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ARTICLE I.

PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN ECONOMY.

The history of the Christian world shows that there has been a wide-spread sensibility, in the conscience of Christians, to the sin of indulgence in superfluities. This sensibility has sometimes shown itself in a morbid, and sometimes in a blind, undistinguishing way. Among the mendicant and some of the monastic orders of the Romish communion, poverty and simplicity of life formed a part of the vows and rules, however little part they may have had in their practice. Among the Churches of the Reformation, we find the Mennonites forbidding, not only all luxuries of dress, equipage and furniture, but even the fine arts and liberal education. The denomination of Quakers, as is well known, practised a similar sobriety. A part of the original discipline of the Methodists was to enforce a strict renunciation of all the pomps and vanities of the world. These facts indicate that the conscience of the Christian world has had an extensive feeling of the obligation to moderation and self-denial in the use of wealth, though they may prove that this feeling has not been very well defined nor intelligent.

Several things in the present state of the Church induce the belief that there is a strong demand for the discussion and enforcement of the true principles of Christian economy at this day. These circumstances are the great increase of material wealth, and consequently of luxuries, in

Thomson, in his *Winter*, seems to have had the scriptural description in mind :

“ With the fierce rage of winter deep suffused,
An icy gale, oft shifting o'er the pool,
Breathes a blue film, and in its mid career,
Arrests the bickering stream. The loosened ice
Let down the flood, and half dissolved by day,
Rustles no more; but to the sedgy bank
Fast grows, or gathers round the pointed stone
A crystal pavement, by the breath of heaven
Cemented strong : till seized from shore to shore
The whole imprisoned river grows below.”

And again :—

“ Ocean itself no longer can resist
The binding fury : but in all its rage
Of tempest *taken* by the boundless frost,
Is many a fathom to the bottom chained,
And bid to roar no more ; a bleak expanse
Shagged o'er with wavy rocks.”*

*“ The process of congelation begins at the surface of the sea with the formation of slender, prismatic crystals resembling wet snow, termed by the sailors, sludge. The surface is at first rough, but by the union of the numerous crystals, becomes smooth, and forms a continued sheet.”—*Barrington's Physical Geography*, p. 22.

ARTICLE VII.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

Have you ever sat down, with a Bible in your hand, and reflected upon its wonderful history and character? Although the copy you hold may have a new cover and fresh type, and may be worded in the most recent English, yet is that a very ancient book. Moses, who is the alleged author of its first five divisions, lived some six or seven hundred years before Homer. He is to be regarded, however, not simply as an original historian, but also as the compiler of earlier records. The book of Genesis is the result of this compilation. These records and narratives (arranged by one inspired, if ever man were inspired,) reach back some twenty-five hundred years earlier, furnishing us, not only with a brief account of the worthies of those remote periods, but a cosmogony of the world and the origin of our race. What gray antiquity overhangs

that book—what monuments mark and consecrate its hoary age.

It is also remarkable in what esteem this book has been held by a large portion of mankind. The Israelites, among whom it originated, kept a copy securely deposited in their sanctuary; it was the statute book of their kings; the authority appealed to by their teachers; and the daily meditation and study of their devout saints. In later times, their learned men wrote prolix commentaries on it; counted its very letters, and paid both a literary and pious homage to its text. Nor have Christians esteemed it less. Its literary history has been travelled over again and again; all its numerous translations collected and compared; commentaries upon it, that would fill the largest library cases, have been written in various languages; systems of ethics and theology have been deduced from it; it has been expounded, Sabbath after Sabbath, from thousands of pulpits; it has been opened and read, morning and evening around the family hearth; the mother has commended it to her son when leaving his home for some distant region; and multitudes, when dying, have welcomed it to their bedsides and their bosoms with more than an earthly interest.

The general influence, too, of this book on society is remarkable. It has banished heathenism, upset barbarous customs, removed feudal abuses, moderated the severity of laws, softened the temper of kings and magistrates, fraternized hostile nations, elevated depressed classes and races, extended the bonds of brotherhood, and is gradually and constantly melting down the selfishness of the species into love and mutual esteem.

