

**THE BIBLE<sup>1</sup>**

—C. H. MacIntosh

*Its Sufficiency*

Some, we are aware, would fain persuade us that things are so totally changed since the Bible was penned, that we need other guidance than that which its precious pages supply. They tell us that society is not what it was; that the human race has made progress; that there has been such a development of the powers of nature, the resources of science, and the appliances of philosophy, that to maintain the sufficiency and supremacy of the Bible, at such a point in the world's history as the nineteenth century of the Christian era, can only be regarded as childishness, ignorance, or imbecility.

Now, the men that tell us these things may be very clever and very learned; but we have no hesitation whatever in telling them that, in this matter, they do greatly "err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." (Matthew 22:29) We certainly do desire to render all due respect to learning, genius, and talent, whenever we find them in their right place, and at their proper work; but when we find them lifting their proud heads above the word of God; when we find them sitting in judgment, and casting a slur upon that peerless revelation, we feel that we owe them no respect whatever; yea, we treat them as so many agents of the devil, in his efforts to shake those eternal pillars on which the faith of God's people has ever rested. We cannot listen for a moment to men, however profound in their reading and thinking, who dare to treat God's book as though it were man's book, and speak of those pages that were penned by the All-wise, Almighty, and Eternal God, as though they were the production of a shallow and short-sighted mortal.

It is important that the reader should see clearly that men must either deny that the Bible is the word of God, or admit its sufficiency and supremacy in all ages, and in all countries — in all stages and conditions of the human race. Grant us but this that God has written a book for man's guidance, and we argue that that book must be amply sufficient for man, no matter when, where, or how we find him. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God... that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17). This, surely, is enough. To be perfect and thoroughly furnished must needs render a man independent of all the boasted powers of science and philosophy, falsely so called.

We believe that the Bible, as written in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, is the very word of the only wise and the only true God, with whom one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day (2 Peter 3:8), who saw the end from the beginning, and not only the end, but every stage of the way. We therefore hold it to be nothing short of positive blasphemy to assert that we have arrived at a stage of our career in which the Bible is not sufficient, or that we are compelled to travel outside its covers to find ample guidance and instruction for the present moment, and for every moment of our earthly pilgrimage. The Bible is a perfect chart, in which every emergency of the Christian mariner has been anticipated. Every rock, every sand-bank, every shoal, every strand, every island, has been carefully noted down. All the need of the Church of God, its members, and its ministers, has been most fully provided for. How could it be otherwise, if we admit the Bible to be the Word of God? Could the mind of God have devised, or His finger sketched an imperfect chart? Impossible. We must either deny the divinity or admit the sufficiency of *the Book*. We are absolutely shut up to this alternative. There is not so much as a single point between these two positions. If the book is incomplete, it cannot be of God; if it be of God it must be perfect. But if we are compelled to turn to other sources for guidance and instruction, as to the path of the Church of God, its members or its ministers, then is the Bible incomplete, and being such, it cannot be of God at all.

*Tradition?*

What then, dear reader, are we to do? Whither can we go? If the Bible be not a divine and therefore all-sufficient guidebook, what remains? Some will tell us to have recourse to *tradition*. Alas! what a miserable guide. No sooner have we launched out into the wide field of tradition than our ears are assailed by ten thousand strange and conflicting sounds. We meet, it may be, with a tradition which seems very authentic, very venerable, well worthy of respect and confidence, and we commit ourselves to its guidance; but, directly we have done so, another tradition crosses our path, putting forth

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<sup>1</sup> This article originally appeared in the "Miscellaneous Writings" by C. H. Mackintosh published by Loizeaux Brothers, New York. Slightly abbreviated, and edited to update some of the most antiquated words, these lines still have considerable relevance today.

quite as strong claims on our confidence, and leading us in quite an opposite direction. Thus it is with tradition. The mind is bewildered, and one is reminded of the assembly at Ephesus, concerning which we read that, "Some cried one thing, and some another; for the assembly was confused."(Acts 19:29) The fact is, we want a perfect standard, and this can only be found in a divine revelation, which, as we believe, is to be found within the covers of our most precious Bible. What a treasure! How we should bless God for it! How we should praise His name for His mercy in that He hath not left His Church dependent upon the ignis fatuus of human tradition, but upon the steady light of divine revelation! We do not want tradition to assist revelation, but we use revelation as the test of tradition. We should just as soon think of bringing out a rush light to assist the sun's meridian beams, as of calling in human traditions to aid divine revelation.

