unto God, through Jesus Christ your Saviour, who alone can make them acceptable in his sight who is the Fountain of infinite purity and justice. You have also promised to take up the cross of Christ; not to be ashamed of Christ crucified, but boldly confess him, and fight manfully under his banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil. Be steady: Gods grace will ever be sufficient for you; and; after having guided you by his counsel through life, he will, if you continue steadfast in the faith, at last receive you into his eternal glory, by Christ Jesus. Amen.

As your stay with me has been too short to acquire both the English language and a general knowledge of the sacred writings, and the doctrines they contain, and you may possibly soon return to your native land, I have drawn up the following short but comprehensive view of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and the principles of religion derived from them; to which I have added a few directions, by attending to which you will never read this divine word without gaining an increase of heavenly knowledge and an increase of religious experience. I wish you to have always at hand those principles which have often been the subject of my teaching and of your learning; that, understanding them and the reasons on which they are founded, you need not be afraid of your most cunning adversaries; but be always able to give them that ask you a reason of the hope that is in you; and which I trust you will ever feel it your duty and interest to recommend to the notice and consciences of your heathen

countrymen, who are still lying in that darkness out of which, by the mercy of the true God, you have now risen. I know that it is your present purpose to announce to the heathen in your own country, and in continental India, the gospel of the grace of God. In reference to this, should God call you to such a work, I wish to give you a few particular directions.

1. If you go forward in the spirit of the original apostles and followers of Jesus Christ, trusting not in man but in the living God, he will enable you to pull down the strong holds of sin and Satan, and that work by which he is pleased will prosper in your hands.

2. Remember that, as the souls of sinners are saved by the mere mercy and power of God, by the same principles is the world to be converted; Human might, authority, or influence, can do little here: it is not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts, that this great work is to be performed. Zechariah 4:6.

3. The primitive disciples of Jesus Christ, when they went to the heathen, as you are now going, had nothing to recommend them but the simplicity and holiness of their lives, and the excellence of the doctrine which they preached; and they had no support but that which they received from their Lord. But this was sufficient to pull down the strong holds of sin and the devil. The weapons of their warfare were not carnal, such as worldly men use; but they were spiritual, such as God furnishes: and they were, therefore, mighty through God. They had Christ in their hearts; they had a powerful love for the perishing souls of men; and they went forth in his strength, proclaiming to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

4. The same work is still to be done; and the same grace and simplicity of heart are equally requisite now as formerly. Do not suppose that human strength and human learning, howsoever useful, will accomplish now what it required the arm of the Almighty to perform in those primitive times. The hearts of sinners are as dark and as hard now as formerly; and nothing but the light of God can illuminate them, and nothing but the power of God can make them soft. Trust, therefore, in him, both in behalf of your own souls, and in behalf of those to whom you may minister: and point them, and ever go yourselves, to that Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world, John 1:29.

5. There is one thing more, of which it may be requisite to apprise you. As preachers of the gospel of Jesus, do not expect worldly honors: these Jesus Christ neither took to himself, nor gave to his disciples. If you be faithful, you will have that honor that comes from God: his Spirit will say in your hearts, Well done, good and faithful servants. Instead of receiving the honor that comes from men, you may possibly be despised, defamed, and persecuted. For the laws of Christ condemn a vicious world, and galling it to revenge; and as the religion of Christ gives no quarter to vice, so the vicious will give no quarter to that religion. Do not wonder, therefore, if you should be mocked, insulted, and abused: if they have persecuted me, said Jesus, they will also persecute you. This the primitive disciples found: but they tell us that, far from being discouraged on this account, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his names sake, Acts 5:41. His true ministers have ever found the same spirit in the unconverted. You have read of the persecutions of the primitive Christians; and you have also read of the many holy men, bishops, ministers, and others, who have lost their lives in this country, when lawless power, false religion, blind zeal, and brutish bigotry prevailed: but these blessed martyrs all died in triumph they glorified God in the fires; and, when consuming at the stake in the raging flames, they possessed the highest consolation of God, and rejoiced that ever they were born! Should you be ever called to bear the same testimony, you will doubtless find the same grace and support.

I mention these things because their occurrence is possible yet it is not very likely that you will be called to suffer personal abuse. Wherever you go, whether in India or Ceylon, you will be under the protection of the mild, excellent, and powerful laws of the British king. These laws you know are vastly superior to all those of which you have heard or read. Of this king (under whose government you have received the light of life; and in whose paternal kingdom you have found, though strangers and foreigners, a place of refuge; and among whose subjects you have found so many friends and brothers) you can not but speak well. I know you love him and his administration; and I know that you will declare to your countrymen what blessings they enjoy who live among the Christian subjects of a Christian king. And I am sure I need not add that you will ever feel love, attachment, and gratitude to that religious society (the Wesleyan Methodists) who cheerfully took you by the hand on your first landing in this country, and placed you under my care; with the wish that you should have every thing necessary for your bodies and your souls. How this wish has been accomplished, while under my roof, yourselves

know best. If I have been faithful, my work is with the Lord: and for my cares and anxieties I ask only an interest in your prayers.

To what I have said in the foregoing pages, I need scarcely add any thing farther. The Holy Scriptures tell you that your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, 1 Peter 5:8, therefore watch, pray, believe, love, and obey.

WATCH against his temptations; watch against your own spirits.

PRAY much in private. Pray for Gods grace to make you humble and teachable. Pray for his Spirit to help your weakness. Pray for divine light, and pray for holiness of heart.

BELIEVE on the Lord Jesus, as having died for you. Believe on him as your Intercessor at the throne of God.

LOVE him who first loved you, and called you from darkness into his marvelous light. Love him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

OBEY him affectionately in all things: obey him as your Master, your King, and your God; and continue in his truth until death.

PERSEVERE in doing his will; i.e., whatsoever he commands. Persevere in suffering his will, cheerfully bearing whatsoever affliction or trial he may permit to come upon you. I now commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them who are sanctified.

I am, my dear friends, your affectionate teacher and servant in Christ Jesus,

Adam Clarke.

GENERAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

SACRED WRITINGS

Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me, John 5:39.

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God; and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

That collection of writings delivered by divine authority to the Jews by Moses and the prophets, and which the Jewish Church has always received as divinely inspired, includes thirty-nine books, the names of which are the following: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.

These books collectively have had a variety of appellations, each of which serves to point out some excellence of those writings, as contradistinguished from all others.

[Transcriber Note: Preceding certain words, the printed text of this compendium contains the characters of the original language. The electronic text contains only the English spelling of those words. Please note also, I have globally searched and changed the spelling of some words in the printed text from their our spelling to their modern or spelling: words such as labour to labor, favour to favor, neighbour to neighbor, and honour to honor by which changes, my spell-checker moves more quickly through the text without repeatedly stopping to identify these words as misspelled.]

The Jews have divided them into three classes, which they have termed, 1. Torah; 2. Nebyim; 3. Ha-ke-thubim: or, as we sometimes express it, The Law, The Prophets, and The Hagiographa.

The Law, included in the Pentateuch, or first five books, they considered as coming immediately from God himself to Moses.

The Prophets, greater and smaller, (with which they connected Joshua, and Judges the two books of Samuel, and the two books of Kings,) they received as extraordinary messengers, deriving their authority from God without the intervention of man; and delivering predictions and expostulations as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

The Hagiographa, containing the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles, they acknowledged as divinely inspired also; but not to have been given on such extraordinary occasions as those on which the law, and the different oracles delivered to the prophets, had been communicated.

1. The whole of these books collectively, they sometimes termed Ha-Mikra, The Reading; emphatically signifying that these records were alone worthy to be read and studied, because of their importance, antiquity, and divine inspiration. It was from this epithet of the sacred writings of the Jews, that Mohammed borrowed the word Al-Koran, which he prefixed to his pretended revelations; and which has the same meaning with the Hebrew Ha-Mikra, both signifying The Reading.

2. In order to distinguish these sacred books from all others, they were termed by the Jews, in those places where the Greek language prevailed, Al-Graphai, The Scriptures, or Writings, as being alone worthy of being written and preserved; 1. Because of their high importance. 2. Because they contained the most ancient writings in the world; the Decalogue, or Ten Commandments, a part of the book of Exodus, being probably the first regular production in alphabetical characters ever seen by man, and the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, being unquestionably the oldest record in existence.

3. Testament, Berith, or Covenant, was another term used at a very early period to designate these divine oracles; as they contained the covenant, or agreement made between God and the people of Israel.

St. Paul calls the sacred books before the time of Christ, the Palaia Diatheke, The Old Covenant, 2 Corinthians 3:14, which is a very proper and descriptive title of the grand subject of those books. This apostle evidently considers the Old and New Testaments as two Covenants, Galatians 4:24, and, in comparing these two together, he calls one the Old Covenant; the other the New; one the first; the other that which is recent. In opposition to the Old Covenant, which was to terminate in the New, he calls this better, more excellent, Hebrews 7:22, 8:6, and everlasting, Hebrews 13:20, because it is never to be changed, or terminate in any other; and is to endure endlessly itself.

The word covenant we borrow from the Latin *convenio*, from *con*, together, and *venio*, I come; signifying a contract or agreement made between two parties; to fulfill the conditions of which they are mutually bound. The Old Covenant, in its essential parts, was very simple; I WILL BE YOUR GOD, YE SHALL BE MY PEOPLE; the spirit of which was never changed. The people were to take Jehovah as the sole object of their religious worship; put their whole trust and confidence in him; and serve him in his own way, according to the prescribed forms which he should lay before them. This was their part. On his side, God was to accept them as his people; give them his Spirit to guide them, his mercy to pardon them, his providence to support them, and his grace to preserve them unto eternal life. But all this was connected with the strict observance of a great variety of rites and ceremonies, at once expressive of the holiness of God, the purity of divine justice, and the exceeding sinfulness and utter helpless state of man. A great part of the four latter books of Moses is employed in prescribing and illustrating these rites and ceremonies; and what is called the New Covenant is the complement, or fulfillment and perfection of the whole.

