

# THE BATTLE OVER THE BIBLE

*First in the Series of  
Fundamentalist-Modernist Debates*

between

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NEW YORK

and

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NEW YORK

## THE STRATON-POTTER DISCUSSION

**Resolved: That the Bible is  
The Infallible Word of God.**

THE BATTLE OVER THE BIBLE, was an oral debate conducted in New York City, December, 1923, between John R. Straton, Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, and Charles F. Potter, formerly a Baptist. At the time of the Debate, Potter was Minister for the West Side Unitarian Church.

The original book containing this discussion consisted of 92 pages.

THE BATTLE OVER THE BIBLE

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# INTRODUCTION

BY REV. JOHN ROACH STRATON, D.D.

When Rev. Charles F. Potter, Pastor of the West Side Unitarian Church, New York, challenged me to this series of debates on the great fundamental questions of religion, I promptly accepted his challenge. As to the desirability and value of religious debates there can scarcely be any division of opinion. The Bible enjoins us to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." (I Peter 3:15); and we are further exhorted to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The ancient prophets were constantly debating and contending against error, as witness Elijah on Mount Carmel against the prophets of Baal. The New Testament is full of accounts of debates over the great truths of revealed religion, and periods of discussion and debate of such issues have always been periods of growth in the church. We may well be hopeful, therefore, that great good will finally come out of the widespread religious agitations of today. And certainly it is undeniable that if the great truths of religion cannot stand discussion and vindicate themselves on their merits, then they have no right to claim the allegiance and support of the human race.

The New York newspapers have naturally given much space, for years now, to the revolutionary religious views of the radicals, or "Modernists," as they call themselves. I felt that the debates would give an opportunity to get the other side—the conservative,

orthodox, believing side—before the public, and so it is proving.

At the time that Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, a Baptist, preached his radical sermon against the Fundamentalists, in which he took the side of the "Liberals" or "Modernists" against the true inspiration and authority of the Bible as God's word, against the Virgin Birth of our Lord, His substitutionary atonement, and His second coming, he also really caricatured the orthodox belief on some of these great questions. I felt, therefore, that he ought to be willing to face in the open a representative of those whose views he had misstated and distorted in the interest of his radical propaganda; and so, as President of our Baptist Fundamentalist League of New York, I challenged him to a series of joint debates on these questions. He declined and excused himself, under circumstances that made me feel that he was really running to cover.

Again, when Dr. W. H. P. Faunce, President of Brown "University, a Baptist institution, came out with books and articles in magazines having a world-wide circulation, in which he also expressed views that it seemed to me amounted not only to a repudiation of our age-long Baptist beliefs, but to a denial of the very essentials of evangelical Christianity, I expressed the desire to meet him in debate for a frank public discussion of these vital issues. Nothing came of this either, however, as Dr. Faunce declined even to give the newspaper men an interview over these matters.

When Mr. Potter, therefore, challenged me to debates on these very questions at issue, and said that Drs. Fosdick and Faunce were friends of his, I felt moved to accept his challenge. I am really glad to debate with Mr. Potter because he is an out-and-out Modernist, who

is not afraid to show his colors and who does not, like the Modernists within the orthodox ranks, resort to verbal ambiguities and the use of religious language with a double meaning. He calls a spade a spade, and is honest in his beliefs, or, perhaps I should say, his unbeliefs. I think, too, that it will be most useful for the public to read just what Mr. Potter says in these debates, because it will demonstrate to all people just what Modernism is and just how radical and revolutionary are its views.

I am frank to say that I have no respect for the radicals in the Protestant denomination who insist on staying inside and tearing down the faith of the church while they still eat the bread of the church! I cannot regard them as either consistent, courageous or honest men. Robert Ingersoll was, in the beginning, a son of the church; but when he lost his faith he had the fairness and courage to step out of the ranks and carry on his propaganda on a self-supporting platform of his own making. Therefore, while deploring and even execrating his views one could, nevertheless, respect the man for his consistency and honesty.

I, therefore, though pained by his views, nevertheless respect Mr. Potter because when he lost his faith in Baptist and evangelical views of religion he left the Baptist church and joined the Unitarians. He did exactly the right thing, and while, therefore, there can be absolutely no religious fellowship between us, I can still strike hands with him as an honest human being and debate with him the great religious issues that divide us today.

I feel, too, as a Baptist, some sense of responsibility for Mr. Potter, since he is a product of one of our oldest Baptist universities and one of our most famous Baptist

theological seminaries. But Mr. Potter was honest enough to step out when he could no longer conscientiously walk with the Baptists.

Because of this honesty and other lovable traits, I have hopes that through these discussions Mr. Potter may be led to see his errors and come back to the faith.

In the meantime, I am happy to be able to say that there were several conversions during the first debate, the printed form of which follows in this little book. I have had the great joy of baptizing and welcoming into Calvary Church some of those who were won at the debate. This encouraging fact makes me the more willing to do the extra work necessary in connection with these discussions. It also proves again that God's word will not return unto Him void, but that it will accomplish that whereunto He has sent it, even as His blessed promise is.

JOHN ROACH STRATON

*Study of Calvary Baptist Church,  
New York City.*

# INTRODUCTION

BY REV. CHARLES FRANCIS POTTER, M.A., S.T.M.

The first of these debates has vindicated debating as the proper vehicle for conveying religious messages to the people. The church was crowded and many were turned away. The newspapers of the English speaking world 'front-paged' the debate the next day in a very fair and complete fashion. Thousands of people at home "listened in" on the radio.

Dr. Straton claims "conversions" on his side. On mine I have had adequate evidence of a most convincing nature that people are eager to hear the modern interpretation of religion, which has not always been made accessible to them. They want to hear both sides and then judge for themselves, and these debates make that possible.

CHARLES FRANCIS POTTER

*Study of West Side Unitarian Church,  
New York City.*

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(Click title of speech for speech)

## CONTENTS

### FIRST DEBATE

*Calvary Baptist Church*  
*20th December, 1923*

PAGE

AFFIRMATIVE, REV. JOHN ROACH STRATON .....	13
NEGATIVE, REV. CHARLES FRANCIS POTTER .....	52
REBUTTAL FOR THE AFFIRMATIVE .....	66
REBUTTAL FOR THE NEGATIVE .....	82
THE JUDGES REPORT .....	92

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# I

## FOR THE AFFIRMATIVE

Question.

RESOLVED THAT THE BIBLE IS THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD.

"Bring me the book!" exclaimed Sir Walter Scott on his death-bed. "What book?" asked Lockhart, his son-in-law. And the greatest literary genius of the Scottish people turned his eyes upon him and answered gently "There is but one book! Bring that!" Lockhart understood and handed him the Bible.

We are to deal with that book in this debate.

I come to this discussion with a certain degree of pleasure, because it gives me an opportunity to say a good word for the Bible. I am much indebted to it, as it has been the greatest formative influence in my life. My father was a Scotchman before he became an American, and he had the old-time devotion of the Scotch for the Scriptures. I was reared, therefore, on a mixed but well-balanced diet of oatmeal, Bible precepts, and hickory switch. It is not a bad combination as a developer of youth.

I think that the earliest memory of my life is the picture in my father's home where, every morning and every evening, he gathered the family around the wide-mouthed fireplace for the family worship. Father sat at one end of the circle and mother at the other, and the children and the servants in between, and father read to us from the Bible, and then sent up to the Throne of Heaven a fervent prayer, either of thanksgiving for blessings received or petitions for the needs of the new day. The last words

\*First speech for the affirmative by Rev. John Roach Straton, DD., Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church.

that my sainted mother uttered were a quotation from the Bible, and in a lime of recent bereavement that fell into our present home, when my wife and I had to say the long good-bye to our only daughter—a precious child of twelve and a half years—the teachings of the Bible were our only comfort and stay.

In this day, therefore, when so many preachers even are criticising the Bible and tearing it to pieces, I am glad of an opportunity to say a good word for the old Book. It has proved itself a true and tried friend. I have often put it to the test, and it has never failed me. To me it is God's word, and it has proved itself infallible. So it has one honest vote to begin with.

The way in which the subject for debate is stated, "RESOLVED THAT THE BIBLE IS THE INFALLIBLE WORD OF GOD," assumes the existence of a living God, capable of revealing Himself to men through a book. In championing the affirmative of this question, I do not, therefore, have to argue the existence of God.

I begin merely by pointing out a reasonable presupposition, namely, that God would necessarily reveal Himself to men. Can you conceive of a king undertaking to rule an earthly country without prescribing laws for his subjects? If such a thing would be unreasonable in an earthly king, then how completely absurd is the thought that the King of Heaven would not provide an adequate code of laws and directing principles for His subjects in this wonderful world of ours?

The thought of God leaving either His vast material or moral universe to drift without law and without intelligent direction is a thought which, upon its face, is so impossible that it is unthinkable to an intelligent mind. It is not remarkable, therefore, that we have a revela-

tion from God. It would be far more remarkable if we did not have such a revelation.

Consequently, the only real issue before us is the question whether the Bible is that revelation. If the Bible is the final and complete revelation from a wise, powerful, holy and loving God, then it must be infallible and authoritative, and with that established, the affirmative has won.

I ask you, now, in the beginning of our thought together, to consider with me a group of facts, entirely outside the Bible's claims about itself, which seem to indicate that it is a book so absolutely unique that it cannot be accounted for on any ground other than that it is an infallible revelation from the living God. The first of these facts is:

### **I—THE FACT OF THE BIBLE'S MIRACULOUS PRESERVATION AND INCREASE**

Now no one can deny that the Bible is here. It is an objective reality and not a subjective idea. Here it is! I hold a copy of it in my hand. It has not only existed for thousands of years, but it has existed in the face of efforts of all sorts to destroy it. Not only has it been subjected to the vicissitudes of fortune and the catastrophes of history that have utterly destroyed other valuable books, which were former treasures of the human race, but calculated and definite steps have been taken from time to time to wipe it utterly from the earth. Toustal bought and burned the whole of Tyndal's first edition, but he utterly failed to destroy the Book or to prevent its circulation. Tyndal took the money from this first edition and with it printed a far larger edition, and the Bibles were shipped into Old England wrapped up in bales of cloth, in barrels and kegs, and even in coffins

used as packing cases! It is said that in one century 150,000 people were butchered for reading the Bible. The jailer's key, the headman's ax, the rope of the gallows, the fagot of the bigot, the powder of the poisoner, the dagger of the assassin have all combined in the effort to annihilate it.

Intellectual pride, too, has often rejected it because of the vanity of man's mind; and infidelity has battled against it with a relentlessness worthy of a better cause and a malignity unmatched elsewhere in the dark realm of prejudice, hatred and spite. What has the result been? Always victory for this venerable and noble old Book! It has successfully resisted the sophistries of Hume, the misguided eloquence of Gibbon, the rationalism of Rousseau, the ignorant blasphemies of Thomas Paine, the satirical mockery of Voltaire, the idle quibbling of Strauss, the shallow witticisms of Renan, the cheap buffoonery of Bob Ingersoll, the audacious assaults of the Communists of France, and the insidious duplicity of the rationalistic theologians of Prussianized Germany. As with Moses's bush, the Bible has burned, but it has not been consumed. Phoenix-like, it has risen from its ashes to new heights of usefulness and power.

### **500,000,000 BIBLES**

In the 18th century the great French infidel, Voltaire, prophesied that, within a hundred years from the time when he wrote, the Bible would be an obsolete book. He declared that it would go entirely out of circulation and that it would be found only as a curio on the shelves of antiquarians. As a striking comment on this prophecy stands the fact that the house where Voltaire wrote it is now owned and used as a storehouse by the French Bible Society, and the very walls that looked down on the

sneering sceptic as he penned his prophecy are now literally lined with hundreds of Bibles 1

One of the most remarkable facts of modern times is that the Bible is still the world's "best seller." In some quarters there is a tendency to discount the Bible in favor of science, but I would point out the significant fact that while there is scarcely a scientific text-book that is ten years old that is not already out of date, the Bible after all these thousands of years is still doing business at the old stand! Yes, while a decade usually sees the death and burial without hope of resurrection of the average text-book or popular "best seller," and while even the masterpieces of antiquity line the shores of time like pathetic wrecks, this marvelous old Book lives on from generation to generation, conquering and to conquer!

How do you account for it?

The rate at which Bibles are now being printed by the American and British Bible Societies alone represents an average of one every five seconds, twelve every minute, 720 an hour, 17,280 every day in the year. At the centennial celebration of these societies in Washington during President Roosevelt's administration—a meeting that was attended by the President, the British ambassador and other dignitaries representing the great civilized nations of mankind—facts were given showing that those two societies had printed and circulated 250,000,000 Bibles in that one hundred years. Let your minds, my friends, dwell upon that tremendous truth for a moment. Supposing all of these Bibles should be brought together at one spot upon the earth's surface. With them, you could construct a skyscraper beside which the Woolworth Building would dwindle into insignificance. I have estimated that the weight of that number of Bibles was at least 47,000 tons. To transport them would require a

train 25 miles long; drawn by 225 locomotive engines, and if the pages of that number of Bibles were spread out upon the ground they would afford standing room for three times the present population of the earth!

Nor is that all. It is said that there are now at least 500,000,000 Bibles in the world. Averaging them at eight inches high each, it means that if they were laid end to end they would reach almost three times around the earth, and if you piled them up one on top of the other they would reach up 63,131 miles into the air!