### *Expediency?*

But there is another very ensnaring and dangerous resource presented by the enemy of the Bible, and alas! accepted by too many of the people of God, and that is *expediency*, or the very attractive plea of doing all the good we can, without due attention to the way in which that good is done. The tree of expediency is a wide-spreading one, and yields most tempting clusters. But ah! beloved reader, remember its clusters will prove bitter as wormwood in the end. It is, no doubt, well to do all the good we can; but let us look well to the way in which we do it. Let us not deceive ourselves by the vain imagination that God will ever accept of services based upon positive disobedience to His word. "It is a gift," said the elders, as they boldly walked over the plain commandment of God, as if He would be pleased with a gift presented on such a principle. There is an intimate connection between the ancient "corban" and the modern "expediency," for, "there is nothing new under the sun."(Ecclesiastes 1:9) The solemn responsibility of obeying the word of God was got rid of under the plausible pretext of "corban," or "it is a gift" (Mark 7: 7-13).

Thus it was of old. The "corban" of the ancients justified, or sought to justify, many a bold transgression of the law of God; and the "expediency" of our times allures many to out step the boundary line laid down by divine revelation.

Now, we quite admit that expediency holds out most attractive inducements. It does seem so very delightful to be doing a great deal of good, to be gaining the ends of a large-hearted benevolence, to be reaching tangible results. It would not be an easy matter duly to estimate the ensnaring influences of such objects, or the immense difficulty of throwing them overboard. Have we never been tempted as we stood upon the narrow path of obedience, and looked forth upon the golden fields of expediency lying on either side, to exclaim, "Alas! I am sacrificing my usefulness for an idea"? Doubtless; but then what if it should turn out that we have the very same foundation for that "idea" as for the fundamental doctrines of salvation? The question is, what is the idea? Is it founded upon "Thus saith the Lord"? If so, let us tenaciously hold by it, though ten thousand advocates of expediency were hurling at us the grievous charge of narrow-mindedness.

There is immense power in Samuel's brief but pointed reply to Saul, "Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord! Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15: 22). Saul's word was "*Sacrifice*." Samuel's word was "*Obedience*." No doubt the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen were most exciting. They would be looked upon as substantial proofs that something was being done; while on the other hand, the path of obedience seemed narrow, silent, lonely, and fruitless. But oh! Those pungent words of Samuel! "*To obey is better than sacrifice*." What a triumphant answer to the most eloquent advocates of expediency! They are most conclusive — most commanding words. They teach us that it is better, if it must be so, to stand, like a marble statue, on the pathway of obedience, than to reach the most desirable ends by transgressing a plain precept of the word of God.

But let none suppose that one must be like a statue on the path of obedience. Far from it. There are rare and precious services to be rendered by the obedient one — services which can only be rendered by such, and which owe all their preciousness to their being the fruit of simple obedience. True, they may not find a place in the public record of man's bustling activity; but they are recorded on high, and they will be published at the right time. As a dear friend has often said to us, "Heaven will be the safest and happiest place to hear all about our work down here." May we remember this, and pursue our way, in all simplicity, looking to Christ for guidance, power, and blessing. May His smile be enough for us. May we not be found looking askance to catch the approving look of a poor mortal whose breath is in his nostrils, nor sigh to find our names amid the glittering record of the great men of the age. The servant of Christ should look far beyond all such things. The grand business of the servant is to obey. His object should not be to do a great deal, but simply to do what he is told. This makes all plain; and, moreover, it will make the Bible precious as the depository of the Master's will, to which he must continually go to know what he is to do, and how he is to do it. Neither tradition nor expediency will do for the servant of Christ. The all-important inquiry is, "What saith the Scriptures."

