

SPIRIT OF THE XIX. CENTURY.

VOL. II.

FEBRUARY, 1843.

No. 2.

A DISCOURSE ON USURY—DELIVERED IN THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, KY., OCT. 30, 1842, BY W. L. BRECKINRIDGE, PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATION.

JEREMIAH XV. 10. I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me.

I do not remember any where in the sacred Scriptures, a more forcible expression of the enormity of men's conduct in the sight of God, than that contained in the first verse of this chapter—"Then saith the Lord unto me, though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people—cast them out of my sight—and let them go forth." The words declare in extremely solemn terms, the inflexible purpose of God towards the persons in question, an intention absolutely unalterable, to turn away his mercy from them. The mind receives a clear impression of the enormous evil of such conduct, and the dreadful corruption of such principles, as can fix in the bosom of infinite benevolence and pity a determination so stern and immoveable.

I may add, that clearly as the sacred Scriptures exhibit the *efficacy of prayer*, I do not know that they contain a more forcible expression of its power to prevail with God, than that which we find in these words. Here is an exception—a rare and most remarkable exception. An instance which may come up once in a generation, or perhaps once in many centuries,—a case in which prayer is of no avail. Tho' Samuel, that eminent and highly honored servant of God, stood before him, his most urgent entreaty would be unheeded; tho' Moses stood beside him, before the Lord, and lifted up that voice which used to prevail with God. Moses, to whom God once said, when his anger was burning fiercely against Israel for their sins, and he dreaded so to speak, the intercession of his servant, least it should turn him from his purpose, "let me alone that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them," even Moses, who persevered and succeeded then, so that it is said, the "Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people," should have no power here. The united supplication of these great favorites of heaven would return unanswered, if they were offered in this case.

I cannot conceive how any stronger expression could be made of the general efficacy of prayer. The exception so remarkable, tending to strengthen and confirm the rule, fastening and deepening the conviction in every mind, that ordinarily, prayer will be heard and answered, while it assures us beyond all controversy of the dreadful wickedness in question. Language cannot express that wickedness

object to any attempt to raise any more *permanent funds*, at least till the church has a more satisfactory explanation of the management and loss of so great a part of those already raised.

III. As the anniversary itself occurs on Saturday, it would be well perhaps to put off the public addresses in the churches generally, till the day following. But would it not be well also, for our Presbyteries to meet on the day itself, in some central and convenient place? If they cannot do this, for the ministers to gather themselves in convenient places on that day, and by previous appointment, hold such meetings of the people as may be agreed on?

IV. If the plan suggested in Scotland, for a meeting in London of delegates from all the orthodox communions of the world should be matured, ought not our Assembly to send a delegation to attend it? But as this is emphatically a *Presbyterian* event and celebration, should not an effort be made expressly to unite in closer bonds the scattered elements of this great branch of the church of Christ?

DOCTRINES AND PRACTICES OF THE CHURCH OF ROME.---CON-
TROVERSY WITH THE DOMESTIC CHAPLAINS OF THE ARCH-
BISHOP OF BALTIMORE.---NO. V. OF THE PROTESTANTS.---THE
APOCRYPHA.

In nothing is the intolerable arrogance of the Church of Rome more strikingly displayed than in the authority, which if she does not formally claim, she yet pretends to exercise, of dispensing the Holy Ghost not merely to men themselves but also to their writings. Thus the famous Council of Trent has attempted to make that divine which is notoriously human, and that inspired which, in the sense of the Apostle, is notoriously of "private interpretation." We allude of course, to the conduct of Rome in placing the *Apocrypha* upon an equal footing with the sacred oracles of God. Among the books which the "holy oecumenical and general Council of Trent, lawfully assembled in the Holy Spirit" has declared should be received with equal piety and veneration with the unquestioned word of God, and which indeed have God for their author, are *Tobit*, *Judith*, *the additions to the book of Esther*, *Wisdom*, *Ecclesiasticus*, *Baruch with the Epistle of Jeremiah*, *the songs of the three children*, *the story of Susannah*, *the story of Bel and the Dragon*, and *the first and second books of Maccabees*.

