

OUR MANIFESTO.

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“But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.”—GAL. i. 11.

To me it is a pitiful sight to see Paul defending himself as an apostle; and doing this, not against the gainsaying world, but against cold-hearted members of the Church. They said that he was not truly an apostle, for he had not seen the Lord; and they uttered a great many other things derogatory to him. To maintain his claim to the apostleship, he was driven to commence his Epistles with “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ,” though his work was a self-evident proof of his call. If, after God has blessed us to the conversion of many, some of these should raise a question as to our call to the ministry, we may count it a fiery trial; but we shall not conclude that a strange thing has happened to us. There is much more room to question our call to the ministry than to cast a doubt upon Paul’s apostleship. This indignity, if it be put upon us, we can cheerfully bear for our Master’s sake. We need not wonder, dear brethren, if our ministry should be the subject of attack, because this has been the lot of those who have gone before us; and we should lack one great seal of our acceptance with God if we did not receive the unconscious homage of enmity, which is always paid to the faithful by the ungodly world. When the devil is not troubled *by* us, he does not trouble *us*. If his kingdom is not shaken, he will not care about us or our work, but will let us enjoy inglorious ease. Be comforted by the experience of the apostle of the Gentiles: he is peculiarly our apostle, and we may regard his experience as a type of what we may expect while we labour among the Gentiles of our own day.

The treatment which has been given to eminent men while they have lived has been prophetic of the treatment of their reputations after death. This evil world is unchangeable in antagonism to true principles, whether their advocates be dead or living. They said more than eighteen hundred years ago, “Paul, what of him?” They say so still. It is not unusual to hear dubious persons profess to differ from the apostle, and they even dare to say, “There I do not agree with Paul.” I remember the first time that I heard this expression I looked at the individual with astonishment. I was amazed that such a pigmy as he should say this of the great apostle. Altogether apart from Paul’s inspiration, it seemed like a cheese-mite differing from a cherub, or a handful of chaff discussing the verdict of the fire. The individual was so utterly beneath observation that I could not but marvel that his

conceit should have been so outspokenly shameless. Notwithstanding this objection, even when supported by learned critics, we still agree with the inspired servant of God. It is our firm conviction that to differ from Paul's Epistles is to differ from the Holy Ghost, and to differ from the Lord Jesus Christ, whose mind Paul has fully expressed. It is remarkable that Paul's writings should be so assailed; but this warns us that when we have gone to our reward, our names will not be free from aspersion, nor our teaching from opposition. The noblest of the departed are still slandered. Be not careful as to human judgment of yourself in death or in life; for what does it matter? Your real character no man can injure but yourself; and if you are enabled to keep your garments clean, all else is not worth a thought.

To come more closely to our text: we do not claim to be able to use Paul's words exactly in the full sense which he could throw into them; but there is a sense in which, I trust, we can each one say, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man." We may not only say this, but we ought to be able to say it with thorough truthfulness. The form of expression goes as far as Paul was wont to go towards an oath when he says, "*I certify you, brethren.*" He means, I assure you, most certainly—I would have you to be certain of it—"that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man." On this point he would have all the brethren certified past all doubt.

From the context we are sure that he meant, first of all, that *his gospel was not received by him from men*. His reception of it in his own mind was not after men. And next, he meant, that *the gospel itself was not invented by men*. If I can hammer out these two statements, we will then *draw practical conclusions therefrom*.

I. First, TO US THE GOSPEL IS NOT AFTER MEN AS TO THE MODE BY WHICH WE HAVE RECEIVED IT. In a certain sense we received it from men as to the outward part of the reception, for we were called by the grace of God through parental influence, or through a Sabbath-school teacher, or by the ministry of the Word, or by the reading of a godly book, or by some other agency. But in Paul's case none of these things were used. He was distinctly called by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself speaking to him from heaven, and revealing Himself in His own light. It was necessary that Paul should not be indebted to Peter, or James, or John, even in the way in which many of us are indebted to instrumentality; so that he might truly say, "I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." Yet we also can say this in another sense. We also have received the gospel in a way beyond the power of man to convey it to us: men brought it to our ear, but the Lord Himself applied it to our heart. The best of the saints could not have brought it home to our hearts, so as to regenerate, convert, and sanctify us by it. There was a distinct act of God the Holy

Ghost by which the instrumentality was made effectual, and the truth was rendered operative upon our souls.