Why, now, this marvelous record? What is it that has caused the Bible to live on in perennial youth and ever-increasing power until it has now been translated into over 700 languages and dialects of the earth, and seven-tenths of the children of men can read it in their mother tongue? What is the reason and the secret of it all? Jesus Christ said, "Thy word is truth!" Must that not be the secret of it? It is in the very nature of an error, delusion or lie to destroy itself. The lie carries in its bosom the seed of its own destruction. The poet has well said:

"Truth crushed to earth will rise again,  
The eternal years of God are her's;  
But error wounded, writhes in pain  
And dies among her worshippers."

This old Book has not died, but has lived on and on in ever greater vigor.

Must this not be true because the Bible is the divine and infallible revelation from a wise and loving God? Have not men clung to this old Book because they have found in it the very bread and water of life? And is it not monstrous to suppose that a maze of myths or a cunningly-devised tissue of errors, superstitions and lies could so have gripped the human race?



## **II—THE FACT OF THE BIBLE'S UNIQUE UNIVERSALITY**

Closely akin to what I have just been saying, I wish to call attention next to the fact that the Bible has a quality of universality which stamps it as infallible and divine. The Bible is not for one age, but for all time. Neither is it for one nation, but for every tribe and tongue. It speaks to the man of the twentieth century with the same appealing and compelling power as it did to the man of the first century. It speaks to the universal human heart, and that heart responds to its utterances as it does always instinctively to the voice of truth. Its truths convert the Chinaman or the Hottentot in exactly the same way that they convert the Englishman or the American. This cannot be said of any other of the world's so-called sacred books. The Koran or the Vedas, for example, have no appeal to the universal human mind and heart, but the Bible has, and this fact in itself stamps it as a book apart.

The very difficulties of the Bible constitute a part of this element of universality, and were doubtless, therefore, included deliberately in God's wise and loving plan for revealing Himself to man. The mystery element of the Bible troubles some minds, but mystery is a necessary part of any permanent religion. We are greater than anything which we can fully understand. We have mastered it, and, therefore, we will not worship the thing that we can understand completely, but will pass on and leave it, in the search for something higher. If we could fully explain all the mysteries contained in the Bible we would soon lay it aside. There are problems in nature that constantly challenge scientific faith and effort, and we know that we will never fathom all of the mysteries in this infinite universe. The Bible is a revelation of an

infinite God, and so we will never fathom all of its mysteries.

The mystery element is a designed and essential part of the divine revelation. The difficulties, the seeming contradictions about which my opponent will probably speak, the accounts of the miracles, etc., which the Bible contains constitute a constant challenge to interest and faith. It is said that a writer once undertook a compilation of a list of the numerous works written about the Bible, and, having collected the titles of 60,000, he gave up in despair and quit. What other book ever existed about which a hundredth part of this could be said? And today the interest in the Bible is deeper and wider than ever before. The presence of this great crowd of people here at this debate is in itself proof of it. Yes, the best thought of the race is being given to the study of this old Book. It holds the center of interest even for many who do not follow its teachings. But few men study the Vedas or the Koran, but the best scholarship of the human race centers in the study of the Bible. The keenest intellects of all civilized nations, the men of profoundest patience in research, men of supreme genius in the fields of literature, archaeology, language and history are digging down for new treasures of truth in this inexhaustible gold mine. They cross-examine and exhaustively analyze every important word in each Book, and they weigh the meaning and setting of every phrase uttered by prophet or priest or spoken by the Man of Nazareth amid the hills of Judea or beside the limpid waves of Galilee!

The age-long discussions which have raged about this venerable old volume constitute in themselves a source of its perennial life, and we are seeing already that God is overruling the efforts of modern rationalism and of destructive criticism for His glory and to bring new

strength to the Bible. Even the efforts of sceptical critics have but served as the furnace which has purified the gold.

### **MODERN CRITICISM**

Concerning the modern critical difficulties connected with the Bible, a word should be said. We are not to underestimate the part that scholarship plays in our religious interests. Those who love the Bible owe a debt to reverent scholarship which they can never pay. We may be sure, too, that down the ages new light is to break from the sacred page, as the Holy Spirit leads us into all the truth. But it has also become now perfectly evident that much of the criticism of the age has been born of vanity instead of humility, and that its work has been carried forward in the spirit of doubt rather than that of devotion.

In opposing the destructive criticism those who love the Bible are not opposing the search after truth. All should desire the truth from whatever quarter it may come. But the sober second thought of the world is coming to see that the methods of the destructive critics are, for the most part, unfair, vain and presumptuous to an astounding degree. These men complain of "dogma," and yet they themselves are the greatest dogmatists that the world has ever seen. And they dogmatize, too, not on the authority of a Divine revelation that has justified its claim for centuries, but only on their own hypotheses, theories and beliefs of what they think ought to be right. They are working on the assumption that the theories of evolution are true, and that they apply to the Bible, and they strain every point and even manufacture evidence when necessary to try to prove their theories. The book of Dr. Reginald Campbell of London on "The New Theology" is a conspicuous example of this truth.

One other illustration will suffice. Wellhausen asserted flatly that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch, because in the age of Moses society was very crude and writing, if known at all, was known only by a few! Therefore, he concluded that the idea of a carefully elaborated code of written laws coming under such circumstances and at such a time was unthinkable. On this dogmatic assumption Wellhausen proceeded to erect a mighty fort from which to bombard the battlements of revealed truth. A few years after he wrote, however, the "Code of Hammurabi" was discovered. Here we have an elaborate code of written laws, coming from the same part of the world in which Moses lived, and antedating the time of the Hebrew lawgiver by hundreds of years.

Thus, position after position of the critics has been overthrown and destroyed, and they are everywhere on the defensive today. In Germany, the home of scepticism and criticism, as well as in England and America, we see the plain signs of a conservative reaction, which is to usher in a new era of faith and devotion to the Bible.

The difficulties of the Bible, as a part of its quality of permanence and universality, also form an inexhaustible storehouse of food for faith. We said before that difficulties and mysteries are an essential part of any true and permanent religion, because if we could see all the way and fully understand everything connected with the religion we would leave it. The highest reach of moral grandeur in the entire Old Testament is that where the servant of God, though suffering in body and sorely bereaved and perplexed, nevertheless exclaims, "Though He slay me, yet will I believe in Him." It is easy to remain loyal when the sailing is clear and smooth, but moral

grandeur is developed when we remain loyal even though the way is rough, uncertain and dark. This noble element in human character God has sought to develop, seemingly, by leaving some things dark in His Revelation. The mere fact that we cannot fully understand all that is in the Bible or fathom its mysteries has kept it as the center of interest and devotion generation after generation. If, therefore, at this hour I had it in my power to clear up every mystery connected with it, and reconcile every alleged contradiction in it, I would leave it absolutely untouched, for the wisdom of God has planned it as it is, and it is sufficient.

### **III—THE FACT OF THE BIBLE'S REMARKABLE UNITY IN DIVERSITY**

The next concrete and understandable fact to which I would invite your attention is the remarkable unity in diversity which characterizes the Bible. This fact, as I shall show, argues that there is but one author of the Book and, of necessity, that this author is God.

We hear from many sides today this assertion: "The Bible is just like any other book." And following this is the assertion that we need to regard it merely as "literature," and to give it its place in the other literatures of the world. But the Bible is not "just like any other book." As well say that a telescope is "just like any other brass!" It is not. True it is brass, but brass in a peculiar relation and shaped for a specific and unusual purpose. The man who uses up his time analyzing it, that he may determine its chemical composition, or who spends his energies in speculations concerning the half-effaced name of its maker, would fail to get any benefit from the telescope, even if he did not completely ruin the instrument. The telescope is not like any other brass,

and a man who uses it in the wrong way really abuses it, at the same time that he denies himself a most uplifting and inspiring experience. He might be gazing with rapt vision and leaping heart upon the before unseen glories of the midnight heavens. The critical attitude toward the Bible prevents many a soul from catching through it the visions of eternal glory.

Yes, the Bible is perfectly unique. There is not another book on earth like it, nor is it like any other book. Indeed, it is not one book, but a library of 66 books composed by 40 different writers from all ranks of society, and requiring at least 1,500 years in its composition. It took 20 years to give the world Gibbon's Rome; Clark's Commentary required in its composition 26 years; Webster's Dictionary, 36 years, but it required 1,500 years to produce the Bible; and its authors came from every walk of life. Shepherds, fishermen, priests, warriors, statesmen, husbandmen, kings contributed to it. Amos was a vine dresser; Solomon was an illustrious king; David was a shepherd; Moses was a great statesman; Peter was an unlettered fisherman: Paul was a ripe scholar. Yet throughout this Book there is a marvelous unity. Though it was written by these different men from almost every walk of life, and, though it was 1,500 years in the making, it is, nevertheless, a harmonious whole. One spirit breathes through it all; one great ideal and purpose shines with ever-increasing brightness from its beginning to its end.

Though in 66 divisions, the Bible is one Book. Why? There is but one answer to the question. The answer is because the Holy Spirit of the Living God was the real Author! Suppose that forty-eight men should walk into this church tonight. One man we will say comes from Maine, another from California, another from

Georgia, and so on from each state, each bearing a block of marble of peculiar shape. Suppose I pile up these blocks in order, until I have a beautiful marble statue here, perfectly symmetrical and faultless in its grace. If then I should ask: "How did these men, who have never seen each other before, chisel out that beautiful statue?" You would say: "That is easily explained. One man planned the whole statue, made the patterns, gave the directions, and distributed them around; and so, because each man worked by the pattern, the work fits accurately when completed." Very well. Here is a Book coming from all quarters, written by men of all classes, scattered through a period of fifteen hundred years, and yet this Book is fitted together as a wondrous and harmonious whole. How was it done? "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." One mind inspired the whole Book! One voice speaks in it all! Behind each of the writers, though making use in each case of their individual temperament and style, the Holy Spirit stood down the ages speaking God's message to the needy hearts of sinful and lost men.

"Whence but from heaven could men unskilled in arts,  
In several ages, born in several parts,  
Weave such agreeing truths? Or how or why  
Should all conspire to cheat us with a lie?  
Unmasked their pains, ungrateful their advice,  
Starving their gains, and martyrdom their price."

The Bible is a glorious temple of truth, with its broad foundations in Genesis, its majestic columns rising in the record of patriarch prophet and priest, its roof-tree in the Gospels of Jesus Christ, and its majestic dome in the Revelation of a New Heaven and New Earth wherein will dwell righteousness. The miraculous unity in diversity of this Book argues conclusively to the thoughtful

mind the oneness and divinity of its origin and, therefore, its infallibility.

#### **IV—THE STRIKING FACT OF THE BIBLE'S FULFILLED PROPHECIES**

There is another most conclusive proof of the divine origin and infallibility of the Bible, and that is fulfilled prophecy. Prophecy is the foretelling of events before they happen, and only God can do that as it requires omniscience, and God speaks, therefore, through the prophets. Amos said: "Surely the Lord Jehovah will do nothing except He reveal His secret unto His servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7.) And in the Acts of the Apostles it is written: "God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21.)

God Himself, through the Book, challenges us to faith in it because of fulfilled prophecy. He says: "I am God, and there is none like Me; declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done." (Isaiah 46:9-10.)

And even Christ based His claims to faith and obedience upon the correctness of His prophecies. He said: "I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He." (John 13:19.)

These Bible prophecies are not like the prophecies of the Delphic oracle, for example, where either one of two events would prove the prophecy, as in the answer the oracle made to one of the old kings that if he crossed a certain river with his army "it would bring about the destruction of a great nation." But either his nation or that of his foes might have been meant. The Bible prophecies are not like that. They are specific. They are so explicit and definite that they all but take one's breath



away, and their fulfillment has been so remarkable that one thoughtful mind has said that "prophecy is the mold of history." Listen to just a few of them, by way of illustration:

Assyria, with its proud city of Nineveh, flourished in Zephaniah's day, yet he prophesied its utter destruction by God. This prophecy was literally fulfilled, and Nineveh has lain in desolation for ages, her very site forgotten for centuries. (Zeph. 2:13-15.)

Again, God speaking through Ezekiel prophesied not only destruction for ancient Tyre, but certain peculiar things about it that are most striking in their literal fulfillment. Listen to God's prophecy spoken through Ezekiel. He said:

"Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. . . . And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise: and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses; and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. . . And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more; for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God" (Ezek. 26:3,4, 12, 14).

Here was the prophecy. Was it fulfilled? Yes, literally, in every detail. First came Nebuchadnezzar and took the city and spoiled it. The old city lay in ruins. The remaining inhabitants moved away to an island, half a mile from shore, and there built a new city. Then came -Alexander the Great, who besieged the new Tyre built on the island. He planned to attack the city by building a causeway from the mainland through the half

mile of sea to the island. To build this causeway, Alexander took the walls and towers, and timbers and the ruins of ancient Tyre's palaces and literally laid them "in the midst of the water." So great was the demand for material that the mounds of ruins from the ancient city and even the "dust" was scraped from the rocks and laid in the sea! So it became literally "like the top of a rock ... a place to spread nets upon." And Tyre's history stands today as a dramatic monument to the infallible truthfulness of the Bible.

