

# **SCRIPTURE AND TRUTH**

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Scripture and truth by Benjamin Jowett

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**BENJAMIN JOWETT**

**SCRIPTURE  
AND TRUTH**



*Relig.  
Theol.*

# SCRIPTURE AND TRUTH

DISSERTATIONS BY THE LATE  
BENJAMIN JOWETT

WITH INTRODUCTION BY  
LEWIS CAMPBELL.

LONDON  
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1907

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‘JOWETT has been of use to me, because he believes in the great essentials—the life of the dead and the deity of Christ. What he says is very comforting, because he knows on what foundations our faith rests. Others have been most kind and sympathizing: but cut-and-dry sentiments, in which everything is taken for granted, do me no good at all.’—ALEXANDER EWING, Bishop of Argyll and the Isles: 1856.

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## INTRODUCTION

THE Dissertations which are here reprinted turn principally on the Author's method of interpreting Scripture. They indicate the point of view from which he looked upon the sacred writings, both in themselves, and in their possible applications to human life in its religious aspect. With the exception of the first Essay, which is of general significance, they formed part of his edition of St. Paul's Epistles to the Thessalonians, Galatians and Romans (1855-1859). The Essay on Interpretation, though it appeared afterwards (1860) as a contribution to the volume known as *Essays and Reviews*, consists of a series of observations which had occurred to the writer in the course of the same long-continued labour. This Essay contains the noble sentences—to print them twice within the limits of the same volume can hardly be superfluous:—

‘When interpreted like any other book, by the same rules of evidence and the same canons of criticism, the Bible will still remain unlike any other book; its beauty will be freshly seen, as of a picture which is restored after many ages to its original state; it will create a new interest and make for itself a new kind of authority by the life which is in it. . . . No one can form any notion from what we see

around us, of the power which Christianity might have if it were at one with the conscience of man, and not at variance with his intellectual convictions. There, a world weary of the heat and dust of controversy—of speculations about God and man—wearied too of the rapidity of its own motion, would return home and find rest.<sup>1</sup>

Though separated from their original context, and republished after so long an interval, it is believed that these writings will be found to have a lasting value. Much has since been thought and written in theology, and discoveries have been made, through which Biblical Criticism has been placed on more secure foundations. Perhaps, also, the errors of Bibliolatry, against which some of these Essays were directed, are less current, in the present day, than sacerdotal tendencies which equally make for obscurantism. But the spirit of Jowett's work, in which the purest love of truth was transfused with deep religious feeling, may still give encouragement to inquirers and comfort to doubtful minds. Learned treatises abound among us and devotional manuals and incitements are not infrequent. But the combination of learning with wisdom and of both with piety, of fearlessness with sobriety, of enthusiasm with clear judgement, of considerateness with openness of mind, has not been common in any age, and is rare in our own. Not the matter conveyed so much as the personality behind it, and 'the style

<sup>1</sup> Vide *infra*, pp. 50, 51.

which is the man', give permanence to compositions, which may in some ways come short of our present horizon of knowledge, or be not directly applicable to the mental requirements of our time.

The late Lord Bowen, between whom and Jowett there was a life-long attachment, once said of him, 'The Master taught us not what to think, but how to think.' The former method has an immediate fascination for many minds, and has often led to the formation of a school. The results of the latter mode of instruction are less obvious, but they are more far-reaching and permanent, supplying stimulus and guidance for all subsequent activities, theoretical and practical.

In an appreciative notice of the former volume,<sup>1</sup> one critic has remarked on the 'serenity' which is characteristic of Jowett as a writer on theology; and has quoted in illustration the concluding paragraph of the Essay on the Atonement. The justice of this remark would be still more evident, if the atmosphere of theological agitation and excitement, in the midst of which Jowett thought and wrote, could be realized by the present generation. The passage in question appeared for the first time in the *second* edition of the work on the Epistles, published in 1859. And it was the *only* answer given to numberless attacks. Moreover, as readers of the *Life of Benjamin Jowett* are aware, it was written under the stress not only of

<sup>1</sup> *Theological Essays*. By the late Benjamin Jowett. Oxford, 1906.