4. When the writings of the evangelists and apostles were added, to distinguish them from the others they were termed *He Kaine Diatheke*, The New Covenant, or Testament, signifying the New agreement made between God and ALL mankind, the Gentiles as well as the Jews, the first or Old Covenant being made principally in favor of the latter; which new covenant was ratified by the incarnation, sufferings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, as the succeeding collection of PRINCIPLES point out.

The books containing this New Covenant or Testament are twenty-seven in number; and have been divided into four classes I. The GOSPELS. II.

The ACTS of the Apostles. III. The EPISTLES. IV. The APOCALYPSE, or Revelation.

The names of these books are the following: The Gospel of St. Matthew, of Mark, of Luke, and of John: The Acts of the Apostles, probably written by St. Luke. The Epistles of St. Paul: To the Romans First and Second to the Corinthians To the Galatians To the Ephesians To the Philippians To the Colossians First and Second to the Thessalonians First and Second to Timothy To Titus To Philemon and to the Hebrews. The Epistle of St. James. The First and Second Epistles of St. Peter. The First, Second, and Third of St. John. The Epistle of St. Jude. And the book of the Apocalypse, or Revelation; probably written by St. John, the author of the gospel and the three epistles mentioned above.

Having given a general view of the Bible, as a collection of sacred writings, it may be necessary for the benefit of the young and inexperienced to give a more particular account of the contents or subject of each book, included in this collection.

THE BOOKS OF THE OLD COVENANT

I. THE PENTATEUCH, OR FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES

GENESIS

This book has its name from the Greek word [genaesis] used by that ancient Greek version of the Scriptures commonly called the Septuagint which signifies generation, or origination; because this book gives an account of the origin or beginning of all things. It begins at the creation of the heavens and the earth; gives an account of the creation and fall of man, the history of the first inhabitants of the world, the origin of nations, the call of Abraham, and the history of the Hebrew patriarchs, and ends at the death of Joseph: comprehending the space of about 2400, or at the lowest computation of 2369 years.

EXODUS

The name of this book is also borrowed from the Greek [exodos] Exodus, which signifies the going out or departure; because the departure of the people of Israel from Egypt to go to Canaan, or the land of Judea, promised by God to their father, is the most remarkable fact contained in the book. It gives an account of the birth of Moses, the Jewish lawgiver; and contains a history of the transactions of one hundred and forty-five years, beginning at the death of Joseph, B. C. 1635, where the book of Genesis ends, and coming down to the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness of Arabia, at the foot of Mount Sinai, B. C. 1490.

LEVITICUS

This book has the name of Leviticus, because it treats principally of the Levites, the descendants of Levi, the son of the patriarch Jacob, who were all devoted to the service of God in the tabernacle and temple. It also gives an account of the priests, the sons and descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses; and of all the ceremonies to be observed in the different sacrifices and religious feasts prescribed by God. It seems to contain little more than the history of what passed during the eight days employed in consecrating Aaron and his sons to the priesthood. The above occurrences are supposed to have taken place in the year of the world 2514, i.e., 1490 years before Christ.

NUMBERS

This book has been called Numbers from its containing an account of the numbering and marshaling the Israelites in their journey through the wilderness, or desert of Arabia, to the promised land. It comprehends the history of between thirty-eight and thirty-nine years; i.e., from 1490 B. C. to 1451 B. C., and gives a distinct account of the several stages of the Israelites journey; the various occurrences in the way; their trials, rebellions, punishments, deliverances, conquests, i.e., with the several laws and ordinances not mentioned in the preceding books; together with a repetition and explanation of several others which had been previously mentioned. The whole forming a most interesting history of the justice, mercy, an providence of God.

DEUTERONOMY

This book has its name from the Greek, Deuteronomion, which signifies the second law, because it contains a repetition of the preceding laws. It includes an account of what passed in the wilderness from the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year after the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, to the seventh day of the twelfth month of the same; making in the whole the history of the transactions of exactly five weeks. Beside a repetition of the previous laws, this book gives us the finest illustrations of each, so that it may well be called a spiritual comment on the laws of Moses; and also an account of the death of this most eminent man, and all his last discourses with the people. It is continued about seven days after his death. For he began to deliver his first discourse to the people in the plains of Moab the first day of the eleventh month of the fortieth year, chap. 1:3, and died on the first day of the twelfth month of the same year, aged one hundred and twenty years.

II. THE HISTORICAL BOOKS

JOSHUA

This book was probably written by the person whose name it bears; and is properly a continuation of the book of Deuteronomy. It begins where that ends, immediately after the death of Moses; for by this great man Joshua was appointed general and leader of the Israelitish people; and under his direction it was that they entered the land of Canaan. It contains an account of all Joshuas battles; his conquest of the land; division of it by lot to the twelve tribes according to their different families; exhortations to the people; remarkable providences of God; and concludes with Joshuas death, at the age of one hundred and ten years, 1443 years before the Christian era. It seems to include the period of about eight years.

JUDGES

This book contains a history of a high class of Israelitish magistrates, called by the name of judges, raised up at particular times by the especial providence of God, to deliver the people from their enemies, and to govern them according to the law of God. The duration of this species of government, from the death of Joshua to the reign of Saul, was about three hundred and forty-eight years. But as this book does not include the government of Eli and Samuel, the last two judges, but ends at the death of Samson, which happened in the year of the world 2884; consequently it includes the period of only three hundred and twenty-three years.

RUTH

This book, which contains the interesting history of the woman whose name it bears, is a sort of appendix to the book of Judges, and introduction to the books of Samuel, next following. Ruth was a Moabitess, who was married to a Hebrew of the name of Mahlon, born in the land of Moab, where his parents Elimelech and Naomi had gone to sojourn in a time when a famine had obliged them to leave their own country. Elimelech dying, Naomi, his widow, returned to Judea, her daughter-in-law Ruth accompanying her, whose husband had lately died. Arriving at Bethlehem, Ruth was soon known by a kinsman of her own named Boaz, who took her to wife, from whom sprang Obed, the father of Jesse, who was the

father of David, the progenitor of the Messiah. The book seems to have been written to ascertain the genealogy of our Lord.

FIRST BOOK OF SAMUEL

Samuel was an eminent prophet, and the last of the Israelitish judges; and most likely the author of the materials which constitute the two books that go under his name, though probably compiled by another hand. The first book contains an account of the Israelitish affairs under the government of Eli the high priest, who was the fourteenth judge; under Samuel, the fifteenth; as also an account of Saul, the first king of Israel, his reign and death, with which the book concludes. It seems to include a period of about one hundred and fifteen years.

SECOND BOOK OF SAMUEL

This book is a continuation of the preceding; and includes the history of the reign of David, the successor of Saul, and comprises the period of about forty years.

FIRST BOOK OF KINGS

This book gives an account of the death of David; the reign of Solomon his son; the building of the temple; the death of Solomon; the division of the empire under his son Rehoboam into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah; the idolatry of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, who seized on that part of the empire called the kingdom of Israel; and the transactions of the various kings of Israel and Judah down to the death of Ahaziah, king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. The whole including a period of one hundred and nineteen years.

SECOND BOOK OF KINGS

This book contains the history of the Jewish and Israelitish kings down to the destruction of Judah by the Chaldeans, succeeded by the Babylonish captivity; including a period of three hundred and eight years.

FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

This and the following book have their name from the Greek word *chronica*, from *chronos*, time, signifying a narrative of events, registered

according to the times, reigns and years, in which they happened. The first book, in the first nine chapters, contains several genealogies, from the creation down to the Babylonish captivity. The rest of the book gives the history of the reign of David, beginning at the death of Saul, B. C. 1056.

SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES

This book contains the history of the king of Judah, from Solomon to the Babylonish captivity. It is very similar to the books of Kings; giving in many places the same events; but scarcely ever mentions the idolatrous kings of Israel; confining itself in general to the kings of Judah who reigned in Jerusalem.

EZRA

In this book we are informed that Cyrus, king of Persia, into whose hands the Babylonian empire had fallen, permitted the captive Jews, whom he found scattered through his provinces, to return to their own land, under Zerubbabel, one of the Jewish princes, and Jeshua the high priest: the opposition they met with till the accession of Darius to the Persian throne, who gave leave to the Jews to rebuild their temple which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and sent Ezra, a man of great eminence, to assist them in the work. This man was full of faith and the Holy Spirit: he collected all the sacred books of the Jews, placed them in that order in which they now stand, and rendered the returned Jews the most important services. Ezra flourished about four hundred and fifty years before Christ.

BOOK OF NEHEMIAH

This is a continuation of the history of the Jews after their return from captivity. Nehemiah was cupbearer to Artaxerxes Longimanus, or, as the Persians call him, Ardsheer Dirazdest, the long-handed Ardsheer, who, at his request, permitted him to go to Jerusalem, several years after Ezra had gone thither to settle the Jewish state, which was in great disorder. He took two several journeys to Jerusalem, rebuilt the walls, restored the divine worship, rectified a number of abuses, and again returned to the Persian court. He was a man of amazing resolution and fortitude, tempered with much wisdom, piety, and prudence; and is a model for all civil governors. Nehemiah flourished about four hundred and forty years before Christ.

ESTHER

This woman was a Jewish captive; and became queen to Ahasuerus, king of Persia, about four hundred and fifty-eight years before Christ. She was, in this capacity, the means of preventing the massacre of the whole Jewish nation, which had been plotted by Haman, prime minister and favorite of the king. It details the whole history of these transactions, and of the wonderful providence of God in raising her to the throne, preserving the Jews, and defeating their enemies.

III. POETICAL BOOKS, AND THOSE WHICH CONTAIN MAXIMS

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF LIFE

JOB

This book gives the history of an Arabian chief illustrious for his riches, patience, and piety. It contains principally conversations in a highly poetical strain between him and his friends, concerning the providence and perfections of God. He was at first very rich and affluent; but God permitted him to be deprived of his property and children, and also to be sorely afflicted in his body: all which he bore with exemplary patience, which was at last rewarded with a double increase of temporal blessing, and the high approbation of his Maker. When he flourished, is very uncertain.