Having by its own authority constituted these books a part of the Word of God, the Holy Council proceeded to pronounce its usual malediction upon all who would not receive them as sacred and canonical. Now in direct opposition to this wicked and blasphemous sentence of Rome, we assert most unhesitatingly, and shall endeavor triumphantly to prove that these books, commonly called the *Apocrypha* are neither "sacred nor canonical," and of course, have no more authority in the Church of God than Seneca's Letters, or Tully's Offices.

*Let it be remarked, however, that the onus probandi rests upon the Papists. The presumption is against them until they adduce satisfactory testimony in behalf of their extravagant pretensions. Nay, even defect of proof is fatal to their cause.—They bring us certain documents and declare that they were given by inspiration of God. We are not at liberty to believe them, until they bring forward clear and decided proofs of the fact. We are bound to treat these documents, as we treat all other writings, merely as human productions, until clear and cogent arguments for their Divine original are submitted to our understandings.—Hence, the Protestant cause is fully made out by failure of proof on the part of the Romanist. We are not required in justification of our position, to advance a single argument against the inspiration of these books. Our course is a righteous—a necessary one, until they are *proved* to be inspired. We think it important that this high vantage ground of Protestantism, in the argument upon this subject, should be fully apprehended. Not because we are unable to prove that these books are not inspired, but in order that it may be distinctly understood that all our positive arguments against them are *ex abundantia*—are over and above what is actually required of us in the case. If our position is justified by failure on the part of Rome to establish her assertion, it is more than justified—it is doubly fortified and rendered wholly impregnable by the irresistible arguments which we are able to allege against the inspiration of the Apocryphal Books. With the distinct understanding then that we are doing a work which justice to our own cause does not absolutely require, but which only exposes in a stronger light the arrogance and blasphemy of Rome, we proceed to show by a few positive considerations, that these books have not the shadow of a claim to Divine inspiration.

1. Our first argument is drawn from the indisputable fact that these books were not found in the canon of the Jews in the time of our Saviour and his Apostles. It is even doubted by learned men whether some of them existed all, until some time after the last of the apostles had fallen asleep. But be this as it may, they were not in the sacred canon of the Jews or the catalogue of books which the whole nation received as coming from God. We have very clear testimony upon the subject of the Jewish canon in JOSEPHUS, *Philo*, the *Talmud* and the early Christian Fathers. It is unnecessary to quote these testimonies at full length. Those who have not access to the original works, may find them faithfully collated in *Schmidius De Canone Sacro*, and in *Eichorn's Einleitung*. We would particularly commend to the reader's attention *Hornemann's* book *De Canone Philonis*. Augustin again and again confesses that the Apocrypha formed no part of the Jewish canon. He declares that Solomon was not the author of the Books of Ecclesiasticus and of Wisdom, and assures us, moreover, that these books were chiefly respected by the

*It is proper here to remark, that no less than thirteen manuscript pages of this article, are here omitted, in order to bring it within our limits; being the whole of it, that contained a reply to the poor sophistry of the gentlemen at the Cathedral. We could not devote *two* articles of our twenty-six to this subject, and thought it better to proceed directly to the matter in hand, and leave our priests to *explain*—as they call it.

Western Christians. He informs us that Judith was not received by the Jews; and his testimony in relation to Maccabees is equally decisive. We insist upon the testimony of Augustin, which may be found in his Treatise De. Civ. Dei. lib. i. c. 17, because he had evidently a very great respect for these books—for he frequently quotes them, and because he was a member of the bodies whose decisions in their favor have been strongly and earnestly pleaded. We take it then to be a fact which no scholar would think of calling into question, sustained by the concurring testimony of Jews and Christians for four hundred years after Christ, that the Jews rejected the Apocrypha from their canon. For the purpose of our present argument it is not necessary to show what books they did receive, nor how they classed and arranged them. It is enough that they had a canon which they believed to be inspired, and that in it the Apocrypha were not included.