Take, again, the case of Babylon. Jeremiah and Isaiah alike prophesied, that that mighty empire, then in the heyday of its glory, would be utterly destroyed. It would cease to exist, be forgotten, mould into dust, and be desolate forever. God said through Isaiah:

"And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms,, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation; neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and wild goats shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces. I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, and pools of water, and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith Jehovah of hosts." (Isaiah 13:19-22, 14-21.)

These prophecies have been marvelously fulfilled. Jeremiah prophesied about Babylon that its destruction would be so complete that "they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations." (Jeremiah 51.) Mr. Rassam remarks upon the fact that the natives living near the site of ancient Babylon use the *bricks* for building purposes, but always burn the

*stone* thus discovered for lime, which fact wonderfully fulfills the divine words of Jeremiah. And as to the literal fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, it is worthy of note that he knew thousands of years before our days that the Arabs would survive even down to modern times as a nomadic people, still living in tents. Furthermore, observers have commented again and again on the number of wild beasts, reptiles and insect pests that abound among the ruins of ancient Babylon; and Rawlinson, in his well-known book on "EGYPT AND BABYLON" (page 206), says:

"On the actual ruins of Babylon the Arabian neither pitches his tent nor pastures his flocks, in the first place, because the nitrous soil produces no pasture to tempt him; secondly, because an evil reputation attaches to the entire site, which is thought to be the haunt of evil spirits."

I would like to ask why have not the Rationalists and the infidels, whether in the church or out, who are so eager to disprove God's word, gone and inhabited Babylon? God's fulfilled prophecies on multiplied millions of Bible pages stand a challenge to them to prove that the verdict passed on Babylon is untrue!

So I might go on for hours tracing out before you the prophecies of the Bible and their amazing, literal fulfillments. I might cite the case of Egypt, about which Ezekiel prophesied, not that it would become desolate and uninhabited as in the case of Tyre, Nineveh, Babylon, etc., but that it would become forever a subject nation, and so it has been. I might cite the marvelous prophecies of Daniel about the world empires that followed his day.

I might cite to you the prophecies concerning Israel, or, as we call them, the Jews. Quite wonderfully, every part of their history was foretold: their prosperity and greatness when they obeyed God, their decline and ex-

pulsion from their own land, when they disobeyed Him, their tragic and unparalleled sufferings, persecutions and sorrows, and yet their miraculous preservation, their multiplication in numbers, wealth and power, and finally their restoration to their own land, and glory to them and all mankind through their final obedience to God when Christ comes back again. Already in the "Zionist movement" we are seeing enacted before our very eyes the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning their return to Palestine.

Listen to but one of these ancient prophecies: In Deuteronomy, the 28th chapter, it is written:

"And Jehovah will scatter thee among all peoples, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth. . . . And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, and there shall be no rest for the sole of thy loot. . . . And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear night and day and shalt have no assurance of thy life." (Deut. 28:64-66.)

This has been literally and tragically fulfilled. There is nothing in all history so pathetic and so terrible as the history of the Jews. Two millions were killed or starved to death or sold into slavery worse than death in A.D. 70. Over half a million more were slaughtered by the Romans sixty years later. Other millions have tragically perished in Poland, Italy, Russia and other lands. Even here in free, democratic America thoughtful Jews have had to express their apprehension for the future, in the light of Henry Ford's propaganda and such movements as the Ku Klux Klan. No wonder that Milman says, in his "History of the Jew?":

"Massacred by thousands, yet, springing up again from their undying stock, the Jews appear at all times and in all regions. Their perpetuity, their national immortality, is at once the most curious problem to the political inquirer; to

the religious man a subject of profound and awful admiration." (Page 398, Vol. 2.)

Frederick the Great once said to his Chaplain that if his religion was true he ought to be able to prove it in one word. He demanded that he so prove it, and his Chaplain said: "Yes, sire, it is provable in one word—*Israel!*" If there were no other proof of the divine origin and infallibility of the Bible would stand proved forever by its fulfilled prophecies about the Jews!

And what shall we say about the prophecies connected with Jesus Christ Himself? Think, first, of the many prophecies about His coming to this earth, even including details as to place and miraculous manner of birth, as to His mother, the deeds of His life, the peculiar and most unusual incidents of His death and burial and resurrection, all of which were literally and exactly fulfilled. And think of the prophecies that Christ Himself uttered, and how they have been fulfilled. Though its golden beauty was still sparkling before their eyes, He prophesied to the men of His own day that the Temple would be utterly destroyed, and that not one stone of it would be left upon another. Amazing, yet it was literally fulfilled! At a time when Rome was mistress of the world, He foresaw the break-up of her power and prophesied not that nations would rise against Rome, but that "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against Kingdom." The political history of the world, He said, was not to be one Kingdom ruling all, or nations rising against that empire, but numbers of nations and Kingdoms, all in strife and warfare against each other. In the light of those prophecies, we can but stand in awe and wonder as we read in the pages of history the unending movements of kingdom against kingdom and nation against nation for these two thousand years.

Christ prophesied the history of His church, its trials, sufferings and sorrows and yet its glories and its final victories. And all of this has been fulfilled and is being fulfilled before our very eyes.

Christ and the apostle John prophesied that near the end of the age, the Gospel would be preached "to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" on the face of the globe. (Matt. 24:12; Rev. 14:6.) At the time the prophecy was uttered its fulfillment seemed an impossibility. Only the invention of printing and the consequent increase in the number of Bibles made it possible. Yet the prediction was made, and Paul and other apostles proceeded to act as if they believed that an impossibility would be accomplished. It has been accomplished, and we have seen it in our day. While there are many thousands of other books in the world, how does it happen that not one of them has been translated into one-twentieth as many languages as the Bible? And how did those ancient prophets know that this would be the case?

In the light of all this, may we not see the absolute infallibility of God's word? And may we not know that Jesus spoke only the truth when He said: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away!"

#### **V—THE FACT OF THE BIBLE'S OWN CLAIMS CONCERNING ITSELF**

This leads me now to point out the fact that the Bible claims to be the word of God, and, therefore, it claims infallibility. It boldly states its own right to instruct and lead the children of men. I designedly bring this argument late in the discussion. I did not argue in the beginning that the Bible was the revelation of God because it said it was. I have marshalled the facts from

the outside first. But now, in the light of those facts, I make bold to introduce the Bible that it may speak for itself. What does it claim for itself? Almost on every page the claim of its divine origin and infallibility is either implied or asserted. To be sure, it does not elaborate any formal theory of inspiration or infallibility, and yet inspiration and infallibility are implied from one end of it to the other. All through the Bible run such expressions as "Thus saith the Lord," etc. This phrase, "Thus saith the Lord," or its equivalent, is used in the Old Testament fully two thousand times.

Allow me to give you now a few of such expressions, taken almost at random from among the many that might be quoted.

In the case of Moses we are told that,

"God spake these words" (Exod. 20:1).

"And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord" (Exod. 24:4); and in repeating them to the children of Israel he was able to say, "these are the words which the Lord hath commanded" (Ex. 35:1).

David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue (2 Sam. 23:2).

Isaiah said, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord has spoken." And he refers to his writings as the words of the Lord "at least twenty times."

Isaiah said, again, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isa. 8:20.)

Jeremiah, over one hundred times in his writings, said, "The Word of the Lord came unto me." (Jer. 1:4.)

Ezekiel wrote: "The Word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel." (Ezek. 1:3.) He used such expressions sixty times.

Daniel tells us he received his message in vision. "(Dan. 7:1); and from the lips of Gabriel (Dan. 9:21.)

Amos says he wrote "the words . . . which he saw concerning Israel," etc. (Am. 1:1.)

John says what he writes is "the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him." (Rev. 1:1.)

When Jeremiah was first inspired he seemed for the moment quite unconscious of the fact, so that God had actually to tell Him—"Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth." (Jer. 1:9.)

Peter said, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 121.)

Paul said, "For this cause also thank we God 'without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." (1 Thes. 2:13.) And the great classical text still stands:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." (2 Tim. 3:16.)

These new Testament utterances concerning the inspiration and infallibility of scripture refer, for the most part, to the old Testament, and thus declare its full inspiration and authority. But the New Testament makes for itself the same claim. The Gospels are full of internal claims to be the inspired record of the Son of God when He was in the flesh. The Book of Acts is avowedly the history of the Holy Spirits work in and through the early churches. The book of Revelation explicitly claims to be just what its name implies, a real revelation from God. That leaves, then, only the epistles to be accounted for. Fourteen of these epistles are from the pen of Paul. He declares explicitly and repeatedly that what he writes is not of man but of God, and that it is to be received "not as the word of man, but, as it is in truth, the Word of God." (1 Thes. 2:13.) To the Galatians he wrote: "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received



it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1:11-12.) And so again and again he repeated.

What he testifies of his own writings, Paul equally affirms of the writings of the other apostles. In his letter to the Ephesians he says truth not heretofore known has now been revealed to the "holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." (Eph. 3:5.) In this he is in accord with the Son of God, who assured these very apostles that when they should speak (and therefore when they should write) it would not be themselves, but, as he said, "the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." (Matt 10:20.)

Without hesitation it may be said the Apostle Paul claims full inspiration for the writings of Peter, James, John and Jude as made by the Spirit in and to them. The Apostle Peter, speaking not only for himself, but in the name of the other apostles, gives an added testimony to the inspiration of Paul's epistles. He says: "Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also *the other scriptures*, unto their own destruction." (2 Pet. 3 :15, 16.)

This is an unequivocal declaration by Peter that the writings of Paul are to be received upon the same authority as "the other Scriptures" of Israel; and it is this same Apostle Peter who, speaking of the inspiration of the Old Testament, says the men who wrote it "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:21.) It is he who also declares that the spirit of Christ was in them as the source and inspiration of their testimony, leading them to write "beforehand the sufferings of

Christ, and the glory that should follow." (i Pet. i:ii.) Thus, it is plain that the entire New Testament claims to be the inspired and infallible Word of God.

Jesus Christ has left His record as to His faith in the Bible as the infallible Word of God. He prayed the Father and said: "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." He was constantly speaking of "the scriptures," and He said "the Scriptures cannot be broken." Indeed He proclaimed Himself to be the theme of all scriptures. On the walk to Emmaus and in the upper room at Jerusalem He announces that He Himself is the unique key to the understanding of the Bible, and there we may well let the matter rest. We can only exclaim, like that distressed disciple of old, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." (Compare Luke 24:13-35 and 36-49.)

Here, then, is the Bible's testimony concerning itself. The old Book comes into court with a good reputation as it makes these claims for itself. In the light of the wonderful record of its influence and its power, which I have tried to bring to your attention, I wish to ask who will dare to impeach it? Who will dare rise up in the face of this noble record and say that this old Book is a liar?

## **VI—THE FACT OF THE BIBLE'S SELF-AUTHENTICATING AUTHORITY**

' If, now, the Bible is truly the Word of God, then it is infallible and should be received as a final self-authenticating authority. There must be in every field of human activity and interest some court of last appeal. It is true in the scientific world. Though the human consciousness continues to play a great part, and the activity of the human mind in the discovery, analysis and classification of new facts goes forward constantly in the science of

mathematics and in every other science, there are, nevertheless, final and axiomatic principles and truths which can never be transcended and which stand, therefore, as ultimate authority. A straight line is forever the shortest distance between two points and twice two will make four to the end of time.

In medicine the need of authority exists. While the different schools of medicine vary among themselves and are constantly developing and perfecting their science, there are, nevertheless, great general principles of healing and established facts underlying them all. While the individual consciousness and skill of a given doctor has a large room for play, his talents are, nevertheless, circumscribed by the things that are established, and that are true forever. Let every doctor begin practicing medicine according to his own whim and impulse, and the undertaker and manufacturer of tombstones would become speedily the most prosperous citizens in the community !

In the law there must be a seat of final authority and a court of last appeal. While the law is a science that is progressing, still, there are, nevertheless, a group of principles and truths that are established and that are absolutely final.

The fundamental axioms of the law—the axioms of justice, equity and righteousness in the relationships between man and his fellows—are irrefutable and unchangeable. The consciousness of the individual does not create these authoritative standards and principles. The individual consciousness merely recognizes them as true when they are presented, and must act upon them in obedience unless disaster is to follow.

Upon this truth of authority, therefore, the whole vast structure of modern civilization is builded.

**RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY.**

Dare anyone say, then, that in the field of religion, where man's most vital interests for both time and eternity lie, there is no dependable authority, no infallible guide? Shall the highest interests of our natures be left to caprice and chance? Are we to grope forever in darkness and uncertainty? Are there no fixed standards? No solid and enduring ground on which we can build our individual lives, establish our homes, order our society and found our hopes of Heaven? Is each one of us to be left to believe one thing one day—and that thing perhaps different from everything our neighbors are believing,—and another thing tomorrow, and another thing the next day, and so on and on?

The modernists and the rationalists exalt the individual consciousness as the seat of final authority. But this only means that God has been dethroned and man put in His place.

Now, my friends, let us look at it frankly and honestly. We do not wish to be offensive, but we must be loyal to the truth, and the truth is that this whole modern philosophy, when it is logically followed out, leads inevitably not only to atheism but also to anarchy!

A man who becomes a law unto himself and declares that he, will do only what he thinks is right and what he wishes to do we call an anarchist. With sober hearts and earnest minds we need to face the question whether this truth does not apply also to the man in the religious world who says the same thing. If the consciousness of the individual is the seat of authority and the court of final appeal, then we have anarchy in the religious world. Every man will be a law unto himself. Conflicting authorities mean that there is no authority.