PSALMS

This is a book of one hundred and fifty most elegant and spiritual hymns, chiefly written by King David. As poetic effusions, they excel every thing written by man; and from their depth and sublimity, their just descriptions of the majesty and perfections of God, the nature and consequences of sin, and the heights and depths of holiness, properly challenge a distinguished place among the inspired writings of the Old Testament.

PROVERBS

This book contains a very large collection of wise sayings, spoken at different times by Solomon, king of Israel, and other eminent sages; affording counsels and maxims for the direction and regulation of every department, office, and circumstance of life. They are delivered in a high oriental strain; and may be said to contain all the wisdom of the ancient world.

ECCLESIASTES

A book supposed to have been written by Solomon in order to show the vanity of the world, and of human life, whether in high or low estate: and

that no happiness can be expected by the human soul, but in the fear, love, and obedience of God.

CANTICLES, OR THE SONG OF SOLOMON

This is a very highly finished Hebrew ode, which, if literally taken, seems to describe the great love and affection which subsisted between Solomon and his queen, the daughter of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. But most commentators suppose it to be an allegorical poem, in which Solomon represents Christ, and his queen the Christian Church. Taken in this sense, it shows the great love which Christ bears to his genuine followers, and the duty and affection which they owe to him. It is in the form of a pastoral.

IV. THE MAJOR PROPHETS

ISAIAH

This most eminent and holy man began to prophesy about seven hundred and sixty years before Christ, under Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh, kings of Judah. This last king was extremely wicked; and under his reign, and by his command, it is said that Isaiah suffered martyrdom, being sawed asunder with a wooden saw! He is supposed to have been of the blood royal of Judah; and is the most sublime of all the prophets. His prophecies are so clear and minute, that they appear rather to be narrations of things past, than predictions of things to come. Of these prophecies the first five chapters are supposed to have been delivered in the reign of Uzziah; the sixth in the reign of Jotham; the seventh to the fifteenth in the reign of Ahaz; and the rest in that of Hezekiah. His predictions of the advent, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glorious conquests of Jesus Christ, are so clear and pointed, as to have gained him the appellation of the evangelical prophet. He spoke clearly also of the calling of the Gentiles; and foretold the ruin that Nebuchadnezzar brought on the Tyrians, Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Philistines; and also the ruin of Nebuchadnezzar himself, and the Babylonish empire. He is supposed to have prophesied about fifty or sixty years.

JEREMIAH

This man was a priest of the tribe of Benjamin; and entered on the prophetic office about the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, seventy years after the death of Isaiah. He foretold the ruin, captivity, and restoration of the Jews, and the destruction of the Babylonish empire. He also predicted the calling of the Gentiles. He lived to see the siege and destruction of Jerusalem, and suffered much himself; all which he feelingly describes. When Jerusalem was taken, and the king of Babylon had committed the government of the land to Gedaliah, Jeremiah continued in Judea: but Ishmael, who was of the seed royal, having slain Gedaliah, the remaining Jews, fearing the Chaldeans, fled to Egypt, whither this prophet was carried, and there died or was put to death. He prophesied about forty-five years, during the reigns of Josiah, Jekoiakim, and Zedekiah, and under the government of Gedaliah; about five hundred and eighty-eight years before Christ.

LAMENTATIONS

The Lamentations of Jeremiah, composed after the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of Judah, are divided into five distinct chapters, which are so many beautiful elegies bewailing those sad events. Chap. i-iv, are written in acrostics, each verse beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in consecutive order. The third chapter is written in double acrostics; and the fifth in single lines, without this artificial order.

EZEKIEL

This prophet was one of the Jews who were carried captive to Babylon, with Jehoiakim, king of Judah. He began to prophesy in Chaldea, about the fifth year of the captivity, before Christ five hundred and ninety-five years; and continued about twenty-five years. He preached against the iniquities of the Jews; and foretold the destruction of several neighboring nations, enemies to the Jews. He was chiefly sent for the edification of the poor captives in Babylon. He foretold the calling of the Gentiles, and the glorious state of the church of God, under the similitude of a temple, the parts of which he very minutely describes. He is on the whole very obscure.

DANIEL

This prophet was also one of the captives in Babylon, whither it is supposed he was carried when very young. He was contemporary with Ezekiel; and was famous for wisdom, penetration, and piety. His prophecies concerning the Messiah, the destruction of Jerusalem, the formation of the Chaldean, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires, and their revolutions, are so very clear that their very dates are fixed. That concerning the advent and death of our Lord is the clearest prophecy ever delivered: though he lived nearly six hundred years before our Lord, he foretold the very year in which he should be manifested, and the year in which he should be cut off. He, and his companions, after running great risks, and suffering great hardships, were raised to great honors in, the kingdom of Babylon. His prophecy is a lasting monument against the Jews of the truth of the Christian religion. He died about five hundred and thirty-six years before Christ.

V. THE TWELVE MINOR PROPHETS

HOSEA

This prophet is thought by some to have been the earliest of all the prophets. He was certainly contemporary with Isaiah; and exercised his office in the kingdom of Israel, about the same time that Isaiah exercised his in the kingdom of Judah. His prophecies are chiefly directed against the ten tribes, previously to their being carried into captivity. He also predicts the coming of the Messiah, and the glorious state of the Christian church. He flourished from seven hundred and eighty-five to seven hundred and twenty-five years before Christ.

JOEL

This prophet was contemporary with Hosea, and flourished about seven hundred and eighty-five years before the incarnation. His prophecy may be considered in the light of a very solemn sermon, warning the Jews to repent of their sins; foretelling a grievous famine which was to be occasioned by an innumerable host of locusts; promises the penitent Gods mercy; and foretells in a very pointed manner that great outpouring of the divine Spirit which should take place under the gospel dispensation.

AMOS

This man was neither of the sacerdotal nor prophetic order: but was a herdsman, a keeper of cattle, in the territory of Tekoa; and was sent by God to call the people of Israel to repentance, and denounce the divine judgments against the workers of iniquity. He foretells the judgments of God which were to fall on the Syrians, Philistines, Tyrians, Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites. He flourished about seven hundred and eighty-seven years before Christ.

OBADIAH

This is the shortest of all the prophets. His prophecy refers to the Edomites, the descendants of Esau, whom he threatens with utter destruction, because of their cruelty and oppression to the Jews. It is supposed that he lived about five hundred and eighty-seven years before the Christian era; and was contemporary with Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

JONAH

Jonah was a native of Gath-Hepher, in Galilee; and was sent by God to denounce his judgments against the Ninevites: but, fearing for his personal safety, he determined on leaving his own country; and so took ship, and endeavored to escape to Tarshish. Meeting with an extraordinary storm, the sailors, concluding that there must be some person aboard against whom there was divine wrath, questioned him on the subject. He confessed his sin, was thrown overboard, and was swallowed by a fish, in whose belly he remained three days and three nights; and was a type of our Lord's death and resurrection. The fish having cast him up on dry land, he went to Nineveh, delivered the divine message; the people trembled, fasted, and repented, and were saved. He is supposed to have flourished about eight hundred and sixty-two years before our Lord.

MICAH

This prophet was sent to reprove both Israel and Judah for their manifold sins, which he did with great warmth and fidelity. He foretold their captivities; comforted the godly; and predicted the incarnation of our Lord, mentioned the very place of his birth, Bethlehem, described his offices as King and Priest of his people, and foretold the glory of the Christian church in the latter days. He flourished at the same time with Isaiah and Hosea, about seven hundred and fifty years before the Christian era.

NAHUM

Though the Ninevites had repented at the preaching of Jonah, they did not continue to bring forth the fruits of repentance. This prophet was, therefore, sent to foretell their destruction, and the ruin of the Assyrian empire, of which Nineveh was the capital. This destruction was effected by the Medes and Babylonians, about sixty years after. Nahum lived under the reign of Hezekiah, about ninety years later than Jonah, or about seven hundred and seventy-two years before the Christian era. He is the most sublime and energetic of all the minor prophets.

HABAKKUK

The preceding prophet foretold the destruction of the Assyrians who carried the ten tribes into captivity; and Habakkuk foretold the ruin of the

Chaldeans, who completed the captivity of this unhappy people, by carrying away the two tribes that remained. He is suppose to have been contemporary with Jeremiah, and to have flourished about six hundred and twenty-six years before our Lord. The prayer in the third chapter of this prophecy is inimitably fine.

ZEPHANIAH

This prophet was sent to the Jews under Josiah to foretell them of their approaching captivity by the Chaldeans, on account of their idolatry, and other heinous offenses; of which he strenuously exhorts them to repent. He foretells also the destruction about to be brought on the Philistines, Moabites, Ethiopians, and Assyrians. He flourished about six hundred and thirty years before Christ.

HAGGAI

This prophet, with the two following, was sent to the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity. He reprehends their negligence in not building the temple, being more intent on their secular interests than on the glory of God; on account of which God sent a dearth, by which they had been grievously distressed. At his instigation, the people resumed the work, which had been sadly neglected, and the temple was soon finished: and though that temple was much inferior to that built by Solomon; yet he foretold that its glory should be greater than that of the former; which was accomplished in the Messiahs honoring it with his presence and preaching. He lived about five hundred and twenty years before Christ.

ZECHARIAH

This was the second prophet sent to the Jews after their return from captivity; and he encouraged the people to proceed with the building of the temple. There are many prophetic visions in this book which relate to the Jews; and several prophecies relative to our Lord; his riding into Jerusalem as a King; the thirty pieces of silver, for which Judas sold his Master; the destruction of the Jews; and the calling of the Gentiles. He flourished about five hundred and twenty years before our Lord.

MALACHI

This was the third and last prophet sent to the Jews after their return from the Babylonish captivity. From his prophecy, it appears that the Jews were in his time generally corrupted. They had not only neglected, but profaned the divine service; these he sharply reproveth; and encourages them much who in those times of degeneracy continued faithful. He foretells the coming of Christ, and very clearly speaks of his forerunner, John the Baptist. He intimates that no other prophet would be sent to them; and that they must be careful to observe the law of Moses till the advent of the Messiah. He flourished about three hundred and ninety-seven years before the incarnation; and was the last prophet ever sent to the Jewish people. His book, therefore, properly closes up the canon of the Old Testament.

