

# GOD'S METHOD OF APPROACH TO MEN.

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Some minds have been perplexed concerning the New Testament by a knowledge of the process through which it was produced. They have thought that that process opened the way for errors and that the claims for its fallibility were strengthened by the process. It suggests errors as possible or probable or certain in the book. From this they have recoiled under the apprehension that if God gives a book to the world it must of necessity be preserved from all error. This writing is addressed to that state of mind and course of reasoning. My purpose is not to propose that the New Testament contains errors or does not, but that if it does, they are not surprising in view of the way that it came into being; and then besides, and chiefly, that the way it came, errors or no errors, is the way in which we are justified in expecting it to come. This expectation is sustained by the manner in which the Creator and the creature have co-operated throughout the whole course of the activity of these two on earth. We perhaps can agree that if the infinite mind projects a continuous process of approach to humanity, He will project it on a plane of the highest reason. This involves that the same general laws run through its entire course, with adjustments in detail only as required by changes in the quality of the materials utilized and the intelligences approached. Attempting to put this conception into more elaborate statement, we proceed, with short steps, along the way on which the Creator-Redeemer has moved toward fellowship, and in fellowship, with mankind.

## I.

### THE MAKING OF THE INANIMATE WORLD.

The creation was preliminary to the making and for its purpose. As clearly as human language then permitted the author of Genesis held to this distinction in his use

of words in expressing it. Out of the materials provided through the creation the Creator made, formed, fashioned the globe on which we live. This work extended through manufacturing periods of indefinite length from step to step. As we understand Genesis and geology we find them in agreement on this point. But of more immediate importance to us now is the allied fact that in this work of making, the Creator wrought in company with the materials which He had created, and this working together was through the laws that He had planted in the materials at the beginning. The materials were endowed with the laws for this purpose. By these laws God attached Himself to the world in its rudest stage as a partner in the process, and He bound Himself to the involved co-operation from beginning to end. If the laws should not work God would not, but when God would work the laws must work. So was established what we may reverently call a partnership between the Most High and most low of His creative products. And the world making went on prosperously through the working together of God, the gas and the gravel. They spread the heavens, they fixed the firmament, they excavated the deep and filled it, they fructified the soil for productiveness through the process preparatory to the springing of the verdure which was waiting under the creative command. And then they brought forth every living thing of inanimate nature, every shrub, vine and tree for food and furnishing of the animates that were to follow. Here at the very base of being on earth the Creator brought the humblest elements of His creation into action with Himself. In doing this He laid Himself liable to all the consequences and was not afraid. He knew that some buds would fail to flower, some stalks fail to produce grain, some trees fail of completeness and symmetry; but His operation in the combination ran the whole length, and so running guaranteed the success of the enterprise in sufficient perfection to justify the whole and satisfy Himself; all of this through

the laws of the life of this low world which He had given to it. (Was not this preliminary process a prophecy and a parable of those moral and spiritual processes and results to be displayed later among men and in men on earth?)

## II.

## THE MAKING OF THE ANIMATE WORLD BELOW MEN.

The way having been prepared for the sustenance of animate life, the Creator proceeded to the next higher order, animate life lower than man. In this order are two classes, the occupants of the water and those of the air, first, and those of the dry land, second. God here announces Himself as Creator, verse 21, reaffirming His own supremacy, but perpetuating His partnership with the more refined materials available. In the first stage the Creator said, "Let be", or "Be", certain things, as if speaking to the more gross inertness; but in the second He said "Let the waters swarm" and, "Let the earth bring forth". This involves the co-operative response of the water, the air and the land, under their own laws, with a nearer approach than previously to the still higher life next to follow. And so the waters swarmed into fish to navigate their native element, and, perhaps, into birds to navigate the air and water. So the earth "brought forth" (language of motherhood) many kinds of animate life. So God "said", and so God "made" all that the water and the land mothered, through their laws and in response to the Creator's call. All these were animate and sentient in their powers and passions, as the preceding had not been. They were endowed to will and work, to love and hate, to seek peace and cause strife, to perpetuate their kind and to destroy it. They reached toward personality with a distinct likeness to it; but, as the sequel showed, and as the Creator always knew, without capacity fully to attain it.

