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THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

VOL. XXV.

DECEMBER-JANUARY.

No. 2.

THE BUSINESS OF THE CHURCH.

BY THE REV. J. S. LYONS, D. D., LOUISVILLE, KY.

*Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the
United States.*

In responding to the invitation to write upon the subject of "The Business of the Church," it is worth while to avail one's self of the limitations of the subject. We assume that we may omit any consideration of the technical definitions of the church; the outstanding characteristics, or "marks" of the church; its spiritual equipment; its past history, and its great mission through the years to come.

The whole question narrows down to the interesting, important, and extremely practical question—"What does Jesus Christ want us who are in His church to do today?"

What is the present task of the church in our country? This inquiry must contemplate the church in the general sense in which that term is used, including all the Protestant Evangelical bodies in our land.

The present task of the church calls upon us to consider how it is related to the people of God themselves. The work of the church in this regard is to gather them out of the world, to nourish and strengthen them, and to inspire them to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."

As the work of the church relates to what is known as the "world," that is, the unregenerate mass about us, its duty is to evangelize and save as many as possible, and to season and

THE TESTIMONY OF CHRIST TO THE OLD TESTAMENT.*

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR G. B. STRICKLER, D. D., LL. D.

The first testimony I present of the divine origin and inspiration of the Bible is that testimony which is the clearest and strongest and most conclusive, and, therefore, the most satisfactory of all—the testimony of our Saviour Himself. Of course His testimony relates directly only to the Old Testament because the New Testament was not in His day yet in existence; but if the divine origin and inspiration of the Old Testament is established, there is no body, so far as I know, who would then be disposed to deny that the New Testament had the same origin and the same inspiration.

When the Saviour entered on His mediatorial work, the Old Testament was already in existence; in existence in the same books in which we now possess it. It was not only in existence, as the testimony of Josephus, for instance, makes plain; but it claimed to have come and was believed by the Jews to have come from the same God from whom He Himself claimed to have come, and it claimed to be doing in the world just what He claimed to be doing; it claimed to be teaching men what they were to believe concerning God and what duties He required of men. He was obliged, therefore, to take some position in regard to it. What position did He take, as indicated in the Gospels? Did He receive it or reject it? Or, did He receive it in part and reject in part, as some of the negative critics now do? Did He receive some parts as true, and reject other parts as untrue, as they now do? Did He receive some parts as inspired and reject other parts as uninspired? Did He ever in a single instance so little as intimate that He in any respect found

*This paper is the main body of the sermon which Dr. Strickler preached in the Central Presbyterian Church of Atlanta on Sunday morning, May 18th, 1913 during the meeting of the General Assembly. It is the last sermon that he preached to the people whose beloved pastor he was from 1893 to 1896. The paper was originally delivered before the General Ministers' Association of Richmond on February 10th, 1913.

fault with the Old Testament? He found fault with the Jews for the manner in which they interpreted it, but did He ever find fault with the book itself? Did He ever point out any mistakes in it? Did He ever intimate, as some now do, that there were myths in it and legends? Did He ever say anything about it that suggested that it was erroneous in any of its teachings—especially in its moral and religious teachings? Did He ever say that He had come to set up a higher moral standard than it contains or to teach a purer and more perfect religion than it inculcates? Does anybody claim that He ever did that? Some say, indeed, that He came in part for that very purpose; but are they able to show that He anywhere on any occasion said that He came for that purpose? Is not their claim that He came for that purpose based on their theories instead of on His teachings? Did He not always read the Old Testament as the word of God? Did He not always appeal to it as the word of God? Did He not always rely on it as the word of God? Did He not always enforce it as the word of God? Did He not, in all His controversies with the Jews about truth, appeal to it as the final standard? Did He not always appeal to it as the standard from which there was no appeal? Everybody who has any acquaintance with the Gospels knows that this is true. But how could He thus appeal to the book as the end of all controversy in every case unless He believed it to be an infallible revelation of the divine will, and how could it thus be an infallible revelation of the divine will and so free from error unless it was fully inspired?