Now our argument is this: Jesus Christ and his Apostles approved of the Jewish canon whatever it was, appealed to as possessing Divine authority, and evidently treated it as at that time complete, or as containing the whole of God's revelation as far as it was then made. If the Apocrypha had been really a part of that revelation, and the Jews had either ignorantly or wickedly suppressed it, how comes it that Christ no where rebukes them for their error? We find him severely inveighing against the Pharisees for adding to the Word of God by their *vain traditions*, but not a syllable do we hear in regard to what was equally culpable, their taking from it, which they certainly had done if the Apocrypha were inspired.—Here was confessedly a great teacher and prophet in Israel—their long-expected Messiah who constituted the burden of their Scriptures according to his own testimony: and yet while he quotes and approves the canon of the Jews, and remands the Jews themselves to their own Scriptures, he no where insinuates that their sacred library was defective. If the Jews had done wrong in rejecting the Apocrypha, is it credible that he who came in the name of God—a teacher sent from God to reveal fully the Divine will, would have passed over without noticing such a flagrant fraud? We find him reproofing his countrymen for every other corruption in regard to sacred things of which they are known to have been guilty, but not a whisper escapes his lips or the lips of his Apostles touching this gross suppression of a large portion of the Word of God. The conclusion is irresistible that neither Jesus nor his Apostles believed in the Divine authority of the Apocrypha—they knew that *they were not inspired*. We will grant the Romanist what *he cannot prove* and what *we can disprove*, that these books are quoted in the New Testament. This will not remove the difficulty. According to his views of the canon, the Jews were guilty of an outrageous fraud in regard to the Sacred Oracles, and yet neither Christ nor his Apostles, whose business it was to give us the *whole* revelation of God, ever charged them with this fraud or took any steps to restore the rejected books to their proper places. Christ as the great Prophet of the Church was unfaithful to his high and solemn trust if he stood silently by when the word of God was trampled in the dust or buried in obscurity, or even robbed of its full authority. To the Jews were committed the oracles of God—(Rom.

iii. 2.) if they betrayed their trust, we ought to have been informed of it before the lapse of sixteen centuries.

It is in vain to allege that Christ and his Apostles used the Septuagint and that this version contained the Apocrypha. In the first place, it cannot be proved that the Septuagint at that time did contain the Apocrypha—in the second place, if it did contain them, the difficulty is rather increased than lessened. The question is, what books did the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, receive as *inspired*? Did Christ know that they *rejected* the Apocrypha from the list of *inspired writings*? If so, and the Septuagint version was in his hands and really contained these rejected books, what more natural than that Christ should have told his Apostles that here are books which the Jews reject, but which you must receive—they are of equal authority with the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms? His total silence both before the Jews and his own disciples becomes more unaccountable than ever, if the books were actually before him and almost forced upon his notice by the version of the Scriptures which he used. But we do not insist upon this, because we do not believe that the Septuagint, at that time, contained the Apocrypha. (a.) If it should be said that the Jews received these books as *inspired* but did not insert them in the canon, because they had not the authority of a prophet for doing so? why is it that Christ did not give the requisite authority, if not to the Jewish Priests and Rulers, at least to his own Apostles?

Upon every view of the subject, then, the silence of Christ is wholly unaccountable, if these writings are really inspired. It becomes simple and natural upon the supposition that they were merely human productions. The Jews had done right in rejecting them—they stood upon a footing with other literary works, and our Saviour had no more occasion to mention them than he had to mention the writings of the Greek philosophers.

2. If it should be pretended that Christ did give his Apostles authority to receive these books, though no record was made of the fact, we ask how it comes to pass—and we mention this as our second argument against them—that for four centuries the unbroken testimony of the Christian Church is against their inspiration? They are not included in the catalogues given us by Melito (b) Bishop of Sardis, who flourished in the second century—of Origen, (c) Athanasias, (d) Hilary, (e) Cyril of Jerusalem, (f) Epiphanius, (g) Gregory Nazianzen, (h) Rufinus (i) and others, neither are they mentioned among the canonical books recognized by the Council of Laodicea. As a sample of the testimonies referred to in the margin, we will give a few passages from *Jerome*, the author of the *authentic* version commonly called the *Vulgate*. In the preface concerning all the books of the Old Testament which he prefixed to his Latin translation of Samuel and Kings, after having given us the Jewish canon, he says: “Hic prologus scripturarum, quasi galeatum principium om-

(a) Vid. Schmidius de Canone.