## III.

## THE MAKING OF MAN.

Here the text rises suggestively above the preceding in four particulars. First, "Let Us". This is the language of communion, counsel, implying deliberation. In human history it has become the language of royalty, sovereign authority, when used by the individual. This elevates the "God said" above the same words in the earlier connection. Second, "Make Man in Our Image". This again elevates the prospect. What is it to make man in the image and after the likeness of God? We may not be able to answer precisely and completely, but we can approximately. These words should be interpreted in the light of what went before them. They signify at least a distinct advance on the preceding of likeness in nature to the Creator, with a corresponding closeness of fellowship and association between them. Third, "And let them have dominion over" all preceding creatures of earthly origin. Dominion belongs to God. Here God delegates something of His dominion over all to humanity, indicated as a plurality of personalities, which implies combination and unity of authority by man and woman over the lower realms. And these two are instructed to increase and multiply their kind in order to perpetuate this dominion, as deputies of the Deity, and to extend it as far as the multiplication of the subordinates may render practicable. Fourth, the differentiation between the latest comers to earth and their predecessors, is symbolized by the difference in the sustenance provided and designated for them. To mankind were assigned all grains, fruits and nuts; to the others all vegetables. The food for man was at once more substantial and more refined than that for his subjects and it so ripened to his hand that in harvesting it he did not need to abandon or humiliate his stature, the erectness of which betokened his supremacy; so that in taking his food from its native source he needed

only to look outward and upward. But the food assigned to the lower creatures is grosser, and to reach it they must look downward and grub in the ground. The symbolism of this seems not difficult to discover, and when discovered and considered it confirms and illuminates what we have already seen in this connection. Humanity comes forth in this scripture, as endowed and explained, for an improved association with God in the activities assigned to creatures on earth. If we are at all following the Creator up this stairway of revelation, we are now assured that man is to have a closer intimacy, a freer action and an increased responsibility in the creature's partnership with the Creator in the work and the dominion over it. This carries with it again the responsibility of the author of it all for the outcome of the whole.

In order to understand consistently the two passages in Genesis touching the origin of man, it is necessary to bring them into unity. They seem to have been originally separate, perhaps literally, on two tablets. The second supplements the first, and the two blended present the whole teaching of Genesis on this subject. When, then, we so unite Genesis 1:26-30 and 2:27, we learn that:

1. Man was made in the same "day" as the animals.
2. He arose out of the same co-operative source, the ground, the dust of the ground. This makes him what we may perhaps properly call half brother to the beast, giving him the same mother on the lower side that the other has. Consonant with this is the fact that his anatomy and physiology are substantially the same as the other. This likeness has been widely misapplied. It has been applied as showing that man is the child of the other, sprung from it, at least in his physical part. The likeness in structure and function of the two portions of the production of the sixth day, suggests this though it does not prove it; but when the whole is fairly considered it disproves it, renders it impossible. The reasoning or inference which says that the physical man arose, or descended, from the ani-

mal is fallacious. Genesis distinctly guards against that error. It indeed shows that these two came from the same source on the lower side of the higher of them, but above that it makes them separate and parallel, not united and successive. Therefore the search for "the missing link" between them has failed and must fail because they are not links in the same chain. The one is the last link of one chain and the other is the first link in another chain—if the figure of chain is admissible here. That lower chain can never extend itself into procreative relations with the higher. God and the ground produced the lower part of man but God the Creator alone produced the higher part of man. (Genesis 1:27.) The interacting intimacy between the two parts of man, the physical which was made out of the ground and the spiritual which was produced independent of the ground—this intimacy carries great possibilities of success and failure, honor and shame, life and death, for the creature; and in it the interlinking of the powers and responsibilities of the two continue and are intensified. (The creative word distinctively, as far as such word is possible, appears only three times, marking three beginnings: verse one, inanimate matter; verse 21, sentient life; verse 27, man.)