So I note that *not one among us has received the gospel by birthright*. We may be the children of holy parents, but we are not therefore the children of God. To us it is clear that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” and nothing more. Only “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” Yet we hear of persons whose children do not need conversion. They are spoken of as being free from natural corruption, and born children of God, having a grace within which only needs to be developed. I am sorry to say that my father did not find me such a child. He found out early in my life that I was born in sin, and shapen in iniquity, and that folly was bound up in my heart. Friends and teachers soon perceived in me a natural depravity; and assuredly I have found it in myself: the sad discovery needed no very minute research, for the effect of the evil stared me in the face in my character. This tradition as to our being born with a holy nature is gaining foothold in the professing Church, though contrary to Scripture, and even to the confessions of faith which are still avowedly maintained. Certain preachers hardly dare formulate it as a doctrine; but it is with them a kind of chaotic belief that there may be productions of the flesh which are very superior, and will serve well enough without the new birth of the Spirit. This tacit belief will lead up to birthright membership; and that is fatal to any Christian community, wherever it comes to be the rule. Without conversion, in certain fellowships, the young people drift into the Church as a matter of course, and the Church becomes only a part of the world, with the Christian name affixed to it. May we never in our Churches sink into that condition! That religion which is a mere family appendage is of little worth. The true seed are “born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.” We have not received our faith by tradition from our parents; and yet some of us, if true faith could be so received, would certainly have thus received it, for if we are not Hebrews of the Hebrews, yet according to our family-tree we are Puritans of the Puritans, descended through many generations of believers. Of this we make small account before God, though we are not ashamed of it before men. We have no father in our spiritual life but the Lord Himself, and we have not received that life, or the gospel, by any carnal parentage, but of the Lord alone.

Brethren, we have not received the gospel, nor do we now receive it, *because of the teaching of any man, or set of men*. Do you receive anything because Calvin taught it? If so, you had need look to your foundations. Do you believe a doctrine because John Wesley preached it? If so, you have reason to mind what you are at. God’s way, by which we are to receive the truth, is to receive it by the Holy Ghost. It is helpful to me to know what such and such a minister believed. The judgment of a holy, godly, clear-

sighted, gifted divine is not to be despised; it deserves to have due weight with us. He is as likely to be right as we are; and we should differ from a grace-taught man with some hesitancy. But it is a very different thing to say, "I believe it on this good man's authority." In our raw state as young Christians, it may not be injurious to receive truth from pastors and parents, and so on; but if we are to become *men* in Christ Jesus, and teachers of others, we must quit the childish habit of dependence on others, and search for ourselves. We may now leave the egg, and get rid of the pieces of shell as quickly as may be. It is our duty to search the Scriptures to see whether these things be so; and more, it is our wisdom to cry for grace to appropriate each truth, and let it dwell in our inmost nature. It is time that we should be able to say, "This truth is now as personally my own as if I had never heard it from lip of man. I receive it because it has been written on my own heart by the Lord himself. Its coming to me is not after men."

There is an opinion current in certain circles that you must not receive anything unless it is taught you of men: the word "men" being swallowed up and hidden away, but being there, after all, under the term "*the Church*." The Church is set up as the great authority. If she has sanctioned it, you dare not question it; if she decrees, it is yours to obey. But this is to receive a gospel "after man" with a vengeance. And the process involved is a strange one. You must trace a dogma as coming through a continuous visible Church, and this will lead you through the *Cloaca Maxima* of old Rome. Though truth be manifestly clear and pure, and prove itself to be the water of life to you, yet you must not accept it; but you must betake yourself to the muddied stream which can be traced through the foul channel of a continuous Church, which for ages has apostatized. My dear brethren, a doctrine's being believed by what may in courtesy be called "the Church" is no voucher for it: the most of us would almost regard it as being a question to be raised whether teaching can be true which has been vouched for by those great worldly corporations, which have usurped the name of Churches of Christ. Several sects claim apostolical succession, and if any possess it, the Baptists are the most likely, since they practise the ordinances as they were delivered; but we do not even care to trace our pedigree through the long line of martyrs, and of men abhorred by ecclesiastics. If we could do this without a break, the result would be of no value in our eyes; for the rag of "apostolical succession" is not worth warehouse room. Those who contend for the fiction may monopolize it if they will. We do not receive the revelation of God because it has been received by a succession of fathers, monks, abbots, and bishops. We are right glad when we perceive that certain of them saw the truth of God, and taught it; but that fact does not make it truth to us. We would each one say, "I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man." We

never think of quoting the community of men called “the Church” as the ultimate authority with conscience. “We have not so learned Christ.”

