

**THE EFFICIENCY AND  
SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE**

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# THE EFFICIENCY AND SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE<sup>1</sup>

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## I. ABUSES OF THE BIBLE

THE Bible cures the wounds the Bible makes. It pulls down the errors it was misused to build. It restores fourfold the freedom it was employed to take away. It has been the *occasion* of tyranny, superstition, and cruelty, but it is the *source* of all that destroys such things forever. There is no error but has supported itself from the Bible. There is nothing you cannot prove from parts of the Bible. But there is no error or wrong that can resist the truth and power of the Bible as a whole. Its own revelation adjusts its own views.

Dangerous truth—I prefer it to ever so useful an error.

Truth has a power that can cure every wound it may cause.

We who still believe in the Bible are not ostriches; and it will be worth while to notice the following examples of the mischievous interpretation of the Bible.

We know how the devil can quote Scripture for his purpose. The absolutism of kings was based on the theocratic kingship of the Old Testament. The chaplains of Justinian in the sixth century proved from Melchizedek that the emperor must be also the priest, the master of church as well as the state, and so they paved the way for the papacy. James I of England based on Psalm 82:6, “Ye are gods,” the divine right

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of kings to share God's throne. The King's will is law.

On the other hand, the Bible has been used as a charter of revolution. The peasants of the Reformation demanded relief from their burdens with the Bible and its Gospel of liberty in one hand. Cromwell felt himself the Lord's Shiloh on reading Zephaniah 1:8. And it was the Bible that sustained him as a regicide. The Socialist Seidel in Zurich years ago struck a Bible in a meeting and said: "This is the book of the democracy."

Again Pope Urban, at the Council at Clermont, in the eleventh century, declared that the children of the bondwoman should no longer enslave the children of the free; and so he roused to fever heat the passion of the first Crusade. "It is God's will," they shouted in reply. (The story that Peter the Hermit did this was an attempt by monkhood to seize the honor.) Innocent III, in the thirteenth century, demanded the subjection to the Pope of the kings and lords of England and France with the text: "Doth not your master pay tribute?"

So the persecution of heretics was based on the Bible. Firmicius Maternus was a zealot who wrote to the sons of Constantine the Great a letter demanding the extermination of the pagans, and he based his appeal on the Old Testament command to the Jews to exterminate the Canaanites. Jerome justified compulsory measures against heretics by Deuteronomy 16:6-11.\* Augustine, like many since, used "Compel them to come in" in the same way. Charlemagne wrote to Leo III to say he was following, with the foes of the church, the example of Joshua with the Amalekites: "It is laid on me by the mercy of God to defend the

\* Typo in original. Most likely a reference to Deuteronomy 13:6-11.

Church of Christ with the sword against the heathen and unbelievers. It is yours, holy father, to lift up holy hands to God for me and sustain me as Moses prayed while the battle went on." The burning of heretics in the Middle Ages was defended by Christ's words: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6). Mary of England stayed herself in her persecutions on the exterminations of the Old Testament. Louis XIV justified his dragonnades with the text: "He that spareth the rod hateth his child: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 18:24). Baronius, a great Catholic historian in the end of the sixteenth century, wrote to Pope Paul V that his office was to feed and to slay because Peter was called on in his vision: "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat."

On the other hand, the Bishop of Lincoln in the thirteenth century made a bold speech before Innocent IV, rebuking him for his bloody wars in Christ's word to Peter: "Put thy sword into the sheath." And in the eighteenth century Frederick the Great replied to some Protestant peasants who asked leave to massacre the Catholics in their district: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you."

Leo I (440-461) was the first Roman bishop who set up for the universal bishop of Christendom. He based his claim on the primacy given to Peter in Matthew 16:18. And we know how that has been worked since. Gregory VII claimed the right to depose the Emperor, excommunicate him, and release his subjects from their oath of obedience, on the ground that Samuel had deprived Saul of the kingdom. Suarez, the Roman jurist, expressly said that the Pope

has the right to depose heretical sovereigns, founding on the word: "Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven."

Boniface VIII, in the great bull, *Unam, sanctum, ecclesiam*, of the fourteenth century, claiming the temporal and spiritual sword, falls back on Jeremiah 1:10: "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant." He also uses the text, "Lord, behold, here are two swords. And he said unto them. It is enough" (Luke 22:38), as the ground of both jurisdictions. *Per contra* it was out of the same Bible that the Reformers drew the most mighty weapons against the papacy.