But what is most remarkable about this book, after all, is, *that it transforms individual character*. Thousands on thousands there are and have been, in almost every age, who ascribe to the *moral power* of this book, a transformation of views, feelings and purposes, which is both radical and permanent. Some of these have been the most abandoned, some the most reputable of men. Some of them have been distinguished for intellectual greatness; many of them have been children and slaves. Nor have we to rely upon the testimony merely of these persons as to the reality of the change: it has been apparent to the eyes of whole communities and the world. The sensual

have been rendered chaste, the penurious liberal, the drunken sober, the revengeful forgiving, the contemners of the gospel its friends and advocates, and the despisers of God and religion, devout and sincere worshippers. The change has been both internal and external, and has not only softened, to its subject the ruggedness of life, but led him to a happy and triumphant death. Now, a book that can produce such effects upon the hearts, lives and hopes of men, must possess extraordinary character, and should be considered with far more than common interest.

There are two questions that suggest themselves in the contemplation of this volume—"What object does it propose?" and, "Is it true?" Every book that is published is supposed to have some end in view. What is the design of the Holy Scriptures? It no doubt serves a great variety of ends. It is useful to the antiquarian, to the lover of polite literature, and the philanthropist. It is a great moral code, and serves to direct human conduct. It confirms the deductions of reason in reference to the existence of a Creator and the soul's immortality. It enforces public and social morality by the highest sanctions, and furnishes the brightest examples known of exalted virtue. But these, high as they are, inestimable to this life as they are, these are not *its great end*. The Bible, from its beginning to its close, is *a revelation and a history of man's redemption by Jesus Christ*.

We have already noticed, that man, becoming a sinner, the expedient adopted by his Creator, was that announced above. Possibly even in an unfallen state, our race may have required some *directory* for its conduct; but it certainly would never have needed such a book as we now have. One of its earliest statements announces a Deliverer to be born. Soon a particular nation—the Israelites—is selected to be the repository of all that complex apparatus of means which was to precede the birth of this extraordinary person. Among this people, the priesthood, royalty, and even the doctorate of the prophets, were to be but so many roads of ascent to that lofty summit on which the Messiah was to be crowned "Prince of Peace" and Saviour of the world. The birth of the great Peacemaker at length arrives. As his first work was one of humiliation, every circumstance of his life is selected with a wise refer

ence to that end. His natal place is a stable, his royal couch a manger, his metropolis Nazareth, his courtiers fishermen. Even under these circumstances, however, he not only performs the most extraordinary miracles, but teaches a set of doctrines, and announces a system of ethics, that even yet, after the lapse of eighteen centuries, manifest the fragrance and the dews of their heavenly origin. Pythagoras and Plato, Socrates and Solon, Confucius and Zeno, are all cast into the shade, in the presence of the Great Teacher of Galilee. But another work was before him. Sin cannot be expiated by *doctrine*, nor can heaven be purchased by a *holy life*. He must *die*. Yes, before the key of heaven and hell, of time and eternity, can be placed in his hand, he must *die*. As an innocent person, he could not, and as a divine one he could not suffer death. These impediments, however, are removed; the one by the assumption of humanity, the other by his voluntary espousal of human guilt. Here, then, is the sacrifice, the great sacrifice, for sin. Behold it! Was there ever such a death; can there ever be another like it? It is the great sin-offering and peace-offering of the world. But his services are soon required elsewhere. He has died as a sacrifice; he must now reign as a prince. Behold the scene! While blessing his disciples on Olivet, the heavens open, angels appear, and he ascends to his Father's right hand. The promised spirit is sent down upon his apostles; a church is organized; repentance and faith are preached to men; nations are converted; the world is placed under a general system of teaching and discipline, and even now we see its rapidly proceeding *moral* revolution, the dawn of a triumph such as history no where records, man never enjoyed.

Now is all this true? Is the Bible a revelation from God, with so extraordinary a theme? Surely it must accord with our best wishes that it were true. A book of such a character, and contemplating such an end, ought to be welcomed and valued by all. Whence, then, the propensity to deny its truth, to pervert its doctrines, to trample upon its authority? This lies wholly in *ourselves*, and in the *false light* in which we contemplate the subject. Ignorance, pride, conceit, often transfer in their possessor's eye, their own evil qualities to this holy and blessed book.