But let us now notice some of the Saviour's testimonies to the Old Testament that we may have them distinctly before our minds and thus see how full and clear and conclusive they are. In Matthew 5:17 He says to the Jews: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." By the law and the prophets there, it is admitted, He meant the Old Testament Scriptures. The Jews to whom He was thus speaking had somehow got it into their heads that His purposes were revolutionary; that He was seeking to overturn the old and set up something new: They had observed, for instance, that He did not conform to some of their notions

about Sabbath observance; that He healed on the Sabbath day, which they erroneously regarded as a violation of the Sabbath commandment; that He had appointed a publican, Matthew, as one of His apostles, a man, who, because he had become a publican, an officer of the Roman government, was regarded by them as an apostate from the Old Testament religion; for reasons like these they had come to suspect that His purpose was to set the Old Testament aside and to introduce something new and entirely different. He tells them, therefore, that He had come for no such purpose. He had not come to destroy the Old Testament as something that was erroneous; something that taught an imperfect morality or religion; but He had come to fulfil it; He had come to develop and complete all that was contained in it—"Verily I say unto you," He added, "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled." Not only was the Old Testament to be fulfilled in some general way as to the main substance of its teaching, as being to that extent only a revelation from God, but it was to be fulfilled in all its details, as being in all its details from God as truly as in its main outlines. Not a jot—not its smallest letter, not a tittle—not one of the little curves or projections from the edges of its letters should remain unfulfilled. Could He have in any way more fully endorsed the Old Testament as an infallible revelation from God? If He could, what was that way?

After making this declaration in His sermon on the Mount, He proceeded in that sermon to indicate what He meant in explanations and applications of the law, but did He in a single instance correct anything in the Old Testament? Did He not instead only point out how the principles of the Old Testament needed a more extensive and more spiritual application to the minds and hearts of men; to their thoughts and feelings than the Jewish teachers had given them, than they had been accustomed to give them?

Thus did the Saviour in that passage endorse the Old Testament Scriptures as correct even in every "jot and tittle." Now can it be believed that if the book had been as full of myths and legends; of mistakes of every sort; of defective moral and reli-

gious teachings as some would have us believe, that the Saviour would have given it so sweeping and unqualified an endorsement as that? Does He not in that passage encourage a reliance on the Old Testament even as to its smallest details? Could He have done that; could any honest teacher have done that; if He had known that the book was full of error, of even moral and religious error, and therefore, in many of its parts adapted to lead astray?

On another occasion, just before His ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on High, after He had given His disciples some instruction appropriate to the occasion, He said to them (Luke 24:44), "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, *that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the Psalms concerning me.*" Is there not in that passage another declaration adapted to make on the minds of His hearers no other impression except that the Old Testament is a divine and an infallible book, and could He have made that impression over and over again unless the Old Testament was a book of that character, and could it be of that character unless it was inspired?

Take another passage. In the 5th chapter of John, we find the Saviour pointing out the evidence that had been borne to Him and His work. John the Baptist, He says, had borne witness to Him, and the Father also. The Jews had not, indeed, He says, heard *the voice of His Father* or seen His shape. Nevertheless this witness to him had been borne; borne in the Sacred Scriptures, and, therefore, He said unto them "search the Scriptures"; as the word in the original means, search them from beginning to end; from top to bottom; make a thorough search of them; "for in them ye th'nk ye have eternal life"; that is, it is a fixed article in your creed that in them ye have eternal life. Very well, in that you are correct, in them it is revealed and offered to men. Now search them. "They are they that testify of me." Does He not there again appeal to the book as the supreme authority as to Himself? Does He not appeal to it as the end of the controversy between Him and His enemies? Does He not in the matter of His Messiahship—the most important of all matters—exhort them to rely on its teachings? Does He not tell them

that they are right in so relying on its teachings as to believe that they have in them eternal life? But could they thus safely rely on it unless it was from God and infallible in its teachings? And could it be thus infallible unless it was so inspired as to be free from error?

Take still another passage: John 10:34. Our Saviour had been saying what to the Jews seemed to imply that He was making Himself God, and they were about to stone Him. He said unto them, "Many good works have I showed you from the Father, for which of those works do ye stone me?" The Jews answered, "For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods?" His reference was to the 82nd Psalm, 6th verse, in which earthly magistrates are called gods because they represent God in the rightful exercises of their authority. "Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods?" "If He called them gods unto whom the Word of God came (and the Scripture can not be broken), say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God?" In this passage He declared "the Scripture could not be broken." But if it could not be broken in that verse of the Psalm, who can show how it could be broken in the verse going before that or in the verse coming after, or in the second verse going before or in the second verse coming after? Who can show how it could be broken in any verse of that Psalm? And if it could not be broken in that Psalm, who can show how it could be broken in any other Psalm? And if it could not be broken in the book of the Psalms, who can show how it could be broken in any other book of the Bible? Was not His assertion that the Scripture as to that word could not be broken adapted to make the impression that it could not be broken as to any word; and if that was not true, did not perfect candor in teaching to prevent that erroneous inference, require Him to say so?

