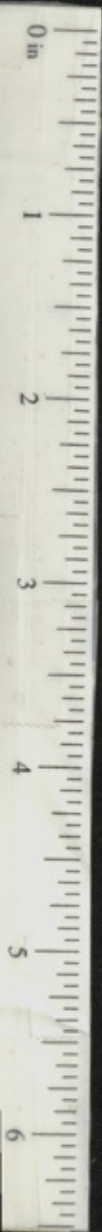


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## A SOLDIER ON RELIGION.

"IN TIME OF PEACE IS BATTLE WITH SCRIPTURE."

General O. O. Howard's Remarkable Defence of the Christian Religion—Have Laymen the Rights of the Pulpit?—An Exposition of Some Religious Truths at Which Our Clergy May Well Hearken—A Soldier Who is a Christian, and Knows the Bible Through and Through.

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ONE cannot always be writing professional articles, even if he is a military man. In times of peace, when I have been able to control my time, I have devoted a part of it to the reading and study of the Holy Scriptures, especially with a view to Bible readings in a Sunday-school class. So that while I may not claim to be a thorough biblical scholar, I may claim the post of a simple witness; a witness of somewhat that the Scriptures have accomplished under my observation, of the difficulties that I have met in attempting to teach, and of the obscurities which men for ages have sought in vain to penetrate and explain.

The Sabbath work has been a delight to the heart; but in all its varieties it has shown me that Christian people of the lay sort ought not to leave the discussions of the Bible, the evidences of its truth, or the explanations of difficulties therein altogether to the bishops, priests, and deacons.

Permit me a word more of explanation why I offer the following thoughts. In my early Christian life a learned friend rebuked me gently for encroaching upon the province of the clergy. At that time I was looking to the ministry, believing that holy voices were calling me in that direction. My friend drew my attention to the death of Uzzah, who simply put forth his hand to the Ark of God and took hold of it, "for the oxen shook it." God smote him there for his error, and there he died by the Ark of God. My friend further declared that, as shown in Uzzah's case, there were certain functions that belonged only to the province of the ordained ministry, and that the Lord Himself would even now be displeased with any layman who should encroach upon these functions.

While I was not convinced particularly as to the dividing line between the duties and functions of the clergy and the privileges and responsibilities of any other follower of the Master, the conversation made a strong impression upon me, and has caused me to be careful to seek diligently even in the matter of witnessing, so as to do it without actual or seeming encroachment.

I cannot help thinking that though we are under a different dispensation from that when the Ark of the Covenant was brought home, that there is still a feeling on the part of many men, named and consecrated bishops, priests, or deacons, who are called of God to the sacred ministry, that they have a province, a field distinctively their own in the matter of the simple witnessing for Christ, from which lay-leaders, lay-speakers, lay-teachers, and lay-people generally should be excluded. But let us reason upon this matter a little.

In General Sherman's memoirs we find an interesting account of the first discovery of gold—that is, of a veritable gold mine, in California. We see how news of it spread abroad. A man who saw the gold became interested in it, and after he had procured a small quantity of it his interest was increased. He led his friends to examine the region from which it came, and they carried the witness of the mine to others. They wrote about it in letters to friends in the East; these friends gave information concerning it to the public press, and soon the whole world knew that there was not only one mine, but several mines of gold in California.

It would have been as sensible to have attempted to restrain the witnessing in this case to the officials of the State, to the officers of the United States mint, to those who are put in charge of assaying and determining the value of the gold, all of whom have their proper and prescribed functions, as to attempt to restrain the witnessing concerning the Holy Bible to any priesthood, however established and however organized.

Doubtless this statement concerning the rights of witnesses seems to practical minds almost trivial; but, if I mistake not, a remarkable friend of mine, who has been for many years a strong witness for God and the Bible, a man of great research and a writer of unquestionable ability, has strangely encountered this feeling of exclusiveness. He appears to me to be a layman set apart for Bible interpretation, and yet his testimony, clear, positive, and indisputable, concerning the rich mines which he has discovered—more precious than the finest gold—has been sometimes ignored, sometimes ridiculed by men high in place and sneered at, and sometimes suppressed in Christian reviews. Permit me to be more specific concerning my friend.