The tyranny, too, of false teachers, the presumption of pretended friends, and the errors even of real disciples, often raise a dense fog over the heaven-lit pages of this precious volume, that men contemplate it as a traveller does the sun, struggling amid clouds and gloomy hills. But, dissipate all these; take the book as it is, read it, understand it, and in what a radiance of love and light are you encompassed in a moment! Your heart beats with a new throb, your eye beams with a new ray, your soul melts with a new fervour, and eternity opens with a new glory! Would you banish such a book from the world? Would you sever, at one rude blow, all these bonds of man to man; of man to God? Would you strike from the hand of affliction this soothing comforter; from the vale of poverty the richest solace; from the shadows of death this only lamp? Surely, no one, with the sentiments of a man, with the sympathies of a man, could desire a work like this to be done, unless there were palpable and certain evidence that the volume is a forgery and its advocates lunatics. Let us, then, briefly consider the counter evidence which proves that the Bible is not a fiction but a well-accredited revelation from God to man.

That the great and uncreated mind can communicate with the mind of his creature, is what all must admit. Now, as God is a pure spirit, and man a spirit in clay, there are two obvious methods of conducting such communication; by calling the human spirit, as it were, out of the body, or by appearing to it in some visible form. Either, then, by trance, or by apparition, (not to deny other methods,) God may communicate with man. Now, supposing such a communication to have been made to some one individual, the question arises, "How is he to convince others of the fact that he has received such revelation?" His character for veracity may go far to produce conviction, and the nature of the revelation may also afford a presumption in its favour. But it is evident that these alone could never establish a perfect and general faith in the fact. One of two sorts of evidence is here indispensable; either the predictions of such prophet must be fulfilled, or he must work a miracle in confirmation of his testimony. The latter is the readier, the former the slower mode of demonstration.

But suppose such prophet or law-giver to have demonstrated his mission in this way to the men of his own generation, the question still recurs, "How can such demonstration reach and convince posterity?" In two ways. The testimony of eye witnesses to the miracles wrought and the prophecies fulfilled, must be recorded, and thus transmitted as matters of authenticated history; and, secondly, the accomplishment of those predictions which refer to later periods, must occur in the times of those who are thus called upon to believe. In the former instance, our faith in miracles and fulfilled prophecy rests upon precisely the same ground on which we credit any, or all of the facts of history. The wars of Alexander, the death of Cæsar, the conspiracy of Cataline, and the pandects of Justinian, have not a whit better evidence to support them than the miracles of Moses and the prophecies of Isaiah. The case of *fulfilling* prophecy is different—here we have made eye-witnesses ourselves of the facts predicted.

Just at this point we wish to make two remarks on Mr. Hume's celebrated argument against the evidence of miracles. We shall not offer a direct answer to that argument, as it has been so ably confuted by others. We wish to exhibit its futility in another way. We have just seen that miracles are necessary to authenticate a revelation; but they go further—it is by them that the *being of a God is satisfactorily established*. The physical argument for a first cause is a *deduction* merely from reason—it is not attended, therefore, with that *positive certainty* which is required on so important a subject. That certainty can be given only by *miracle*. Let a being actually appear among men who suspends the laws of matter at will, who walks on water, stills the tempest with a word, and raises the dead, and it is evident that he is either an accredited servant of the God of nature, or that God himself manifested in a visible shape. Thus, in attempting to pull down the fabric of Christianity, Mr. Hume destroyed that of *practical* deism, and, Sampson-like, involved himself in the ruin he designed for others. Again: suppose the great syllogism to have overthrown miracles: it has destroyed but one species of the evidence on which Revelation rests. Prophecy still remains; and that, as potently as the suspension of the laws of nature, demonstrates the truth of a

divine commission. Suppose, for instance, that Jesus Christ never performed a miracle, or that his miracles are proved to be fallacious, what will you do with his predictions concerning Jerusalem and the Jews? These last have been fulfilled to the iota, and the evidence of the fact is before the eyes of the whole world.