#### IV.

##### THE MAKING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

With the introduction of man the chasm between the Creator and the creature decreases, not only in the powers and responsibilities of the two, but also and equally in their practical adjustment. The co-operation becomes closer as the likeness becomes more distinct. It is therefore to be expected that now a history will be accomplished requiring a literary record. If God is and if He designs creation to give a revelation to creatures capable to receive it, then we should expect a closer walk with God for the improved creature; and presumably such pre-

servation of the process as will maintain its continuity and guide its course. This is what appears in the Old Testament. We now have no need to hesitate or speculate as to the actual course of events in this era. We take the older parts of the Bible and find the facts as they have been worked out in experience and put on record by the joint activity of God and man. What does it tell us beyond what we found in the preceding section? It tells us that this high-born creature was tested on the basis of the powers with which he was endowed and with reference to the responsibilities involved in that endowment. Man was made free and innocent. He was designed for righteousness and, on the basis of appropriate righteousness, for high, holy companionship with the high and holy one. He could attain the requisite righteousness only as a free and responsible being, through a test adapted to his powers and proposed destiny. The test was simple and just. But he failed and fell. Then divine mercy intervened with an antidote for the effects of the failure. This antidote, to be revealed later in more fullness, was redemptive and into a fellowship higher than would have come to him if he had not fallen. This greater blessing out of the fall is the crown of grace. Preliminary, however, to its fuller revelation, he must pass through a series of experiences, involving a continual testing and education into preparation for it in the fullness of time. The Old Testament shows that this test, running through many generations, was a test of God as well as man. The Creator's purpose of redeeming grace was continually and repeatedly tried by the creatures perversity. The recurring indignation and sorrow, forbearance and helpfulness of God are set in the record very fully and clearly. This brings us to our crucial inquiry in this connection: **How was the Old Testament made?**

Where did the Old Testament come from and through what process? Was it dropped from heaven bodily and complete, escorted by angels and proclaimed by arch-

angels, written by the finger of God without human instrumentality, and committed to men under penalties of perdition if they marred it? Nothing of that kind. The sources were human and may not be always definitely traceable; but the source was divine and does not need to be traced. God did, indeed, once write with His finger on tables of stone, committing the keeping of them to Moses; but Moses, yes Moses—the child of extraordinary providence, the youth of all Egyptian learning, the man of the repudiation of all human fame and power for God's sake, the leader in Israel of amazing manifestations of supernatural endowment, the voluntary mediator between the offended God and His offending people, who offered himself to die that Israel might live—this Moses smashed those tables before he reached home! What did God do then? He wrote the same ten commandments on the same kind of stone again, thus giving Moses another opportunity as custodian, this time with better result.

In one view of it the whole Old Testament is a pathetic patchwork of divine failure, superficially, through human failure, profoundly, because God tied Himself to incapacity and infidelity, and this because He was working out through men what they neither fully understood nor adequately appreciated. Adam, Cain, Noah, and Abram before Moses, and many more after him, made the Old Testament a kaleidoscope of human failure interfused with the divine design; but God's success triumphed until the fullness of time, the preparatory time, brought the process to the threshold of a plane far above the best that could have been under the older at its best. And so the product, the Old Testament history and revelation, stands approved and appreciated, as, for its intended purpose, it will stand, because the failure of men did not cause God to fail in making a message for humanity such that, whatever its defects may be through the human element in it, the design of God was accomplished.



## V.

## THE MAKING OF THE GOD-MAN.

All the preceding steps upward in the revelation of the Creator and the increase of the intimacy between the infinite and the finite, are comparatively insignificant in the presence of the union of God and man in Jesus the Christ. The Old Testament, indeed, disclosed the compassion, mercy and patience of Jehovah, far in excess of what appears in contemporaneous human record; but this disclosure was under law and through law, with a distance in many ways between the higher and the lower, in striking contrast with the fellowship which is next to be set forth. When the Eternal Word of God, bearing the divine self-immolation for human salvation, stooped to be born of a woman, albeit by the power of the Highest which overshadowed her, then this process of blending the higher and the lower reached an incomparable climax. This climax was accentuated and intensified to the utmost by the manner of the life of this "Middleman". He lived in the lowlands of human fellowship, while not ceasing to live on the highlands of divine fellowship, in a way the glory and grace of which are beyond human expression. He was among them as one who served. The dullard incapacity of His selected associates in service, which may seem to us amazing and irritating, could not break the bond of patient love with which He was bound to them, and He rose toward the close to added heights of sympathy and supplication against their defects. The culmination of this course of humiliation for helpfulness was in the death of the cross. The whole meaning of it on the divine side perhaps we never will know; but, in our best apprehension of it, let us hold to it in every revealed application of it, while we proceed to the specific application for which all of the foregoing has been written.