The first book of Dr. Francis W. Upham which came to my hands was his "Thoughts

on the Gospels;" of the two others which came before it, "The Wise Men" and "The Star of our Lord," I had never heard, but have since had the great joy of perusing. I gained so much positive truth from them as to make the gospels a new revelation to me; their chapters are, in fact, replete with wholesome religious truth; they solve many problems heretofore unsolved, and these facts have made me earnestly bent on making them better known to my personal friends, and especially to Bible students.

I find that Dr. Tayler Lewis said of "The Wise Men" (the Magi): "Passages in the gospels which have been passed over as having little interest, as well as many similar parts of the Old Testament, are presented in such a way and in such connections as to give them a power of freshness unperceived before. Whoever reads this book must acquire a new interest in the study of the Scriptures." I do not feel that I have dipped so deep as this inimitable searcher for truth, yet I give a soldier's glad endorsement to that last forcible expression, which certainly is also true of all the writings of Dr. Upham.

He has a habit which I believe is a good one for any minister or writer upon the Bible—the habit of proving every substantial assertion which he makes from the Bible itself. We have a beautiful illustration on the very first page of "St. Matthew's Witness," where he says: "The Bible comes not to be judged, but to sit in judgment on us." After pausing a little on this thought with reference to the Bible conflicts now and at all times existing, we have these proof-words of Christ: "He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My words, the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

Let me now invite you to turn to page 393 of "St. Matthew's Witness," wherein, commenting on the statement that for *every Jesus was delivered up to Pilate*, Dr. Upham remarks: "Human nature alters the least of things below the sun. *Every* is now the secret of the hatred to Jesus of some men of letters or science who, coveting a high place for themselves in the thoughts of men, claim to be the rightful law-givers, the real 'principalities and powers' of the world. In the presence of Jesus Christ they are nothing; and they will not forgive the Nazarene His making human glory an impossible thing. For there now is no other glory than that of a union by faith and love with Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, him that glorifieth, let him glory in the Lord." Thus repeatedly throughout his choice pages Dr. Upham's last appeal is to the Divine Word itself, and to passages always so pertinently chosen that one can scarcely ever withstand or oppose his conclusions without a direct contradiction of God's own message.

A striking instance of Dr. Upham's originality is his proof that the gospels are not biographies or histories of Jesus Christ, and that they are arguments made up from selections from His words and works, so chosen as to demonstrate Christ's true Divinity, and given "that believing in Him we might have life through His name."

I have never seen this proof offered anywhere else, nor heard it from any pulpit; but Dr. Upham fortifies it by these express statements of the Apostle John (21: 25 and 20: 30, 31): "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name."

A distinguished scholar, the late Professor B. F. Martin, says: "This view of the nature and design of the gospels is entirely original. It is a highly significant and fruitful view. It readily disposes of a whole body of objection drawn from the irregular form of the Scripture narratives." And surely skeptics need not quarrel with the Evangelist's statements because they are not consecutive and biographical, for they had not the remotest intention of furnishing biographies or histories.

But, most of all, my wish in calling attention to these writings is to bring out the religious bearings—which are wonderful—of the new truths and facts discovered, and put into strong light by my friend. Look for a moment at those on page 355 of the "Thoughts": "The argument in the gospels is not made by the Evangelists, but by the Lord Himself. Between this idea of the gospels and every other the difference is immense. From its root it is unlike all partial and human ideas of the gospels. It reaches to their source and discloses the true power of those wonders of the Eternal Spirit. With that power time has nothing to do. For Christ Jesus comes to us all in His gospels as truly as He comes to those Jews who received or rejected Him. His Gospels bring us all into the presence of our Judge. They compel us to look upon the face of the Saviour, whom if we do not accept we deny. They make to us as real and personal an appeal

as that which Pilate made to the Jews when he said, *Ecce Homo*—Behold the Man!"

