

filed so far, have in that fulfilment been accompanied by divine revelation.

Those prophecies that remain to be fulfilled will as surely be accompanied by revelations. When Christ first came His coming was heralded by angels, by the Spirit of God operating on men; His ministry was followed by revelations on the mount, in Gethsemane, and the Spirit was poured out upon His followers. And yet, at His first coming, He appeared in humility, despised by men in general. What will not His second coming, judging from this, bring with it? Surely revelations *cannot* cease as long as God has promised to send His Son in glory to visit this earth and its inhabitants. Preparations on the earth are necessary for such an event, preparations that no man can make without the aid of Divine revelations.

During the ages past God has tried the human race in every respect. The patriarchal dispensation ended in a corruption which even the deluge could not check. The Mosiac dispensation ended in the rejection and dispersion of the covenant people. The Gospel dispensation ended in the apostasy of the apostolic churches and the reign of Antichrist. But God is prepared to gain the victory yet. He promised in the end of time to establish that kingdom which shall stand forever, never to be overthrown, and hence the necessity of continuous revelation.

DIFFICULTIES IN ASCERTAINING THE MEANING OF THE SCRIPTURES.

In considering the question whether the Bible is sufficient for the guidance of men to salvation, it becomes a matter of great importance to ascertain whether the language employed by the sacred writers is sufficiently clear to be understood, in all main points at least. If the Spirit of God, in directing the composition of the books of the Bible, intended to make these books a code of divine laws whereby further revelation should be rendered superfluous, we may reasonably expect to find in the Bible a clear language conveying the ideas in a manner to be easily understood by the earnest reader. We may expect to find no ambiguity, no indistinctness.

Human laws are written with the greatest possible care. Lawmakers aim at clearness, seeing that this is indispensable when laws are made for the guidance of the citizen. Yet with all possible care in framing laws, it has been found that no law ever was framed, however carefully worded, that could not be construed in more than one way. Hence the necessity of a supreme court to which all cases can be appealed, the meaning of any disputed paragraph of the law authoritatively given. No human law would ever be a complete guidance for the citizens without such a supreme court.

Now, the question is simply this: Is the Bible clear enough so that it undoubtedly can be understood in only one way? If it be, then there may not be any need for the "su-

preme court" of Divine revelation to appeal to in order to ascertain its meaning, since this is in no instance doubtful. But if the Bible is not clear enough; if it is so worded that, in many instances, the same passage may be understood in more than one way, then further revelation is necessary in order to settle these points. If every passage of the Bible does not convey only one meaning, and this unmistakably; if many passages can be, and have been, construed in various ways, and if Divine revelation be abolished, then we are exactly in this position: We have a code of laws and a collection of doctrines; but for the right understanding of those laws and doctrines we are entirely at the mercy of the sagacity or the stupidity of the (theological) lawyers with whom we happen to be connected. There, is, then no appeal, no authority, no certainty.

Let us honestly consider some of the facts in the case, without shrinking from the inevitable conclusion.

First, we are met by the sad fact that mankind has not yet been able to decide exactly how many and which of the ancient books really belong to the Bible. The Protestant churches now accept sixty-five books in all, viz., thirty-eight in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New. But Luther was not quite certain about the canonicity of all of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. The Revelation of John was always suspicious to him, because he did not understand it, and the Epistle of James, he thought was more fit to be burned than to be read. As to the books of the Old Testament, a much later and better informed critic, Michaelis, has proposed to exclude the two books of Chronicles from the canon, while others have had their grave doubts concerning the Song of Songs. But the Catholic church, so far from being disposed to diminish the number of books, has added all those which by Protestants have been called apocryphal. The whole apocryphal collection was by the Council of Trent, 1545, declared to be holy Scripture, and the council did so with some antiquity in support of the decision too. For the book of Baruch is quoted as canonical by Origen, Athanasius, Cyril and Epiphanius. Tabith, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus and two Maccabees are quoted as canonical by the great Augustine. Whether, then, the Bible should consist of seventy-nine books (including the fourteen apocrypha) or of sixty-five, or of only sixty-one, excluding the two Chronicles and James and the Revelation, is yet a question awaiting its final decision. And it would seem but reasonable not to abolish the immediate revelations from God until this problem has been satisfactorily solved.

Secondly, accepting any of the above mentioned books as canonical, a great difficulty presents itself in determining the precise text. What the first authors wrote is in some cases impossible to determine. Let it be remembered that our present Bibles, with their divisions of

chapters and verses, are by no means exactly such as the first authors left them. Much is the work of uninspired man. The original manuscripts were copied in numerous editions, and it was always possible in copying to drop a letter, to misspell a word, to leave out a word, etc. Translations and paraphrases have been made. These were not always correct in every particular. In the case of the Old Testament the original authors did not write the vowels, but only the consonants. It was the work of later men to insert all the vowels, but whether these later men in all instances, or even in most, inserted the right vowels is another open question. At all events, if it were possible to prove that all the consonants of the Old Testament are identical with those written by the original authors, and therefore inspired, yet all the vowels, which are added many years afterwards by uninspired men, cannot be proved to be of divine origin or such as God originally intended them to be.

A few instances may be quoted to illustrate the nature of such easily recognized changes as the sacred text has suffered. In Jonah i: 9, the Prophet says: "I am a Hebrew," where the original reading probably was (as the Septuagint has it): "I am a servant of Jehovah." The difference is between *Ieri*, Hebrew, and *Jedi*, the servant of Jehovah. In 1 Pet. iii: 3, it will always be dubious whether the correct reading is: "If ye have tasted that the Lord is *gracious*," or "that the Lord is *Christ*." The fact is that both these words were sometimes written with the letters *Chs*, standing both for *Christos* and *Chrestos*, gracious. In Genesis i: 8, the words: "God saw that it was good" is wanting at the end of the second day's creation, but it is found in verse 10, in the middle of the third day's work, indicating a transposition. Sometimes verses have been added by later copyists. Such variations amount to many thousands in all, leaving the present text very far from satisfactory in its details.

Theologians, in admitting this, as they are compelled to do by the facts, generally smooth the disagreeable impression over with the assurance that none of all these variations in the text affect the meaning in the least degree. "The most inaccurate text ever written," they say, "leaves the truths of Scripture substantially unchanged." But this is evidently said more for the sake of the effect than for the sake of truth. For the theologians themselves *always* insist on the very letter of the text. The little words "this is" were sufficient in the quibble between Luther and Calvin to cut the Protestant body in two halves, each wishing to roast the other in hell. Yes, the theologians build doctrines not only on words but on *forms* of words, discriminating between the meaning of the same words when used in this form or the other. In a text where words are so important, it is ridiculous to say that many thousand variations are of no importance. And besides, since we know there are