That the truth of Revelation is based primarily upon miracles and prophecy, the scriptures themselves teach. When the angel at Horeb conversed with Moses, the appeal, both for his own conviction and for that of the Israelites to whom he was sent, was to *miracle*. A rod was converted into a serpent, and the serpent back again to a rod—his hand was made leprous by placing it in his bosom, and it was restored by taking it out. These signs of a divine commission he was directed to repeat to the Israelites, and if they were not satisfied, he was to convert water into blood before them. Jesus Christ, too, appeals to his *works* as the seals of his mission. "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but, if I do, though ye believe not me, believe for the works's sake." He also makes an appeal to prophecy with equal confidence. "Search the scriptures, for they are they which testify of me." Revelation then makes its first appeal to *miracle* and *prophecy*.

Have such miracles been wrought—have such prophecies been fulfilled? Every civilized nation, and almost every religious sect, has its history. This history is composed of certain facts that occurred at its origin, and others which followed its development. These facts being authenticated and recorded, constitute the web of historical narrative. Belief in them follows as a matter of course. There are still, however, two grounds of doubt left. The earlier parts of a nation's history may be fabulous or traditional, or some things may be admitted to the records upon insufficient evidence. Now, the Old Testament scriptures are not only a professed revelation from God, but they are essentially the records of Jewish history. So, also, the New Testament is not simply a text-book of Christianity, but its earliest *history*. Note this, however, that the two grounds of doubt above alluded to, exist in neither of these histories. Moses sustained essentially the same relation to the Israelites in this respect that Cyrus did to the

Persians, or Augustus to the Romans. The life and teachings of Jesus Christ, also, are as much in a blaze of light as the wars of Cromwell or the revolution under Washington. In neither case is there fable or tradition, but well-tested and lucid *facts*. The mission of Moses lasted for at least forty years; and, if we associate Christ and his apostles, theirs also continued for as long a time. Now, is it possible to conceive that for so long a period, thousands on thousands of men could have been deceived as to the reality of such miracles? Not a whit more than the Romans as to the facts of the reign of Augustus, or the French as to the battles of Napoleon. The occurrences in each case were submitted to the senses of whole communities and nations, and those communities and nations could just as soon have doubted the revolutions of the seasons, or the existence of the stars, as the incidents presented so obviously to their view.

With equal clearness were the early prophecies of ancient times fulfilled. Jeremiah, for instance, predicted, years before, the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Isaiah also foretold the fall of Babylon by Cyrus. Here are two sets of prophecies which must stand or fall by the events. But they were both fulfilled, and in the manner predicted. That Jerusalem fell under the power of Nebucadnezzar, and that Babylon was captured by Cyrus during the reign of Belshazzar, are recorded facts in Jewish, Assyrian and Persian history. The predictions of Daniel, also, concerning the rise of the Grecian and Roman governments, were accomplished with an accuracy that almost astounds belief. And what is noticeable here is, that Providence has employed to a large extent heathen and uninterested historians to record the fulfilment of prophecies delivered originally by his prophets and servants. Thus, Herodotus, and Diodorus, Livy and Tacitus, Josephus and Gibbon, with no design of the sort whatever, are the elegant and classic narrators of scenes and events that the prophets of God had long before predicted.

But there are prophecies in the scriptures that are *now* under fulfilment—a world-wide fulfilment. Take two of these. The Bible, in a great variety of texts, foretells that the advent of the Messiah would disperse the Jews and bring in the Gentiles. Has it not been done? While the

descendants of Japheth are congregated around the banner of Jesus—while they, who were once aliens, have become the rich heritage of the blessings of salvation—the sons of Abraham, once the favourites of God, are dispersed among all the nations of the earth! Here, then, is a fulfilled prophecy, that stretches as a sort of moral horizon over the whole earth. Every Messiah-less Jew and every Christian Gentile on earth, is a witness to the fulfilment of this prophecy. Again: Isaiah and Daniel, and several other seers, predict, that in the latter days society should be greatly elevated and improved—that knowledge, and especially the knowledge of the Lord, should be widely diffused, and that men should forsake war and delight in peace. Are we not now in the ascending wave of this glorious revolution? What efforts are now making to employ every creature in man's profit—to develop science, to perfect art, to remove obstacles, to improve commerce, to facilitate traffic. Earth, air, water, steam, magnetism, electricity—in short, all the powers of nature known, are put under contribution to the improvement of man's terrestrial dwelling place. What endeavours, too, to disseminate intelligence! See the rapidity with which books, pamphlets and papers are printed—how, like the locusts of Egypt, (though on a very different errand,) they almost darken the air in their onward flight. See what scores of living teachers are going forth to instruct the rude and unenlightened—how Bibles, and tracts, and religious books, are disseminated over the earth. Surely here is the state of things which Daniel foresaw, and which Isaiah and John have so eloquently described.