(b) Euseb. Lib. 4. c. 26. (c) Expos. Psal. 1. Oppe. Tom. II. Euseb. vi. 25.

(d) Pasch. Epist. (e) Prolog in Psalmos. (f) 4th Cato. Exor.

(g) Hares I. 6. (h) Cann. 33. (i) Exposit. ad symb. apost.

nibus libris quos de Hebraeo vertimus in Latinum convenire potest: ut scire valeamus quic quid extra hos est inter *αποκρυφα* esse ponendum." "Therefore," he adds, "*Wisdom* which is vulgarly attributed to Solomon and the *book of Jusus the Son of Sirach*, and *Judith*, and *Tobias*, and *Pastor*, are not in the canon." His testimony in relation to the Maccabees, is equally divided. In the prologue to his Commentary on Jeremiah, he declines explaining the book of *Baruch* which in the edition of the lxx. is commonly joined with it, because the Jews rejected it from the canon, and he of course, knew no authority for inserting it. In the preface to his translation of *Daniel*, he assures us that the *story of Susannah*, the *song of the three Children*, and the *Fables of Bel and the Dragon*, are not only not in the Jewish copies, but had exposed Christians to ridicule for the respect which they paid to them! In his preface to *Tobit* and *Judith* he pronounces them *apocryphal*!

Here, then, about the close of the fourth century, we find no remnant of any unwritten tradition from Christ and his Apostles authorizing his Church to receive these books. The early fathers followed in the footsteps of the Jews, and unanimously concurred in receiving no other canon of the Old Testament as inspired, but that which came down to them through the Jewish Church. In this opinion learned men in every age have concurred up to the very meeting of the Council of Trent. We refer to such men as Cardinal Ximenes, Ludovicus Vives, the accomplished Erasmus and Cardinal Cajitan. How could there have been such a general concurrence in an error so deplorable, if Christ and his Apostles had ever treated these books as the lively oracles of God? Surely there would have been some record, some hint of a fact so remarkable. We ask the Romanist to reconcile the testimonies of the Fathers with the decree of Trent. In the language of Bishop Burnet: "Here we have four centuries clear for our canon in exclusion of all additions. It were easy to carry this much further down and to show that these books (the Apocrypha) were never by any express definition received into the canon till it was done at Trent, and that in all ages of the Church, even after they came to be much esteemed, there were divers writers and those generally the most learned of their time, who denied them to be a part of the canon."

3. The third argument which we shall bring forward is drawn from the books themselves. In reading them we not only are struck with the absence of that "heavenliness of matter, efficacy of doctrine, majesty of style, concert of all the parts, and general scope of the whole to give glory to God" by which the Sacred Scriptures abundantly evidence themselves to be the word of God; but we are as forcibly struck with defects utterly inconsistent with these excellencies. To say nothing of their silly and ridiculous stories, these books notoriously contain palpable lies, gross anachronisms, flat contradictions, and doctrinal statements wholly irreconcilable with what we are taught in the unquestioned oracles of God. Such things are totally inconsistent with the idea of inspiration.

It would be easy to make good these charges by citations from the books, but it is unnecessary to protract our article by quotations which have again and again been made for the same purpose.

What, under the present head, we wish particularly to remark is, that these books, or at least several of them, virtually disclaim all pretensions to inspiration. They do not profess to be the word of God, and why should Protestants be blamed for not conceding to them an authority which they themselves do not claim? They come to us from their authors merely as human productions—we treat them as such, and yet we are consigned to the damnation of hell, because we do not believe that a writer was inspired when he did not believe it himself!

