
Reflections On the Gospel of Christ

Forster Josiah

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Author: Forster Josiah

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REFLECTIONS

ON

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST,

IN CONNEXION WITH THE

PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES

OF THE

RELIGIOUS SOCIETY OF FRIENDS;

ILLUSTRATED BY

EXTRACTS FROM ITS ANNUAL EPISTLES,
AND OTHER SOURCES.

BY

JOSIAH FORSTER.

LONDON:

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PREFACE.

It is not my intention to offer to others a systematic treatise on the all-important truths of the Christian religion: I do not feel equal to such an undertaking, but it is my desire to leave behind me a testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus—that truth in the principles of which I was educated, and of which I have made profession through life. Whilst conscious that through manifold infirmities I have but feebly and imperfectly maintained these principles, they are now, at an advanced period of my life, increasingly dear to me, and earnestly do I desire to commend them to the serious reflection and cordial acceptance of the reader.

In preparing what is now offered, I have made copious extracts from the accredited declarations of the Society of Friends, conveying as they do my own religious sentiments in more appropriate language than I could employ; and calculated as they are to carry with them more weight than is due to mere individual opinion.

J. F.

TOTTENHAM,
Fifth Month, 1860.

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CHAPTER I.

ON THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

It has pleased the Lord, in his infinite goodness and love, to give unto the children of men a revelation of Himself, and of his will. The books in which it is recorded, written in different ages of the world, have, through the superintending providence of God, been preserved to the present day; and are handed down to us in the volume designated the Bible.

In these records we are taught those great and solemn truths that God is the Creator of all things; that with Him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning; that his greatness is unsearchable, and his ways past finding out; that He is the governor among the nations, ruling in the kingdoms of men. He is infinite in knowledge and in power, in purity and holiness, in mercy, love and goodness. There is not a word on the tongue, but lo! He knoweth it altogether, He searcheth all hearts; and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts. He changeth not: his compassions are new every morning: his promises are sure. His word is settled in heaven; and his faithfulness is unto all generations. His name is a strong tower, the righteous runneth into it and is safe.

The religious Society of Friends has ever accepted these records as of divine authority. In proof of this, the following extracts are selected from others which might be adduced.

In a letter to the Governor of Barbadoes, in the year 1671, George Fox, who was the instrument in gathering and settling that Society, writes thus:—
“Concerning the Holy Scriptures, we believe they were given forth by the Holy Spirit of God, through the holy men of God, who (as the Scripture itself declares) spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We believe they are to be read, believed, and fulfilled (he that fulfils them is Christ); and they are ‘profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works,’ and are able to make wise unto salvation, ‘through faith in Christ Jesus.’”

The character and object of Holy Scripture is clearly and comprehensively set forth in the following extract from the Epistle of the Yearly Meeting of our religious Society of 1836:—

“It is expressly declared by the apostle Peter that ‘the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’ The apostle John declares respecting the gospel which he wrote, ‘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.’ Very pertinent and comprehensive is the language of the Apostle Paul to Timothy:—‘From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith

which is in Christ Jesus.'—'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.' Again, the Apostle says, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.' Finally, our blessed Lord, in reference to those divine writings, of which the grand object, in accordance with his own declaration, was to testify of himself, emphatically declares the Scripture cannot be broken. Although most of these passages relate to the Old Testament, our Society has always freely acknowledged that the principles developed in them are equally applicable to the writings of the evangelists and apostles. In conformity with these principles, it has ever been, and still is, the belief of the Society of Friends, that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God; that therefore the declarations contained in them rest on the authority of God himself; and there can be no appeal from them to any other authority whatsoever: that they are able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus; being the appointed means of making known to us the blessed truths of Christianity; that they are the only divinely authorized record of the doctrines which we are bound as Christians to believe, and of the moral principles which are to regulate our actions: that no doctrine which is not contained in them can be required of any one to be believed as an article of faith; that whatsoever any man says or does which is contrary to the Scriptures, though under