If it is argued that the Bible is fallible in part, then the question arises: "What part is fallible and what part is infallible? What part is true and what part is false? And who is to be the judge?" Is it not evident that such a contention leads to absolute religious anarchy?—that it makes every man a law unto himself? If we do not accept the Bible as authority, then we have \* to accept our own individual judgment as the final authority, or the judgment of some other man, expressed in a book or otherwise, and we are still utterly at sea; we still have no real authority: For, look you, one man may accept his own judgment as authoritative or the judgment of some other man or book, but you and I may not accept his conclusions or the conclusions of the other man or book at all. And so it comes down to it that we have no binding authority: that is to say, we have anarchy.

Is it not perfectly evident, my friends, that we must have some authority outside of ourselves, some absolute and unchanging standard, some court of final appeal to which all must submit, or there can only be confusion worse confounded in all matters of religion?

The whole matter of religious authority reduces itself to the question whether the infinitely holy and wise God has a right to rule His own world and His finite children. We must believe that He has. God's righteous will, then, is the ultimate source of authority in the religious world, and that will is revealed in the Bible. In this Book, either explicitly stated or clearly implied, there is every truth, precept and principle that the individual or the race can ever need.

"But," it is asked, "is there then to be no new truth? No progress in thought?" And we answer: Yes, there is to be constant progress in thought, but this is to come

because the individual will learn better to think God's thoughts after Him! There is to be more and more new truth, but it is to be new truth that breaks out of the old Word. That Word is "forever established in Heaven," and we are not to add to it or take from it one jot or tittle. The heart of it is One "in whom there is no variableness nor shadow cast by the turning." One who is "the same yesterday, today, and forever." Man's chief glory is in learning of Him, and not in trying to surpass Him nor supplant Him with our feeble finite thoughts. New truth will come, but it will come bursting out of the eternal and infallible Word. The improvement must be in man and not in the Word. The Holy Spirit has been given us to lead us into all the truth, and He will not fail us if in prayer and humility we look to Him for guidance. The enlightening of the individual mind and the deepening of its power of perception merely enables the mind to enter into the deeper treasures that lie forever at the golden heart of Truth. The supreme need of this age is that we shall reestablish respect for authority everywhere, and that can come only through reestablishing respect for the Bible as God's Word.

### INFLUENCE ON THE INDIVIDUAL

Now the striking thing is that the Bible actually exerts a vital and authoritative influence over men. It has a mystical power through which God speaks to men in a way that is mentally illuminating, inspiring, and to the individual, final and infallible. Let me quote to you, in this connection, no less a man than *Hon. Winston Churchill*, the great English statesman. Beyond any question he is one of the most practical men and one of the most gigantic minds of today, but in his book on

the great war,—"The World Crisis of 1914-1918,"— which I have just been reading with profound interest, and which many competent critics have declared the greatest of the books on the war, I found Mr. Churchill relating a striking incident. In speaking of the tremendous sense of responsibility which came upon him when he was selected to serve as the First Lord of the Admiralty at the outbreak of the World War, and of his uncertainty and apprehension about assuming such colossal responsibilities in the face of the known strength of Germany and her vast preparations for war, Mr. Churchill relates an experience he had with the Bible. He says:

"That night when I went to bed, I saw a large Bible lying on a table in my bedroom. My mind was dominated by the news I had received of the complete change in my station, and of the task entrusted to me. I thought of the peril of Britain,—peace-loving, unthinking, little prepared—of her power and virtue, and of her mission of good sense and fair play. I thought of mighty Germany, towering up in the splendor of her Imperial state and delving down, in her profound, cold, patient, ruthless calculations. I thought of the army corps I had watched tramp past, wave after wave of valiant manhood, at the Breslau maneuvers in 1907; of the thousands of strong horses dragging cannon and great howitzers up the ridges and along the roads around Wurzburg in 1910. I thought of German education and thoroughness and all that their triumphs in science and philosophy implied. I thought of the sudden and successful wars by which her power had been set up."

Then, with these thoughts in his mind he turned to the Bible, without any plan of reading any particular passage, and it opened to a passage that greatly cheered

and strengthened his heart, and encouraged him to go forward with his new duties, and responsibilities. He says:

"I opened the Book *at random*, and in the 9th chapter of Deuteronomy, I read:

"Hear O Israel; Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven, A people great and tall, the children of the Anakim, whom thou knowest and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak! Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire, he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before they face; so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord hath said unto thee. Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the Lord thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying: For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee. Not for thy righteousness, nor for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land, but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware unto thy fathers." (Deut. 9:1-5.)

This message from God's word did thus infallibly guide that great statesman in the hour of his supreme need.

### THE BIBLE'S MORAL POWER

The Bible has also proved itself the infallible word of God to a great multitude of individuals in the field of morals and religion. The *avowed purpose* of the Bible is to point the way to salvation, and the fact that it does this prove that it is infallible and divine.

We have in the membership of this church young



men whom I have baptized during this pastorate, some of whom have come from lives of crime and shame and have been made over into lives of purity, honesty, and noble service. They delight in nothing more than to quote from the Bible and tell how its truths saved them, and how its precepts guide and keep them in the way. Some of you have doubtless seen that picture which sets forth the purifying and uplifting influence of the Bible on the individual character. The painting is entitled "The entrance of Thy Word Giveth Light." The artist had pictured the interior of a humble and poverty-stricken home. Upon the bed in the corner lay a young man. Evidently he had been a youth of right impulses and noble purpose, though his fine face was now marred sadly by the deep lines of sin. The young man lay upon the bed in the early morning after a night of drunkenness and debauchery. Beside him sat the venerable old mother of the wayward lad. A tear was upon her wrinkled cheek; the old family Bible was open upon her knee, and with her drawn, crooked finger she was tracing laboriously and reading the words of counsel and truth from the Book. And with marvelous spiritual insight and skill the artist had managed to suggest the dawn of hope upon the young man's face. Realizing his own weakness and his own inability to stand amidst the temptations of human life—convinced at last of his own moral impotence—there came to his penitent soul the revelation that there was another power, a Beneficent and Divine Power, that would strengthen his weak will and correct the sad abuses of his life, and so the entrance of God's word gave him light. That picture is true, and that experience has been repeated, in essence, many million times upon our earth. Because, therefore, of the fruit that this blessed

old Book has borne witness that it is truth, and that it points the way to everlasting life.

Talk about the divine origin and infallibility of the *Bible!* Are not such experiences final and conclusive as to this question? I submit that they are. So far as the question of infallibility is concerned, I bear my testimony that the Bible has been infallible for me, because it has been the greatest purifying, guiding, and inspiring power in my life. It has never failed me. Churchill found it so in his life, and a great multitude of others have found it so in their lives. Coleridge, the poet, said that he knew the Bible was true because "it found him at a deeper depth than any other book." Gladstone called the Bible "the impregnable Rock of Holy Scripture," and acknowledged that he shaped his life by its teachings. Daniel Webster paid his tribute, to the influence of the Bible upon his life and character, and he admonished all men to accept it and follow it. He said:

"I believe that the Bible is to be understood and received in the plain and obvious meaning of its passages; for I cannot persuade myself that a book intended for the instruction and conversion of the whole world should cover its true meaning in any such mystery, and doubt none but critics and philosophers can discover it. If we abide by the principles taught in the Bible, our country will go on prospering and to prosper; but if we and our posterity neglect its instructions and authority no man can tell how sudden a catastrophe may overwhelm us and bury all our glory in profound obscurity."

I wish to add to these views of practical men of the world the following words from one of humanity's greatest scholars, the late Dr. James Orr, of the Free Church College of Glasgow. In speaking of the Bible, Dr. Orr says that it has a "saving and sanctifying power that

wield the best proof of its divine origin." In his great book, on "The Problem of the Old Testament," He then says further:

"The Bible has a character and power of impression which belong to it as a living Book. Who, coming to this sacred Book with a sincere desire to know God's will for the direction of His life, will say that he cannot find it? Who desiring to be instructed in the way of salvation 'through faith which is in Christ Jesus' will consult its pages and say it is not made plain to him? Who, coming to it for equipment of his spiritual life, will say that there are still needs of that life which are still unprovided for? Who, seeking direction in the way of life everlasting, can doubt that, if he faithfully obeys its teachings he will reach that goal? The Scripture fulfills the ends for which it was given; no higher proof of its inspiration can be demanded."

These are noble and significant words which I have quoted from some of the great minds and hearts of earth, and they all argue the divine origin and infallibility of the Bible as God's word.

### **AUTHORITATIVE PREACHING**

A new understanding and a practical application of this old truth will bring renewed power to the modern pulpit and the church today. Why is it that with greater wealth, enlightenment and numbers than ever before in Christianity's history many of her churches, especially in our cities and centers of culture, are declining? The reason is not far to seek. A question mark concerning Christ and the Bible has gotten into many pulpits. Its poisonous roots reach down through the soil of uncertainty to the subsoil of doubt, and even into the dark, deadly mold of infidelity itself. Its fruits show in the preaching of the day. The trumpet is giving "an uncertain sound" and consequently few are "preparing

themselves for the battle." The silly sensationalism, the "ragtime" religion that is seen in many of our churches, and the puny little essays that are delivered from many of our pulpits, and dignified through courtesy with the name of "sermons," are pitiful in comparison with the grand preaching of the past, which gave forth a sure note of warning and promise by the very authority of God Himself, speaking through His Holy Word.

The rejection of authority in the civil state, in the home, in social life, and in the church, is the greatest and most menacing danger of today. Half of the world has been already plunged into anarchy, and the other half seems trembling upon the brink of that dreadful precipice, because the truth of authority has been rejected by the superficial thinking of the times. In the home, parental authority has waned, and the result is the wreck and ruin which is falling already upon the younger generations, which is the theme of magazine writers the world over, and the distress of thoughtful minds everywhere. In society the old-fashioned authority of decent standards of dress and conduct has been partly rejected, and the result is a reign of sensuality and the clogging of our divorce courts with the tragic tales of violated marriage vows, the setting adrift of little children with no hand to guide them upon the storm-tossed seas of human life, and the utter disruption of multitudes of American homes. And all of this has come about because of loss of faith in the Bible as God's infallible and authoritative Word.

I hope that my opponent realizes that a solemn responsibility rests upon him in this debate because, at last, these questions are the most important questions that are now engaging the attention of mankind. The supreme religious issue of this age is: do we be-

lieve God? Not do we believe about God. Every man who has any capacity for thought must believe something about some sort of God. The real issue of today is: do we believe God? A great multitude of devout and faithful souls the round world over hold that God has spoken to man in this venerable Book, and we believe God and what He says to us in the Book, and we believe, too, that the supreme strategy of the devil, whom Christ recognized as His arch enemy, centers today in his subtle attack upon the Bible. The devil's plan from the beginning has been to discount and discredit God's word. It is recorded here in Genesis that when the tempter came to our first mother, "he said unto the woman: yea, hath God said?" The very first step in the seductive sophistries of the devil, therefore, was to raise a question in the human mind concerning God's word. Then his next step was to deny God's word. When the woman told him that they were permitted to eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden except the fruit of the tree which was in the midst of the garden, for, said she "God hath said: ye shall not eat of it; neither shall ye touch it lest ye die," the devil made his master stroke. It is recorded here, "and the serpent said unto the woman: ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Gen. 3:1-5.)

First the devil raises a question as to whether God has really spoken—whether He has given us His word, and then he goes a step further and boldly denies God's word and declares God to be a liar. And that, my friends, is what he is still doing; and all of the sin and the sorrow, the suffering and the shame, that have come upon mankind have fallen upon the race because they

have believed the devil's lies rather than God's word. Let us beware, those of us who lead the people, lest in these latter times we ourselves, allow ourselves to be deceived by the adversary and to fulfill what Paul said: "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." (2 These. 2:11.)

### FAITH AND SPIRITUAL VISION

There are but one or two other practical things that I need to say in this connection. In establishing the affirmative of this debate, I do not have to prove that the Bible is fully understandable down\* to its minutest detail. I have already pointed out that there are some difficulties, some mysteries and some seeming contradictions in the Book, but I showed that these difficulties have probably been left in the Bible purposely in the wisdom of God, as a perpetual stimulus to interest, and a constant challenge to faith! We should not allow these few minor difficulties, however, to decide our judgment about the Bible. In fairness, we must look at it as a whole. The question is: "Resolved that *the Bible* (the united whole) is the Infallible Word of God."

Again, in establishing the affirmative in this debate, I do not have to prove that the Bible is infallible to all men. I have shown that it is infallible to many—indeed, to all who will accept it; but, as with any other valuable gift, it must be accepted before it can be enjoyed. Now, as with any other gift, faith is the way by which we must accept the Bible, because of the undeniable and self-evident truth that spiritual things are spiritually discerned, just as physical things are physically discerned. I can discern the pul-

pit here only by looking at it with my physical eyes. I can determine that it is smooth only by running my physical hand over it. Likewise, it is true that there must be a spiritual eye in order to behold spiritual beauty and truth. Those who, through lack of faith, have no spiritual vision, and therefore do not accept the Bible, are like a blind man who at mid-day declares that the sun is not shining! The Bible "worketh effectually (only) in those that believe," but when there is the smallest degree of humility, of the spirit of teachableness, and of vital faith, it becomes the very word of God and an infallible guide to all who thus accept it!