## VI.

## THE MAKING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

When Jesus left the earth He left on it a people for whom spiritual provision had been made abundantly in fact and in promise. To this people He committed the preservation and promulgation of His gospel and the administration of His kingdom among men in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. This was the greatest commission and commitment that has ever fallen into human hands. Our reason and the analogy of the Old Testament assure us that for the guidance of this people on this mission a guide book will be needed. How is it to be made?

Will the teacher write it, lock it in a box, and leave it with Pilate or Peter, whichever may seem the more hopeful, if indeed either give promise? Will He bury it in the wilderness and tell the disciples where to find it at the proper time? Will He authorize designated men to write it from notes prepared by Himself, and then certify it by spectacular miracle, or any other process? So far as we know He never said a word to anyone about writing it or anything else. Having taught, He sent the Holy Spirit to bring His teaching to remembrance in the minds of those who had heard. And having done this, He left the book to work itself out through those in whom the Holy Spirit dwelt for this purpose. This was done by them under a variety of primary motives, with local and temporary purposes more or less, with but little conference among the writers probably and no collusion. Thus a body of literature accumulated, out of which some documents were gathered, preserved, differentiated and combined by the fit men into superiority for the purposes, doctrinal and practical, involved, and lifted and established, through the whole procedure into such authority as the maintenance and success of the enterprise required.

Was that a safe or suitable process? Consider God's way with the gas and the gravel. Consider God's way with Moses and His other Old Testament mediums. Having done this, do we not conclude that the production of this book in any other way than that in which it was produced, would have been a distracting and disastrous anticlimax? It would have jostled the wheels of the train off the track—it would if God is working through the ages to reveal Himself to man, in men, through men. The way in which the New Testament came is God's way in every stage of the process of which it is a part. He wrought in and through defective humanity here as elsewhere, as everywhere; and He was not anxious about the results, immediate or ultimate. If He had done otherwise, the change in method might have suggested doubt of the divine stamp on the product; but the continuity of the method, in connection with the character of the product, reveals the inworking and over-ruling One who framed the worlds and prepared the race for the incarnation of the Most High.

A view held many times and in many ways, formulated in argument or flung forth in sneer, has been that the process militates against the product, discounts it, and puts suspicion on the reason or intelligence of those who so exalt a book thus produced. We meet the argument with a question and the sneer with an affirmation. Our question is: How could a book with the character and the purpose of the New Testament have been more consistently produced? Let the critic of the method devise a better one. Our affirmation is that the New Testament was produced, combined and established in impressive accord with God's whole revelation to man; and that it carried his customary processes to their highest expression, logically terminating in the acme of external authority. We are going on the assumption that if we have any literary communication from God it is in the Bible. Eliminate it and you wipe out the only standard

of divine authority to which men can rally and in which they can unite. Then manifestly, if God is, and if He designs to communicate with us through a book, and if He has understanding of the receptivity of humanity, He will proceed on the plan most consistent with itself, with the human constitution and with His own nature and designs.

These two—God's nature and His designs in humanity—are sufficiently set forth in the Bible as we now have it. He was concerned profoundly alike for His own holy honor and gracious glory, as well as the honor and glory of mankind. He must not deal with men as He had dealt with matter and brute; but fairly with the intelligence, the liberty, the spiritual capacity and the resultant responsibility of the being made in His image and likeness, redeemed by Him and assigned to extraordinary destiny. As any one reaches a higher plane of experience it seems necessary that he will be impressed proportionately with the bearing of these considerations on the observations and conclusions to which we proceed.