This settles everything. From the decision of the word of God there must be no appeal. When God speaks man must bow. It is not by any means a question of obstinate adherence to a man's own notions. Quite the opposite. It is a reverent

adherence to the word of God. Let the reader distinctly mark this. It often happens that, when one is determined, through grace, to abide by Scripture, he will be pronounced dogmatic, intolerant and imperious; and, no doubt, one has to watch over his temper, spirit, and style, even when seeking to abide by the word of God. But, be it well remembered, that obedience to Christ's commandments is the very opposite of imperiousness, dogmatism, and intolerance. It is not a little strange that when a man tamely consents to place his conscience in the keeping of his fellow, and to bow down his understanding to the opinions of men, he is considered meek, modest, and liberal; but let him reverently bow to the authority of the holy Scripture, and he will be looked upon as self-confident, dogmatic, and narrow-minded. Be it so. The time is rapidly approaching when obedience shall be called by its rightful name and meet its recognition and reward. For that moment the faithful must be content to wait, and while waiting for it, be satisfied to let men call them whatever they please. "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity." (Psalm 94:11)

### *Rationalism?*

But we must draw to a close, and would merely add, in conclusion, that there is a third hostile influence against which the lover of the Bible will have to watch, and that is *rationalism* — or the supremacy of man's reason. The faithful disciple of the word of God will have to withstand this audacious intruder, with the most unflinching decision. It presumes to sit in judgment upon the word of God — to decide upon what is and what is not worthy of God — to prescribe boundaries to inspiration. Instead of humbly bowing to the authority of Scripture, which continually soars into a region where poor blind reason can never follow, it proudly seeks to drag Scripture down to its own level. If the Bible puts forth aught which, in the smallest degree, clashes with the conclusions of rationalism, then there must be some flaw. God is shut out of His own book if He says anything which poor, blind, perverted reason cannot reconcile with her own conclusions — which conclusions, be it observed, are not infrequently the grossest absurdities.

Nor is this all. Rationalism deprives us of the only perfect standard of truth, and conducts us into a region of the dreariest uncertainty. It seeks to undermine the authority of a book in which we can believe everything, and carries us into a field of speculation in which we can be sure of nothing. Under the dominion of rationalism the soul is like a vessel broken from its safe moorings in the haven of divine revelation, to be tossed like a cork upon the wild watery waste of universal scepticism.

### *Its Supremacy*

Now we do not expect to convince a thorough rationalist, even if such a one should condescend to scan our unpretending pages, which is most unlikely. Neither could we expect to gain over to our way of thinking the decided advocate of expediency, or the ardent admirer of tradition. We have neither the competency, the leisure, nor the space, to enter upon such a line of argument as would be required were we seeking to gain such ends as these. But we are most anxious that the Christian reader should rise up from the perusal of this little book with a deepened sense of the preciousness of his Bible. We earnestly desire that the words, "*The Bible: its sufficiency and supremacy,*" should be engraved, in deep and broad characters, upon the tablet of the reader's heart.

We press upon our readers earnestly to set a higher value than ever upon the Holy Scriptures, and to warn them, in most urgent terms, against every influence, whether of tradition, expediency, or rationalism, which might tend to shake their confidence in those heavenly oracles. There is a spirit abroad, and there are principles at work, which make it imperative upon us to keep close to Scripture — to treasure it in our hearts and to submit to its holy authority.

May God the Spirit, the Author of the Bible, produce, in the writer and reader of these lines, a more ardent love for that Bible! May He enlarge our experimental acquaintance with its contents, and lead us into more complete subjection to its teachings in all things, that God may be more glorified in us through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **THE FUTURE (4)**

—H. L. Heijkoop

*The Future of Christendom*

It is written in Isaiah 11:9 that there will be a time that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah, as the waters cover the sea." This is a great comfort for those that see unbelief and apostasy everywhere on the earth. The question arises, how will that time come about?

Many think that this passage is proof that the gospel will conquer the powers of darkness and sin. They are of the opinion that the gospel of grace will be preached everywhere before the Lord comes and that by this means the world will turn to God. In this manner a world would come into existence which would submit itself to God.