About this time Ezra, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, had made a complete collection of all the sacred books of the Jews, in which all the major as well as the minor prophets were included; though some think that Simon the Just added Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Malachi, to Ezras work. This is the same collection which exists to the present day; to which nothing has been added, and from which nothing has been taken away. See Ezra.

The next extraordinary messenger with whom the Jews were favored, was JOHN THE BAPTIST, of whom this prophet (Malachi) so clearly speaks. After him came GOD MANIFESTED IN THE FLESH; who before his ascension to heaven, commissioned his disciples, who were afterward called apostles, to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, beginning first at Jerusalem, Luke 24:47. This was accordingly done; and the word of the Lord had free course, ran, and was glorified.

GENERAL ACCOUNT OF THE BOOKS CONTAINED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope,

Romans 15:4.

I come now to consider the writings of the New Covenant, which were the effect of this revelation of Jesus Christ, and the mission of his apostles; and shall divide them into four classes:

I. The historical books: including the four gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles.

II. The thirteen epistles of St. Paul.

III. The catholic or general epistles: viz., of James, Peter, John, and Jude.

IV. The Apocalypse, or book of the Revelation.

Of these different books I shall endeavor to point out the author, the time when written, and the chief subject of each.

I. THE HISTORICAL BOOKS, VIZ., THE FOUR GOSPELS, AND ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

ST. MATTHEW

This evangelist is supposed to be the same who is also called Levi, son of Alphaeus. He was by birth a Jew; and, like the rest of our Lords disciples, a native of Galilee; and appears to have been at first a collector of the public taxes under the Roman government. He was called by our Lord to be a disciple when sitting in his public office by the seaside, near the city of Capernaum.

He was placed by our Lord in the number of his apostles, and continued with him during his life. After the ascension of Christ, he was at Jerusalem; and received the Holy Spirit with the rest of the disciples, on the day of Pentecost. His gospel (i. e., his history of the incarnation, preaching, miracles, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord) is generally allowed to be the most ancient part of the writings of the New Covenant. It is very probable that he wrote this book in Hebrew, about the eighth year after the ascension of our Lord, or A. D. 37, and that it was, by himself or some other, translated into Greek about A. D. 61.

Matthew being a constant attendant on our Lord, his history is an account of what he saw and heard; and, being influenced by the Holy Spirit, his history is entitled to the utmost degree of credibility. Whether he was martyred for the truth, or died a natural death, is uncertain.

ST. MARK

This is the same who is called John Mark; and who traveled from Jerusalem to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, and afterward into other countries. Acts 12:25; 12:5.

It is supposed that he wrote this gospel at Rome, about A. D. 64, and that he died at Alexandria, in in the eighth year of the reign of Nero, the Roman emperor. It is very probable that he had seen the gospel written by St. Matthew, as he omits several things which are amply detailed by that

evangelist. At the same time he inserts several curious particulars not mentioned by any of the others.

ST. LUKE

St. Luke is the most elegant of all the evangelical writers; his language being purer and much more free from Hebraisms than any of the rest. He was an early convert to Christianity, and was St. Pauls fellow laborer, (Philemon, ver. 24,) and accompanied him when he first went to Macedonia; and from Greece, through Macedonia and Asia, to Jerusalem; and from Jerusalem again to Rome, where he stayed with him the two years of his imprisonment in that city. It is generally believed that he finished and published his gospel and the Acts of the Apostles in Greece, about A. D. 47, both of which he dedicates to Theophilus, an honorable Christian friend of his in that country. His gospel, like those of the preceding evangelists, gives an account of the birth, preaching, miracles, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord. It is supposed that he died in peace about the eightieth or eighty fourth year of his age.

ST. JOHN

This evangelist was the son of a fisherman named Zebedee, and his mothers name was Salome. They were probably of Bethsaida; and the father and his sons James and John followed their occupation on the sea of Galilee. Both these brothers were called to the apostleship; and John is supposed to have been about twenty-five years of age when he began to follow our Lord. It is likely that he was one of our Lords relatives; and was that disciple whom it is said our Lord loved: that is, he had a peculiar affection for him. He was also an eye and ear witness of our Lords labors, journeyings, discourses, miracles, sufferings, crucifixion, death, resurrection, and ascension.

The gospel of John presupposes the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke: the grand facts he has in common with them; but he supplies many particulars which are not found in the others. St. Matthew seems to labor to prove the fact of the reality of our Lords incarnation or humanity: on the other hand, John takes up the eternal divinity, which he powerfully establishes; and gives us many invaluable discourses and conversations of our Lord with his disciples, as well as several miracles that are not found in the other evangelists. No one of the gospels gives us the whole history of our Lord; we must read all four, to have this complete. John was banished

by the Roman emperor, Domitian, to the isle of Patmos, in the AEgean Sea: but his successor Nerva having recalled all the exiles banished by Domitian, John returned to Ephesus, where he died, aged upward of one hundred years. The holy Virgin is said to have lived with him till her death, which took place about fifteen years after the crucifixion.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The book of the Acts of the Apostles is the fifth and last of the historical books. It was doubtless written by St. Luke, probably about A. D. 63; and is dedicated to the same noble personage, Theophilus, to whom he dedicated his gospel. The design of the apostle in writing this book appears to have been twofold: 1. To relate in what manner the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost were communicated on the day of Pentecost; and the subsequent miracles performed by the apostles, by which the truth and divine origin of Christianity were confirmed. 2. To deliver such accounts as proved the claim of the Gentiles to admission into the church of Christ. In this book we see how the Christian church was formed and settled. The apostles simply proclaimed the truth of God, relative to His passion, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and God accompanied their testimony with the demonstration of His Spirit. The consequence was, thousands embraced Christianity, and openly professed it at the risk of their lives. They were converted, not merely from one religious sentiment to another, but from sin to holiness. Their tempers, passions, and moral prospects were all changed; and they only lived to bring glory to God, and to do good to men. This mighty change is everywhere in this book attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit, which took of the things which were Christ's, and applied them to the souls of the people. Such was the Christian church at its formation: and such it must be to the end of the world, if it deserve the name of Christian.

II. THE THIRTEEN EPISTLES OF ST. PAUL

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

Paul, at first called Saul, was born of Jewish parents at Tarsus, a city of Cilicia. When young, he was sent to Jerusalem for the purpose of receiving a Jewish education; and was placed there under a most eminent doctor or rabbi, called Gamaliel. He joined the Jewish sect called Pharisees, who were at once the best learned, the most proud, hypocritical, and intolerant of all the Jews. Paul imbibed much of their spirit, as he acquired the whole of their learning. He became proud, overbearing, and haughty; and grievously persecuted the Christians: but as he was on his way from Jerusalem to Damascus, with authority from the chief priests, to bind and variously persecute all that bore the Christian name, he had a most remarkable vision, which see related in Acts, chap. 9, in consequence of which he carefully examined and embraced the Christian faith; and afterward became one of the most zealous promoters and successful defenders of that cause which he had before so inveterately persecuted.

Of his labors, sufferings, and travels, we have an ample account in the book of the Acts. He was long imprisoned at Rome; and at length suffered martyrdom, having his head cut off, by an order of the Roman emperor, Nero, on June 29, A. D. 66.

Rome, to whose inhabitants, or rather to the Christian church there, this epistle was directed, was the metropolis of the Roman empire, and the mistress of the world.

The occasion of writing this epistle was the following: Many Gentiles as well as Jews having been converted by the preaching of the gospel, the latter refused to admit the former to all the privileges of the church of Christ, unless they submitted to be circumcised; as they supposed that this was the only gate through which they should be admitted into the fold. In this epistle St. Paul shows that the Jewish rites and ceremonies were done away; that all men, both Jews and Gentiles, had sinned against God; and that no sacrifices or observances of the Jewish law could make atonement for sin; (for by its works no soul could be justified;) God had therefore appointed a new way of salvation, the sacrifice of Christ, and faith in that sacrifice. That this privilege was not granted to the Jews alone, but equally to the Gentiles; that none could be saved but in this way; and

that those who were thus saved stood upon the broad ground of Gods infinite mercy, and were equal in their religious rank, rights, and privileges. This view of the subject gave the apostle ample scope, 1st, to show the absolute inefficacy of human works, whether consisting in moral obedience or in observation of religious rites and ceremonies, to purchase the favor of God, or make an atonement for sin: and, 2d, the sovereign efficacy of the death of Christ, and faith in the merit of that death, to bring the soul into the favor of God, and give it a right to eternal life that sacrificial offering of Christ being the sole ground procuring these, and faith the means of applying its benefit to the guilty conscience.

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

Corinth, to which this and the following epistle were sent, was one of the most celebrated cities of Greece. It is situated on a gulf of the same name; and was anciently the capital of the Peloponnesus, or Achaia. It was joined to the main land by a narrow isthmus, or neck of land, that had the port of Lecheum on the west, and the port of Cenchrea on the east, by which it commanded the commerce both of the Ionian and AEgean Seas. By the port of Lecheum it received the merchandise of Italy, and of the western nations; and by the port of Cenchrea it received that of the AEgean Sea, the coasts of Asia Minor, and of the Phoenicians. As this city abounded in riches, so did it in luxury and corruption of manners: and no place in the habitable globe needed the gospel of Christ more than this did. Here a church was founded, the principal members of which were eminently endowed with the gifts and graces of Gods Spirit: but as some dissensions had arisen among them concerning things lawful and unlawful, what might be done with a clear conscience, and what ought not to be done, they wrote to St. Paul to give his judgment, and settle these disputes. This first epistle is in answer to that letter; in which, among other things, he discusses the question of the unlawfulness of eating things offered to idols: and enters at large into a consideration of that most important doctrine, the resurrection from the dead, and its proofs drawn from the natural and moral world, and from the resurrection of the body of our blessed Lord.

SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

The preceding epistle having been well received, and its exhortations and reprehensions having produced the desired effect, the apostle writes this to comfort and confirm them in the truth. He reproves a false apostle who had insinuated himself among them, and endeavored to render their minds

evil affected toward himself. In this epistle he vindicates his own doctrine and conduct against the aspersions of that false apostle, gives an affecting account of his own trials and sufferings, and strongly exhorts them to holiness of heart and life.

EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS

Galatia or Gallograecia, was anciently a part of Phrygia, in Asia Minor bounded on the east by Cappadocia, on the west by Bithynia, on the south by Pamphylia, and on the north by the Euxine Sea.

The church of God founded in this place seems to have been greatly perplexed and disturbed by some Jewish teachers, who endeavored to persuade the converted Gentiles that unless they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved. Many having been stumbled and turned aside by these teachers, the apostle wrote to them, 1. To vindicate his own apostleship which those false teachers had undervalued. 2. To assert and maintain the doctrine of justification by faith, from which they had been departing. And, 3. To call them back to the liberty of the gospel from which, under those bad teachers, some of them had apostatized. He proves at large, 1. That no rites or ceremonies of the Jewish law could avail in their justification. 2. That their own works could avail nothing in reference to their acceptance with God; the only way of salvation being by faith, and that this was the original way, for Abraham was justified by faith long before the law was given. 3. That the curse of the law was upon every sinner, and is not removed but by the sacrifice of Christ.

EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

Ephesus was a very famous city of Ionia, and once the metropolis of that part of the world. The grand subject of this epistle is to prove that the great mystery of God, which had been hidden from all former ages, was opened and explained by calling the Gentiles into the church, making them one with the converted Jews, and placing them under the one great and Only Shepherd, Christ Jesus. The apostle also shows the necessity of the doctrine of justification by faith; enters into a description of the heights, lengths, and breadths of Christian holiness; points out the enemies of true believers; shows them the spiritual armor with which they are to defend themselves and concludes by giving them the most pointed directions

relative to the cultivation of their hearts, their moral conduct, and particularly their exact fulfillment of all the relative duties.

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Philippi was a town of Macedonia, in the confines of Thrace, and near the northern extremity of the AEgean Sea. St. Paul first preached the gospel here about A. D. 53, and established one of the most pure and excellent churches. False teachers had crept into this church also, against whom he warns the people exhorts them to unity and concord, points out to them the glory which shall be revealed to the truly faithful, speaks of the blessedness of his own experience, and thanks and commends them for the contributions they sent to supply his wants.

EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS

Colosse, or Colossa, was a city of Phrygia Pacatiana, now a part of Natolia, in Asia Minor, situated on an eminence on the south side of the river Meander. There is a very great similarity between this epistle and that to the Ephesians It contains the very depth and essence of Christian doctrine and Christian experience; strongly excites to holiness of heart and life; and exhorts to a regular fulfillment of the relative duties, viz., parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and servants, &c.

FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

Thessalonica, now called by the Turks Salonichi, is a seaport town of Turkey, in Europe, and anciently the capital of Macedonia. Paul and Silas preached the gospel in this city about A. D. 51 or 52. This epistle is probably the first that St. Paul wrote: and it appears that the church of Thessalonica was the purest of all the apostolic churches. The apostle finds scarcely any thing among them to reprove. They had received the whole truth as it was in Jesus, and their conduct was conformed to it. They had a faith that worked, a love that labored, and a hope which enabled them to bear all afflictions patiently, and wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus. The directions which he gives in the last chapter, relative to the perfection of their Christian faith and character, are of the utmost importance; and intimately concern all Christian churches, and all who bear the Christian name.

SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS

It appears that the second epistle was written shortly after the first, the main design of which is to warn the people against crediting a false report which they had heard relative to the sudden appearing of Christ to judge the world; which they had so far received and credited as actually (at least some of them) to give up their secular affairs, as being inconsistent with the expectation of so solemn an event, so speedily to take place. On this subject the apostle sets them right by giving just notions of the future judgment, predicts a certain apostasy from the faith, and exhorts them to obedience and fidelity in all the circumstances of life in which God may place them.

FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

Timothy, the person to whom this epistle is addressed, was the son of a Gentile, by a Jewish woman named Eunice, the daughter of a Jewess named Lois. It is likely that, at the time that Lois was converted to the Christian faith, her husband was dead, as was also the husband of Eunice; and that the grandmother, mother, and son lived all together. Their son Timothy became strongly attached to St. Paul, received the Christian faith in its power, became an evangelist, and traveled with the apostle through different parts, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. The apostle having left him in the City of Ephesus to superintend the church in that place, he wrote this first epistle to him, probably about A. D. 64 or 65, in which he gives him direction, 1. To oppose those fables invented by Jewish teachers to recommend the observance of the Mosaic law as necessary to salvation. 2. To oppose those uncertain genealogies by which certain persons wished to show their descent from Abraham, on the persuasion that they should be saved merely because they were his descendants. 3. That he might oppose a foolish propensity which they had to the discussion of intricate questions, which, instead of leading to godliness, engendered strife. 4. The apostle gives him suitable directions how to act the part of an evangelist; how to rule the church of God; and how to repress irregularities, and maintain truth.

SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY

This was in all probability written a short time after the first; for the same sort of persons, doctrines, and practices are reprobated in the second which were condemned in the first. The same commands and instructions

are given to Timothy in the second as in the first. The same remedies for the corruptions which had taken place at Ephesus are prescribed in the second as in the first. And in this second epistle every thing is addressed to Timothy as the superintendent both of the preachers and laity in the church of Ephesus. All which prove that, as the same persons and the same state of things continued when this second epistle was written, as when the first was written, consequently both must have been sent within a short time of each other.

In this epistle St. Paul strongly exhorts his son Timothy to hold fast the form of sound words which had been delivered to him; shows him what and how to preach; predicts the evils of the latter times and his own approaching martyrdom; and sends salutations to different friends.

Both epistles are a treasury to the church of Christ, and of the utmost consequence to all preachers of the gospel.

EPISTLE TO TITUS

From frequent mention made of this person in St. Pauls epistles, we learn that he was a Greek, and most probably a heathen till converted to Christianity by St. Paul. He accompanied this apostle in several of his journeys; and was at last left by him in the island of Crete, as superintendent or bishop of the churches there planted. Crete is a very large island in the Mediterranean Sea; being about one hundred and eighty miles long, by about forty broad.

This epistle is very similar to the First Epistle to Timothy. They are both principally occupied in describing the qualifications of those who should be appointed to ecclesiastical offices; and the ingredients in this description are nearly the same in both epistles.

Timothy and Titus are both cautioned against the same prevailing corruptions; the phrases and expressions in both letters are nearly the same; and the writer accosts his two disciples with the same salutations; which shows, not only that the two epistles were written by the same person, but nearly about the same time, viz., A. D. 65.

EPISTLE TO PHILEMON

Philemon seems to have been a person of consideration, affluence, and charity, in the city of Colosse and a distinguished Christian, who had a church at his house; and frequently entertained the Christians and Christian ministers who passed that way.

The occasion of writing this letter was the following: Onesimus, a slave, had on some pretense or other run away from his master, Philemon, and come to Rome, where St. Paul then was as a prisoner, though dwelling in his own hired house and guarded by a Roman soldier. Onesimus, having found him out, was converted by the apostle, who wrote this letter to his friend Philemon in behalf of one who, though formerly unfaithful, was now restored to a better mind. The recommendation is managed with great skill and address, and was no doubt successful. The epistle contains no pointed reference to any particular doctrine of Christianity; but is a model for commendatory and intercessory letters. It was probably written about A. D. 62.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

This is allowed to have been the last written by St. Paul of which we have any knowledge; and was most probably composed in A. D. 63. The design was to prevent the Jews who had received the gospel from turning back again to Mosaic rites and ceremonies. And, to accomplish this design, he shows them that the law was but the shadow of good things to come, and the gospel the substance; that the former without the latter was without meaning, and without use; and that every thing in and under the law pointed out some corresponding spiritual good under the gospel. The major part of the epistle is a comment upon the law, and the most beautiful illustration of it that ever was or can be given. On the prophetic, sacerdotal, and regal offices of Christ, it is both ample and luminous; and no man can read it without having his head enlightened and his heart mended. It is by far the most elegant, the most argumentative, and the most useful epistle of the great apostle of the Gentiles. In it he concentrates all his learning, all his legal knowledge, and all his evangelical experience and unction. The epistle everywhere shows the hand of a master; and that hand was guided by the unerring wisdom of the eternal Spirit.

III. THE CATHOLIC OR GENERAL EPISTLES

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

James the Less, one of the disciples and kinsmen of our Lord, has been most generally supposed to have been the author of this epistle; and that it is the oldest of all the apostolical epistles, and perhaps prior to any of the gospels. It seems to have been written to comfort and edify the believing Jews, who were scattered through the different nations of the earth. It is written much in the style of a Jewish prophet; and seems to be a connecting link between the law and the gospel, as John the Baptist was between Judaism and Christianity. The style of it is elevated, and the diction compressed and clear; and the lessons of morality and submission to the divine will which it conveys are not surpassed by any thing found in the writings of the other apostles.

FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

Peter was a native of Bethsaida, in Upper Galilee; and by trade a fisherman. He and his brother Andrew were called early to be disciples of Christ. Being married, he had removed his family to Capernaum and his house there seems to have been the usual residence of our Lord when in those districts. He is generally supposed to have obtained the crown of martyrdom at home, at the beginning of Neros persecution, about A. D. 64 or 65.

His epistles seem to be written to the believing Jews and Gentiles; especially those who were suffering persecution, or were obliged to leave their country on account of the gospel, and take refuge in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. He exhorts them to patience, submission, perseverance, and holiness, after the example of our Lord; and concludes with suitable exhortations to the elders to guard and feed the flock of Christ.

SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

This is addressed to the same persons as the first, and on nearly the same occasion. He shows that the believing Gentiles, though uncircumcised, were entitled to the same privileges as the believing Jews; exhorts them to patience and steadiness in their Christian profession; warns them against

false prophets, and professing Christians whose lives were unholy; refers to the day of judgment, and wonderfully describes the action of the fire by which all things shall be destroyed; but predicts a renovation of all things, so that a new heaven and a new earth should be, by the power of God, generated as out of the old.

FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

The writer of these three epistles is the same as John the evangelist, of whose history we have already had a sketch in speaking of his gospel. This epistle appears to have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem, and probably A. D. 68 or 69.

The design of this epistle is to inculcate the doctrine of holiness of heart and life springing from love to God and man. Indeed this love seems to be his text, and he has written the whole epistle on this text. His own soul was filled with this heavenly fire; and it shone on and warmed all around.

SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

This epistle is of a private nature, being written to an eminent Christian matron in or near Ephesus, probably a deaconess of the church; or one who was in the habit of accommodating apostles and itinerant evangelists. He commends her for her piety, for the Christian state and discipline of her family; warns her against false doctrines and false teachers; and concludes by hoping shortly to pay her a visit.

THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

This is also an epistle of a private nature, being written to an eminent Christian friend of the name of Gaius, to whom he earnestly wishes, 1. Health of body; 2. Health of soul; and, 3. Prosperity in secular affairs. He commends him for his charity and hospitality, warns him against a troublesome person of the name of Diotrephes, and promises to pay him a visit shortly. Both these persons must have been near the apostles habitation, as he was now about ninety years of age, and consequently incapable of taking any long journey. Both these epistles are supposed to have been written between A. D. 80 and 90. The exact time is not known.

EPISTLE OF JUDE

We know no more of this person than what he tells us himself, in the beginning of this epistle, that he was a servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James. But, as there were several Judes and several Jameses, we know not which is intended. It is not directed to any particular church or people, but to Christians in general; and hence it has been called a general epistle.

He warns the churches of Christ against false teachers, and against apostasy; and describes the false teachers of the time in the most vivid colors. The exhortation in verses 20, 21, is forcible and affectionate; and the doxology in verses 24 and 25 is well adapted to the subject, and is peculiarly dignified and sublime. It is supposed that this epistle was written about A. D. 64 or 65.

IV. THE APOCALYPSE, OR BOOK OF THE REVELATION

This is generally allowed to be written by John the evangelist, author of the gospel and of the three epistles lately reviewed; and that it was written while he was an exile in the isle of Patmos; and published after his return, about A. D. 96. It is undoubtedly the latest piece of the New Covenant: after which the divine Spirit has not thought proper to add any thing farther to the Christian code. This, therefore, finishes and seals up vision and prophecy under the New Testament, as Malachi does under the Old.

The book opens with a splendid appearance of the Lord Jesus, as the Ancient of days, in his sacerdotal vestments; who dictates to John seven epistles, or letters, which he orders him to send to seven churches in Asia Minor; viz., Ephesus, Smyrna Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea.

After these, there are a profusion of hieroglyphic [symbolic] representations; accompanied by a tissue of most solemn prophecies, supposed to regard not only the church, but the different governments of the world, from that time to the day of judgment. Several of these prophecies appear to have been already fulfilled, some in the act of being accomplished, and others remain which respect future ages. The book is written with great dignity and majesty of figure, metaphor, and coloring: and several of the prophecies in it bear a striking similitude to some in the prophets Ezekiel and Daniel. Obscure as it is, God pronounces a blessing on all them who shall read it; and because it closes the canon of the New Testament and revelation in general, God thus speaks:

If any man shall ADD unto these things, God shall add unto him all the plagues that are written in this book. If any shall TAKE AWAY from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book, Revelation 22:18, 19.

With this apostle the reader may well add, Unto him that LOVED us, and WASHED us from our sins in his own BLOOD, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to HIM be glory and dominion for ever and ever, amen, Revelation 1:5, 6.

All these books collectively, whether given to the Jewish or Christian church, are sometimes termed THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT; and generally through all Christian countries, and in almost all languages, The Bible from a Greek word Biblos, a BOOK, as being the only book that teaches the knowledge of the true God; the origin of the universe; the creation and fall of man; the commencement of the different nations of the earth; the confusion of languages; the foundation of the church of God; the abominable and destructive nature of idolatry and false worship; the divine scheme of redemption; the immortality of the soul; the doctrine of the invisible and spiritual world; a future judgment; and the final retribution of the wicked in the pains of eternal perdition, and of the good in the blessedness of an endless glory.

From this Bible, or collection of sacred writings, the following principles have been extracted; which, though they do not contain every particular, yet they exhibit the grand principles of revealed religion; and, in several cases, the reasons on which they are founded. I have endeavored to deduce them in their dependent and progressive order, that the mind may be easily and gradually led from primitive to secondary and ultimate truths, through the whole economy of divine justice, mercy, and grace, as far as these things are revealed to us in the sacred writings, or seem fairly deducible from the different parts of divine revelation.

This is a desideratum, or thing to be desired, but not yet furnished, which few catechisms, creeds, or confessions of faith attempt to supply, though in them we might reasonably expect to find such principles.

I have seen most compositions of this kind; but have not found in any of them such a condensed synopsis, or general view of those principles, on which every Christian must found his faith, if he wish it not to stand in the

wisdom of man, but in the power of God. Bodies of divinity, so called, are out of the question; as being by far too voluminous for the purpose; nor do they in general contain principles, but rather systems of doctrines, most of which are founded on party creeds.

These Scriptures we know to be revelations from heaven:

1. By the sublimity of the doctrines they contain; all descriptions of God, of heaven, of the spiritual and eternal worlds, being in every respect worthy of their subjects and on this account widely differing from the childish conceits, absurd representations, and ridiculous accounts, given of such subjects in the writings of idolaters, and superstitious religionists, in all nations of the earth.
2. The Bible is proved to be a revelation from God, by the reasonableness and holiness of its precepts; all its commands, exhortations, and promises having the most direct tendency to make men wise, holy, and happy in themselves, and useful to one another.
3. By the miracles which it records: miracles of the most astonishing nature, which could be performed only by the almighty power of God: miracles which were wrought in the sight of thousands, were denied by none, and attested through successive ages by writers of the first respectability, as well enemies as friends of the Christian religion.
4. By the truth of its prophecies, or predictions of future occurrences, which have been fulfilled exactly in the way, and in those times, which the predictions delivered many hundreds of years before had pointed out.
5. By the promises which it contains promises of pardon and peace to the penitent, of divine assistance and support to true believers, and of holiness and happiness to the godly, which are ever exactly fulfilled to all those who by faith plead them before God.
6. By the effects which these Scriptures produce in the hearts and in the lives of those who piously read them; it being always found that such persons become wiser, better, and happier in themselves, and more useful to others: better husbands and wives; better parents and children; better governors and subjects and better friends and neighbors. While those who neglect them are generally a curse to themselves, a curse to society, and a reproach to the name of man.

7. To these proofs may be added the poverty, illiterate and defenseless state of our Lords disciples and the primitive preachers of his gospel. The Jewish rulers and priesthood were as one man opposed to them; they sought by every means in their power to prevent the preaching of Christianity in Judea; the disciples were persecuted everywhere, and had not one man in power or authority to support them, or espouse their cause; yet a glorious Christian church was founded even at Jerusalem; thousands received and professed the faith of Christ crucified, and many of them gladly sealed the truth with their blood. When they had preached the gospel throughout Judea, they went to the heathens, preached the gospel in different parts of the Lesser Asia, Greece, and Italy. In all these places they had to contend with the whole power and influence of the Roman empire, then entirely heathen, and the mistress of all the known world! Christian churches, notwithstanding, were founded everywhere; and even in Rome itself, the throne of the Roman emperor! Here they were as defenseless as in Judea itself; they had to contend with all the idolatrous priests, with all the Greek philosophers, with the secular government, and with the many millions of the deluded and superstitious populace, who, instigated by furious zeal, endeavored by the most barbarous acts of persecution to support their false gods, idols, temples, and false worship: yet, before the preaching of these poor, comparatively unlearned, and totally defenseless men, idolatry fell prostrate; the heathen oracles were struck dumb; the philosophers were confounded; and the people were converted by thousands; till at last all Asia Minor and Greece, with Italy, and the various parts of the Roman empire received the gospel, and abolished idolatry! Had not this doctrine been from God, and had not He by his Almighty power aided these holy men, such effects could never have been produced. The success, therefore, of the unarmed and defenseless apostles and primitive preachers of Christianity is an incontrovertible proof that the gospel is a revelation from God; that it is the means of conveying light and life to the souls of men; and that no power, whether earthly or diabolic, shall ever be able to overthrow it. It has prevailed, and must prevail, till the whole earth shall be subdued, and the universe filled with the glory of God. Amen.

All these are proofs which cannot be contradicted, that these Scriptures are a revelation from God; and, consequently, the only complete directory of the faith and practice of men.

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, said an eminent scholar, have God for their Author, the Salvation of mankind for their end, and Truth without any mixture of error for their matter.

As a revelation from God, they have stood the test of many ages; and as such maintained their ground against every species of enemy, and every mode of attack. Truth is mighty, and must prevail.

This revelation is now complete. God will add nothing more to it, because it contains every thing necessary for men, both in reference to this world and that which is to come: and he has denounced the heaviest judgments against those who shall add to it, or diminish any thing from it.

PRINCIPLES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

I. There Is One God, who is self-existing, uncreated, infinitely wise, powerful, and good: who is present in every place; and fills the heavens, and earth, and all things. Now, as THIS ONE God is eternal, that is, without beginning or end, and is present everywhere, and fills all space, Isaiah 44:6-8, there can be only ONE such Being; for there cannot be two or more eternals, or two or more who are everywhere and fill all things. To suppose more than one supreme Source of infinite wisdom, power, and all perfections, is to assert that there is no supreme Being in existence. A plurality of eternal beings would resemble a plurality of universes, eternities, and infinite spaces; all which would be contradictory and absurd. Isaiah 44:6, 7, 8.