The New Testament was produced through a life process peculiarly and significantly. Any other method at this juncture would have been incongruous. Perhaps we may venture to say that it would have been monstrous. A book of rules, in stiff and arbitrary formula, would have missed the mark utterly, inept for enshrining the words which are "spirit and life". It is therefore properly and impressively a book of principles primarily and almost exclusively, adapted to the followers of Christ in their freedom and their fidelity, respectful toward the one and trustful toward the other. It eliminates or reduces law and penalty as it advances life and liberty. It emphasizes the intimacy between the Redeemer and the redeemed by the way in which it finds its warp and woof in the spiritual experience of those who know Christ and are known by Him as friends and followers in free and loyal fellowship. In the Holy Spirit the intimacy of those who knew and loved Jesus on earth is increased and intensi-

fied. They are assumed to be trustworthy. And their ability to resist and grieve the Paraclete who empowers them, and by their perversities to annul His impressions—all this fills the high fellowship at once with a strenuous exaction and an exalted distinction.

The disciples went forth in the pentecostal empowerment and authorization to tell what they knew and impart what they had. As their numbers increased their enterprise expanded. Their fellowship swept wider, included more and pressed forward victoriously and joyously. If ever a people did not need a book, those early Christians did not need a book. Many of them had known the Lord in the flesh and those who had not, knew Him substantially the same through the information given them by those who had. Paul and his associates in educating, confirming, warning and inspiring, wrote the meaning of the way on the hearts of flesh alive to the breezes of Heaven among Jews and Gentiles. When their voices were removed, their writings supplemented. The whole host of the believers was more and more unified in understanding, enterprise and enthusiasm, as it rose more and more above and out of Judaism. But the individuals were human and they experienced the peril and the evil of success and popularity. The great sweep from Pentecost began to subside while jargon voices were heard on the horizon and in the camp. Then the presence of Jesus took on a new aspect in the literary enshrinement of His words and ways as He had walked among men. The atmosphere of the great propaganda was crystalized in fragments, and more, of writings. And finally, selections from this material came into combination and the New Testament stood made.

Who made it? God and the people of God in Christ, the people whose love and loyalty reached back a little way to secure for themselves and their successors the cream of the great churning in Palestine and beyond, to pass it on in such form as would best preserve it from

perversion. How simple this process, and how sublime! How it honors the human instruments in the fellowship of the divine guidance. Here is fulfilled the prophetic saying of Jesus when He said: "I no longer call you servants, because the servant does not know what his Master is doing; but I have called you friends, because whatever I have received from the Father I have made known to you".

## VII.

### WHAT, THEN, OF ERRORS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

If now we have come a straight course on solid ground, we seem to be relieved of the burden of some questions or problems by which others have been disturbed or distressed. One of these problems is whether the New Testament, as we now have it, contains any errors. This involves that we take into consideration the way in which it has reached us. In view of the perils through which it has passed, from the attacks of its enemies, the errors of translators, the mistakes of copyists and the defects of theologians, philosophers and scientists which have tinctured it in many ways—in view of all these and other such like things, known or unknown to us, is it not possible or probable, or even certain, that its claims have been impaired if not abolished? Differences are evident in the most ancient manuscripts, so much so that the most competent and sincere translators and expositors are in doubt, more or less; and what are we to do about these things?

Pertinent to reply let us take a look or two. First, look into the cemetery of alleged errors in the Bible. This cemetery in which have been buried a multitude of "mistakes" in the Bible, which are or have been pronounced "assured", is very large; and its boundaries are constantly expanding as the deceased discoveries of the critics are brought in and laid away in dishonored graves as

