

**PASTORAL MINISTRIES AND
TEACHINGS: DELIVERED IN THE
CATHOLIC APOSTOLIC CHURCH,
CANNING STREET, LIVERPOOL**

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GEORGE J. W. PITMAN

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THE following sketches of pastoral ministry are published partly for the benefit of some members of the flock to which they were originally addressed, and partly to shew, to such of our brethren as may be interested in the matter, something of what is taught in the Catholic Apostolic Church.

W. T.

LIVERPOOL.

THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY.

ISAIAH VIII, 20.

“ To the law, and to the testimony : if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”

FEW words of Holy Scripture are more frequently used than these, especially in reference to disputed points of doctrine. And when persons use them, the sentiment they mean to express is both a just and an important one. They mean to say that the Scriptures of God are the rule—the measure—the test, of our faith ; and that whosoever speaks not according to what they contain, speaks not according to the truth of God. To this we must all give our entire assent. We believe that the Bible contains the full revelation of God's mind to man. It contains the declaration of His great purpose concerning His Son, and concerning the Church, which is the Body of His Son—the fulness of Him who filleth all in all. We may be very sure, therefore, that whatever is taught contrary to the Bible, is contrary to the truth, and is most displeasing to God. How can

we sufficiently admire His grace and patience, who has borne with His people so long, notwithstanding their manifold forms of opposition to His word, and to His way!

But although the sentiment we have referred to, as expressed in the words "to the law, and to the testimony," is good, and very important in itself, it does not follow that every one who uses it, either understands it or applies it aright. On the contrary, men of the most opposite views alike refer to the law and the testimony, in proof of the very points on which they disagree. A Unitarian appeals to the Bible. All the more orthodox Protestants do the same. Also Romanists appeal to it, when they think they can do so, with advantage to their cause.

When a man refers "to the law, and to the testimony," in order to make out from the Bible the truth of what he believes, he thinks, no doubt, that he is honouring God's word; and yet he may quote it only seeking to establish some view of his own, which is not in the Bible. How often must this be the case, when men of different views do it equally. Each calls the Bible the rule of faith, and yet his own private judgment of its meaning is the rule he acts on. And what is this but counting the Truth of God, and a *man's opinion of it*, to be the same things?

If it were not possible to misunderstand the Bible, then an appeal to it might be expected to set at rest all

controversies. But the Bible is often misunderstood. Every one must acknowledge this. And, indeed, no wonder that it is misunderstood. It is not a shallow pool, such as may be fathomed by any disputant. It is a great deep. And if any man thinks that he has got to the bottom of any of its depths, he has yet to begin to learn what God's word is. "If any man thinks that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

One great truth which we should learn from the Bible concerning God and His word, is, that He alone can teach us effectually; and, blessed be His name, we know that He has undertaken to teach us. And so, the first lesson we should learn concerning ourselves, is, that we know nothing worth knowing, save as God has taught it to us. And the second lesson is, that we may well hope to increase in all divine knowledge, seeing that God has undertaken to be our Teacher.

If every one who reads the Bible could understand all its doctrines, what need would there be of the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth? God has not revealed His mind and purpose that we should inform ourselves upon it, as we do upon any point of history, or of science. He has not put His Truth on paper that we should be independent of His help in studying it. He keeps our teaching in His own hand. The truth of God is a spiritual thing, and no part of it is discerned save by the spiritual mind. We require *not only* to

have the truth set before us, but, what is more, we require an inwrought capacity to discern it, which God alone can give.

Again: God's truth is revealed in His word, in order that it may be transferred to the hearts and lives of His people. It is of no value to us otherwise. Jesus Christ is the Truth; and the Truth is to be in us, as it was in Him. The Church, His mystical Body, is to contain the *living* truth, even as the Bible contains the *written* truth. And then, these two may justly be named the law and the testimony: the written word being the law—containing the statutes of the Kingdom: the Church, indwelt by the Holy Ghost, being the testimony—bearing witness to the word of truth. It is so expressed in the Acts of the Apostles: "God gave *testimony* to the *word* of His grace." He did this by the Holy Spirit in the Church then. And we have the same testimony revived in the Church now. We see plainly, that the written word alone will not make men of one mind and of one judgment. Both the written word, and the living testimony, are needed. And they being found alike,—agreeing in one,—the true appeal lies to them. "To the law, and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

All truth is in the Bible: but the Bible itself testifies that the Holy Ghost, in divers gifts and

various ministries in the Church, is needed to complete the witness unto God's truth. Therefore, we hold by the Scripture, and we hold by the Church; we hold by the law, and we hold by the testimony. And we rejoice to know, that where the Holy Ghost is manifested in the Church, the law and the testimony speak the same thing, and the very Truth of God is found.

Now, who is he that will learn true doctrine fastest and best? Assuredly not the disputant and debater, who is referring continually to the Bible as to the law, and to the testimony. He refers to the law, but he sets aside the testimony. He thinks he knows the truth of the Bible without the testimony of the Spirit in the Church. He thinks he knows it sufficiently to judge all other men's views according to it; which is much the same as thinking that he knows it all: and how can he learn anything more?

Who, then, will learn true doctrine soonest and best? Blessed are the meek—it is they! David, in spirit, said, “The meek will He guide in judgment: the meek will He teach His way.” Now, if this be true,—and the word of God cannot be broken,—is a man who manifestly is not meek as a learner, likely to know much of God's truth, or likely to make much progress in learning it? We trow not. Jesus said, “Come and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.” Just, therefore, as we have the meekness and lowliness of Christ, we shall be