In these days, when it is the fashion to pull to pieces the Scriptures and, instead of lifting Christ up to the high plane of a confident faith, to be doing the exact opposite—that is, to be making every effort to lower Him to the level of the common standard of weak humanity, it is indeed refreshing to old-fashioned Christians to read any portion of Dr. Upham's writings. They induce confidence in the Scriptures, while they invite the most careful and thorough study and appreciation of them. A youthful daughter of a distinguished army officer thus writes concerning the effect of the doctor's writings upon herself: "I always want them by me, and I cannot begin to tell what a pleasure and help they are to me."

I, too, give the same testimony, which I have hinted at before, with regard to their effect upon myself, and I further believe that any Christian man, young or old, who ponders these writings will be quickened in his confidence in God and strengthened in his belief that He has revealed Himself to us all through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For many years Dr. Upham has lived a lonely, silent life, working and thinking. Only once has he broken through his reserve in a letter, in January last, to the *Presbyterian* (Philadelphia), in which there are some things of a general and some of a personal nature that will interest my readers: "My books are parts of a whole, for they all bear upon the conflict as to the Bible."

Historically, this conflict turns, I think, on the answer to the question whether the Scriptures, given in the great time-cycle which closed in the middle ages, can pass over into our present time-cycle, whose field and sweep of thought is far wider, and fill its utmost compass with truths unchanged in their essence. To show that they can and that they do was the aim of the essays in "The Star of Our Lord," on the relation of the universe to Christ, and on the astronomical doubt as to Christianity.

Just now the Bible assailants attack the old Covenant. Their assaults upon it must be, can be, and will be met *point by point*; yet, even for the older Scripture, which our Lord said "cannot be broken," the true battle-ground is in front of the battlements and towers of the Gospel, for that four-square fortress of God commands all the approaches to the lines that secure and defend this truth. All there was of vital force and effect in the epoch-making assault on the gospels by Strauss, in A.D. 1834, was conceded by Neander when, in his life of Jesus, he said that St. Matthew's Gospel *was made up of fragments*. To that uncritical and heretical concession I have opposed *new* evidence, drawn from the Gospel itself, showing that it was written seven years after the crucifixion.

"For years I intended that my writings should not be printed till after my death. Because of urgent, persistent persuasions, 'The Wise Men' was published by Sheldon, in 1869, and I was also prevailed upon, though very reluctant, to put my name to it. I am a Congregationalist, and call myself a Puritan, as several of my ministers—Cotton and others—were ancestors of mine; yet in 1873 Nelson and Phillips, agents at the Methodist Book Concern, wise and good men who no longer live on the earth, wished to republish 'The Wise Men.' Their proposal to do that *was a pleasant surprise*."

"As to my books, there are other facts that ought to be known, and especially so as to 'The Church and Science.' But I will only further add that in my writings there is much (though not all) of the thought on the conflict as to the Bible of a life that has now reached its seventy-fifth year, and the truths and facts I have set forth have long been considered. The chapters which prove the date of St. Matthew's Gospel were printed from manuscript yellow with age."

*The Church and Science* I have not seen. Dating as far back as 1861, it has long been out of print. But I have read a full account of it in the *North American Review*, when Dr. Peabody was editor, and some of the points are here given. The writer says: "We wish in this notice to state our impressions of an important and remarkable book. It is printed anonymously, no clew whatever being given to the name of the author, and no hint of his station, condition, or residence. Even the publisher is unable to tell whose book it is that he is publishing. Issued so quietly by a wholly unknown writer, it will be slow in finding its public and its admirers, but it will be sure to find them in the end. The author of so solid and ingenious a work can afford to wait for its appreciation and to trust to time in giving it its dues."

Let me go on to give from here and there sentences that show, in part, some of his impressions: "One which the volume gives is that of *reverence*. Its tone is that of deep, sincere, and devout belief. There is an undertone of awe and wonder, even in the closest critical discussion. Firm as the logical fabric is, it throbs all along with a tremulous piety, and we constantly expect that the discourse will break into praise and become a psalm.