Our first business, therefore, is to seek the leading of God's spirit that we may approach it in such a way as really to reach its beautiful and saving truth. It is not the proud and egotistical spirit of the critic, who comes to the Bible with an attitude of superior wisdom and condescension, but, rather, the humble and teachable soul who will find its richest treasures. Its message is to the heart and conscience as well as to the intellect of man, and faith is the open sesame by which we enter in.

The Bible is not an iron safe that can be opened only by some key which we are strong enough to forge or some combination that we are shrewd enough to figure out. The Bible is rather a beautiful flower which cannot be forced open, but which will open of itself in the sunlight of faith and love, and give forth a beauty and sweetness that are divine. We need, above all things else today, that warmth of appreciative atmosphere and of humble devotion which will cause its deeper spiritual beauties to unfold for us, and to exhale the rare perfume which so sweetened the lives of those in the generations that are gone.

### GOOD FRUITS

And surely its fruitage has been blessed down all the years! Queen Victoria was once asked the secret of the greatness of the British Empire. She lifted a Bible from her table, opened it on her out-stretched hand and said: "Here it is!"

Whatever else anyone may think about Him, there is one principle that Jesus of Nazareth laid down which cannot be denied by any man. It is the principle that a good tree bringeth forth good fruit and an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. "Wherefore," said He, "by their fruits ye may judge them." Judged by this simple, safe, practical standard, what of the Bible? We know it is true and good because its fruits have been righteousness and truth and holiness down all the years.

Think what this old Book has done for our modern society. It has secured the acceptance of those principles and ideals which heathenism ignored and rejected, as, for example, the importance of the individual; the law of mutual love; the sacredness of human life, and the need for identity between belief and practice, or the doctrine of internal holiness. It has liberated womanhood and glorified childhood. It has taught the nations the value of monogamy, the sacredness of the marriage vow, the religious equality of the sexes and the sanctity of the home as the foundation unit in the organization of enlightened society. These and other forces of wisdom, purity and progress have their fountain-head in the Bible!

And particularly are these considerations applicable to our own country. The very foundations of the American Republic were laid down upon the open Bible. The most significant fact, at last, in the history of our coun-



try is the fact that the Plymouth Fathers, before ever they left the Mayflower and set foot upon these wild shores, opened the Bible in the cabin of the ship and drew up the first charter for their colony in the light of its teachings. The foundation stones in this country's greatness were not laid by men who doubted the Bible, who desecrated the Lord's day, and who neglected the church, or by women who were more regular in attendance on the playhouses than they were on the services of the sanctuary, who knew more about Ibsen than they did about God's word, who wore their complexions in the bureau drawer, who were past masters in the tango, the turkey-trot, and the grizzly-grapple, and who preferred to mother a mongrel puppy rather than a cooing baby! No, the greatness of our country was founded by men and women who held to the old faith, who lived lives of usefulness and service, who walked in the light of God's law, whose sorrows were comforted by the truths of His word, and whose hopes of Heaven were the main-stay and anchorage of their souls!

Wendell Phillips once eloquently exclaimed: "The answer to the Shasta is India; the answer to Confucianism is China; the answer to the Koran is Turkey; the answer to the Bible is Christian America!"

Because, therefore, of the fact of its miraculous preservation and its increase, the fact of its unique universality, the fact of its remarkable unity in diversity, the marvelous fact of its fulfilled prophecies, the fact of the overwhelming claims it makes for itself, and finally, the fact of its self-authenticating authority and its power over the individual and the race, I claim that it is demonstrated and proven, that this book is divine in its origin and infallible in its content.

## II

### IN THE NEGATIVE\*

"RESOLVED, That the Bible is the Infallible Word of God." I want to call your attention to the exact wording of the subject under discussion. Notice that the resolution does not state, "Resolved, That the Bible is the *best* book in the world," nor, "Resolved, That we find God's Word in the Bible," neither of which resolutions would find me upholding the negative side.

When any one says that the Bible is the "infallible" word of God, we understand that person to mean that every part of the Bible is the word of God and therefore infallible. Indeed, the word "infallible" is somewhat unnecessary in the stating of this subject. If every verse and every word in the Bible is the word of God then it must be infallible. The question before us, which I submit to you, Mr. Chairman, Honorable Judges, Worthy Opponent, and Ladies and Gentlemen, is whether or not God is actually speaking in every verse, phrase and word in the Bible. I do not have to prove that it is, all wrong. If any part of it is wrong, or untrue, the Book is not infallible, as that word is commonly understood by English-speaking people. Now, the Bible is a very precious book to me. I will not yield one whit to my worthy opponent either in the matter of attachment to the book or in the matter of the advantages of my early education. I was brought up in a Baptist home in New England, and compared to a New England Baptist home, Scotland has nothing to offer. My earliest memories are associated with the Bible. My mother entered me in a Baptist Sunday

\*First speech for the negative by Rev. Charles Francis Potter, Minister West Side Unitarian Church, New York.

School when I was less than three years old, and I attended Sunday School regularly, except when I was sick in bed, from that time until I was 17 years old, and every Sunday in that Sunday School I recited about the Bible the things that I had studied in it during the week. When I was five years old a copy of the Bible was placed in my hands, and I began to read it, and I have been reading it ever since very carefully. I presume I have worn out a dozen copies. I read the New Testament through "out loud" to my mother, chapter by chapter, before I was 7 years old. By that time I was memorizing great sections of it. The Ten Commandments were, as the newspaper men say, "featured" in my early education. I remember distinctly reciting them with other boys and girls of my own age. I learned not only the abbreviated form, taught in most Sunday Schools, but as I was intensely interested, I learned the whole 20th Chapter of Exodus in which the Ten Commandments are contained.

Very distinctly I recall one afternoon when my mother caught me, as she thought, telling a lie. It was probably some childish exaggeration. My punishment was to stand in the parlor of our little home before the framed Ten Commandments, done in red worsted on perforated paper. I was to read these through a number of times. As I was doing so, there suddenly dawned upon my humiliated consciousness the startling fact that there was no "Thou shalt not lie." When I pointed out that fact to my mother, she seemed surprised, but rose to the occasion nobly by saying that "Thou shalt not bear false witness," was near enough for the purpose, and that I had better stand there awhile longer. But I could think of several kinds of lies which had nothing whatever to do with witnessing, and wondered

why with "Thou shalt not steal," and "Thou shalt not kill," it didn't come straight out and say "Thou shalt not lie."

As I read the Old Testament, however, the answer gradually came to me. The reason why there wasn't any prohibition of lying was because lying wasn't a sin in the days of the Ten Commandments. Isaac and Jacob continually lied and the more they lied the better they seemed to get along. Jacob deceived his brother, then his father, and then his father-in-law, and the Lord blessed him and called him Israel (ruling with God) and his sons founded the 12 tribes of Israel. Thus early I learned by myself to question the doctrine of the sacred completeness of the Ten Commandments, and the infallibility of the Bible.

Naturally I looked at the Decalog closer and found other questionable statements. I asked my Sunday School teachers why we shouldn't keep Monday holy as well as Sunday, especially since what the fourth commandment really said was to keep Saturday holy.

I asked her if she thought it was right for God to be "a jealous God" when it was wrong for me to be a jealous boy, and if she thought it was altogether right for innocent children to have the "iniquities" of their dead and buried great grandfathers "visited" upon them.

Much to my surprise I found that these questions were either dodged or very unsatisfactorily answered by my religious instructors. They even seemed surprised that anybody should ask such questions. <sup>!</sup> When I found that there was no help in that direction, I was left to my own resources and decided to make an original investigation of the infallibility of the Bible. As nearly as I can remember I was just about nine years old when I conducted a scientific laboratory test of this doctrine we

are debating tonight. Mind you, I had never heard that there were such persons as higher critics. I had found in my Bible two verses—

Matthew 21:22.

"And all things whatsoever ye ask in prayer believing, ye shall receive."

John 14:14.

"If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do."

There were many other verses along the same line and in all of them was the promise that if I asked anything of God it would be given unto me. Consequently the test I proposed was fair enough. There seemed to be two conditions: First, I must ask in faith believing, and second, I must ask in Jesus' name. I remember distinctly how I went down cellar and found an old wash bench and set up on it a wooden nine-pin. I knew that money was needed for my education and for things we lacked in the little home. It occurred to me that if once I could get hold of some money that things would be very much better. So I got down on my knees in the cellar and prayed earnestly to God that he would turn that wooden nine-pin into gold. I asked it in faith believing, for I had been repeatedly told that God could do anything.' I asked it in Jesus' name. I prayed as hard as I knew how, and let me tell you that a more earnest prayer never was uttered. I had been told repeatedly that God could do anything, and I was giving him, as well as I could, a fair chance. When I arose from my knees and found that nine-pin was still wooden, something happened in my young mind and I questioned the infallibility of the Bible. Do you wonder? And remember that it was no German higher critic that put in my mind doubts as to the infallibility of the Bible.

Of course I was told that when prayer wasn't answered, it was because God knew that what we prayed for wasn't good for us to have. That seemed all right, too, but it didn't help the infallibility of the Bible any, because that wasn't what the verses had said. There were no reservations. Those verses had said "all things whatsoever ye ask" and "if ye shall ask anything."

But youth is elastic, and environment is powerful and I got over that blow. I feared I had been an atheist and I repented of my disloyalty. I was converted and joined the Baptist church at the age of eleven, by immersion. It was a very real conversion, too. I had conviction of sin and all the rest of the orthodox plan of salvation. Always I had wanted to be a minister and the idea grew stronger after I was baptized. I kept on in the Sunday School studying and thinking a great deal about the Bible and came to know it so well that at the age of fourteen I was taken from among the pupils of the Sunday School and made a teacher of a class of twelve 10-year-old boys. I found that some of them asked the same questions that I was still subconsciously asking.

An earnest church worker, a doctor's wife, formed a Bible study class which met on Tuesday evenings and which I joined at the age of sixteen. She suggested that we begin with Genesis, and inasmuch as I had been studying Genesis lately I was very glad to have her make this suggestion. The class lasted just three weeks. On the first night I presented her with a list of a dozen or more questions which had to do with the contradictions and inaccuracies which I, as a 16-year-old boy, unaided, mind you, by any books of higher criticism, had noticed as I read the Bible carefully. She glanced through the questions and said she could not answer

them that night, but would try to the next meeting. I think that she visited the public library that week and I think she called on the minister. The next Tuesday night she said she would have to postpone those questions still another week. Although there was a good attendance at this class, it was announced on the third meeting night that that would be the last session of the class. I haven't had those questions answered yet.

When I was seventeen I went away to college. Almost the first week I was there we had a meeting of the Ministerial Union. This consisted of about forty young men studying for the Baptist ministry. In planning the monthly meetings of the Ministerial Union for that year it was decided to have debates. It was a very rash thing for a freshman to do, but I proposed that one of the subjects of the debates be the Virgin Birth. The upper class men asked me what there was to debate about the Virgin Birth. I told them I thought the matter was very debatable and the debate developed then and there. As I recall it, there were about twenty who maintained that the Virgin Birth was an historical fact and a necessary Christian doctrine. I was the only one who maintained the opposite, but when the afternoon was over my questions on the Virgin Birth had not been answered, and it had been decided not to have debates in the Ministerial Union.

From the first year of my college experience until I was graduated from the theological seminary I was known as "the Unitarian," a title which I indignantly repudiated because I had been taught that Unitarians did not believe in God. I was sure that I still believed in God, however, even if I did not believe every word of the Bible. I insisted that I was simply trying to find the truth and that there were some parts of the Bible

which did not seem to me to be true, and that the mere statement by certain religious instructors that they must be true because they were in the Bible did not seem to me at all logical.

Now, these childhood and boyhood questions of mine, I found, in later college years and in theological seminary years, are the very questions which are asked by the so-called higher critics. When I found that a number of learned men, most of them Christians, were asking the same questions which had bothered me about the Bible, I began to read their books, but I thought them very mild and tame.

The trouble with the higher critics appeared to me to be that they were too much concerned with matters of detail such as words in the text, minor discrepancies, and things of that nature. The things that troubled me were not so much the fact that, for instance, there were four different versions of the inscription on the Cross:

Matthew has it (Matt. 27:37). "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

Mark has it (Mark 15:26). "The King of the Jews." Luke has it (Luke 23:28). "This is the King of the Jews." John has it (John 19:19). "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Of course I knew that this fact alone, which can easily be verified by any one whether a higher critic or not, proves that the Bible is not literally inspired and not the infallible word of God. But what concerned me more, and really troubled me, were the direct contradictions between various sections of the Bible and the things which the Bible said God commanded and which seemed to me wrong.

Let me direct your attention to several passages in the Bible. I hope you and the judges will make a note of



these references, and you can look them up in whatever version you think is the verbally inspired infallible word of God. I shall read them now from the commonly accepted version, the King James, used in Dr. Straton's pulpit. These passages I have grouped into three sections, *first*, those that are inaccurate, that is unscientific or unhistorical; *second*, those that are obvious contradictions, and *third*, those that represent God as doing or approving something which seems to me morally wrong.

### INACCURACIES IN THE BIBLE

#### *Unscientific*

Lev. 11:6—"And the hare, because she cheweth the cud." It is well-known now, of course, that the hare and the rabbit are not cud-chewing animals, although they make motions with their lips and jaws which might easily be mistaken by an unscientific observer.

Gen. 3:14—The same sort of mistake is made when it was supposed that snakes eat dust.