When we read the Word of God carefully, however, we see something entirely different. It is not through preaching that the world will learn righteousness. "When Thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. If favour be shown to the wicked, he doth not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness he dealeth unjustly, and beholdeth not the majesty of Jehovah" (Isaiah 26:9, 10). Isaiah 11:4b, 5 also says that the Lord "Shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of His reins, and faithfulness the girdle of His loins." That is the way in which this blessed condition will come about.

The New Testament also teaches us expressly that the gospel will not change the world. On the contrary, we see that wickedness develops more and more, and finally it will reach its peak in the open apostasy from God and open rebellion against Him. And the terrible thing is that this will not only occur in that part of the world that does not know God. Also in Christendom we find the ruin that ends with the great apostasy from God.

### *The Kingdom of Heaven*

In Matthew 13 we find the prophetic history of this kingdom in its hidden form; not as the prophets of the Old Testament saw it and prophesied about it, but as it has become by the rejection of the King. It shows the kingdom as it has existed since the day of Pentecost until the day that the Lord will come on the earth to set up the kingdom in power and glory. It is characterized by the fact that the King Himself is absent. He is rejected and killed by His people, and is now seated in the throne of His Father in heaven, not on His own throne on earth.

The first four parables give us the outward form of the kingdom. In the first one the Lord shows us that not all keep the gospel in an honest and good heart (Luke 8), but that many merely put on an outward show. In the second we find that in the beginning the kingdom was indeed good but very early the enemy had sown weeds among the wheat. The Lord Himself calls the wheat the sons of the kingdom and the weeds the sons of the wicked one. The unbelievers would be in the midst of the believers. Outwardly they would resemble the believers, for this weed (known as "tares" or "darnel") is a type that looks very similar to wheat. This condition will remain until the harvest time; till both wheat and weed will be ripe. Only then will the weeds be removed by judgment. The time of the harvest is the time of the completion of this age (v. 39), the end of the present dispensation.

The third parable conveys to us that the kingdom will become a large earthly power (cf. Daniel 4), although that is actually not in accord with its true character (mustard seed). While the king was rejected it would rule on the earth. Birds would nestle in its branches (Revelation 18:2); unclean doctrines would establish a foothold in it.

In the fourth parable we see the inward corruption. The clean meal is entirely ruined by the leaven secretly brought into it. False doctrine and moral decline (Matthew 16: 12; 1 Corinthians 5) would be introduced and would entirely characterize it.

### *The Ruin in the Church*

In the apostolic letters we find the same thing announced as well. No matter how glorious the beginning was, the evil soon became evident. And there is no room for doubt that the evil will continue to develop further. "The Spirit speaks expressly, that in latter times some shall apostatise from the faith, giving their mind to deceiving spirits and teachings of demons speaking lies in hypocrisy, cauterised as to their own conscience" (1 Timothy 4:1, 2). "But this know, that in the last days difficult times shall be there; for man shall be lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, evil speakers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, profane, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, of unsubdued passions, savage, having no love for what is good, traitors, headlong, of vain pretensions, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God; having a form of piety but denying the power of it" (2 Timothy 3: 15). These are the same things as mentioned in Romans 1 to prove how

deep the Gentiles had sunk. But here it is said of Christendom, about those who call themselves Christians, "having a form of piety but denying the power of it."

"For the time shall be when they will not bear sound teaching... and they will turn away their ear from the truth, and will have turned aside to fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4). In the same chapter the Apostle mourned that all had forsaken him and in chapter 1:15 that all in Asia had turned away from him. Doesn't that make us think of Acts 20:29, 30? God allowed the weeds to appear even then, so that we might have divine instruction about this, and we would know what to do in a time of decline. "For the time of having the judgment begin from the house of God is come" (1 Peter 4:17). "As there shall be also among you false teachers, who shall bring by the by destructive heresies." (2 Peter 2:1).

John wrote that the last hour is characterized by the presence of the antichrist, rather than faith or the preaching of the gospel over the entire world (John 2:18).