"Then there is the impression which the vol-

ume gives of extraordinary patience both in thought and composition. The thought seems to have been tried over and over again, and tested in every way before it was intrusted to manuscript.

"Exactness of reasoning is another undeniable feature of the volume. There is scrupulousness in weighing evidence, or rejection of all superfluous details; the writer's fervor never carries him on into looseness of statement. Yet there is no want in the volume of rhetorical beauty. There is an unconscious eloquence in many of the arguments which is very captivating, and some of the pages close a long discussion with a sentence of Miltonic grandeur, in which we hold our breath as we read."

"One more merit of the volume we mention—its wonderful *suggestiveness*. We have marked scores of pointed sentences which, taken separately, might become the texts of essays—of sentences which seem to condense months of reading and observation." These remarkably appreciative statements as to the earliest of Dr. Upham's books, and especially that last sentence, seem to me exactly true of all his later writings.

It seems that Dr. Upham has had before his mind every class of assailants of the Bible, and yet, while these assailants are very frequently answered, they have not been directly, personally, and solely antagonized; for his aim and penetration have reached beyond assailants. His missiles have broken the prison-bars of friends.

To show that mine is not altogether a layman's opinion, I could defend it by statements of the Rev. Drs. Whedon and Crosby that go as far; and there have been no clergymen pleading for the cause of the Master who have been more pronounced than they in defence of the Holy Scriptures, and none whose opinions Christian men generally value more highly. They did not live long enough to give their testimony to "St. Matthew's Witness," but I notice that of a remarkable man of the same class, the Rev. Alfred Owen, D.D., once pastor of the Lafayette Street Baptist Church, in the city of Detroit, then President of Dennison University, Granville, O., like them of commanding influence in his great denomination, a powerful reasoner, of strong common-sense, and so moderate in speech as to make very impressive the testimony he gives to the "Witness" in a letter to Dr. Upham, written from Nashville, Tenn., where he is now President of the Roger Williams University, which has found its way into print: "I have been reading and rereading your book with profound interest. Its matchless rhetoric, its historic insight, its wide sweep of information, its consistency and accuracy equally please me. But I think I am most of all impressed with the new and wonderful portraiture of our Lord, and the Evangelist's purpose and plan in producing it. I realize this so deeply that I seem almost to have found a new Gospel."

It was a new thing which came to me under the sun to meet such a man as my friend, Dr. Francis W. Upham, a graduate in 1837 of the same college as myself, a brother of my most esteemed instructor, Professor Thomas C. Upham, a man possessing original genius, pursuing so steadily the study of the gospels, and in absolute self-denial meditating on having his writings published only after his death.

Twenty years and over given to a single book, and the constant dwelling with the gospels, in the gospels, meditating day and night, has produced in him the effect, if I may say it, of catching their very spirit and transfusing it into his own heart; and hence, the remarkable portraiture of the character of the earliest Evangelist and the new insight into the plan of his Gospel. If any one does not credit what I say, let him investigate for himself and see if Dr. Upham's writings are not worthy of even more praise than I have been able to bestow upon them.

Permit me a word more of personal witness. Notice one feature of Dr. Upham's productions, which has greatly cheered and helped me in my Bible-class teaching—to wit, the established fact that there were "oral gospels." Then the several collateral facts, for example, that Matthew six or seven years after their utterance formulated them in a written manuscript; that Mark a little later put forth "the gospel" of the Apostle Peter, there having arisen strong reasons for his doing so; that the Apostle Paul at a peculiar crucial epoch found a voice for his testimony through Luke; and that finally the beloved disciple John, when silvered with years, gave the finest sweet touches of his vivified witnessing to complete the exhibit that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Messiah, the Son of Man, and the Son of God, the very Immanuel of the good old Scriptures—the Saviour of the whole world.

Reading the last chapter of the "Thoughts" verified in my heart all this strong and beautiful presentation of mighty truth, on which hangs the perpetuation of our existence and the joy of it after the granite hills shall have crumbled to dust; and I say as I close the volume, with this loyal prophesy of America: "The work of the chosen witnesses is at last complete."

OLIVER OTIS HOWARD,  
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