Slavery of the blacks was long defended by "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren" (Gen. 9:25). The Boers, especially under President Pretorius, justified their inhuman treatment of the Bechuana natives by Deuteronomy 20:10-18. At the same time it is from the Christian Bible that the impulse has gone to treat all men as children of God and destined to eternal life, as spiritually, and therefore civilly, free.

Dancing has been justified by David dancing before the ark. It has been denounced with Paul's text: "Walk decently as in the day" (Rom. 18:18). The invocation of angels is based on passages like "He shall give his angels charge concerning thee." While Paul's phrases about the subjection of angels to Christ have been used against it along with the first commandment.

"Let your women," it is quoted, "keep silence in the churches." And, against that: "Your sons and

your daughters shall prophesy" (Joel). In Christ "there is neither male nor female." And, it is further added, the daughters of the evangelist Philip prophesied.

The text, "He hath no form nor comeliness," proved to Clement of Alexandria that Jesus must have had a miserable aspect. While the opposite was proved from, "Thou art fairer than the children of men."

The worship of relics has been defended by, "He keepeth all his bones."

Infant baptism is proved by texts and disproved, along with transubstantiation, double predestination, everlasting torment, confession, faith-healing, and anointing the sick, and prayer as the sole treatment for illness.

Popes and others have excused a lax and mixed standard of church morals by reference to the Ark, which had clean beasts and unclean, to the parable of the wheat and tares growing together or to the text: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth." While on the other side are found: "What concord hath Christ with Belial?" "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers," "Come ye out from among them."

Some, like Darby, find all church offices forbidden by the Bible; others find in it all the offices of to-day; others, again, like Irving, would restore to-day all the polity of the New Testament, and even its versions in the Apocalypse. Some sects in Russia mutilate themselves in obedience to misunderstood passages of Scripture. Abstainers and non-abstainers find texts that seem equally final. Liberal interpreters stand on the text that the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.



Their opponents say no jot or tittle of the law must pass.<sup>2</sup>

## II. THE TRUE NATURE OF THE BIBLE

What is the inference from all this? That the Bible is useless? No, but that certain textual methods of treating the Bible are useless, unnatural, unspiritual. The allegorical way, especially, which was doomed at the Reformation, encouraged each man to find in it what his fancy liked.

But we have got on the real tack—the historical, the critical, the ethical, the evangelical method. The Bible exists for its revelation. It has not a unity of absolute consistency but of life, purpose, and Gospel. It is not a solid block of equal value throughout, but a living body of which parts could be amputated. Its unity is in Christ and His redemption and not in a system; it is not in the perfect harmony of its texts or views, but in the entirety of its message and its power; it is in Christ crucified, risen, and reigning over all. The spiritual power of Paul would have beat the same if his legs had not been of equal length, if his eyes had not corresponded in color, or if they had crossed like two texts. And it need not suffer if we find his texts cross each other at points, or his views not quite adjusted to a symmetrical system.

As out of chaos arose Nature, and then man's spirit to lay law and order on Nature, so out of the chaos of Scripture Christ rises on His cross as the creative power which makes all fall into place. The Bible is there for the Gospel, not for a system, not for scientific proof. It is for moral power rather than for systematic truth. It is a library covering a thousand years.

<sup>2</sup> For a number of these instances I am indebted to a pamphlet by Heinrici, as also for other suggestions.

It did not come out of one mold at one casting. Nor did any portion of it. It was not immune from any kind of error by magical dictation. It must be read historically as well as spiritually. Does it destroy the overwhelming impression we have from a cathedral that it was built in various centuries with some mixture of style, some incongruities, and some flaws? The total impression is there still, great for the soul that feels the spell and owns the unity of the spiritual idea. "The Evangelists may contradict themselves as much as they please so long as the Evangel does not contradict itself," says Goethe. He that believeth shall not worry.

The lesson of the past is to be both cautious and large and historical with our interpretation. The Bible's message to the soul verifies itself differently from its word for the intelligence. For experience we can all vouch, for truth we must study and learn. Every soul can answer to the words: "Thy sins are forgiven thee," "The Lord is my shepherd," "The just shall live by faith." But it needs much care and skill to work out the exact message of each prophet, the perennial lesson from Israel's history, the theology of the world politics round it, or Christ's teaching about such things as the future, divorce, the ministry, the church, and many other points where the amateur is cocksure.