the work of exploration goes on. Let it go on. Why should it disturb us? We proposed, or at least implied, at the beginning of this study to recognize any errors in the Scriptures when they are proved beyond dispute. Just prove them. But do not ask us to stultify ourselves by accepting as proof any rickety reasoning or inadequate investigation or bloated imagination or fantastic fancy that may be exhibited. Many such that have been claimed and proclaimed have been disproved: others will presumably go the same way; and possibly some of them will continue to claim credence because the evidences against them are not available. Some timid saints remind me of an ignorant listener who is afraid the sun will not rise tomorrow, because he heard an astronomer say that he had seen a spot on it. The sun is able to carry more and larger spots than any astronomer has ever seen and continue to supply all the heat and light that the earth needs. God keeps the sun going successfully in spite of the spots. And He has never agreed to preserve from defects anything that He does in association with defective humanity. Besides and indisputably, if all the errors that have been supposed to be in the Bible, were finally found to be really there, all of them together would not seriously impair the product as a whole or the aggregate of its effects in human life, according to His intention.

Another problem, related to the foregoing if not involved in it, is that of "verbal inspiration". Is every word in the Bible the word that was first given in the message? What difference does it make, provided that the divine intention is executed? We do not ordinarily expect a man to be a machine in carrying any message; we accept the message as correct, if he has preserved its substance and delivers to the receiver the impression which the sender intended. The extreme advocates of verbal inspiration seem never to have learned of the existence of synonyms. They are logically obligated to deny that two

words can mean the same thing. In the first instance, it is a very shabby faith in God which cannot trust Him to get His message through sufficiently perfect to accomplish His purpose. It runs on a low level of literalism, far below the highway of the divine-human fellowship revealed in Christ. In the second instance, the contention is equally extreme, namely, that verbal inspiration is impossible. This error is more absurd than the other, whenever it is held by one who believes in the God of the Bible at all.

### VIII.

#### IS THE BIBLE THE FINAL CANON.

If we accept all of the preceding we are at once met by two fair questions: Why did the process that we have been tracing terminate when it did and the collection of the scattered writings constitute a "closed canon"? Why did not "inspiration", in the sense of book making and authority bearing, continue longer, perhaps indefinitely? Why is the New Testament a finality, an authoritative finality?

The New Testament is an authoritative finality because the Lord Jesus Christ is an authoritative finality. If anyone says that this begs the question, dodges the issue, his saying is challenged and proof required. It puts its author under obligation to show that it is not reasonable to believe that a book would and should appear embodying the teachings of Jesus and charged with power certifying it as representing Him. The propriety and necessity of such a book being granted, the next questions fairly arising are these. Does not the New Testament bring to this generation, impressive and convincing evidence of itself as that book, both by its contents and its fruits? Does any other book exist claiming its place, whose contents and fruits approximate a certification of it, either to our common sense or Christian consciousness? Manifestly, I think, if the Christian plan had



omitted the book it would thus have sounded the death knell of its own unity and the efficiency dependent on unity. This would have resulted from the necessities of humanity, which arise from its deficiencies, unless some extraordinary substitute had been supplied. Such substitute is not in sight and never has been.

Now granting the necessity for the book, let us inquire concerning the proper time to complete it most effectively by closing it collectively. The promise made by Jesus to send One who would bring to remembrance what He had taught, made it necessary to delay the Testament until after that Guide had come, to say the least. But, next, the Holy Spirit having come, the analogy of the divine operation calls for further delay in book making until the Spirit's leading had developed and exhibited the life to be expressed in the book, to the point which Omniscience sees that it can best be crystalized and closed permanently. To be a guide for the Christian life of all time, humanity remaining always essentially the same but ever fluctuating in the details of its experience, we may reasonably expect that the delay will be extended until this new order of life in Christ shall have reached essential completeness in detail, and come to the point where its passing out from under the flush of Pentecost, and entrance on a wider area of territorial expansion and a freer development of individuality in itself—until these two contemporaneous processes reveal those perils against which the book is to guard and disclose those ways along which it is to guide. When that time is reached God alone knows, and if the process reveals the time, that revelation shows the best time. Now, having come so far, we seem to be obliged to conclude one or the other of these two things: either God was not directing in the making of the New Testament or He wrought in the whole process to secure the climax at the best date. If God was not directing, we have no God practically in this field. If God was directing, the New Testament is the rational resting place of

our faith, the basis of our confidence and the guide of our obedience. Therefore we seem finally to be shut in to this dilemma—practical atheism or practical obedience to the New Testament.