It is to be carefully noted that if the Scripture could not be broken as to the particular statement to which the Saviour refers, it is difficult to see how it could be broken as to any other

statement it contains, for, you will remember, that if there be anything the Bible is intended to overthrow, it is idolatry in all its forms. From the beginning of the book to the end of it, we find it making war on this sin in every aspect in which it presented itself. We find it condemning everything and forbidding everything that had any tendency toward it, or to give to it the slightest encouragement. I suppose, therefore, if it had been announced to men in the days of our Saviour that while the Old Testament was from God, a single passage had somehow slipped into it that ought not to be there, and had put men to searching for it they would likely have fixed on that passage in which mere men are called gods. They could scarcely have been able to find any other passage that would have looked more like erroneous teaching than that. And yet it is remarkable, and it is of vast significance as bearing on the subject of inspiration, that it is in connection with that very passage that the Saviour says "the Scripture cannot be broken." But if it cannot be broken in regard to such a passage as that, in regard to what passage can it be broken?

It is further to be noted in regard to that passage that our Saviour's appeal to the Jews hinges on the use of a single word in the passage. The word "gods" is there, and the Saviour says that in regard to that word, "the Scripture can not be broken." How could He say that unless that word was a divine word and how could that word be a divine word—so divine as to settle the controversy unless an inspired word? Suppose it was there only on the judgment of the Psalmist, or that it was there only as the best expression that the Psalmist was able to give of a divine communication he had received. Why could it not then be broken? Why could not some other word be substituted in its place—some other word that would have more correctly expressed the idea intended to be conveyed? When the Saviour says that word could not be broken, must He not have meant that it was there by divine authority, and so by divine inspiration and for that reason and for that reason alone could not be broken? But if that word was inspired, who can show why any other word in the Psalm, in the book; or any other word in the Scriptures is not inspired also?

One other remark on this interesting passage: If it be true, as many are now saying, that there are mistakes in the Scriptures, I mean in the Scriptures as originally written; if it be true that the account given of the creation in the first chapters of Genesis is scientifically incorrect, how could it be said in reference to that passage that the Scripture can not be broken; that is, that its teaching cannot be corrected? If the statement about the garden of Eden, and the fall of man are mere myths, how could it be said in regard to that statement that the Scripture cannot be broken? If Abraham never lived and if Moses never wrote the books ascribed to him, how could it be said that the statements of our Saviour Himself that he did live and that he did write the books ascribed to him, be parts of the Scriptures that cannot be broken? In short, if the Bible be as full of erroneous statements as some say it is, how could the Saviour say without qualification in regard to it, "the Scripture cannot be broken?" Why can it not be broken anywhere where mistakes have been made? Has He not thus in that declaration endorsed the book in as full and explicit way as can be conceived?

Many more passages might be quoted. Indeed, the Old Testament is quoted by the Saviour a number of times and in no case is He represented as having ever hinted at error in the book of any kind whatever. That we have His full and repeated endorsement of the Old Testament as of divine origin and inspiration—ought not that to settle the question for us? Can we have any more satisfactory evidence than that? Does it not look like irreverence, and, indeed, something like gross profanity, to raise any question as to the sufficiency of the Saviour's testimony?

Yet there are not a few who decline to accept His testimony as conclusive. Indeed, there are not a few who give His testimony very little consideration. Some of them say that when He came into the world He laid aside His divine attributes; His knowledge, for instance, and therefore, knew no more about the Old Testament than any other Jew did. They say the other Jews said it was from God, and, therefore, He said so too. They said it was inspired, and, therefore, He made the same affirmation; that, in short, His views about the Old Testa-

ment were simply an echo of the views prevailing in His day, and have therefore no more value and no more authority. That is, they would have us believe that although He was the great Prophet of the church, giving the Old Testament by inspired prophets as He afterwards gave the New Testament by inspired apostles, He did not know when He was in this world what He had thus given by the prophets; did not know what He had given through Moses or whether He had given anything through him; did not know what He had given through David, or whether He had given anything through him; did not know whether the book that bears the name of Isaiah was written by one Isaiah, or two, or three, or none. They would have us believe that although He was the truth, the author of the truth, the teacher of the truth, the object of the truth, the exemplar of the truth; although He so proclaimed Himself, He did not in fact know what the truth was and could not infallibly point it out to men—to those who looked to Him for it and to whom He professed to give it! But in that case, how was He a competent Saviour? How could He claim, as He did claim, to know the truth and to teach the truth? If He did not know the facts about the Old Testament Scriptures He was certainly conscious that He did not know. How could He, then, claim, as He constantly did, that He did know? Do not such assertions as these about the Saviour tend to discredit, not only the Old Testament Scriptures as a revelation, but to discredit Him as a competent Saviour?