It is for the soul that the Bible primarily exists, for the moral soul. The soul may be trusted to find by a spiritual affinity what it needs for food and lives on by faith. Faith is not faith in the Bible, but in Christ through the Bible; yet there are many preachers who preach the Bible more than Christ. The soul picks its own food as children, girls, and all pure

hearts pick from books of mixed morals what is beautiful and good, and pass the evil by without understanding or memory. Errors in the Bible? Yes, but they make it in some ways a nearer, dearer book. "Man's errors make him lovable," says Goethe. We do not love the admirable paragons. The note of absolute consistency is formidable in any man and in a woman terrible. So with the Bible and its inerrancy. It has its infallibility, but a false claim for the form of that authority has made it despised by many as the prig of literature.

The message of the Bible is to faith. All are capable of faith (though not of learning). Let us circulate the Bible, read the Bible, and let it do its own work, find its own mark, go home to its own affinities in the soul. It was a Bible often wrong (the Vulgate) that made Luther. It will do the work that the warring churches cannot do. It will speak for itself as none can speak for it. It can cure the wounds of humanity. Yea, it can cure the wounds itself makes. As the Gospel remakes the men it shatters, and out of penitents builds saints, so the Bible cannot only recall men from the errors it has stirred, but it can by these errors bring them into a life and truth much more powerful because of the struggle it had gone through and the correction won.

The Bible is the cure for the church, for the theologians, for the fanatics that have built strange fabrics on it. Terrible churches, theologies, and cruelties have risen from it, or been forced into it. But all modern liberty has come out of it. It stands subduing its abuses like a free people, rebuking them, confounding them, stirring their repentance and drawing out their purified devotion.

It is the Bible, the free, public, layman's Bible that must save us from the church of the past and the churchlings of the present, save us for the church of the future, of the race, of the Gospel, of the Christ, of the living God.

### III. THE AUTHORITY IN THE BIBLE IS ITS GOSPEL TO THE CONSCIENCE

The old theologians, so acute with their distinctions, distinguished between two aspects of the Bible: First, its authority, and, second, its efficiency. First, its authority as a rule or standard, its *auctoritas normativa*, what might be called its statical value as a law over us; and, second, its efficacy, its *auctoritas causitiva*, its dynamic quality as the source of an effect in us, of an impulse toward the law and a power to obey it, whether it was the law of works or the law of faith. Now the wonder, the glory, the solemnity, the *authority* of the Bible as God's law is not apparent to us till we have felt the efficiency, the power, of the Bible *in* us as God's Gospel. We do not see its wonders till it has opened our eyes. The Spirit that put it there must reveal to us, and even see for us and in us, what is there.

All great literature, the literature of power, all music or art of any kind, for instance, is to be understood only by sympathy. You must come prepared, wistful, eager to find. You must be more or less in tune. You must feel something of the matter spoken of, and "you must love it if to you it shall seem worthy of your love." If the spirit of the Bible have nothing in us, we shall find nothing in the Bible that is not in any document. But experience is the teacher that turns the Bible from a document to a sacrament.

Things themselves, says Luther, are our preceptors. What a modern note that is! And he gives an illustration in application to the Bible. He says:

“I used to read and sing in the psalm ‘Deliver me in thy righteousness.’ But I quailed at the words. They were strange to me—these words like ‘the justice of God,’ ‘His judgment,’ ‘His work.’ I knew no better. I thought the justice, the righteousness of God was His stern doom. If it was *this* judgment that was to save, I was lost forever. But ‘the mercy of God,’ ‘the help of God,’ these I was fonder of reading about. But, praise God, I came to understand the thing itself. I came to know that the justice of God was the justice by which God justifies us through the justice which was His own gift in Christ. Then I understood the grammar of the words, and then I enjoyed the psalms.”

The real wonder, the supremacy, the authority, of Scripture is given by the efficiency of it, by the experience of it, by the opening of our eyes to its inner mystery and majesty and mercy.

The authority of the Bible does not come by its literal infallibility but from its evangelical. For it is not free from certain errors. The Bible does not come and say: Before I can do you any good I must have your admission that I am an infallible book. That would not be an appeal to experience. For only an infallible being could have any experience of infallibility, or could test and decide upon what is infallible or not. So it would never do us the good we fallible creatures most need.