Lev. 11:20-22—In this passage grasshoppers, crickets and locusts are spoken of as going upon all four. These insects all have six feet.

Joshua 10:12-14—Joshua making the sun stand still. Those who wrote that story had no idea of the astronomical havoc they were creating. If the sun had stood still "about a whole day," not only would the Amorites have perished, but Joshua and the Israelites as well.

#### *Unhistoric*

Luke 2—"Now it came to pass in those days, there went out a decree from Cesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed (*i. e.* enrolled). This was the first enrollment made when Quirinius was Governor of Syria."

Joseph and Mary went up to Bethlehem for enrollment and there Jesus was born (and Matthew says "in the days of Herod the King").

Three errors of history are to be noted in this passage:

1. There is no record of a world census, not even a Roman world census, in the careful records of the Romans.

2. A small enrollment in Palestine was made by Quirinius but it was ten years after the death of Herod.

3. At the time of the birth of Jesus, the Governor of Syria was not Quirinius, but Quintus Sentius Saturninus.

### CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE

2nd Sam'l. 6:23—"Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death."

2nd Sam'l. 21:8—"The five sons of Michal, the daughter of Saul."

Gen. 22:1—"And it came to pass after these things that God did tempt Abraham."

Jas. 1:13—"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

1st Kings 8:46—"There is no man that sinneth not."

1st John 3:9—"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; he cannot sin because he is born of God."

Matt. 5:33-34, Matt. 5:38-39, Matt. 5:43-44—(These passages flatly contradict the Mosaic law.)

If it be objected that the contradictions between the Old Testament and the New Testament are no proof of the infallibility of the Bible because we must interpret the Old Testament by the New Testament, how about the following contradictions within the New Testament, indeed, within the same book?

Rom. 2:11—"There is no respect of persons with God" (this means no partiality).

Rom. 9:13—"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

Rom. 9:18—"So then he hath mercy on whom he will and whom he will he hardeneth."

Acts 9:7—"And the men who journeyed with him (Paul) stood speechless, *hearing a voice*, but seeing no man."

Acts 22:9—"They that were with me saw indeed the

light and were afraid; but *they heard not the voice* of him that spake to me."

In 1st Cor. 15:5 Paul says—"Christ was seen of the 12 apostles after his resurrection." But there were not 12. Judas hanged himself before the resurrection and Matthias was not elected until after the Ascension.

In Mark Jesus goes into the wilderness immediately after his baptism and stays 40 days in wilderness.

In John, the third day after baptism Jesus in Cana of Galilee at a wedding and the wilderness temptation is not mentioned.

My main contention, however, on which I would be willing to base my entire argument, is not the scientific inaccuracies, nor even the fully recognized contradictions in the text of the Bible. If the Bible is the word of God, the scientific mistakes prove him ignorant and the contradictions prove him inconsistent, and an inconsistent and ignorant God can hardly be called infallible. But my principal contention goes much deeper than that. It is based on morally degrading ideas of God which are contained in some parts of the Bible, where God is made by ignorant writers to sanction certain things which, if you and I did, we would be put behind steel bars.

### **MORALLY DEGRADING IDEAS OF GOD**

Ex. 7:13, 11:10—God hardened Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let the children of Israel leave Egypt and then punished him severely for not letting them go.

Ex. 5:3—God told Moses to say to Pharaoh, "Let us go, we beseech thee, three days journey into the wilderness that we may sacrifice unto the Lord our God,' which was deceit, because they were planning to escape and not return. 'Then God told them (Ex. 11:2) to borrow all they could and carry it off with them; *i. e.* God is reported to have commanded them to lie and steal.

2nd Kings Chapter 9:10—Jehu was a hypocrite and whole-

sale murderer and yet the Bible says he did according to "all that was in God's heart," all that was "right in God's eyes," and received God's approval and reward.

Ex. 22:18—God said, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." Very few in this audience would, if on a jury, sentence to death any woman charged with witchcraft no matter what the evidence, and yet on this supposed command of God, and because of the idea that the Bible is the infallible word of God, thousands of innocent women have been tortured and killed by religious fanatical literalists. This one verse alone proves my contention.

Deut. 21:18-21—"If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:

"Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;

"And they shall say unto the elders of his city, this, our son, is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard.

"And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die; so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear."

Here is a command to stone to death disobedient children without trial, on the accusation of their parents. If the parents of New York obeyed this tomorrow, think of what it would mean. For one thing the parents would be arrested for murder, and rightly.

Deut. 14:21—And God said, "Ye shall not eat of anything which dieth of itself; thou shalt give it unto the stranger that is in the gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it to an alien."

No comment is necessary.

Any one of these inaccuracies, contradictions, or immoral sanctions, would, taken alone, prove my thesis that the Bible is not the infallible word of God. All of them, taken together, and many others which might be cited, constitute a body of evidence within the book itself

which refutes my worthy opponent's contention. It is a wonder that there are not more inconsistencies in the volume, for it is a whole literature rather than a book by one author.

My worthy opponent is historically incorrect if he supposes that the Bible is a unity. The word "Bible" comes from two Greek words "ta biblia," which, being translated, mean "the books." There are 66 books in the Bible and they were written by very many different men over a long period of time, nearly a thousand years. If these books were arranged in the order in which they were written it would be possible to trace the changing and improving ideas about God which developed among the Hebrews.

They represent, in the Old Testament, the literature of the Hebrew race, and in the New Testament, the documents of early Christianity. Many of these books were written for special purposes, and I doubt if any one of them was written with the idea that it would be included in the Bible. Paul, for instance, writes a letter to the people of Thessalonica giving specific counsels for their peculiar situation. Take the Psalms alone, usually ascribed to David. It takes only a few hours' study to reveal that we have here, not a number of compositions by one man, but the final edition of the Hebrew hymn book, a compilation of many different hymns by many different authors. If you presume that they were all written by David, under the inspiration of God, and are the infallible word of God, how can you account for the imprecatory psalms? Will any one who believes in the God in whom Jesus believed, the loving Heavenly father, dare to say that it is God's infallible word which declares (Psalms 137:9) "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones."

If the Bible is the infallible word of God, that means not only that what God was supposed to have originally said to inspired men is infallible, but it necessarily presupposes that there must have been infallible copyists during the period of hundreds of years before printing was invented. Thousands of early Christians and later monks, often-times wearied with long hours at the desk might easily have made errors in copying, as the existing manuscripts show to even a superficial observer, that they did.

Remember that the Old Testament was written in Hebrew, which was translated into Greek, the Septuagint, and then into English. Remember that not all the Greek was translated. There was a part they left out, which was later put in between the Old and New Testaments and called the Apocrypha. In England, for many years, and it probably still obtains, if you swore in court on a Bible not containing the Apocrypha, your oath was valueless. In America the other kind will do. Which Bible is the infallible word of God?

Remember, too, that Jesus spoke in Aramaic which was translated into Greek and Latin and those in turn into English. This, you see, necessitates infallible translators, and if you think translators are infallible, you have only to compare the different versions of the Bible. Then, again, the printers must be infallible. They were not always. Take, for instance, the famous "Vinegar Bible" where a printer substituted, by mistake, the word "vinegar" for vineyard.

"There is many a slip twixt the cup and the lip," and it is a long way from the original words of the Bible to the copies which we have today, and if one link in the whole chain is weak, then my worthy opponent's

contention that the Bible is the infallible word of God is a mistaken argument.

If he could show you one square inch of the original manuscripts, he might conceivably be entitled to say: "This God hath said." But the oldest manuscript of the New Testament we have is dated, at the very earliest, in the middle of the fourth century, over 300 years after Jesus died. Moreover, the oldest copy of the Hebrew Old Testament in existence dates somewhere around the 8th or 9th century A. D.

My main and final criticism of the assertion that the Bible is the infallible word of God is simply this: God is too great to be included between the covers of any printed book. Not the literature of a single race, nor even the literature of all races, is sufficient to comprehend the wonder and the glory and the goodness of God. We can read His message in the sunshine and the flowers. We can read the story of the making of the earth and of the life upon it carved deep in the eternal rocks. The aspirations toward goodness within the heart of man are a better evidence of God than all the books ever written.

### III

## REBUTTAL FOR THE AFFIRMATIVE\*

I want to express my admiration for the adroit manner in which my opponent has handled his side of the question. I confess to a degree of distress, however, over the autobiographical parts of his address, particularly the portion where he referred to his early predilection for prevarication, and his disappointment as a lad in not finding a prohibition against lying among the Ten Commandments. It recalled to my mind the story of the pious old Quaker who had a worldly minded brother who greatly burdened and distressed him. This brother was given to such exaggeration that it got sometimes into gross prevarication. On one occasion he had exceeded all bounds. The older brother had caught him in glaring misstatements, and he said to him: "Jonathan, I do not desire to deal harshly with thee, but, Jonathan, if the Governor of Pennsylvania should say to me: 'Bring me hither the greatest liar in the State of Pennsylvania' I would come unto thee and say: 'Jonathan, the Governor hath need of thee!'" I will not say that my opponent has deliberately misstated the truth about the Bible in those alleged contradictions which he quoted. Nor did he actually call the Bible a liar. Like the old Quaker, he put it in a little more diplomatic language, but it amounts at last to about the same thing. I prefer to believe that he is just honestly mistaken about these things.

I confess to some personal disappointment over his presentation. I am loath to believe that my opponent is one who finds more enjoyment in the companionship of

\*By Rev. John Roach Straton, D.D.





pale and sickly doubt than in that of strong faith and robust affirmation, or that he is one who is only happy when stumbling into some blind alley of alleged Scripture contradiction, or one who prefers to pick out the spots upon the sun rather than to see its full-orbed glory at noon-day.

### SEEING ARIGHT

I am very sure that my opponent does not handle the other important matters of life as he handles the Bible. I am sure that he doesn't deal in that way, for example, with Mrs. Potter. At least I know that I cannot so deal with Mrs. Straton. If I should follow the policy of trying to find the flaws in the wife's character, if there are any, if I should come to her constantly and say: "Now this is wrong, and that is wrong with you," and "what on earth did you do that for?" etc., etc., I know that there would be trouble in my household. Nothing gives forth its best under the spirit of criticism and mere fault-finding, and so far as the wife is concerned, I see only the nobility of character and the wonderful charm and beauty which are an increasing joy and delight to me as the years come and go.

And is not that the proper attitude to take toward the Bible? Who in looking at a great impressionist picture would single out a particular lump of paint or a place where the weave of the canvas perhaps showed through the pigment, and judge the entire picture by that? The Bible, as already remarked, is a unity, and we need to look at it as a whole; and, viewed as a whole, my contention is that the claim is established that it is the infallible word of God. If not, then we have no guide and no fixed standards to which all must submit, that is to say, once more we have anarchy! If the Bible

is true and infallible only in spots, then once more I ask who is to pick out the good spots? If one man has the right to tear from the Bible the pages telling of the Virgin Birth of our Lord, and if another has the right to tear out the pages teaching the transcendence and real personality of a living God, and if another has the right to tear out the pages containing the record of the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and if another has the right to tear out the pages that teach the inspiration and authority of the Book, and if another has the right to reject baptism, and another has the right to throw overboard the teaching about divorce and the substitutionary atonement, and if another has the right to reject the miracles and the full deity of our Lord, then have not I the right, if I so desire, to tear out the pages carrying the ten commandments and satisfy the lusts of the flesh, and do otherwise according to my own sweet will?

If we are to say that the Bible is not infallible, then I ask again, who is to be the judge between the infallible and fallible parts of it?

I want to point out that my honorable opponent has not answered one single one of the tremendous facts that I presented in my opening argument. He has only regaled us with a lot of the old stock objections and arguments of scepticism and unbelief.

### **ALLEGED CONTRADICTIONS**

If time permitted, it would be very easy to answer every alleged contradiction and every supposed error which my opponent has undertaken to point out. I will have to hope that all who are really interested will take the time after this meeting to look up these matters in any good Bible dictionary or commentary, or to consult some competent Bible student. In the meantime, I will

have to content myself with calling attention to only a few of these alleged errors.

Take, for example, what he said about the supposed contradiction concerning the inscription on Christ's cross. There is no contradiction at all. The Scripture states that the inscription was written in three languages: Latin, Greek and Hebrew. It would be, therefore, far more accurate to speak of the "inscriptions" rather than the inscription.

Here they are:

- Matthew says: "This is Jesus . . . . . King of the Jews"
- Mark says: " . . . . . The King of the Jews"
- Luke says: "This is . . . . . the King of the Jews"
- John says: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"
- Total—"This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Evidently, then, the Holy Spirit, in inspiring the Gospel writers, was pleased to lead one evangelist to quote from the Latin, a second from the Greek, a third from the Hebrew, while a fourth was led by the same Spirit to give the substance of the whole; and this is exactly in line with what we find throughout the Gospels in other connections. A full view of Christ and His teachings can only be obtained by taking the four Gospel accounts together, as Matthew views Christ from the standpoint of a King, Mark from the standpoint of a servant, Luke from the standpoint of the Son of Man, and John from the standpoint of the Son of God.

So far from these alleged inconsistencies proving the untrustworthiness of the Bible, they prove the exact opposite. It is a well-known fact in all human testimony that different witnesses see different views of the same thing. In giving an account of an incident often statements seem to differ in surface detail, and yet they

are in absolute accord *as to the essential fact*. If they agreed in minute detail, it would arouse suspicions of collusion and, therefore, possibly of designed deception.