The author of the second book of Maccabees professes to have abridged a work of Jason of Cyrene, and concerning his performance, he holds the following language, which can be reconciled with a belief on his part that he was inspired, when light is made to have fellowship with darkness, and God with Belial, but not till then:—"Therefore, to us that have taken upon us this painful labor of abridging, it was not easy, but a matter of sweat and watching; even as it is no ease to him that prepareth a banquet, and seeketh the benefit of others: yet for the pleasing of many, we will undertake gladly this great pains, leaving to the author the exact handling of every particular, and laboring to follow the rules of an abridgment," &c. (2 Mac. 2. 26. seq.) Here his motives as assigned by himself, are such as induce ordinary men to write, and his method is taken from the common rules of criticism. In other words, it is obviously a human composition, and was intended to have no more authority than any other historical document. To the same purport is the following sentence near the close of the book: "And if I have done well, and as is fitting the story, it is that which I desired—but if slenderly and meanly, it is that which I could attain unto." Is this the language of a man who "spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost?"—Does he seem to have drawn from the inexhaustible fountain of divine truth, or from the shallow resources of his own mind? Verily, none but a madman could speak on this wise, and yet believe that he was inspired of God. The prologue to Ecclesiasticus—a production of Jesus the Son of Sirach—is just as decisive in reference to it.—As it is too long to quote, we shall content ourselves by simply referring to it. The writer asks pardon for a defective interpretation of a Hebrew document, and declares that his whole performance was the result of diligence and travail, of great watchfulness and skill. And yet according to the Romanist, instead of being the product of human thought and labor, it was the supernatural dictation of the Holy Ghost. The pretence in this case is too absurd for argument. In the first book of Maccabees, we are assured that there was not a prophet or inspired man in Israel to direct them what to do with the altar which had been profaned. 1 Mac. 4. 46. The same declaration is repeated in the course of the book again and again, and yet contrary to his own testimony, we are required to believe that the writer himself was inspired. In fact, it was the universal opinion of the Jewish nation, that inspiration ceased with Malachi, not to be revived until the dawn of the new dispensation, and that consequently, no books which were written after the time of Artaxerxes Longimannus were worthy of any credit as inspired records.

We might go over each of the Apocryphal books one by one, and

produce such numerous instances of falsehood, error, contradiction and absurdity, as to render it utterly impossible that any should attribute them to God but those whose credulity is enormous enough to swallow down the nonsense and blasphemy of transubstantiation, and to believe that God can be multiplied by the million without disturbing His unity, and made at will, out of cakes and wine, without detracting from His glory. Such men can believe any thing; and to such men it is useless to urge the authority of Christ and his Apostles—vain to allege the concurring testimony of the leading writers of the primitive church—vainer still to plead absurdity, contradiction and lies, and even implied disclaimers from the writings in question; they have an authority higher than all these. The Council of Trent has spoken—the Man of sin and the son of perdition, who has given out that *he* is God, has spoken from his throne of blasphemy and abominations: and the voice of a general council and the pope is enough to silence reason, to sanctify blasphemy and to canonize falsehood.

But to those who are not yet fastened as captives to the car of Rome, we appeal in the confident expectation of success. Can any candid and unprejudiced mind believe that these books proceeded from God, when there is not a particle of evidence to establish the fact—when the Jewish church, to which were committed the oracles of God, rejected them—when Christ and his Apostles rejected them—when for four centuries, united Christendom rejected them—when up to the very time of the meeting at Trent, the most enlightened members of the Church of Rome rejected them—when in addition to all this, the books themselves do not profess to be inspired, and abound in absurdity, contradiction and lies? Despising the authority of popes and councils, we bring the matter to the bar of sober reason and sound argument, and we challenge Rome to vindicate herself from the charge of intolerable arrogance and blasphemy in her corrupt additions to the word of God. The argument which she uses with her own vassals will not do among thinking men.—Until she can adduce clear, decided, unanswerable proof of the inspiration of the Apocrypha, all who reverence God or love their race, are solemnly bound to reject these books, and to treat them precisely as all protestant churches always have treated them. Rome may denounce her anathema against us, but we know full well that the terrible malediction of God rests upon her.—It is not a light matter whether we receive or reject these writings. If they are not inspired, those who receive them, run the risk of everlasting damnation—if they are, those who reject them are exposed to the same danger.

That protestants reject them because they contain unpalatable doctrines, is a fiction of the Roman priesthood to divert attention from the real state of the argument. Light is death to their cause, and therefore they resort to every trick of sophistry and of falsehood to obscure the question at issue, and to escape unexposed in their frauds and impostures. We reject them, because *they are not inspired*, and we shall continue to do so until the contrary is clearly proved, as well as boldly asserted. Let the Romanists come up manfully to the point of *inspiration*—that is the issue between us, and upon that issue we are always ready to meet them.

* *