Nor does the authority of the Bible come by the witness of an infallible church, or indeed of any church. The authority of the Bible does not rest on

the authority of any church, nor of the whole church. The church does not try the Bible and then pronounce for you upon its claim to authority. The church is the custodian and the expositor of the Bible's Gospel, but not its judge—only its witness. The church only selected the canon and said: Whatever the authority of the Bible is, it is there. The church is not the judge of the Bible; the Bible is the judge of the church. What did Luther do and all the Reformers? They went, with souls hungry, thirsty, distracted, tormented, to the Bible. They had gone to the church and failed. So they went to the Bible. And there they sprang up new men in a new world. Their guilt fell from them. The ice broke up. They became free, full, hopeful, faithful men. They found the efficacy of the Bible. And in this experience of its efficacy they found its true authority, an authority which gave them power to challenge and destroy the unscriptural kind of authority and supremacy claimed by the church. The Bible, as the seat of the Gospel, judged the church, not the church the Bible. That is the vital difference between Protestantism and Romanism.

Take another illustration. In the second century, when the church Catholic was being formed, it was compelled into a great unity by a fight for its very life. Gnosticism was a revival of old paganism in Christian guise, and it was a danger as fatal in its way as the Judaism which the church had just overcome. There was no canon of the New Testament then. The books had not been gathered into an authoritative collection and separated from inferior works. The church went on in the tradition and memory of the apostles, and the living voice of their pupils was enough. But the Gnostics appealed to

several passages of apostolic books in their own support. They appealed also to apostolic tradition. So the question arose as to what was the true tradition. What did the great leaders of the church then do? Did they claim that the authority of the church was enough, whatever bygone documents might say? No. They admitted the appeal to certain apostolic documents sifted and selected. They said these were authoritative as to what was Christian. They saw, indeed, that the interpretation of such authoritative books might be abused. They felt the force of arguments borrowed by the Gnostics from the Fourth Gospel and Ephesians. Still they did not reject the appeal to these books as authoritative, as apostolic. They allowed that the church must be judged by the Bible as Gospel, by the apostolic note rather than the apostolic tradition. The test was evangelical. The misuse of the Bible did not lead them to declare that the church was the authority above the Bible, but it did lead them to take the first steps for the formation of an evangelical canon, so that there might be a body of documents with apostolic weight to which the church of every following age could appeal, and not to its own living, unfailing authority. The misuse of Scripture was not met by the authority of the church, but by planting a definite Scripture, selected and not created by the church, in the face of the church and the world.

So the church is not the *judge* of Scripture and its statutory authority. The church is only the historical and continuous *witness* for the originality of Scripture—the witness that Scripture, as the true successor of the apostles, reflects the first Christian sense, the apostolic message, of the presence and mind of Christ.

The early church had more power to decide for posterity what was Scripture than to decide for posterity what Scripture meant. The church is not the judge of the Bible in any age. But the Bible is its own judge. The Bible is to interpret the Bible. God sware by Himself, it is said, because there was none greater. His word was its own warrant. The Bible is a royal, unique book, collection of books though it be. God's word in it is self-vouched. It swears by itself. It guarantees itself. It interprets itself. It comes home in Gospel to His soul. The central principle by which the Bible is to be interpreted and judged is not to be found outside the Bible, either in church or reason, but in the Bible itself, properly used and studied with all the finest machinery which faith and criticism can employ. That is the sound critical principle—interpret the Bible by its own Gospel.

The Bible is a field in which a treasure is hid. It is not to be fenced off by impenetrable theories of infallible inspiration, but it is to be carefully and methodically dug and searched. It is like a rose garden with many stems and leaves of little value, even with some thorns; but the attar of roses is to be distilled from it to fill the world with odor, and to last always as the precious savor of life unto life. Everything in the said field is not the treasure. Everything, of course, is of scientific interest. The stones of the field are, the plants are, and the old mines. But it is not for science that the field is laid out. It is not a botanical garden. It is the treasure you are seeking. For you the field exists for the sake of that treasure, that gold in the quartz. You must pass a great many things by. You must be content



to be ignorant of many things. There is a kind of ignorance which is a matter of true wisdom and real art. To be sure, we are often ignorant by mere neglect or by lack of opportunity. But there is a kind of ignorance which should be studied and cultivated by any modest man, to say nothing of the humble. There are things very young people ought not to know. There are things, like the knowledge of poisons, which the wise state keeps the public from knowing. And so there are things which we should choose contentedly to be ignorant of if we are to pursue knowledge effectually in one direction, or even to cultivate the knowledge of God. If we ran after every kind of knowledge we should not do much in any. There is an art of not knowing, *art nesciendi*. And there is an old Latin verse which says: "To be willing not to know what the supreme teacher does not want to teach is the wise ignorance of real knowledge."<sup>3</sup>

So it is in the Bible. Half the art of reading it is the art of ignoring what the book was never put there to teach. And endless harm has been done to the Bible by making it an authority on what it never existed to convey.