And Jude described the apostasy in its threefold character In Cain the natural falling away, in Balaam the collective falling away (bringing destructive doctrines for reward), in Core the uprising against the priestly and royal rights of the Lord, in the types of Aaron and Moses. The judgment of this apostasy will take place when the Lord comes from heaven to judge.

Sad to say, it is not the gospel that will unite the world but evil, "And I saw out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits, as frogs; for they are the spirits of demons, doing signs; which go out to the kings of the whole habitable world to gather them together to the war of that great day of God the Almighty" (Revelation 16:13, 14).

### *The History of the Church*

In Revelation 2 and 3 we find the prophetic description of the history of the church, not as seen and judged by man, but as seen by Him Who has eyes as a flame of fire. In a separate article we will demonstrate this.

We find here the moral decline and the reasons for the ruin clearly indicated. In Ephesus (the apostolic period) all appears still to be good. But first love is no longer there.

In Smyrna (second and third centuries) we don't find reprimands. The fire of persecution joins the hearts of the Lord's people to Himself.

After Constantine accepted the Christian religion and declared it to be the state religion (Pergamos) we find a great shift in the position of the church. No longer is it a suffering pilgrim in a world that rejected and crucified its Lord. It dwells by the throne of Satan. It has found rest where Satan rules.

In Thyatira (popery) we find an even further shift. Thyatira has a ruling position on the earth. It claims for itself sovereignty over the world. Whoredom (connection with the world) and idolatry have become characteristics of the public church. The Lord must remove the lampstand, but she (the church) will remain until after the coming of the Lord, to be judged at that time.

In Sardis we find a new beginning without the rude things of Rome, but there is no life, just the name that it lives. The Lord must treat it as the world, for it has become identical to the world (1 Thessalonians 5: 1-5).

Philadelphia presents to us the great work of the Holy Spirit in the past century. Thousands left the dead Protestant churches desiring to return to the Word and the Name of the Lord Jesus — a glorious revival!

Unfortunately it did not stay that way. In Laodicea we find what grew out of Philadelphia, although Philadelphia will remain as a small remnant until the coming of the Lord. In Laodicea the Lord stands outside the door. His authority is no longer recognized. They themselves however are convinced that everything is going on very well. They are rich and enriched and do not lack anything, so they say.

In this manner we have followed the history of the church as seen by the Lord Jesus. And in these last days we see that the last four churches are still in existence.

Thyatira, the Roman Catholic church;  
Sardis, the Protestant state churches;  
Philadelphia, the weak remnant;

Laodicea, lukewarm Christianity in any of the groups outside the first two.

We live in the last days. The Lord Jesus will soon come to take His bride from this earth, as we have seen in the previous article.

Then all true believers out of these four churches shall be caught up together to heaven and only a professing Christianity, all those that have no life, will remain.

### *After the Rapture of the Assembly*

In Revelation 17 we find professing Christianity back as the great harlot. She wears the characteristics of Jezebel (3:18-29) and in chapter 17:9 we have a clear inference to Rome.

The similarity between the first verses of chapter 17 and chapter 21:9 etc. is remarkable. The introduction is just about literally the same. In chapters 17 and 18, however, we find a description of the false bride, the great harlot, described as a city. After her judgment we get the description of the bride, the wife of the Lamb, also seen as a city.

That the great harlot represents professing Christianity is very clear. She wears, however, particularly the markings of Thyatira.

This harlot has a prominent place on earth. She is dressed in purple and scarlet and adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls — imperial dignity, and the most costly things known on the earth. Apparently these are the same jewels the bride possesses (Revelation 21:18-21). Her cup, however, is full of abominations and fornication. Ezekiel 16:25-29 says that fornication is a type of intermingling and fellowship with the world, and Ezekiel 16:36 shows that abominations are typical of idolatry.

She sits on the scarlet beast, a type of the restored West-Roman Empire (vv. 7, 8, 11-13). The political influence of Rome will increase and will eventually dominate all of Western-Europe. However it is a Christianity without Christ, a religion without God.