But they say the Saviour Himself admitted that His knowledge was limited; that He did not know, for instance, when the judgment would be; and if He did not know that, there may have been many other things He did not know; and that, therefore, when they assert that His knowledge was limited, they are not to be blamed, for they are only asserting about Him what He asserted about Himself. But this defence is not sufficient. The only evidence they bring forward that the Saviour's knowledge was limited, at least the evidence on which they seem most confidently to rely, is this statement that neither man, nor angel, nor Himself knew when the final judgment would take place. This statement, however, they do not fairly treat.

They make it mean more than it seems to be intended to mean. It would seem to mean no more than that He as a man did not know when that day would be. He shows that He knew that there was to be such a day; that He knew what the day was for; that He knew what would occur on that day; that He knew that He would be the Judge, and that He knew how He would come with all the holy angels; and who would be gathered before him, and that He knew on what grounds He would judge them; what He would say to those on His right hand and what to those on the left; and what those on the right hand and those on the left would say to Him; He thus showed that He knew all about the judgment day except merely the date. Why should that be any secret to Him; especially to His divine nature? How could it be? If He could and did know everything else, what was there about the mere date of the event that made it improper or impossible for Him to know that also? And as a divine being, as God manifest in the flesh, how could it be otherwise than that He should know that as the Father Himself knew it? It would seem, therefore, that all that is meant by His assertion is that no finite being knew the date of the judgment, and therefore, it furnishes no such warrant for the theory of a limited knowledge in the Saviour as justifies the assertions in regard to His limited knowledge of which they make use.

Others, however, undertake to escape the force of the Saviour's testimony, not by the doctrine of the Kenosis, as those do just mentioned, but by supposing that while He knew the imperfect character of the Old Testament Scriptures, He chose to accommodate Himself to the erroneous views as to their full inspiration which prevailed at the time. He knew that those views were wrong, but He did not care to antagonize them, to excite against Himself the opposition that antagonizing them would cause. But He did not hesitate to antagonize wrong views on other subjects. The Jews of His day had wrong views on a number of subjects. To those wrong views they were so much attached that it excited their indignation to have them opposed. Such were their views about Sabbath observance; about divorce; about many of their self-devised ritual observances; about the character and work of the Messiah; about

these and a number of other subjects they had views that provoked their opposition and hatred when they were assailed; and yet when did the Saviour show any hesitation to assail them even when He did it at the risk of His life? Why, then, should He hesitate to correct their views as to the Old Testament if He saw that they were as erroneous as some now say they were?

These modern teachers assert that they feel in conscience bound as lovers of the truth to tell the people the truth about the book—to point out its errors. Why did not the Saviour feel equally bound if He knew there were errors in it? Are they more conscientious than He was?

These modern teachers also insist that by pointing out and correcting the errors of the Old Testament they fit it much better for the instruction of man than it is when left in its original condition. Why did not the Saviour feel in the same way? How is it that they assume a more sincere love of the truth and arrogate a wiser conception of the treatment of the Old Testament than the Saviour seems to have had? Are they not asking a great deal when they expect us to grant such claims as these?

The whole case may be summed up in two or three alternative statements:

1. The Saviour did not know that the Old Testament was the kind of book many say it is. But in that case, who can show that He was a competent Saviour of men? If He asserted the Old Testament to be a divine and inspired book when it was not, how can anybody satisfactorily show that He may not have asserted a number of other things that were equally erroneous?

2. The Saviour did know that the Old Testament was not a fully inspired book, but considered it expedient to leave the Jews under the delusion that it was. But how can it be claimed, then, that He was a candid and truthful teacher? How could He sincerely speak constantly, as He did, of the book, as if He believed it was just what the Jews thought it was, when He knew it was not?

These explanations, then, are not satisfactory. They are not at all satisfactory. But only one other remains. He knew the book was what it claims to be: a divine and infallible revelation,

and, therefore, treated it as He always did. This explanation, and this only, accounts for His treatment of the book in a way honorable to Himself and consistent with the phenomena the book presents to justify its claims.

We have now seen that the Saviour Himself has over and over again endorsed the Old Testament Scriptures as the word of God and as an infallible rule of faith and practice. We see that He has done it in the most explicit and unqualified way. Whom then is it wiser and safer to follow here, the Saviour or those who deny the divine character of the book? If we follow Him: if we treat the book just as He treated it, and because He so treated it, is there any danger that He will ever condemn us for so doing? But, if although He never found fault with the book, we do; if, although He never denied the divine character of any part of it, we do; if, although He never said a word to impair confidence in any part of its teachings, we do; is there no danger that we shall incur His displeasure? Which is the wiser and safer course then for the minister to pursue?*

*This article is printed word for word as it left the pen of Dr. Strickler. It was never intended for print but for Dr. Strickler's own personal use. Yet there are very few changes which the most critical could suggest. It would be a great inspiration to our younger ministers if they could see the great care and fullness with which Dr. Strickler prepared all his sermons and manuscripts.