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"Not slothful in business: fervent in spirit."

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## Poetry.

### FOR EVER WITH THE LORD.

This age is drawing to an end,  
This era of the gospel flies,  
The Lord Himself will soon descend,  
And all the dead in Christ arise.

One rapture all the saints shall share;  
The living changed, the dead restored,  
Caught up to meet Him in the air,  
Shall so be ever with the Lord.

Let us be comforted and cheered,  
Reunion soon will be complete;  
Our absent friends, by death endeared,  
In Jesu's presence we shall meet.

But yet a sweeter thought is this,  
We then shall see our truest Friend;  
And here appears the crowning bliss,  
Our life with Him shall never end.

"We shall be ever with the Lord"  
Eternity will first expire  
Ere all the joys have been explored  
The hope of which these words inspire.

TIMOTHY HARLEY.

St. John, N. B.

## Religious.

### "SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES."

An Essay read at the Sabbath School Convention of the Central Association, held at Port William, Sept. 8, 1870.

BY REV. W. B. BOGGS.

(Published by request of the Convention.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ, when he uttered these words, was declaring to the unbelieving Jews that He was the Messiah promised by God, and predicted by the prophets. They regarded Him as an impostor and attributed all His good works to evil influences and wrong motives. But He constantly affirmed that He was God's anointed one, and that His career was precisely that which had been foretold. And in order to convince them He meets them on their own ground, and turns their weapons against themselves. His words may be paraphrased thus: "You profess to believe the Scriptures—You have perfect confidence in the writings of Moses and the prophets: therefore search those writings and you will find that they testify of me. I base my claim on the testimony of your own sacred books, therefore search those books."

Now, although at the present day there may be few found among so-called Christians who deny that Jesus was the promised Messiah, yet there are many who hold erroneous views respecting his person and work, and who deny truths concerning Him which are just as essential to a saving knowledge of Him as the doctrine of His Messiahship. And errors almost innumerable exist, some grave, and some less formidable. In view of these things we may well consider the words of the Saviour as applicable to men in every age. "Search the Scriptures—for they are they which testify of me."

And not only as regards our views of Christ and His work do we require the testimony of Scripture, but our whole system of religious belief must be founded upon the word of the Lord. It is the only infallible standard. Christianity came from God, and He gave to the world a book of directions with it. And yet how often do we hear men argue upon religious questions with scarcely any reference to the teachings of the Bible. They give their own opinions on the most important subjects instead of the plainly expressed declarations of the all-wise God. One will say "I believe this," or "I do not believe that," seeming to forget entirely that God has uttered His infallible and unchangeable thought concerning the doctrine under discussion. For instance, a man will say "I do not believe in the doctrine of election," and by that He does not mean to say that the Scriptures do not teach it, but that it does not suit his ideas, or that he cannot reconcile it with other doctrines,

that in his opinion it is unnecessary, and therefore without referring to the oracles of Divine truth he rejects it. Another will say "In my opinion the quantity of water used in baptism is of no consequence. It stands to reason that if water is used in the name of the Trinity that is sufficient." He does not ask "what is God's requirement? what does His word teach?" And if you point out to such a one what the word does require he will be very likely to answer: "True, it seems to teach that, but in my opinion this will suffice." Such cases as these are not simply imaginary, they may be met with frequently. Instead of reasoning thus our enquiry should constantly be, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" If we once admit that the Bible is not the only infallible standard and directory we open the door for error to an unlimited extent. In this way those multitudinous forms of error crept in which disfigure large portions of the so-called Christian Church at this day. The only safe ground for us to take, is that the Bible is the infallible and all-sufficient guide given by God himself to be the directory of his church to the end of time.

The only weapon with which to encounter errorists is a "thus saith the Lord." Just as our Lord Jesus Christ when assailed by the father of lies—the great originator of error—withstood every onset, and foiled and put to flight the enemy by answering calmly at every attack "It is written"; so must we by the Bible "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." If we cannot meet them with the declarations of God's word then there is nothing with which to oppose their seductive errors.