Secular literature and history are full of illustrations of this truth. There is considerable difference among historians, for example, as to just when the battle of Waterloo began. The Duke of Wellington, the victor in the fight, declared that no man could tell when the battle commenced. One historian says that it started at eleven o'clock, and another declares that it began at twelve o'clock; but shall we decide because of these differences among witnesses that no battle was fought at all? I stood during the past Summer on the great mound of earth at the center of the Waterloo battlefield, which has been erected as a monument to commemorate the battle, and as the details of the tremendous contest were explained to me by a competent military man, I knew that a world-changing event had occurred on that spot, regardless of differences over minute details in it.

Let me give you another illustration of seeming contradiction from secular literature: In Winslow's "Journal of Plymouth Plantation" there is a statement about a ship which is alleged to have been sent out by "Master Thomas Weston"; but Bradford, in his narrative of the matter, mentions it as sent by "Mr. Weston *and another man*." Both were right, and each narrator simply gave the account of the matter at the point where it made most emphasis on his own mind. John Adams, in his letters, tells the story of the daughter of Otis about her father's destruction of his own manuscripts. In one letter she says: "In one of his unhappy moments he committed them all to the flames,"\* yet in the second letter she says: "He was several days in doing it." Now, this looks like a flat contradiction, and would be so regarded

if we employed the methods adopted by the sceptics and destructive critics in connection with the narratives of the Bible. A clearer understanding, however, of the conditions will make plain her meaning. She meant that for several days her father was in a melancholy and pessimistic mood in regard to his literary work as set forth in his manuscripts, and finally, as a climax to this spirit of melancholy, "in one of his unhappy moments he committed them all to the flames."

So, if we had a full understanding of all the conditions of life and the circumstances under which the several narratives in the Bible were recorded, we would doubtless find that many of these difficulties would disappear. Those of us who hold to the infallibility of the Bible believe that the original manuscripts were absolutely accurate. No man would question the possibility of minor errors through copyists slipping in, however, and as I said in my opening speech, it seems evident that God may even have permitted some such difficulties to enter, to hold the interest of the world in the Book through all the ages, and in order to challenge and stimulate faith. If everything in the Bible was absolutely plain and simple we would have no faith in connection with it, but would walk by sight and not by faith. Many of the alleged contradictions and mistakes, however, are either misquotations by those who allege the mistakes, or are palpable strainings of interpretation.

My opponent thinks, for example, that Romans 2:11— "For there is no respect of persons with God"—contradicts Romans 9:13—"As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." This is due to a misunderstanding of the meaning of the words. When the Bible states that God is no respecter of persons it means that God does not "kotos" to any individual be-

cause of his wealth, position or eminence, but treats all men with equal justice and fairness.

Or, take again, what was said about the hare chewing the cud. It is almost laughably apparent that the Bible-did not have in mind the American hare or jack-rabbit in this case, and it has been scientifically shown that the hare found in Palestine today uses his incisors in mastication, that he chews his food twice. But it is by no means certain exactly what animals are meant in the Levitical law by "hare" and "coney." In one connection in Hebrews the coney seems to be an animal with coarse and porcine-like hair which would explain the interdiction of his flesh for food purposes.

My opponent said that the same mistake is made in the Bible in connection with grasshoppers, locusts and crickets, which are spoken of as going on all fours, when they have six legs. But while it is true that the Palestinian locust has six legs, it walks on only the four forward legs, the hinder and longer legs being used only for springing. The passage to which my opponent refers guillotines his argument at a stroke. It is Leviticus 11:21, and reads as follows: "Every flying, creeping thing that goeth upon its fours, which has legs above its feet (or fours) *to leap withal upon the face of the ground.*"

It is well known also that the ancient Hebrews spoke of any animal that did not walk upright as going "on all fours." Think, too, of the utter incongruity of putting over against the moral grandeur of God as pictured in the Bible and the age-long influence of the old Book, a question about a grasshopper's legs!

And what shall be said of my opponent's confusion in the case of Michal, the daughter of Saul, and the sometime wife of David? He says that at one place

the book of Samuel says that Michal never had children, but that at another it is stated she had borne five sons to Adriel, but this shows a lack of knowledge of the text of 2 Samuel 21:8 which says: "The five sons of Michal, the daughter of Saul, which she *brought up* for Adriel." (Authorized version.) Now, Michal was never the wife of Adriel, but her sister Merab was. The authorized version, therefore, shows her as foster-mother for her five nephews, the sons of her elder sister. The Chaldean version has this reading of the verse: "The five sons of Merab which she bore to Adriel and which Michal, the daughter of Saul, brought up." But it would seem that the Hebrew word means bore rather than trained, so such scholars as Dr. Hastings, and Dr. Schaff say that the name Michal in the passage is a scribal mis-entry by a copyist and should be Merab, which is perfectly consistent. The Syriac and the Arabic have Nedab which is the equivalent of Merab just as Uzziah is the equivalent of Azariah in the historical books of Israel. And so of the references to the sun standing still. Some most interesting astronomical calculations have been made as to the possibility of just such an effect as that at the very time the incident occurred. But apart from that, who would say it was untrue if I declared that "I saw a beautiful sunrise this morning." Now I really saw no such thing. What I actually saw was an earth-roll, not a sun-rise. The sun doesn't "rise," yet we so say. The essential fact in the Joshua incident was that God miraculously prolonged the daylight, and to anyone who believes in miracles there is no difficulty whatever in accepting that as truth. I myself once saw such a wonderful after-glow, because of the peculiar atmospheric conditions and cloud effects, out in Cali-



fornia, that I read a newspaper out of doors after nine o'clock at night!

### A CONVERTED RATIONALIST

Let me take one more important and specific case in which my opponent asserted positively that there was an historical error. I refer to the matter of the taking of the census at the time of the birth of Jesus, as recorded in the second chapter of Luke. My opponent asserts that there are three errors of history in that passage, and argues that no such census was taken.

Now I hold here in my hands one of the greatest and most recent books dealing with the Bible times. This book, "THE BEARING OF RECENT DISCOVERY ON THE TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT," is from the pen of one of the greatest men of our age, Sir William Ramsay, a recognized authority in his field. In the book he makes something of a confession concerning his own early doubts about some of the alleged historical errors, etc., in the New Testament. He tells us how he refused to swallow the theories of the German rationalists, however, and determined to go and see for himself. Thus he journeyed over the New Testament lands and searched out the records on all disputed points, and he tells us *how he was overwhelmed at last with the conviction of the accuracy and the literal truthfulness of the New Testament in all of these things.*

He deals with this matter of the census at length. He says that the theories, implying that Luke invented this story, "destroy themselves in the light of the facts." He quotes from Roman records the edicts, "That all who for any reason whatever are away from their own Nomos should return to their home to enroll themselves," and

in connection with the return of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus, he says: "From modern discovery it now appears that the order to return to the original home, though in a sense non-Roman in spirit, was the regular feature of the census *in the Eastern provinces*. \* \* \* From a fair, unprejudiced and rational consideration of the evidence of Luke, Pliny, Tacitus, Clement and Tertullian, we conclude that the statements of Luke are all probable in themselves, and that the theory either of invention or of stupid error on his part is unreasonable and unjustifiable. \* \* \* This theory is an astonishing example of modern European capacity for making false judgments." (Page 253.) And in speaking a little later of this same false scholarship, which presumptuously sets itself up as superior to God's word, Ramsay says:

"I confess that, when I see the self-satisfied and pretentious ignorance of the critical theologians miscalling and villifying this most wonderful little gem of historical insight and word painting, I find it difficult to restrain my indignation. These are the dull and blind savants whom the modern world has accepted as 'learned,' and to whom so many have humbly bowed down and done homage and worship."

So much, then, for my opponent's flat assertion that there are three errors of history in this one passage. There are no errors. The old Book is vindicated by facts, and it has been thus vindicated again and again over all such contested points. Dr. Sayce, another one of the world's leading archaeologists, has said truly: "Every turn of the spade has unearthed corroborative evidence of the minute truthfulness of Scriptural history." And Professor Sayce said further in acknowledging a mistaken conclusion that he had reached on a

point of Biblical history, "We must write our history of Elam all over again. We have been wrong and the tenth chapter of Genesis is right after all."

I can never forget the impression made upon my own mind as I stood before the inscriptions on the wall of the old temple at Karnak, Egypt, and saw there the account of Shishak's campaign in Israel, and the list of the names of the cities that he had conquered. The two accounts—one written upon the page of the Bible and the other carved in enduring stone—are in agreement! I can never forget, either, the thrill which I experienced, in connection with the discoveries of Petrie at the treasure house of ancient Egypt, dating back to the time of the Israelitish bondage. He found there in those walls some brick made with straw and *other brick made without straw*, suggesting in a way that was dramatic and overwhelming the literal accuracy of the Bible account of how the ancient Israelites were so driven by their task masters. Some of the bricks that they made, of necessity, had to be made without straw.

### THE MORAL CHARACTER OF GOD

Just a word, in closing, in reply to the aspersions which my opponent casts upon the moral character of God as He is pictured in the Old Testament record. Take, for example, his reference to the suggestion about giving defective things to strangers and aliens. How trivial and unfair was his interpretation! Apart entirely from considerations about the peculiar customs of the Hebrews, which differed radically from the customs of other ancient peoples, was it indeed not better to give to the poor that which was not of use to its owner than utterly to discard it without having it serve anyone? Does not my opponent know that thoughtful

writers have commented again and again upon the nobility of the teaching of the Old Testament in connection with the "stranger"? We find the care with which God directed just treatment and consideration for strangers one of the most unique and noble elements in the Hebrew writings.

While, of course, it is well known that the Bible is a progressive revelation, and that the full-rounded view of the character of God can be obtained only in the light of both Old and New Testaments taken together, nevertheless, the aspersions cast upon God, as revealed in the Old Testament, are without warrant in fact or justification in ethics. It is certainly a strange paradox that faith in the God of the Bible, whom my opponent claims was an immoral Being, has produced the highest morality that the human race has ever known! While the foremost nations of antiquity were bowing down to dumb idols, while Egypt was worshipping the crocodile, while Athens was giving tens of thousands of women to the licentious rites of Venus, and Alexandria was rotting in sensuality through the worship of Aphrodite, while Rome was adoring the bloody God of war, and while even the Parsee could rise no higher than to turn his face eastward and adore the sun, the ancient Hebrews were worshipping a spiritual God—holy, just, righteous, and true.

The alleged immorality of God in directing the children of Israel to "borrow" from the Egyptians is entirely beside the mark. The revised version makes it perfectly plain that they "asked" gifts—not loans—and that the Egyptians "gave"—not "lent," as in the old version. God was the owner of all that silver and gold, and the children of Israel were His own chosen people, called out from among all others to bring God's truth and a

Savior for the whole world. If God, therefore, directed that enough of the silver and gold which He owned in Egypt be asked for to later adorn His Tabernacle and Temple, He had the full right so to do. Further, it is well known that ancient peoples were accustomed to asking and receiving gifts from one another in connection with their religious rites,—and that there was an abundance of gold in ancient Egypt—enough and to spare for all—is proved by the recent discoveries in Tutankh-amen's tomb! The Bible, too, says explicitly that "the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they gave unto them such things as they required." (Ex 12:36.) Evidently, God's spirit moved the Egyptians to a sense of justice in remembering the long years of labor which the Hebrews had given them as slaves.

And now as to the alleged immorality of God in hardening the heart of Pharaoh, that also is beside the mark. The Bible says in other places that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Every student of Scripture knows that there is a difference between a case where God *permits* men whose wills are already turned from Him, as was the case with Pharaoh, to be hardened in heart, even because of the fact that that very hardening opens the way for possible redemption when judgment has fallen upon them and they see the futility and sin of resisting God, and a case where He plans and brings about the hardening.

It is well known, too, to all fair minds who come to the study of the Scriptures, that God had to deal with ancient peoples and conditions as they were and not as they should have been in some ideal state. Just as Jesus said about divorce, that Moses permitted it because of the "hardness of the hearts" of the people, so the stoning

of children and all of that has to be interpreted in the light of the age. There were no reformatories, etc., in that time, and the Hebrews were a nomadic people. Obedience to parents, therefore, was vitally necessary if any semblance of order was to be maintained in the families and the tribes. One such incorrigible and hope-less degenerate as is described in Deuteronomy 21:18-21 might not only pollute all the other children in a family, but spread ruin far and wide throughout the tribe. Those nomadic people would either have to take such a son, with his moral contagion and ruin to himself and others, along with them in their journeys, or else dispose of him in some other way. The influence of such a character would lead to things worse than death to other children, and so the parents were authorized to *bring him for trial* before the "elders of the city" (verse 20). The custom was for the elders to meet in "the gate" of the camp or city for the trial of all cases, and verse 19 here proves that parents were to bring any incorrigible, gluttonous drunken son to the elders for trial. They were authorized to punish with death by stoning, the customary form of execution. The purpose of it all, however, was a *moral purpose from God's side*. The object was "so shall thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear" (verse 21). Evidently the purpose of the stern judgment was to prevent crimes among the young through a wholesome fear, and the fact that we have no record of any case of such stoning in the Bible shows that it worked out just as God planned that it should. Furthermore, the fact that Judaism and Christianity are the two religions that have protected and glorified childhood is a sufficient answer to the libel that God was cruel in His attitude to the young.