It is to-day, as it was in the second century, and at the Reformation. It is even as it was in the eighteenth century. Religion is in danger, in great danger. At least historic Christianity is, and the future of religion is bound up with that. The danger that came in the second century from philosophic systems, and in the sixteenth from an ecclesiastical system, arose in the eighteenth century from

<sup>3</sup> Nescire veile quae magister optimua  
Docere non vult erudita incscitia est.

the rationalism of Deism, state control, and soulless orthodoxy. The evangelical movement of one hundred and fifty years ago saved us. It gave the religious keynote to the last century. And what was its great word? Its word was: "Back to the experience of the soul in contact with the Bible. You will find the true authority, you will find the wisdom of the world, when you have found the efficacy of the Bible to forgive and regenerate." As Paul converted Luther, so Luther converted Wesley. It was Luther's preface to Romans that turned Wesley from a servant to a son, from a pious churchman and model clergyman to a burning apostle, with a world for his parish, and a mind much more free and liberal than many of his followers realize.

The greatest service which the modern study of the Bible is rendering us is this: It is opening our eyes and concentrating our attention on the real purpose, the real strength, the real wonder, glory, power, and authority of the Bible; which is its religion first, its science after; first its Gospel, then its dogmatic. What is the use of our eyes being opened if they are opened on the wrong things? What are we to look for in the Bible when our eyes are opened? The Bible is a whole. It is to be treated as a whole. But it is a living whole. It is not a compilation, not a national *Chrestomathia*, merely; it is an organism. We may not take the whole Bible, but we take the Bible as a whole. Its unity is not in its fitted parts but in its organizing spirit, its purpose, its revelation, its Gospel. It crystallizes on that. It is not like a work of classic art. Every part is not in exact and measured proportion to every other. Every section is not vital to the whole. What rules in the Bible is

“the proportion of faith,” not of sight. It is the *spirit*, the intent, the function of the Bible that is its unity. The unity of a statue is in its symmetry of parts. Each part is perfect, else the whole is not. But that is a Greek, an esthetic, idea of perfection, not the Christian which enters life maimed. The unity of a living creature is in the unity of its life, its purpose, its genius—not of its limbs.

All the *statements* of the Bible are not perfectly harmonious. Every verse does not tally with every other. Every fact, every view, does not. Much, too, is obscure and unfinished. The *science* of the Bible—the method of creation? We gain nothing by making Genesis a prophetic text-book of geology. The *history* in it? What if the statements of the Old Testament histories did not agree with each other always? What if, in the New Testament, Luke should have made a mistake about the census at the time of Christ’s birth? What does it matter? Again, we do not find in the Bible final and harmonious rules about many of the great *moral* matters which are the trials of our private or public life. We should be glad to find laws laid down on many vexed private points—laws which should end controversy without an if or a but. We do not find them. Take a grave question like divorce. There are several utterances in the New Testament about it, which it is so difficult to fit to one another that the most competent are still at variance as to what is laid down.

Even in *theology* there is great difficulty in making all parts of the New Testament agree with one another. The acutest and most powerful scholarship is needed to extract from the Bible the great theological principles which are to guide us in making out the details

of a system. Take, for example, the question of eternal punishment. How easy to quote texts on either side! We have to use the greatest care to let the whole Bible interpret the parts, to construe all its utterances by the great central Gospel, and to co-ordinate them, not by logic, but by the principles of creative evolution which are its very soul.

Is this not what we might expect when we remember that the Bible is the great library of a people which had an inspired mission before having an inspired book? It was an inspiration covering centuries of changing life and thought, while revelation was making its way up through popular religion, and emerging into the pure light of Christ. It is a sign of genius not to be afraid of inconsistencies; and as there is more than genius in the Bible there will not be fewer inconsistencies. The truth of it is greater than the truth of genius, and the harmonies must not be sought on levels of consonance which even genius transcends.

Where then are the power, grandeur, wonder, and glory of the Bible? What amazes our spirit-opened eyes? What has God put in the Bible for the eyes He opens to see?

The old theologians spoke not only of the authority and efficiency of the Bible but of its *sufficiency*. Where is its sufficiency? The Bible is enough. Yes, but for what? Not for science, for history, for a moral code, nor even for a theological system, but for its final Gospel with its faith and salvation. It is not the history of a nation nor of a church but of redemption.