Again, the pure and heavenly principles of the Bible require to be brought to bear constantly against the bad and corrupt principles which are abroad in the world, and which affect the whole structure of social and political life. Wrongs appear both in principle and in practice. Deception and overreaching, immorality and worldliness are continually undermining the health of society and threatening it with moral ruin. The only principles with which successfully to oppose these things are those of God's holy word. Other agencies, such as Education may be usefully employed to elevate the moral tone of society, but all such agencies are weak when compared with the holy principles of the gospel.

Moreover, it requires deep and extensive Scripture knowledge to form strong Christians character. Why is it that there are so many weak and sickly Christians, having but little firmness, and liable to be "carried about with every wind of doctrine"? Because there is not more sound, thorough knowledge of God's truth. If we look at those who are indeed pillars in the churches we will find that they are men who have made the word of the living God their constant study, and who have stored their minds with religious truth. They have partaken, not only of "the sincere milk of the word," but also of the "strong meat," and have grown thereby, developing the large bone and powerful muscle of sturdy "men in Christ Jesus," "able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand." While there are so many dwarfs and weaklings in the church we may expect to see them fall back before the forces of evil, bringing as they do to the conflict vast stores of worldly knowledge and mighty powers of intellect. None can stand successfully before these powers but those who are grounded in the truth of the gospel. If then we would see the hosts of God powerful in the struggle between truth and error, and able to take that position from which it will be impossible for the powers of the wicked one to dislodge them, we must seek for more widespread and thorough knowledge of Scripture truth.

Again the standard of Christian life will never be as high as it should be until there is a more intimate acquaintance with the doctrines, and precepts, and examples of God's word. The church needs more holiness, more deep toned, heart-felt piety, more brotherly love, more fellowship with Jesus, more imitation of His spotless character, more consecration to his service. These ends will not be attained; the church

will not shine with the lustre of these virtues until there is more familiarity with "the testimony of the Lord," more contemplation of the life of Jesus, the Christian's great example, more frequent study of the biographies of the holy men who lived and walked with God. Nothing is better calculated to make Christians heavenly minded and holy than prayerful devotional study of the volume of truth. Then if we wish to have holy feeling excited in our hearts, and to have heavenly aspirations arise, and thus be preparing continually for the Society and holiness of heaven we must place ourselves in the warmth and light of the rays of Divine truth.

Now we cannot close our eyes to the fact that there is a lack of Bible knowledge among even the professed disciples of Christ. There is too much of the vague and superficial, and too little of the deep and thorough. It is probable that not a few of our church members, if asked to explain the doctrine of justification by faith, would be unable to give an enquiring soul a clear and simple idea of that saving truth. Or if required to give an outline of Old Testament history, would be at a loss to present it in anything like a connected form. And this state of things is the more to be deplored from the fact that we profess to take the Bible as our only rule of faith and practice. We profess to be guided entirely by the teachings of a certain book: We ought then to know what that book teaches, and to be well versed in its precious truths. There ought to be throughout our churches a far more intimate acquaintance with the Scriptures. A people may start fair, holding the most scriptural doctrines, but without a continued knowledge of the authority upon which those doctrines rest, and an ability to contend intelligently and scripturally as well as earnestly "for the faith once delivered to the saints" they will fall a prey to errorists, and the encroachments of those who do not adhere to the Bible will soon become alarming.