**THE SUPREME NEED TODAY**

And as regards the much trumpeted "imprecatory psalms," a discriminating student of Scripture can plainly see that such psalms, when rightly understood as a part of the divine revelation, cannot be said to be faulty in ethics. In some cases they were ebullitions of personal anger and the desire for vengeance which is a part of the weakness of universal humanity, and in other cases they rare fore-tellers of God's righteous wrath against His foes and expressions of His judicial indignation against evil-doing.

The surgeon is not immoral when he amputates a putrid limb in order to save the life of the entire body, and God was not immoral when He ordered the cutting off of rotten individuals and groups to save the masses of the people from utter corruption and moral death. It would be well, too, for us, in this lax and easy-going age, if we had a little more of the moral stamina which separates sharply between God's friends and His foes and which would pronounce divine wrath against iniquity !

I come back once more, therefore, to re-emphasize the thought that the supreme need of this age is a reassertion of the authority of a wise, holy, and loving God. The youth of today are falling increasingly into moral decay and loose and silly ideals of life because parental authority has been relaxed and the right discipline of homes has been abandoned. An appalling wave of lawlessness is sweeping over America and the world%because of disregard of constituted governmental authority. The blight of divorce and the ravages of sensuality are wasting our society because the authority of 'right social standards has been lightly and jauntily

waved aside by the rebellious spirit of today. *The key to all these dangers is the fact that men have lost the fear of God and the reverence for His authoritative word, which characterized former generation; and we will see obedience to parents and respect for laws and the purification of social ideals brought about only when first of all men everywhere are willing again to bow their wills to the will of a heavenly Father and, in joy and strength, to walk in the way that He has laid out.*

The Bible has survived all of the foes of the past, and it will prove once more victorious against the foes of the present. The coat-of-arms of the French Bible and Tract Society is the picture of a Bible in the form of an anvil, around which numbers of broken hammers lie upon the ground, and the motto is: "*The hammers break; the anvil abides forever!*"



## IV

### REBUTTAL FOR THE NEGATIVE\*

I almost feel like preaching a sermon, too, but I remember that this is a debate. The reason why I did not attempt to answer the statements in my opponent's first speech was the simple rule of debate understood by every debater, that the first speaker on the negative side does not attempt to answer the first speech on the affirmative side; he leaves that to the rebuttal. This is the rebuttal.

I maintain that the *first point* brought forward by my worthy opponent, namely, that the preservation of the Bible proves its infallibility, is valueless, because the preservation of any book for any period of time does not in any sense prove that what is said in it is true. I know of a number of old musty books in libraries carefully preserved from the bookworms and the dust, but what is in them is not therefore necessarily true.

Furthermore, under that point he maintained that because the Bible is the world's best seller, therefore it must be infallible. Have you been reading any of the best sellers lately? Do you think that they are all infallible? Is the number of volumes printed of a certain book any argument whatever as to the worth of what is in it?

The *second point* brought up by my opponent was the unique universality of the Bible, the fact that so many people have been helped by the Bible. My answer to that is that there, are still in the world more Buddhists than there are Christians. Therefore, if universality is an argument, the Buddhists are right and not the Christians.

\*By Rev. Charles Francis Potter.

The *third point* brought by my opponent was that we have unity in diversity in this Book, that it is a library of 66 books, and yet is unified into a "wondrous and harmonious whole." I showed you that the diversities, destroying the harmony, are often flat contradictions, and therefore answered that argument.

The *fourth point* brought forward was that the Bible's prophecies have been fulfilled, especially those about Jesus. It happens that I spent two solid years in the study of Hebrew, and took every passage in the Old Testament which was supposed to be a prophecy relating to Jesus, and a group of fifteen of us working together for two years decided that every one of the passages that were supposed to refer to Jesus were easily explained by their own particular circumstances and time, and did not necessarily refer to Jesus at all.

The other prophecies are very questionable. The ones about the destruction of Nineveh, Tyre and Babylon, recorded in Zephaniah, Ezekiel and Isaiah, which my worthy opponent quotes, are certainly accurate in many details, for the very simple reason that the "prophecies" were written after the destruction took place.

One was mentioned, Deuteronomy 28:64-66—"And Jehovah will scatter thee (the Jews) among all peoples, from one end of the earth even unto the other \* \* \* Thou shall fear night and day." Well, it may be that the Jews are scattered over the face of the earth, but I don't know, they seem to be coming together. I have met a million or more since I came to New York, and I take off my hat to a great many of them. I have been unable to discover that they are in fear night and day. If this passage refers to the Jews, that part of it has not been fulfilled. They are not in fear night and day.

ful patients, just as my worthy opponent has friends in this audience who could get up and testify of the curing power of the Bible. Many physicians have patients who can give testimony to the fact that they have been cured, but the physicians do not, therefore, claim infallibility, and infallibility is the point of this debate, don't forget that. I am not saying that the Bible is not a helpful book.

I was also very glad when my worthy opponent quoted Daniel Webster and said that Daniel Webster maintained that we should abide by the principles of the Bible. I myself am maintaining that we should abide by the principal truths of the Bible, but not by the very different statements that are made in certain parts of the Book by people who were ignorant men of their own time. I would like also to point out to my worthy opponent that this Daniel Webster who said, "Abide by the principles of the Bible," was a Unitarian.

The *final point* made by my worthy opponent was that this Book is a living thing. It is, but is that not rather an argument for fallibility rather than infallibility? It Jives because it tells of how a certain group of people struggled toward God, and found Him, many of them, but the things that they said that God told them to do they sometimes made mistakes about. They said that God told them to do things that you and I know in our consciences were wrong to do. You know that you would not stone your boy if he were disobedient a hundred times. You are too good to do that, and if you are better than your God, then where is your God? You know that in the volume that we are referring to tonight there are many wonderful things. You know that in it there are many things which are helpful, but you can believe all that, as I do, and still maintain that

this living thing, this book, like all living things is imperfect in parts and places.

In my worthy opponent's rebuttal he made some additional arguments which call for answer before I close.

He seemed greatly distressed, fearing that if the Bible has parts in it which we cannot accept as true, then we may be left without a moral guide. He implied plainly that he depends upon the Ten Commandments, and says that if those were deleted from the Bible, he would have the right, if he desired, to follow the lusts of the flesh. He asks who is to be the judge between the fallible and infallible parts. I reply that the enlightened conscience of man is, after all, the final and only guide.

He further misses the point in the matter of the inscriptions on the cross. If one evangelist quotes from a Latin translation, one from a Greek, and one from a Hebrew, then some very poor translating was done. If this is a sample of the translation of the whole Bible, then it is indeed a miracle that we have not more mistakes than the many I have pointed out.

As for the argument that "God may have even permitted some such difficulties to enter, to hold the interest of the world in the Book through all the ages, and in order to challenge and stimulate faith," that seems to me exceedingly unwise on God's part. To tell lies in order to seem interesting is a policy of very doubtful value. Honesty would seem a better policy. And as for stimulating faith, if a man's faith is to be measured by the size of his esophagus, then faith is synonymous with credulity, and the small boy was correct in defining faith as "believing what you know ain't so."

How can my opponent say God is no respecter of persons and "treats all men with equal justice and fairness," when the whole Old Testament is the record of

how Jehovah protected, coddled and favored one small Semitic nation at the expense of the others?

There are four species of hare in the lands of the Bible. The Arabs call them all "arnabeh" so they are undoubtedly the same animal mentioned in Leviticus 11:6, for the Hebrew there is "arnebheth." These four species *Lepus Syriacus*, *L. Synaiticus*, *L. Aegyptius* and *L. Isabellinus* are all rodents and not ruminants; that is, they do *not* chew the cud.

The Leviticus 11:2 passage is ambiguous. Of course, grasshoppers "have legs above their feet." What good would their feet be if they didn't? The point of the whole matter is that even a Boy Scout reading the 11th chapter of Leviticus would laugh aloud at the ignorance of natural history therein imputed to Jehovah.

As for Michal, the childless woman with five sons, why doesn't this infallible book say "nephews" or "stepsons," or whatever they were? It says plainly, "sons." If you will turn to that verse, II Samuel 21:8, you will notice that in the King James version it says, "The five sons of Michal, the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel." From that word "brought up" my opponent has inferred they were not her sons, but nephews. If you will look in the margin of your King James Bible, if it has marginal references, you will find that it says that the Hebrew of the passage is "*bare to Adriel*."

You will also find that the American Standard Revision Bible, which is always closer to the Hebrew, translates this passage, "whom she bare to Adriel." The very same Hebrew word, "yalad," is used here which is used in the first part of the same verse where it speaks of "the two sons of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, whom she *bare* unto Saul."

You see it is quite evident that the King James translators saw the difficulty of the contradiction between this verse and II Samuel 6:23 which says that Michal had no child, and so they took the rather dangerous liberty of translating the word "yalad," which every Hebrew scholar knows means "bare" in the sense of bringing forth in child-birth, to the word "brought up," in order to avoid the very obvious contradiction. To my mind, this was a cheat. Their conscience pricked them so that they put the correct translation in the margin, and the braver revisers put it back in the text.

If you will turn to I Samuel 18:19 you will see that the wife of Adriel was Merab, another of Saul's daughters. It is quite evident that the author of II Samuel 21:8 made a mistake and should have written "the five sons of Merab." This whole thing doubly proves my contention that there are mistakes in the Bible.

The fact that my opponent read a newspaper out-of-doors by after-glow, after nine o'clock at night in California is no proof that Joshua made the sun stand still I have read a newspaper out-of-doors at 10.30 p. in. in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, and if you go north to the land of the midnight sun you can read one at midnight, but that does not prove that in Palestine "the sun stayed in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day."

Sir William Ramsay's eulogy of Luke 2 proves nothing. Nearly every other scholar will admit that the confusing statements in that chapter are responsible for the fact that the birth of Jesus is variously set from B. C. 6 to A. D. 10. Even the conservative King James Version published by the Oxford University Press has Jesus Christ's birth dated in the year *5 Before Christ*.

I still maintain that it is not right to give to a stranger

or sell to an alien meat from animals which have died of themselves. My worthy opponent says that it is better to give it to the poor than to let it be wasted. But the poor have scruples too, occasionally, and the Bible does not say that the strangers and aliens were poor. The strangers within the gates were guests and the aliens had money enough to buy the food. This supposed counsel of God advocated both a breach of hospitality and the practice of doubtful business ethics.

I resent also my worthy opponent's aspersions upon the other nations contemporary with the ancient Hebrews. Egypt, Athens, Alexandria and Rome were not all morally perfect, but their morals are at least favorably comparable with the earlier Israelites, whose own records show that they did not hesitate to sacrifice human beings to Jehovah.

It is hard to get my opponent's point of view about the "borrowing" of the jewels by the departing Israelites. He endorses it on two grounds, first, that the jewels were Jehovah's anyway, and second, that the Egyptians had plenty and didn't really need them. But Jehovah was not the God of the Egyptians. Even if he had been, the ethics of the case are certainly questionable. And as for saying that the rich Egyptians didn't need the jewels, that is what every thief robbing a rich man's house says today. My worthy opponent puts Jehovah in the same moral category with Robin Hood.

I still fail to see the fair play of a Jehovah who would harden a man's heart and then punish him for having a hard heart. If Jehovah did it to "open the way for redemption," then he was a theological politician with ways that were dark and tricks that were vain.

If, furthermore, "the stoning of children and all of that has to be interpreted in the light of the age," as my

worthy opponent admits, then doesn't that place Jehovah in the same stage of moral development with his chosen people? A God who will command his worshippers to stone children to death for disobedience to parents is an immoral tribal deity whose words cannot by any casuistry be considered infallible for us today.

If the imprecatory Psalms are samples of "God's righteous wrath against his foes," if God is happy when the little children of his worst enemies are dashed against the stones, then I, for one, cannot worship such a God, or consider his word infallible.

If men today have lost the fear of God, as my opponent laments, let me tell him the reason. It is just because they cannot fear such an ignorant, malicious, grotesque God as the Jehovah of the Old Testament. Such a God inspires not fear, but hearty laughter today. The God of today is much different, more like the loving Father of whom Jesus the Carpenter spoke.

What we are contending tonight, my friends, is simply this: That the Bible is not the infallible word of God. We do find in it inspiration and help. We do find messages from God, but the contention which, I maintain, has been proved both in my first speech and in the rebuttal, is this: That the Bible is not the infallible word of God. (End of rebuttal.)



## V

### THE JUDGES' REPORT\*

Judge Almet F. Jenks said: "Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen, I have been called by my associates to make the announcement of the decision of the judges. We unite somewhat in the regret that the first canon of Aristotle in logic, as I remember it, was not observed more strictly in a plain and clear and, if possible, accepted definition of the term of the question. It would have been better if the minds of the two speakers, both eloquent and able, could have agreed upon the full force and purport of the words in which the question is stated. The apt phrase of the question is the word 'infallible.'

We have agreed that no man shall attempt any speech, because perhaps it would be an anti-climax, and I have but to announce the decision of the judges. We are not united. The vote is two for Doctor Potter and one for his opponent."

\*The Judges deliberated from 10:13 P. M. to 10:26 P. M., a period of thirteen minutes. The judges were former Justice Almet F. Jenks, Judge Ernest L. Conant and Mr. C. Neal Barney, former mayor of Lynn, Mass. Two of these men are Episcopalians and one a Universalist.

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