Here again you must fall back on the *efficacy* of the Bible. What does it effect in you? Does it make you a scientist, a moralist, a theologian? Are you any

of these? Few Christians are theologians. Some theologians are not Christians. It effects in you the certainty of salvation. It makes you not learned but *good*, not men of knowledge but of *faith*. The Bible was given not to make the world a university, nor a church institution, but to make it the Kingdom of God. Can it do that? It has gone a long way to do it. It has done more than the church to do it. It has done it in history, in Christian history. It was the application of the Bible to public life that founded America. The Pilgrims and Puritans were ejected because they applied the Bible directly to public life—a sphere which had been monopolized by the application of a church. But never mind that just now. If it has not done the like in me, what do I know about what the Bible is sufficient for? Can I speak of its *sufficiency* if I know nothing of its *efficiency*? The Bible is sufficient for what it purposes to do. It is enough to make us see and taste Jesus, and especially His redeeming work and revelation. We see the historic, spiritual, eternal Christ, the crucified and risen, the Redeemer, the embodied active presence and grace of God. By the Bible we enter that Christ and His grace. That is the real seat and principle of authority in the Bible, the grace of God bringing salvation in Jesus Christ, and in Him as crucified. The last authority is what commands the conscience absolutely; and the saving grace of God in Christ is the absolute salvation of the conscience and therefore its absolute Lord. But that was being preached by the apostles before there was a New Testament. It was the preaching of that that produced the New Testament. The Gospel of the new creation is the final standard of all things. It created the Bible for its

purpose. So the standard is not the Bible but that which is a standard for the Bible itself—its own Gospel.

But the Bible is much more than a mere historic document and source. It is a sacrament, I have said. Its value may be greatest to those who know nothing of “documents.” It is a habitation and a vehicle of the Spirit. It must never be severed from the living consciousness of the Gospel in the church, the living Word in the experience of faithful men. It is to that church, and not to the world, that the Bible makes its appeal. It is not there chiefly to convert the world but to enable the church to do so by putting the Gospel into its hands. To this faith the Bible is living and clear, clear and full enough for the purposes of salvation, of forgiveness, of the new life in the Spirit, of the Kingdom of God. The Bible is enough for our need of salvation, individual or national. It will satisfy no other need as it satisfies this. It is there for our experience, not simply for our scrutiny. It is enough for the experimental need of the soul, for eternal certainty and security, for the knowledge of what God is doing with us and for us, for the regeneration of life, and the renovation of human society at the center. Let us once be renewed at the core, let us only all be renewed to the sonship of God in Christ, let us once realize the life of the Kingdom of God by the redemption, forgiveness, and regeneration of the cross, and these vexed questions, such as divorce and the rest, will soon be settled by the discretion of the general Christian mind, and its divination of God’s will. It is not so much the obscurity of Scripture as the mutiny in our own spirit that keeps us from a collective Christian

principle and practice in such affairs. To a thoroughly Christian society the will of Christ would soon grow dear.

Endless harm, as I have said, has been done to the Bible by staking its sufficiency on the wrong issues. It is the wonder and glory of *salvation*, not of science, literature, morals or theology, that are seen in the Bible by the eyes opened of God. It is the glory of Christ and the wonder of grace. There are some words which I will quote, written by one of the greatest scholars that ever lived, in an age when learning was all aglow with new-found faith. They are the words of Erasmus, written within a few paces of the house in Cambridge where I wrote this, in the preface to his great edition of the Greek Testament.

“These holy pages will summon up the living image of His mind. They will give you Christ Himself, talking, healing, dying, rising, the whole Christ in a word; they will give Him to you in an intimacy so close that He would be less visible to you if He stood before your eyes.”

That is the vision, the genius, the spirit, the import, and the purpose of the Bible—to make Christ practically nearer us than if we actually saw Him. It is the great sacrament of the Word. Scholars cannot do this for us. They can vivify the history but not quicken the soul. Scientific theologians cannot. They can adjust differences, discover principles, work out doctrines, and give us the power and footing that positive doctrine gives. But how is it that the great mass of Christian readers of the Bible are not entirely upset by such differences and gaps in Scripture as I have suggested? Because, with the light of the Spirit, they pierce to the one ground beneath all; they build

on the Rock of Ages on which rest all the Bible centuries; they grasp the spirit of creative life which pervades the Bible in Christ Jesus; they are apprehended of Jesus Christ. Though their interpretation of passages is often false, yet their interpretation of the Bible is true. They construe much of the Bible wrong, yet they use it right. It is insufficient in much, yet it is enough and more. With open eyes they behold as in a glass the wonder and glory of the Lord, and are changed from glory to glory by the same Spirit.