We have already intimated that the character of a prophet and of the doctrine taught by him, could not of themselves establish a divine revelation. The justice of this position will appear, when we consider how exceedingly difficult it is to scrutinize human character, or to decide what doctrines are, and what are not consistent with divine benevolence and wisdom. The Calvinist, the Arminian, the Unitarian, the Neologist, and the Quaker, would certainly not be very apt to agree upon the harmony of any particular set of revelations with the government and character of God. Revelation, therefore, does not make its appeal primarily to the erring judgments of men, but to

something far more sure—to their *senses*. It seeks an establishment among our convictions in the same way that the facts in nature are believed. After this primary conviction is produced, however, the lives of “holy men of God,” and the excellent doctrines they taught, come in as powerful, possibly as *necessary*, auxiliaries to faith. One of the strongest convictions of our natures is, that God, should he employ any, would employ *good men*, through whom to communicate his will. Nor do we believe with less certainty, that all truths and doctrines revealed by him, would be, like himself, excellent and holy. In essential value, these last grounds of faith are superior possibly to miracles and prophecy. They address themselves to the moral instincts and desires of our natures: indeed, they are the very *food* of those natures. Still, in the order of *begetting belief* in revelation, they occupy, not the first, but the second position. They are a sort of demonstration upon demonstration—the moral echo of that *positive* voice which speaks from heaven.

In closing these remarks on the evidences of the truth of Scripture, there is one species of testimony we wish to present, too often overlooked—the demonstration given to the truth of God’s word, *through its power of converting men*. By conversion here is not meant a transfer of belief from infidelity to Christianity, or from heathenism to the Gospel. The term is used to denote a change in the moral condition of our natures. We have already seen that a certain *vice of nature* has been transmitted from Adam to all who are born of his blood. Now the *removal* of this internal vice is what we here designate conversion.—And, it is a remarkable fact, that so far as we know, such conversions take place only in connexion with the moral truths of this holy book. We do not allege or believe that these truths, by any innate power of their own, produce the effects here referred to. They are simply, according to their own testimony, the instruments or means of man’s spiritual renovation. By them the Spirit of God, exercising a sort of twofold energy, eradicates the vice and implants the original virtue of our natures. Now, it can be truly maintained, that according to all our knowledge of the laws of mind, a change like this is philosophically and truly a *miracle*. The laws of mind are every whit as

fixed and uniform as the laws of matter—they are of a different *nature*, but act with equal *certainly*. Now there is no law of our mental constitution, more fixed and absolute than that of depravity. It operates in all climates—in all conditions—in all men. It is in the moral world what gravity is in the physical—equally potent—equally diffused. Must not, then, the suspension or rather subversion of this law amount to a miracle? If a man was to make a stone ascend, or a stream run upwards, all would readily believe that such phenomena were miraculous.—With equal reason can it be maintained, that the overthrow of the power of sin within us is miraculous. Indeed, as spirit is superior to matter, it is the greater miracle of the two. The question then comes up, “Is not the truth of Scripture supported, even in our day, by an array of miracles, such as Moses never wrought, Christ (in His human nature) never performed?” The only question here is, whether such conversions or *moral miracles* actually occur. The evidence in this case is of course somewhat different from that which substantiates a *physical* miracle. The work takes place not on the *body*, but on the soul. But are not the methods of ascertaining mental exercises and phenomena equally sure with those that are applied to matter? May not anger, or love, or joy, be as easily discerned as the burning of a fire, the budding of a rose, or the undulations of a forest? And when a moral change within reverses the whole course of a man’s life, and not for a short time, but until death, gives it a different direction—is not the evidence of miraculous power just as strong as when lame feet are rendered serviceable, or a withered arm energetic? When, too, we remember that our nature is evidently *vitiating*—that the Gospel provides a remedy—that God commands a change—is it wonderful that *conversions* should take place? When we see the vapours ascend—the clouds form—the lightnings flash—and hear the thunder roar—is it wonderful that these should be *rain*? Conversion, which is the bringing back of man to God, is the great *moral design* of the Gospel. Besides, men have professed it, in whose veracity we must have confidence. The change then *does* take place, and yet it never occurs but by the intervention of *divine* power. Depravity is a *lusus* that only a *God* can untie.