Furthermore, I hope I shall speak for all of you here when I say that *we have received the truth personally by the revelation of it to our own souls by the Spirit of the Lord*. Albeit that in so large a company as this I fear there may be a Judas, and the “Lord, is it I?” may well be passed round with holy self-suspicion; yet we can all say, unless fearfully deceived, that we have received the truth which we preach by the inward teaching of the Holy Spirit. Let us turn to our diaries, though the dates are now far away in the long-ago. We remember when the light broke in, and revealed our lost estate, and thus began the groundwork of our teaching. Ah, friends! the darker doctrines which make up the foil of the priceless jewels of the gospel, do you not remember when you received them with power? That I was guilty, I believed, for I was so taught; but then and there I *knew* in my soul that it was so. Oh, how I knew it! Guilty before God, “condemned already,” and lying under the present curse of a broken Law, I was sore dismayed. I had heard the Law of God preached, and I had trembled as I heard it; but now I felt an inward conviction of personal guilt of the most piercing character. I saw myself a sinner; and what a sight is that! Fearfulness took hold upon me, and shame and dread. Then I saw how true was the doctrine of the sinfulness of sin; and what a punishment it must involve. That doctrine I no longer received of men.

The gracious doctrine of peace through the precious blood of Jesus, we also know by inward personal teaching. We used to hear and sing of the great Sacrifice, and of the love of Him who bore our sins in His own body on the tree; but now we stood at the cross-foot: for ourselves we beheld that dear face, and gazed into the eyes so full of pity, and saw the hands and feet that were fastened to the wood for our sakes. Oh, when we saw the Lord Jesus, as our Surety, smarting for our offence, then we received the truth of redemption and atonement in a way that was “not after man”!

Yes, those godly men who have gone to heaven did preach the gospel to us fully and earnestly, and they laboured to make known Christ to us; but to reveal the Son of God in us was beyond their power. They could as easily have created a world as have made these truths vital to us. We say, therefore, each one from his inmost soul, “I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man;” so far as the way by which we have come to know and feel it within our own souls.

Since our first days we have experienced a gradual opening up of the gospel to our understanding, but in all that process, our real progress has been of God, and not of men. Brethren, you read commentators—that is to say, if your own comments are worth hearing; you read the books of godly men—that is to say, if you yourselves ever say anything worth reading; yet

your spiritual learning, if it be true and real, is of the Lord's imparting. Do we learn anything, in the most emphatic sense of learning, unless we are taught of the Lord? Is it not essential that God the Spirit should lay home the truth which has been spoken to you even by the ablest instructor? You have continued to be students ever since you left College; but your Tutor has been the Holy Spirit. By no other method can our spirits learn the truth of God but by the teaching of the Spirit of God. We can receive the shell and the outer form of theology, but the real Word of the Lord itself comes by the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth.

How sweetly the Spirit has taught us *in meditation!* Have you not often been surprised and overcome with delight as Holy Scripture has opened up, as if the gates of the golden city had been set back for you to enter? I am sure that you did not then gather your knowledge from men, because it was all fresh to you as you sat alone with no book before you but the Bible, and yourself receptive, scarcely thinking out matters, but drinking them in as the Lord brought them to you. A few minutes' silent openness of soul before the Lord has brought us in more treasure of truth than hours of learned research. The truth is something like those stalactite caverns and grottoes of which we have heard, which you must enter and see for yourself if you would really know their wonders. If you should venture there without light or guide, you would run great risks; but with blazing flambeaux, and an instructed leader, your entrance is full of interest. See! your guide has taken you through a narrow winding passage, where you have to creep or go on bended knees! At last he has brought you out into a magnificent hall; and when the torches are held aloft, the far-off roof sparkles and flashes back the light as from countless jewels of every hue! You now behold nature's architecture; and cathedrals are henceforth toys to you. As you stand in that vast pillared and jewelled palace, you feel how much you owe to your guide, and to his flaming torch. Thus the Holy Spirit leads us into all truth, and sheds light on the eternal and the mysterious. This He does in certain cases very personally. Then He fills us with complete forgetfulness of all our immediate surroundings, and we commune only with the truth. I can well understand how philosophers, while working out an absorbing problem, have seemed lost, and oblivious of all the world besides. Have you never felt a holy absorption in the truth while the Spirit has filled you with its glorious vision? It has been so with many of the saints while taught of God. They are not likely to give up to popular clamour what they have thus received.