But then, at the summit of its power, it will be destroyed. God will work a unity of thought in the hearts of the political rulers of Western-Europe, a unity of hatred resulting from her tyranny. They "shall hate the harlot, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and shall burn her with fire; for God has given to their hearts to do His mind" (v. 17). Chapter 18 describes the judgment in detail, as well as the results for the world.

Before the marriage of the Lamb takes place in heaven, the harlot must first be judged.

Reader, to whom do you belong? Are you a part of the bride? Do you possess life from God, as a result of having truthfully confessed your sins before God and do you believe in the Person and the work of the Lord Jesus?

Or is Christianity with you only merely a form without real content, a form you retained from your upbringing and in which you feel, through habit, quite comfortable? In the latter case it is quite possible that you, too, will receive the judgment of Revelation 18. Yes, if your religion is a mere matter of form, unless you repent, you *will* receive the judgment of Revelation 20:11-15.

May God give that you repent *now*. For *now* it is still the day of salvation. *Now* is the time of grace!

*To be cont'd*

## **REPENTANCE**

—J. van Dijk

In speaking of things that accompany salvation, we ought to ensure that the manner in which we use words agrees with Scripture. This, of course, is not a unique requirement in Bible study as in every discipline we must pay attention to the value of the words commonly used in the textbooks of the particular field of study if we want to get greater insight in the subject matter. So, rather than expecting God's Word to follow our word values, we ought to ensure that we understand the value God attaches to each word. Repentance in Scripture is used in connection with conversion and salvation. In

everyday speech these words are often more or less equated by many. So we would like to give some attention to the manner in which some of these words are used in Scripture.

John the Baptist, the Lord Jesus, Peter, and Paul all use the word repent when addressing unbelieving companies whether they were Jews or Gentiles. The Lord Jesus distinguishes the word from believing (Mark 1:15), Peter differentiates it from conversion (Acts 3:19), and Luke 24:47 shows that it ought to be a basic part of our preaching today.

Many think that sorrow about the past is the same as repentance, but the Holy Spirit, as shown in Acts 2:38 and 2 Corinthians 7:10, does not share this view. Peter says that if you are pricked in your heart, you should repent. Paul says that grief according to God leads to repentance. Therefore repentance is more than sorrow, which, at best, is its beginning. Repentance is, as the Greek word indicates, to have a different mind about a thing. It involves self-judgment.

Repentance of a soul is brought about by the awareness that a righteous God will judge (Mark 1:15; Acts 2:38; 17:30-31). These verses are either related to the coming kingdom in which judgment will take place, or to the position of Lord and Judge, given to the Lord Jesus, as Man, by God. The first relationship (to the kingdom) we find, before the rejection of the Lord Jesus, in the messages of the Lord Jesus and John the Baptist, the latter relationship is found in the messages of Peter and Paul after the Lord Jesus is raised from the dead.

What value has repentance before God? The Lord Jesus says in Luke 15:17, "There shall be joy in heaven for one repenting sinner." One who has repented ought to bring forth fruit, whereas the natural man is dead in offenses and sins (Ephesians 2:1). John the Baptist insists on fruit (Matthew 3:8; Luke 3:8), and Paul expected it (Acts 26:20). We can understand why fruit can rightfully be expected when we look at repentance from God's side. To a sinner, as man under responsibility, the message is, "Repent." But a believer looking back sees that God, by His Holy Spirit, was at work. Repentance is a gift from God (Acts 11:18), given by Christ (Acts 5:31).

Finally, we may observe that repentance is towards God (Acts 20:21) which implies its close relationship to conversion, and 2 Corinthians 7:10 shows its definite end to be salvation, which, at the same time, assures as not only of a close link between these two ideas but also of a definite distinction.

Repentance, therefore, is an inward re-evaluation (judgment), in terms of God's requirements, of one's past condition (sin) and actions (sins), brought about by a realization of who God is at present in His righteousness, and who He will be soon as Judge, all brought about by the demonstration of the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-11). Although repentance is inward only, its fruits are outward, the first fruit, I believe, being conversion. This we may consider perhaps later, if the Lord allows.