What, then, is our situation in reference to the evidences that establish the truth of scripture? Superior even to that of the Israelites, when gazing upon the fires of Sinai, or fed with manna in the wilderness. Superior to that of the Jews, who saw the person and witnessed the miracles of Christ. The evidence which was designed for their conviction, has been weighed, recorded and transmitted to us as a matter of history. But beyond that, we live under the light of many prophecies that have since been fulfilled and are now fulfilling around us. Nor is this all—a class of miracles, superior to the raising of the dead or the stilling of a tempest, is continually occurring around us, with even startling interest. Where, then, is there any rational ground for rejecting revelation? Is it based upon the dissensions of religious creeds—upon the persecutions of past ages—upon the errors and imperfections of Christians—upon the treachery and wickedness of hypocrites and pretenders—or on the sophisms of the ingenious and subtle? Do these, any or all combined, constitute even a pretext for discarding that *powerful direct testimony* by which the truth of scripture is confirmed? Just as wise would it be to deny the existence and glory of the sun, because clouds exist, or lakes and mountains are sometimes enveloped in fog. Just as philosophical would it be to deny the existence of the ocean because floats of straw are sometimes seen upon its bosom, or to doubt the solidity of the earth because caves and caverns sometimes perforate its crust! No, no; there are no good reasons, there can be no good reasons for rejecting this testimony. It is responded to from the present and the past, from heaven and earth; and the echo of that response pervades every faculty and emotion of the human soul. The book is from God. Its history, its contents, its influence, all go to prove that point. Indeed, were human nature in a *sane* condition, there would be no more necessity for logic or argument here than to prove to the world, by a series of well constructed syllogisms, that there is such a luminary as the sun. If, however, men were born blind, it might become a difficult matter to establish even this great physical truth among them. And this is the onus in the present case. There is a moral darkness upon our race that requires something more than logic or argument to dissipate.

But admit the truth that the Bible is from God, and what an awful majesty invests that book at once! He who radiated yon sun—who fixed in their places those sweetly shining stars—who rolled the mighty ocean together, and hung the earth upon nothing—even He conceived these thoughts, penned these lines, uttered these revelations. What an authorship! What a blaze of divinity irradiates each page. What a holy schekinah enshrines the entire volume. Let it then never be rejected. Study the mind of God here with even a profounder awe than you would in nature. Let your spirit here commune with his spirit—your thoughts be mixed with his thoughts—your very being, as it were, absorbed into his essence.

ARTICLE VIII.

THE *δυσία* OF SCRIPTURE; OR, THE RULE, BASIS AND EFFECTS OF SPIRITUAL VIRTUE.

It would be an unailing source of encouragement to any individual, whose only road to a distant country is encompassed with countless dangers, to be fully assured by competent authority that, if he would commence and prosecute the journey before him, he should be securely defended at every step and eventually arrive in safety at the place of his destination. A powerful stimulus of this character is frequently prescribed by the word of God for the special benefit of each pilgrim to that land which Jesus has bought with His own blood for believers, and of which the unsanctified intellect can form no adequate conception.* He is not merely informed that if he persevere, he shall certainly persevere, but is infallibly assured that the strength of Israel will enable him to persevere in holiness till invincible grace shall remove the sting of death and hope perform its last office by introducing the waiting prisoner into the free realms of everlasting bliss. In the form of a pertinent and forcible interrogatory, an inspired apostle pens

* 1 Cor. 2: 9, 10.