2. The second fair question is this: Why is not the Holy Spirit sufficient for all time and all times; and is not the exaltation of a book as a final authority, or even an authority at all, a disparagement of the Divine Spirit? Are we not drifting, or drooping, into a reversion to Moses and the tables of stone? If the Christian life is indeed on so high a level and so intimate with God who is Spirit, why may it not be left to go alone without any external aid of any kind? To these and kindred queries it seems to me that this answer is sufficient: The Holy Spirit did not come to inaugurate an independent order, but to bring to remembrance the sayings of Jesus, and to administer His kingdom on the basis of His redemption and in harmony with His mind as expressed in the New Testament. What our Lord said about this is amply sufficient and perfectly clear. Therefore we have now reached the point where our only safe course is to take this conception as central and formative in the whole course of the kingdom of God on earth or to conclude and declare that its whole movement is anarchistic and Christianity is a fiction.

The conclusion thus reached and determined is sustained by the history which has been enacted and recorded since the New Testament was made. This history shows clearly and repeatedly that those who most attain and maintain, unity and loyalty, are those who accept and emphasize this conception of the divine order. The hierarchy, under whatever name and in whatever connections, casts the Bible out and substitutes itself as authority, and so doing it smites freedom a death blow. Mysticism, when given unbridled course, as authority, also casts out the Bible as authority, putting in its place the individual reason, feeling or phantasy whereupon organization perishes, unity vanishes and efficiency ceases.

## IX.

## BAPTISTS AND THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The Baptist life of recent times furnishes a fitting illustration and confirmation of the conclusion which we have now reached; perhaps the most fitting in all history. Going back to time when this line of life differentiated itself from its more immediate surroundings and stood out distinctly under the Baptist name, we find an interesting and instructive duplex experience. The Baptists of that time were closely related to two distinguished Christian bodies or systems, the Independent or Congregational and the Friends or Quakers. From both of these it gradually separated, leaving each of them to work out its own destiny while the Baptist line, as a whole, kept straight on. The point of the sundering of relations on both sides was a conception of the authority and teaching of the New Testament. Baptists departed from Congregationalists on the issue of the dual authority of the two Testaments or the sole authority of the New Testament over the Christian life individually and collectively. Congregationalism maintained the partnership or unity of the Old and New as authority. Thence resulted infant baptism, state church, "half-way covenant", universalism and unitarianism. On the other hand, Quakerism lowered the authority of the New Testament as it elevated that of the "inner light", which was thought of first as the Holy Spirit and second as the human spirit, which is not holy. With this was associated birthright membership (essentially the same as infant baptism in the other), fanaticism, universalism and unitarianism. These two systems departed from the Baptist in opposite directions, more or less, and they reached the same goals by different processes, more or less, the goal of unitarianism.

Between these two what did the Baptist life do? It kept straight on, comparatively balanced, resolute and se-

cure. It bore the flag of freedom to the front and held it there with a grasp as heroic as it was humble. It lifted the sacredness of the individual conscience, the supremacy of the spiritual experience and the purity of the Christian church, into a consistent conception, under the authoritative guidance of the New Testament harmonious with the indwelling Spirit of God. Its emphasis, iterated and reiterated, was on conscientious conformity to that book as the repository of the mind of Christ on all problems of the Christian life. Men must be free because the lordship of Christ excludes all other lordships. Men must be born from above because only thus can they see the Kingdom of God. The church must be separated from all worldly entanglements and reserved in its whole fellowship and every function to those who have been thus born. The New Testament was so exalted because it was the word of Christ, and Christ was thus exalted because He was the Son of God as no other was. And the world must be won to Christ because He had bought it with His own blood and therefore it belonged to Him. All these principles, in which Baptists have held an approximately straight course, with a completeness and consistency unsurpassed if not unequalled—these principles focalize and harmonize in the Baptist principle of unswerving conformity to the New Testament. Withdraw this unifying principle and the whole combination collapses, at which the Baptist denomination loses its right to exist.