A symmetrical view of Christian truth is of great importance. The more I converse on disputed points, and the more I read of religious controversy, the more I am convinced that a most desirable feature in religious views is symmetry. And yet how frequently is this wanting. We find men continually exaggerating certain doctrines to the disparagement of others, forever harping on one favorite chord and leaving the others in silence, presenting the same view on all occasions whether appropriate or not. One will be forever talking of the ordinances of the Church. With him they are the beginning and the end of religion, while another casts contempt upon them, declaring that they are of but little importance, if a man only loves God and lives uprightly. Now both these views are wrong—they spoil the proportion. Another sees the doctrine of election everywhere throughout the Bible. It is the great central sun of his religious system. Another disregards, or totally rejects the great truth of God's sovereignty, and seems to look upon the exercise of man's free will as a far greater and more profitable doctrine. Both these views are partial, and therefore incorrect and injurious. They destroy the symmetry of the Christian faith. One makes the doctrine of the new birth his constant theme ignoring entirely the necessity of a godly life—faith is the grand essential and works are of little consequence, while another takes the Mosaic view "this do and thou shalt live." Either of these views mars the order and beauty of Christianity. This may be illustrated by a statue, with one of its members, an arm for instance, larger than all the rest of the body. Instead of beauty there would be the most horrid deformity. O that men would hold the Christian faith in its exquisite symmetry! Avoiding extremes and exaggerations, endeavouring to believe all that God has revealed, and seeking to give to each doctrine its due, scriptural proportion. In order to bring about this result the book of Divine truth must be studied and searched impartially as a complete system, containing nothing unimportant, or unnecessary.

And then as the strongest of all reasons for searching the scriptures a knowledge of the gospel is essential to salvation. Faith must have some object on which to lay hold; must know who Christ is and how he saves us. Never until the soul apprehends this great truth can there be the exercise of saving faith.

The foregoing considerations show the need of more general and sound knowledge of the Bible. In order to realize this the Saviour's command must be obeyed. "That there is no royal road to learning," is just as true when applied to the truths of Scripture as to the science of this world. Mark the word which the great Teacher uses. It is not simply read the Scriptures, but "search" them. Divine truths are there revealed, the thoughts of Jehovah are therein unfolded to man, and therefore something more is required than simple reading. It is possible to read the scriptures much, and yet never search them.

In order to "search" the word of God there must be thought, earnest, patient thought. We must endeavour to know what the words mean; what God intended us to understand by them. And thus a passage which may appear very obscure at first will become luminous and clear while we ponder upon it and strive prayerfully to comprehend it. And many a passage which appears very simple and superficial, will be found to contain a deep and important meaning when sounded with the line of steady, concentrated thought. Some may say that these directions would be more applicable to students than to Bible readers generally, but it is very desirable that with all of us there should be more thinking than there is. Our minds will never expand without thought, just as a limb will not grow and strengthen without exercise.

We must seek to become deeply interested in the Bible, for it is the most interesting book that the world has ever seen. There are great doctrines to be traced from page to page, and lines of thought running from first to last. There are types and their antitypes, figures and their realities—prophecies and their fulfillments. There is sufficient to employ the mightiest grasp of intellect, and the most penetrating thought, as well as to interest the prattling child. It is a Book for all classes of the human family and for all ages. And we may lay this down as a fact, that, if the Bible is uninteresting to us it is because we have not studied it.

But all-important in the search for Divine truth is the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit. This heavenly gift is promised to all who ask it. It is not a figure of speech but a fact that the Spirit does impart to those who seek his influence, light and understanding. If then we would profitably search the Scriptures we must come to the study of them seeking Divine instruction, and having that teachable spirit which sits at Jesus' feet, and hears His words.

This injunction of our Saviour was not originally addressed to children. Now while it is admitted that it is very important and desirable for the young to be continually instructed in the word of God, yet Biblical instruction in the Sunday School should not be for children only. It is impossible to bring forward any good reason why adults should not be found in our Sunday Schools in just as large numbers as children, and not only as teachers, but also as scholars. And yet we sometimes hear it said that such a young man or woman has become too large or too old to attend the Sabbath School any longer. What is meant by such an expression as this? Is it that they have grown too large physically? then the same reason ought to prevent their attendance at the other services of the church. Do they mean that there is nothing more that they can learn? then they have outstripped the doctors of divinity, for they say they are just beginning to learn the truths of the Bible. Do they mean that their teachers are unable to give them any further instruction? Then the sooner those teachers are superseded or additional ones appointed the better for the School. No, the time never comes when a person is too old to attend the Sunday School until he is too