How often has the Lord taught His servants His own truth *in the school of tribulation!* We speak well of meditation: it is as silver; but tribulation is as much fine gold. Tribulation not only worketh patience; but patience brings experience, and in experience there is a deep and intimate

knowledge of the things of God which cometh by no other means. Do you know what it is to be in such pain that you could not bear one turn more of the screw, and have you then in faintness fallen back upon your pillow, and felt that even then you could not be more happy unless you were caught up to the third heaven? Then has it been verified to some of us that we can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us. While lying in passive peace, it may be you have seen a Scripture come forth like a star between the cloud-rifts of a tempest, and it has shone with such lustre as only the Lord God could have given to it. Depression of spirit and torture of body have been forgotten, while the bright promise has made your soul full of light. There is a place in the far-back desert which you can never forget. There grows a bush. A very unpromising object is a bush: but it is sacred to you; for there the Lord revealed Himself to you, and the bush burned with fire, but was not consumed. You will never unlearn the lesson of the burning bush. Do we ever know any truth till the Holy Spirit burns it into us, and engraves it on our soul as with an iron pen, and with the point of a diamond? There are ways of learning for which we are very grateful; but the surest way of learning divine truth is by having the Word “engrafted” so as to take living hold upon the soul. Then we do not believe it only; we give our life to it: it lives in us, and at the same time we live upon it. Such truth throbs in every pulse; for it has quickened the heart. We do not question it; we cannot, for it lives in us, and colours our being. The devil insinuates questions; but we are not accountable for what he pleases to do, and we care the less, because he now whispers into a deaf ear. When once the soul itself has received the truth, and it has come to permeate the entire being, we are not accessible to those doubts which aforesaid pierced us like poisoned arrows.

I may add, concerning many of the truths of God, and the whole gospel system, that we have learned the truth thereof *in the field of sacrifice and service with our Lord*, so that to us it is “not after man.” If you do not believe in human depravity, accept a pastorate in this wicked London, and if you are true to your commission, you will doubt no more! If you do not believe in the necessity of the Holy Spirit to regenerate, take a charge over a cultured and polished congregation, that will hear all your rhetoric, and will remain as worldly and as frivolous as it was before. If you do not believe in the power of the atoning blood, never go and see believers die, for you will find that they trust in nothing else. A dying Christ is the last resort of the believer.

“When every earthly prop gives way,
He then is all my strength and stay.”

If you do not believe in the election of grace, live where multitudes of men come under your notice, and persons most unlikely are called out from among them in surprising ways, and it will grow upon you. Here comes one who says, "I have neither father, mother, brother, sister, nor friend who ever enters a place of worship." "How came you to believe?" "I heard a word in the street, sir, quite by accident, that brought me to tremble before God." Here is the election of grace. Here comes another, dark in mind, troubled in soul, and she is a member of a family all of them members of your Church, all happy and rejoicing in the Lord; and yet this poor creature cannot lay hold upon Christ by faith. To your great joy, you set before her Christ in all His fulness of grace, and she becomes the brightest of the whole circle; for they never knew the darkness as she did, and they can never rejoice in the light as she delights in it. To find a greatly-loving saint you must find one who has had much forgiven. The woman that was a sinner is the only one that will wash Christ's feet. There is raw material in a publican which you seldom find in a Pharisee. A Pharisee may polish up into an ordinary Christian; but somehow there is a charming touch about the pardoned sinner which is lacking in the other. There is an election of grace, and you cannot help noticing, as you go about, how certain believers enter into the inner circle, while others linger in the outer courts. The Lord is sovereign in His gifts, and doeth as He wills; and we are called to bow before His sceptre within the Church as well as at its portal. The longer I live, the more sure I am that salvation is all of grace, and that the Lord gives that grace according to His own will and purpose.