II. This one infinite and eternal Being is a Spirit: i.e., he is not compounded, nor made up of parts; for then he would be nothing different from matter, which is totally void of intelligence and power. And hence he must be invisible; for a spirit cannot be seen by the eye of man: nor is there any thing in this principle contradictory to reason or experience. We all know that there is such a thing as the air we breathe, as the wind that whistles through the trees, fans and cools our bodies, and sometimes tears up mighty trees from their roots, overturns the strongest buildings, and agitates the vast ocean; but no man has ever seen this air or wind, though every one is sensible of its effects, and knows that it exists. Now it would be as absurd to deny the existence of God, because we cannot see him, as it would be to deny the existence of the air or wind, because we cannot see it.

As to reason and sense, the wind is known to exist by the affects which it produces, though it cannot be seen; so God is known by his works; and a genuine Christian is as conscious that this divine Spirit works in, enlightens, and changed his heart, as he is that he breathes the air, and feels the action of the wind upon his body; and is either chilled, cooled, or refreshed, by its breezes. John 4:24; 3:8.

III. In this God there are found three persons, not distinctly or separately existing; but in one infinite unity; who are termed Father, Son, and Spirit; or God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; all existing in the one infinite and eternal God; neither being before or after the other, neither being greater or less than the other. These three divine persons are frequently termed among Christians, The Trinity. 1 John 5:7; Luke 3:22.

IV. This God is the Creator, Governor, and Preserver of all things: all creatures, animate and inanimate, owe their being to him; and by him they are all supported. John 1:3; Nehemiah 9:6.

V. The works of creation show God to be infinitely powerful, wise, and good. His power is seen in the vastness or magnitude of his works; his Wisdom is seen in the skill and contrivance so evident in each, and in the whole; and his Goodness is seen in the end for which each has been formed: for he has made all intelligent and animate beings capable of happiness; and he has so contrived their bodies, minds, and different parts, as well as the things by which they are surrounded, that this happiness is, in general, within their reach. Psalm 104:24.

VI. Man is one of the chief works of God. His soul was created in the image of God, i.e., in righteousness and true holiness: and his body was formed out of the dust of the ground. There was no imperfection in his body, a machine of the most complicate, curious, and difficult contrivance: and no sinfulness in his mind; for God, who is all perfection, could make nothing that is imperfect; and He who is infinitely holy could make nothing that is impure. Genesis 1:27.

VII. But from this state of perfection and purity man fell, by his disobeying the commandment of God; and so became liable to sickness, death, corruption, and dissolution in his body; and became ignorant, sinful, and vicious in his soul; which imperfections and sinful propensities he communicated to all his posterity: for as the stream must ever be the same with the fountain from whence it flows, so all generations of men must

necessarily have the same kind of nature with those from whom they are descended. Adam, the first man, was made in the image and likeness of God; but, when he sinned, he lost that divine image; and then, when he begat children, it is said in the sacred writings that he begat them in his own image, Genesis 5:3, i.e., sinful and corrupt like himself. And in this state all human beings that are born into the world are still found: and their sinful dispositions lead them unto sinful practices; so that the whole human race are fallen, and all are sinners against God and their own souls. Psalm 14:3.

VIII. God, who is infinitely good, showed his mercy to fallen, sinful man by promising him a Saviour who was to come in that time which God should see to be the most suitable. Genesis 3:15.

IX. This Saviour was no less a person than the Lord Jesus Christ, who in that suitable time was to take upon him the nature of man, by assuming a human body; which he subjected to death, that he might make a sacrifice and atonement for all those who were partakers of the same nature, i.e., for the Whole Human Race. Matthew 1:21, 28; Hebrews 2:9.

X. Jesus Christ, as man, could suffer and die; as God, he was incapable of either, but it was necessary that his human nature should suffer in order to make an atonement; and it was necessary that his Deity should be united with that humanity, in order to make its suffering of infinite value, that thereby a suitable atonement might be made for the sins of the world. 1 Peter 3:18.

XI. The law which God gave to men was given to human nature. That nature transgressed this law; on that nature, therefore, divine justice had a claim; and from it that justice had a right to demand satisfaction. To have destroyed that human nature existing at the time of the transgression in the first human pair only, would have been inconsistent with the innumerable purposes of divine justice, mercy, and providence; therefore God permitted them to live and propagate a posterity upon the earth: but in his infinite love he found out a Redeemer for this fallen nature. But this Christ or Redeemer took not upon him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham, that is, human nature, that in the nature which sinned he might make the expiation required. Hebrews 2:16.

XII. It was also necessary that this Redeemer should be infinitely divine and perfect; as the end of his great undertaking was not only to purchase

pardon for a world of offenders, but to merit eternal happiness for mankind. Now an infinite happiness cannot be purchased by any price less than that which is infinite in value; and infinity of merit can only result from a nature that is infinitely divine or perfect. Colossians 1:17.

XIII. Accordingly we find that, about 4000 years after the creation, this Jesus Christ was born in Judea, of a virgin, whose name was Mary, in whose womb his human nature was conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost; and about thirty-three years afterward, having wrought multitudes of miracles, the most astonishing and beneficent, and preached that heavenly doctrine called the gospel or good news, he gave up his life at Jerusalem as a sacrificial offering for the lives of all mankind. He was buried; rose again, by that divine power which could not suffer death, on the third day, according to his own predictions; and gave commission to his disciples, (holy men to whom he had taught the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,) to go into all the world, and preach his gospel to every creature; which they and their successors have done, and are doing; and by these means Christianity has been spread and established in the earth; and will finally prevail in every nation of the world according to his own most positive declarations. Luke 2:11; Isaiah 53:9; 1 Timothy 2:6; Mark xvi, 15.

XIV. God has assured mankind that there is and can be no salvation but through Jesus Christ: that for the sake, and on the account, of his sacrificial sufferings and death he can forgive sins; and on no other account will he show mercy to any soul of man. Ephesians 1:7.

XV. As all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and are consequently exposed to endless punishment, and no man can make an atonement for his own soul, God has commanded all who hear the gospel to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to believe on him as having died for them, and to believe that his sufferings and death are a sufficient sacrifice for their sins; and, consequently, to offer this sacrificial death of the Lord Jesus Christ as a ransom price for their souls, Mark 16:16.

XVI. But it is not likely that any person will feel his need of Jesus Christ as his Saviour, unless he feel that he is sinful, guilty, and cannot help himself: hence the Holy Scriptures require men to repent; that is, to turn from and be deeply sorry for their transgressions, to mourn and be distressed for having sinned against God, and to implore his mercy through Christ Jesus, by fervent and continued prayer. Acts 3:19; 18:30.

XVII. Scripture gives no hope to any man, that his sins can be blotted out, or his soul saved, by anything he can do, or has done, or by any sufferings through which he can possibly pass: every man, therefore, must come to God through Christ, to be saved by free grace and mere mercy alone. Romans 3:24; Ephesians 2:8.

XVIII. When a sinner comes thus to God, with a broken and contrite heart, believing and trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ alone for salvation, God freely pardons him; and he knows and feels that he is pardoned, because his darkness and distress are all taken away; and the Spirit of God bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God: this God has promised; and, therefore, it is the privilege of every Christian to know that his sins are forgiven him for Christs sake: and of this fact there are thousands of living witnesses in the Christian church. Let it ever be remembered that genuine faith in Christ will ever be productive of good works; for this faith worketh by love, as the apostle says, and love to God always produces obedience to his holy laws. Romans 5:5; 8:16.

XIX. Pardon or forgiveness of sin implies that the mans guilt is taken away; and that he is no longer in danger of falling into endless punishment: but it does not imply that the evil of his nature is wholly removed; for this is a separate work of Gods mercy. Romans 5:1; 8:1.

XX. Hence God promises his Holy Spirit to sanctify and cleanse the heart, so as utterly to destroy all pride, anger, self-will, peevishness, hatred, malice, and every thing contrary to his own holiness. 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Romans 8:13; Ezekiel 36:25-27.

XXI. The work of pardon on the conscience is called Justification; the work of holiness in the heart is termed Sanctification: these two comprise the whole salvation of the soul in this world. He who is completely sanctified, or cleansed from all sin, and dies in this state, is fit for glory. Revelation 3:5.

XXII. Let it be therefore remembered, that Repentance must go before Justification; that Justification must go before Sanctification; and that Sanctification must go before Glorification. Consequently, he who does not repent and forsake sin can not be justified; he who is not justified cannot be sanctified, and he who is not sanctified cannot be glorified.

XXIII. As the grace that produces any of these states may be lost through sin, or carelessness; hence the necessity that the true penitent should continue to watch and pray till he is justified that, when justified, he should continue to watch and pray, and deny himself, and take up his cross, till he is sanctified; and, when sanctified, he should continue the same course, believing, loving, and obeying, till he is glorified. As he will be in danger as long as he lives of falling from grace, so he should continue to watch and pray, believe, and maintain good works, as long as he breathes; for while thus employed, humbly trusting in the Lord Jesus, he cannot fall. 1 Corinthians 9:27; 2 Peter 2:18; Mark 14:38; 13:37; 2 Peter 2:10.

XXIV. Jesus Christ has ordained only two sacraments, or religious ceremonies: The first Baptism, by which we enter into his church; and the second the Lords Supper, often called the Sacrament, by which we continue members of his church. The former implies being dipped in, or sprinkled with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. The water is an emblem of the cleansing and purifying influence of the Holy Spirit; and the whole of the act itself signifies a consecration of the person to the endless service and glory of the ever blessed Trinity, that is, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in whose name he has been baptized. The second or holy sacrament is an emblem of the sacrificial death of Christ; the Bread which is used signifying his Body that was crucified, and the Wine his Blood that was shed for the sins of the world. But the bread and wine are only emblems of this body and blood; not changed into that of our blessed Lord, as some have erroneously imagined. He, therefore, who receives the holy sacrament professes thereby that he expects salvation only through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus. Matthew 28:29; 26:26, 27, 28.