Once more, some of us have received the gospel because of *the wonderful unction that has gone with it at times to our souls*. I hope that none of us will ever fall into the snare of following the guidance of impressions made upon us by texts which happen to come prominently before our minds. You have judgments, and you must not lay them aside to be guided by accidental impressions. But for all that, and at the back of all that, there is not a man here that has led an eventful, useful life, but must confess that certain of those acts of his life, upon which his whole history has hinged, are connected with influences upon his mind which were produced, as he believes, by supernatural agency. A passage of Holy Writ, which we had read a hundred times before, took us captive, and became the master of every thought. We steered by it as men trust the pole-star, and we found that our voyage was made easy thereby. Certain texts are, to our memory, sweet as wafers made with honey; for we know what they once did for us, and the recollection is refreshing. We have been revived from a fainting-fit, nerved for a desperate effort, or fired for a sacrifice, by a Scripture which became no longer a word in a book, but the very voice of God to our soul—even that voice of the Lord, which is full of majesty. Have you not

noticed how a turn of a word in a text has made it seem all the more fitted for you? It looked a very small point; but it was essential to its effect, just as a small notch in a key may be the exact form which makes it fit the lock. How much may hang on what seems, to the unspiritual, to be nothing more than a slight verbal distinction, or an unimportant turn of expression! A thought of primary importance may turn upon the singular or plural of a word. If it be the Greek word itself, the importance cannot be overestimated; but in an English word, in the translation, there may be well-nigh equal force, according as the word, is true to the original. The many, who can only read our marvellous English Bible, come to prize its words because the Lord has blessed them to their souls. A simple Welsh friend believed that our Lord must have been a Welshman, "because," said he, "He always speaks *to me* in Welsh." To me it has often seemed as if the Well-beloved of my soul had been born in my native village, had gone to my school, and had passed through all my personal experiences; for He knows me better than I know myself. Although I know He was of Bethlehem and Judæa, yet He seems like one of London, or of Surrey. Nay, more; I see in Him more than manhood could have made Him; I discern in Him a nature more than that of man; for He enters the inmost recesses of my soul. He reads me like an open page, He comforts me as one brought up with me, He dives into my deepest griefs, and attends me in my highest joys. I have secrets in my heart which only He knows. Would God His secret were with me as mine is with Him up to the measure of my capacity! It is because of that wonderful power which the Lord Jesus has over us through His sacred Word that we receive that Word from Him, and receive it as "not of man."

What is unction, my brethren? I fear that no one can help me by a definition. Who can define it? But yet we know where it is, and we certainly feel where it is not. When that unction perfumes the Word, it is its own interpreter, it is its own apologist, it is its own confirmation and proof, to the regenerate mind. Then the Word of God deals with us as no word of man ever did or could. We have not received it, therefore, of men. Constantly receiving the divine Word as we do, it comes to us with an energy ever fresh and forcible. It comes to us especially with a sanctifying power, which is the very best proof of its coming from the thrice-holy God. Philosophers' words may teach us what holiness is, but God's Word makes us holy. We hear our brethren exhort us to aspire to high degrees of grace, but God's Word lifts us up to them. The Word is not merely an instrument of good, but the Holy Spirit makes it an active energy within the soul to purge the heart from sin, so that it can be said, "Ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you." When thus cleansed, you know that the Word is true. You are sure of it, and you no longer need even the most

powerful book of “evidences.” You have the witness in yourself, the evidence of things not seen, the seal of eternal verity.

I have taken all this time upon how we receive the gospel, and therefore I must perforce be brief upon a further point.

II. TO US THE TRUTH ITSELF IS NOT AFTER MEN. I desire to assert this plainly. If any man thinks that the gospel is only one of many religions, let him candidly compare the Scriptures of God with other pretended revelations. Have you ever done so? I have made it a College exercise with our brethren. I have said, “We will read a chapter of the Koran.” This is the Mahometan’s holy book. A man must have a strange mind who should mistake that rubbish for the utterances of inspiration. If he is at all familiar with the Old and New Testaments, when he hears an extract from the Koran, he feels that he has met with a foreign author: the God who gave us the Pentateuch could have had no hand in many portions of the Koran. One of the most modern pretenders to inspiration is the Book of Mormon. I could not blame you should you laugh outright while I read aloud a page from that farrago. Perhaps you know the Protoevangelium, and other apocryphal New Testament books. It would be an insult to the judgment of the least in the kingdom of heaven to suppose that he could mistake the language of these forgeries for the language of the Holy Ghost. I have had several pretended revelations submitted to me by their several authors, for we have more of the prophetic clan about than most people know of; but no one of them has ever left on my mind the slightest suspicion of his sharing the inspiration of John or Paul. There is no mistaking the inspired Books if you have any spiritual discernment. Once let the divine light dawn in the soul, and you perceive a colouring and a fashion in the product of inspiration which are not possible to mere men. Would one who doubts this write us a fifth Gospel? Would any one among our poets attempt to write a new Psalm, which could be mistaken for a Psalm of David? I do not see *why* he could not, but I am sure he cannot. You can give us new psalmody, for it is an instinct of the Christian life to sing the praises of God; but you cannot match the glory of divinely-inspired song. Therefore we receive the Scripture, and consequently the gospel, as “not after man.”

You say, perhaps, “You are comparing books, and forgetting that your theme is the gospel.” But this is only in appearance. I do not care to waste your time by asking you to compare the gospels of men. There is not another gospel that I know of that is worth the comparison for a single minute. “Oh, but,” they say, “there is a gospel that is much wider than yours.” Yes, I know that it is much wider than mine; but to what does it lead? They say that what is nicknamed Calvinism has a very narrow door. There is a word in Scripture about a strait gate and a narrow way; and therefore I am not alarmed by the accusation. But then there are rich pastures when you once

enter within, and this renders it worth while to enter in by the strait gate. Certain other systems have very wide doors; but they lead you into small privileges, and those of a precarious tenure. I hear certain invitations which might run as follows: "Come, ye disconsolate; but if you come, you will be disconsolate still, for there will be no *eternal* life made sure to you, and you must preserve your own souls, or perish after all." But I shall not enter into any comparisons, for they are odious in this case.

The gospel, *our gospel*, is beyond the strain and reach of human thought. When men have exercised themselves to the very highest in original conceptions, they have never yet thought out the true gospel. If it is such a commonplace thing as the critics would have us believe, why did it not arise in the minds of the Egyptians or Chinese? Great minds often run in the same groove; why did not other great minds run in the same grooves as those of Moses, or Isaiah, or Paul? I think it is a fair thing to say that, if it is such a commonplace form of teaching, it might have arisen among the Persians or Hindoos; or, surely, we might have found something like it among the great teachers of Greece. Did any of these think out the doctrine of free and sovereign grace? Did they guess at the Incarnation and Sacrifice of the Son of God? No, even with the aid of our inspired Book, no Mahometan, to my knowledge, has taught a system of grace in which God is glorified as to His justice, His love, and His sovereignty. That sect has grasped a certain sort of predestination which it has defaced into blind fate; but even with that to help them, and the unity of the Godhead as a powerful light to aid them, they have never thought out a plan of salvation so just to God and so pacifying to the troubled conscience as the method of redemption by the substitution of our Lord Jesus.

I will give you another proof, which, to my mind, is conclusive that our gospel is not after men; and it is this— that *it is immutable, and nothing that man produces can be so called*. If man makes a gospel—and he is very fond of doing it, like children making toys—what does he do? He is very pleased with it for a few moments, and then he pulls it to pieces, and makes it up in another way; and this continually. The religions of "modern thought" are as changeable as the mists on the mountains. See how often science has altered its very basis! Science is notorious for being most scientific in destruction of all the science that has gone before it. I have sometimes indulged myself, in leisure moments, in reading ancient natural history; and nothing can be more comic. Yet this is by no means an abstruse science. In twenty years' time, some of us may probably find great amusement in the serious scientific teaching of the present hour, even as we do now in the systems of the last century. It may happen that, in a little time, the doctrine of evolution will be the standing jest of schoolboys. The like is true of the modern divinity which bows its knee in blind idolatry of so-

called science. Now we say, and do so with all our heart, that the gospel which we preached forty years ago we will still preach in forty years' time if we are alive. And, what is more, that the gospel which was taught of our Lord and His apostles is the only gospel now on the face of the earth. Ecclesiastics have altered the gospel, and if it had not been of God it would have been stifled by falsehood long ago; but because the Lord has made it, it abideth for ever. Everything human is before long moon-struck, so that it shifts with every phase of the lunar orb; but the Word of the Lord is not after men, for it is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

It cannot be after men, again, because *it is so opposed to human pride*. Other systems flatter men, but this speaks the truth. Hear the dreamers of today cry up the dignity of human nature! How sublime is man! But point me to a single syllable in which the Word of God sets itself to the extolling of man. On the contrary, it lays him in the very dust, and reveals his condemnation. Where is boasting then? It is excluded: the door is shut in its face. The self-glorification of human nature is foreign to Scripture, which has for its grand object the glory of God. God is everything in the gospel which I preach, and I believe that He is all in all in your ministry also. There is a gospel in which the work and the glory are divided between God and man, and salvation is not altogether of grace; but in our gospel "salvation is of the Lord." Man never could nor would have invented and devised a gospel which would lay him low, and secure to the Lord God all the honour and the praise. This seems to me to be clear beyond all question; and hence our gospel is not after men.