XXV. The body is mortal, and must die and mingle with the earth, out of which it was made: but it shall be raised again by the power of Christ, in what is called the Resurrection from the dead. But the soul is immortal, and can neither die nor perish; but in the resurrection the body and soul shall be again united, both of the just and of the unjust. Hebrews 9:27; 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; John 5:28, 29; Ecclesiastes 13:7.

XXVI. After the resurrection comes the general Judgment, in which God shall render unto every man according as his works have been: those who have lived and died in sin shall be sent into hell, and be thus for ever banished from God and the glory of His power: those who have here received the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and have been faithful unto

death, shall be brought into the kingdom of glory, and be eternally with the Lord. John 5:29; Revelation 2:10.

XXVII. In the interim, from death to the resurrection, all souls shall be in a state of conscious existence; the wicked having a foretaste of the misery that awaits them, and the good having a foretaste of the blessedness which is prepared for them. But neither can be supremely happy or wretched till the souls are joined to their respective bodies; otherwise a day of judgment would be rendered unnecessary: for as the works for which they shall be punished or rewarded were done in the body; so they must be joined to their bodies before they can be capable of bearing the due degree of punishment, or enjoying the fulness of eternal glory. Luke 23:43.

XXVIII. Those who, at the day of judgment, are sentenced to punishment shall never escape from perdition; and those who are taken to glory shall never fall from it. Both states shall be eternal. Matthew 25:46.

XXIX. The Bible, from whence the above principles are drawn, is a revelation from God himself; and declares his will relative to the salvation of men. The words contained in it were inspired by the Holy Spirit into the minds of faithful men, called Prophets and Seers in the Old Testament; and Evangelists and Apostles in the New. These all spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. Revelation 12:19; 2 Peter 1:21.

XXX. This Bible, or the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, are the only complete guide to everlasting blessedness: men may err, but the Scripture cannot; for it is the Word of God himself who can neither mistake, deceive, nor be deceived. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

XXXI. From this Word all doctrines must be derived and proved; and from it every man must learn his duty to God, to his neighbor, and to himself. Isaiah 8:20.

XXXII. We have, therefore, three grand gifts, for which we should incessantly magnify God: First, His Son, Christ Jesus. Second, The influence of his Holy Spirit. And, Third, His blessed word 1 John 4:10; Luke 11:13; John 5:39.

XXXIII. This word shows us that God is Love: that he hateth nothing that he hath made; that he is loving to every man, and is not willing that any

should perish, but that all shall come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved. 1 John 4:16; Psalm 145:9.

XXXIV. It shows us that Jesus Christ tasted death for every man, and that the whole human race may believe in him to the saving of their souls. Hebrews 2 ; 1 Timothy 2:6; Ezekiel 18:33; 33:2; 2 Peter 3:19.

XXXV. It shows us that God sends his Holy Spirit into the hearts and consciences of all men, to convince them of sin, righteousness, and judgment; and that his light is to be found, even where his word has not yet been revealed. John 1:19; 16:8, 9, 10, Romans 2:14.

XXXVI. On this ground the Bible informs us, God will judge the heathen who have never been favored with this divine revelation. Those who have acted conscientiously, according to the dictates of this heavenly light in their minds, shall not perish eternally; but have that measure of glory and happiness which is suited to their state; while those who have acted contrary to it shall be separated from God and happiness for ever. Romans 2:12; Luke 12:47, 48 Acts 10:34.

XXXVII. By this light even the heathens are taught the general principles of right and wrong; of justice and injustice: not to injure each other: to be honest and just in their dealings; to abhor murder, cruelty, and oppression; and to be charitable and merciful according to their power. John 1:9; Romans 2:14

XXXVIII. Those who have been favored with divine revelation shall be judged according to that revelation. They have received much, and from them much shall be required; for the Bible assures us that those who have the gospel, and do not obey it, shall be punished with an everlasting separation from the presence of God, and the glory of his power, in that place of misery where their worm, the accusation and self-reproaches of a guilty conscience, shall never die; and their fire, the instrument of the torment, shall never be quenched. 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Mark 9:44.

XXXIX. Thus we find that God will judge the heathen by the law which he has written in their minds; and he will judge the Jews by the law which he has given them by Moses and the prophets; and he will judge the Christians by the gospel of Jesus Christ, which he has given them by the evangelists and apostles; and he will judge the Mohammedans according to the opportunities they have had of knowing the gospel, and the obstinacy

with which they have rejected it. And this will be an aggravation of the punishment of the Jews, Mohammedans, and other unbelievers, that the gospel which would have made them wise unto salvation, has been rejected by them; and they continue blasphemously to deny the Lord that bought them.

XL. As the sacred Scriptures were mercifully given to man to promote his present as well as his eternal happiness; hence they contain directions for every state and condition of life: on husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, they enjoin mutual love, affection, obedience, and fidelity. To governors and the governed they prescribe their respective duties; kings and magistrates, as the representatives of God, they enjoin to use their authority for the protection and comfort of the people: the people they command to love, honor, obey, and pray for their secular rulers; to submit to those laws which are formed for the peace, good order, and prosperity of the state; and to hold in abhorrence every thing that might tend to disturb the peace of the community. In a word, they require all men to love their neighbor, every human being, as themselves; and in all circumstances to do unto others as they would that others should do unto them. Matthew 7:12; Luke 10:31; Romans 3:1-7; Ephesians 5:21 -33; 6:1-9; Colossians 3:18-25; 1 Timothy 2;1-3; Titus 2;1-6 3:1, 2; 1 Peter 3:1-7; 5:1-5.

XLI. From the foregoing principles we see that whatsoever is worthy of the infinite perfections of the One Eternal Being and whatsoever is calculated to produce the present and everlasting happiness of mankind, is taught in the Bible; and that these truths have never been fully nor clearly taught, and most of them not at all, in any system of religion which has been adopted by even the wisest of the heathen nations; that where this book of divine revelation has been received, there is found the greatest portion of wisdom and true greatness; and the largest share of political, domestic, and personal happiness; and that none in such nations are wretched, ignorant, or miserable, but those who do not obey its dictates.

XLII. As this religion positively commands its professors to love God with all their hearts, souls, minds, and strength, and their neighbor, any and every human being, as themselves, hence it is the duty of all Christian nations and people to exert themselves in every possible and reasonable way to send this glorious light of revelation to all the nations of mankind who have not yet received it; and while they continue to use that prayer which Jesus Christ has mercifully taught them, in which is contained this

petition, Thy kingdom come, they should keep a constant eye on the condition of the heathen, and labor to send them that gospel so essential to their peace, their comfort, and their happiness.

Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature: he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; and he that believeth not shall he damned. Mark 16:16.

And I saw an angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the Everlasting Gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth; and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and Give Glory to Him. Revelation 14:6, 7.

DIRECTIONS FOR PROFITABLY READING THE WORD OF GOD

Having thus laid down at large the principles of the Christian religion, and the reasons on which they are founded, and given a general view of that divine revelation from which they are extracted, it may be necessary to give a few directions to those who seriously ask the question, How may we profit most, and grow wise unto salvation, by reading the sacred writings? I answer:

1. Deeply consider that it is your duty and interest to read the Holy Scriptures.
2. When you read, consider that it is Gods Word which you read; and that his faithfulness is pledged to fulfill both its promises and threatenings.
3. Read the whole Bible, and read it in order; two chapters in the Old Testament and one in the New, daily if you can possibly spare the time; and you will have more time than you are aware of; if you retrench all needless visits, and save the hours spent in useless or unimportant conversation.
4. Think that the eye of God is upon you while you are reading his word: and read and hear it with that reverence with which you would hear God speak, were he to address you as he did the prophets and people of old; for, be assured, that he considers it as much his word now as he did when he first spoke it.
5. Remember that the word of God is not sent to particular persons, as if by name; and do not think you have no part in it, because you are not named there. It is not thus sent: it is addressed to particular characters; to saints, sinners, the worldly minded, the proud, the unclean, the dishonest, the unfaithful, liars, Sabbath-breakers, the penitent, the tempted, the persecuted, the afflicted, &c., &c.
6. Therefore examine your own state, and see to which of these characters you belong, and then apply the word spoken to the character in question to yourself; for it is as surely spoken to you as if your name were found printed in the Bible, and placed there by divine inspiration itself.

7. When, in the course of such reading, you meet with a threatening, and know from your own state that this awful word is spoken against you, stop, and implore God, for the sake of the sufferings and death of His Son, to pardon the sin that exposes you to the punishment threatened.

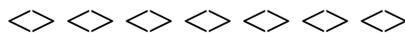
8. In like manner, when you meet with a promise made to the penitent, tempted, afflicted, &c., having found out your own case, stop, and implore God to fulfill that promise.

9. Should you find, on self-examination, that the threatening has been averted by your having turned to God; that the promise has been fulfilled, through your faith in Christ; stop here also, and return God thanks for having saved you from such sore evils, and brought you into such a glorious state of salvation. Thus you will constantly find matter in reading the book of God to excite to repentance, to exercise faith, to produce confidence and consolation, and to beget gratitude; and gratitude will never fail to beget obedience. He who reads the Bible in this way must infallibly profit by it.

10. It is always useful to read a portion of the Scriptures before prayer, whether performed in the family or in the closet. In doing this, mark some particular passages, that they may become a subject for your petitions; by attending to this, all formality and sameness in this sacred duty will be prevented; and you will have an abundance of materials for petitions, supplications, thanksgiving, &c. And thus your prayers will never be tedious, unsatisfactory, or unedifying, either to yourself or to others.

11. Remember that in reading, you keep the eye of your mind steadily fixed upon Him who is the end of the law, and the sum of the gospel; for even the Holy Scriptures can make you wise unto salvation only through faith in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy iii, 15.

12. Let the Scriptures, therefore, lead you to that Holy Spirit by which they were inspired: let that Spirit lead you to Jesus Christ, who has ransomed you by his death. And let this Christ lead you to the Father, that he may adopt you into the family of [God. FINIS.]



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