Again, it is not after men, because *it does not give sin any quarter*. I have heard that an Englishman has professed himself a Mahometan because he is charmed by the polygamy which the Arabian prophet allows his followers. No doubt the prospect of four wives would win converts who would not be attracted by spiritual considerations. If you preach a gospel which makes allowances for human nature, and treats sin as if it were a mistake rather than a crime, you will find willing hearers. If you can provide absolution at small cost, and can ease conscience by a little self-denial, it will not be wonderful if your religion becomes fashionable. But our gospel declares that the wages of sin is death, and that we can only have eternal life as the gift of God; and that this gift always brings with it sorrow for sin, a hatred towards it, and an avoidance of it. Our gospel tells a man that he must be born again, and that without the new birth he will be lost eternally, while with it he will obtain everlasting salvation. Our gospel offers no excuse or cloak for sin, but condemns it utterly. It presents no pardon except through the great Atonement, and it will give that man no security who tries to harbour any sin in his bosom. Christ died for sin; and we must die to sin, or die eternally. If we preach the gospel faithfully, we must preach the Law.

You cannot fully preach salvation by Christ without setting Sinai at the back of the picture, and Calvary in the front. Men must be made to feel the evil of sin before they will prize the great Sacrifice which is the head and front of our gospel. This is not to the taste of this or any other age; and therefore I am sure man did not invent it.

We know that the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is not of men, because *our gospel is so suitable for the poor and the illiterate*. The poor, according to the usual fashion of men, are overlooked. Parliament has enclosed all the commons, so that a poor man cannot keep a goose; I doubt not that, if it were likely to be effectual, we should soon hear of a Bill for distributing the freeholds of the stars among certain skylords. It is evident that a fine property in the celestial regions is, at the present time, unregistered in any of our courts. Well, they may sooner enclose and assign the sun, moon, and stars than the gospel of our Lord Jesus. This is the poor man's common. "The poor have the gospel preached to them." Yet there are not a few nowadays who despise a gospel which the common people can hear and understand; and we may be sure that a plain gospel never came from them, for their taste does not lie in that direction. They want something abstruse, or, as they say, "thoughtful." Do we not hear this sort of remark, "We are an intellectual people, and need a cultured ministry. Those evangelistic preachers are all very well for popular assemblies, but we have always been select, and require that preaching which is abreast of the times"? Yes, yes, and their man will be one who will not preach the gospel unless it be in a clouded manner; for if he does declare the gospel of Jesus, the poor will be sure to intrude themselves, and shock my lords and ladies. Brethren, our gospel does not know anything about high and low, rich and poor, black and white, cultured and uncultured. If it makes any difference, it prefers the poor and the downtrodden. The great Founder of it says, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." We praise God that He has chosen the base things, and things that are despised. I hear it boasted of a man's ministry, although it gradually diminishes the congregation, that it is doing a great work among "thoughtful young men." I confess that I am not a believer in the existence of these thoughtful young men: those who mistake themselves for such I have generally found to be rather conceited than thoughtful. Young men are all very well, and so are young women, and old women also; but I am sent to preach the gospel to every creature, and I cannot limit myself to thoughtful young men. I certify to you that the gospel which I have preached is not after men, for it knows nothing of selection and exclusiveness, but it values the soul of a sweep or a dustman at the same price as that of the Lord Mayor, or of her Majesty.

Lastly, we are sure that the gospel we have preached is not after men, because *men do not take to it*. It is opposed even to this day. If anything is hated bitterly, it is the out-and-out gospel of the grace of God, especially if that hateful word “sovereignty” is mentioned with it. Dare to say, “He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy, and He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion,” and furious critics will revile you without stint. The modern religionist not only hates the doctrine of sovereign grace, but he raves and rages at the mention of it. He would sooner hear you blaspheme than preach election by the Father, atonement by the Son, or regeneration by the Spirit. If you want to see a man worked up till the Satanic is clearly uppermost, let some of the new divines hear you preach a free-grace sermon. A gospel which is after men will be welcomed by men; but it needs a divine operation upon the heart and mind to make a man willing to receive into his inmost soul this distasteful gospel of the grace of God.

My dear brethren, do not try to make it tasteful to carnal minds. Hide not the offence of the cross, lest you make it of none effect. The angles and corners of the gospel are its strength: to pare them off is to deprive it of power. Toning down is not the increase of strength, but the death of it. Why, even among the sects, you must have noticed that their distinguishing points are the horns of their power; and when these are practically omitted, the sect is effete! Learn, then, that if you take Christ out of Christianity, Christianity is dead. If you remove grace out of the gospel, the gospel is gone. If the people do not like the doctrine of grace, give them all the more of it. Whenever its enemies rail at a certain kind of gun, a wise military power will provide more of such artillery. A great general, going in before his king, stumbled over his own sword. “I see,” said the king, “your sword is in the way.” The warrior answered, “Your majesty’s enemies have often felt it to be so.” That our gospel offends the King’s enemies, is no cause for regret to us.

Dear friends, if it be so that we have not received the gospel from man, but from God, *let us continue to receive truth by the divinely-appointed channel of faith*. Are you sure that you ever will to the full *understand* the truth of God? With most of us the understanding is like a narrow postern gate to the city of Mansoul, and the great things of God cannot be so cut down as to be brought in by that entrance. The door is not wide enough. But our city has a great gate called faith, through which even the infinite and eternal may be admitted. Give over the hopeless effort of dragging into the mind by efforts of reason that which can so readily come into you by the Holy Ghost through faith. We that speak against rationalism are ourselves apt to reason too much; and there is nothing so unreasonable as to hope to receive the things of God by reasoning them out. Let us believe

them upon the divine testimony; and when they try us, and even when they seem to grate upon the sensibilities of humanity, let us receive them none the less for that. We are not to be judges of what God's truth ought to be; we are to accept it as the Lord reveals it.

Next, *let us, each one, expect opposition if he receives the truth from the Lord*, and especially opposition from one person who is both near and dear to him—namely, himself. There is a certain “old man” who is yet alive, and he is no lover of the truth; but, on the contrary, he is a partisan of falsehood. I heard a gracious policeman say that, when he stood in Trafalgar Square, and fellows of the baser sort kicked him and the other police, he felt a bone of the old man stirring within him. Ah, we have felt that bone too often! The carnal nature opposes the truth, for it is not reconciled to God, neither indeed can be. Let us pray the Lord to conquer our pride, that the truth may dominate us, despite our evil hearts. As to the outside world opposing, we are not at all alarmed by that fact, for it is exactly what we were taught to expect. We are now unmoved by opposition. The captain of a ship minds not if a little spray breaks over him.

Remember that, if you did not receive the truth except through the power of the Spirit of God, you cannot expect others to do so. They will not believe your report unless the arm of the Lord be revealed to them. But then, if faith be the Holy Ghost's work, we need not fear that men can destroy it. Those who attempt to change our belief may well be a little dubious as to their success in the task they have undertaken. If faith be a divine work within our souls, we may defy all sophistries, flatteries, temptations, and threats. We shall be divinely obstinate: those who would pervert us will have to give us up. Possibly they will call us bigots, or hard shells, or even idiots; but this also signifies little if our names are written in heaven.

Let us also conclude from our subject that *if these things come to us from God, we can safely rest our all upon them.* If they came to us from men, they would probably fail us at a crisis. Did you ever trust men, and not rue the day ere the sun was down? Did you ever rely on an arm of flesh without discovering that the best of men are but men at the best? But if these things come from God, they are eternal and all-sufficient. We can both live and die upon the everlasting gospel. Let us deal more and more with God, and with Him only. If we have obtained light from Him, there is more of blessing to be had. Let us go to that same Teacher, that we may learn more of the deep things of God. Let us bravely believe in the success of the gospel which we have received. We believe *in* it: let us believe *for* it. We will not despair though the whole visible Church should apostatize. When invaders had surrounded Rome, and all the country lay at their mercy, a piece of land was to be sold, and a Roman citizen bought it at a fair price. The enemy was there, but the patriot felt quite sure that he would

be dislodged. The enemy might destroy the Roman State. Let him try it! Be you of the same mind concerning the gospel that you preach. The God of Jacob is our Refuge, and none can stand against His eternal power and Godhead. The everlasting gospel is our banner, and with Jehovah to maintain it, our standard never shall be lowered. In the power of the Holy Ghost truth is invincible. Come on, ye hosts of hell, and armies of the aliens! Let craft and criticism, priestcraft and rationalism, do their best, or their worst! The Word of the Lord endureth for ever, even that Word which by the gospel is preached unto men!