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A table of contents for *Review & Expositor* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_rande_01.php

THE USE OF THE SCRIPTURES IN THEOLOGY!*

BY REV. WAYLAND HOYT, D. D., LL. D.

It goes without saying that these lectures are extremely interesting. Beyond most men Dr. Clarke is master of a fascinating and enthralling style. There is a certain singular charm in what he writes. I suppose no technical book has ever commanded wider or more various audience than his "Outlines of Theology." There is not a dry page in it, nor one difficult to the ordinary reader. Somehow upon his pages a soft and gentle sunlight seems to fall as in June days, and the flowers bloom and the birds sing. Nor is there any straining to get them to bloom and sing. They do it spontaneously. The high themes are so arrayed in the garments of shining, pleasing speech one's attention cannot but follow easily and joyously. What is so true about the style of the "Outlines of Theology" is as true of the style of these lectures. But light and flowers and birds may hover over and adorn and sing in and about dangerous ravines and precipices. I think, though somewhat hiddenly, these gaps and threaten in the "Outlines of Theology." In these lectures they are opener and more disclosed. Indeed, for myself, I do not know a book which, while it is professedly devoutly Christian, is more subtly and speciously dangerous to the fabric of our faith.

But let me most heartily and gladly go with Dr. Clarke in his averments of the Lord Jesus Christ as the crowning, ultimate, authoritative, revelation to us of God—all through these lectures there are such averments. It is necessary to my purpose that I quote freely.

"But the specialty of the Bible is Jesus Christ. On these pages we have practically all that we know of His history and His works. He uttered the highest, simplest,

*The Nathaniel William Taylor Lectures for 1905. Given before the Divinity School of Yale University. By William Newton Clarke, D. D., Professor of Christian Theology in Colgate University.

most self-evidencing, most final body of truth concerning God and the relations of men to Him that this world has ever received; and here we find it, together with writings that show how it was understood by receptive minds, and brought into life as a transforming power." Page 3.

"The fullness of the Christian light is given in Christ." Page 43.

"Theology is the orderly presentation of what we have reason to hold as true concerning God and the relations of men to Him; and the Scriptures are those writings which preserve the story of Hebrew and early Christian religion, with Jesus Christ and His revelation concerning God and man for their crowning element. For us Christians theology and the Christian Scriptures thus conceived, are manifestly inseparable, and the point at which they meet is plain. They meet in Christ. He is the common possession of the two—He and what He contributes—and He is their common glory. He is the crown of the Old Testament and the New, and the crown of the Bible as a whole, and in the field of theology there is none that compares with Him in clearness of revelation or in fullness of light and truth. If He has made theology to be Christian, it is equally true that He has made the Scriptures to be Christian. To either there is none like Him." Page 51.

"From Him"—Jesus—"there came forth the clearest, simplest, worthiest and truest view of God and the relation of God to men that has existed in this world; and in Him there has proved to be inexhaustible power to establish that right relation between God and men in actual life. There is no doubt or mystery as to what His revelation was and is. He has sent forth living truth concerning God, and has made it to live in men." Page 57.

Perhaps this much quotation is sufficient. Certainly it would be difficult to find words or to shape sentences which could more luminously tell and set forth the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as the crowning, ultimate,

never-to-be-superceded, revelation and authority in religion. And with this certainly agrees the Scripture:

“God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *his* Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”

What now is the attitude of this Jesus Christ—this worthiest, truest, ultimate, authoritative revelation of God to men, and of men’s relation to God—what now is the attitude of this Jesus Christ to the Scriptures of the Old Testament?

This Jesus declares the Scriptures of the Old Testament, or, at any event, that portion of them attributed to Moses, to be the *word of God*. Listen to Mark, 7:5-13:

“And the Pharisees and the scribes ask him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with defiled hands? And he said unto them, Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

“This people honoureth me with their lips,

“But their heart is far from me.

“But in vain do they worship me,

“Teaching *as their* doctrines the precepts of men.

“Ye leave the *commandment of God*, and hold fast the tradition of men. And he said unto them, Full well do ye reject the *commandment of God*, that ye may keep your tradition. For *Moses said*, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, He that speaketh evil of father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or his mother, That wherewith thou mightest have been profited by me is Corban, that is to say, Given *to God*; ye no longer suffer him to do aught for his father

or his mother; making void *the word of God* by your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things ye do.”

In the Greek that word of God is *λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ*—the translation is accurate. Unequivocally here this crowning revelation of God, this Jesus Christ declares that so much of the Old Testament Scriptures as are commonly attributed to Moses are the *word of God*. Turn now to Matthew, 5:18:

“Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished.”

Here the reference of this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, is to the prophets as well as to the law. No slightest atom of either, this Jesus declares, shall come to failure. Neither jot nor tittle of them may be disesteemed. As the bulb pushes to the flower this so precious deposit of God in the Old Testament Scriptures shall come to exactest and fullest bloom.

Then further to John 10:31-37:

“The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, Many good works have I shewed you from the Father; for which of those works do ye stone me? The Jews answered him, For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the *word of God* came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am *the Son of God*?”

Here Psalm 82:6—“I said ye are gods,” though it be song, is invested with the dignity of law. Here, again, the Old Testament Scripture is designated the *word of God*; here, in addition, this Jesus, this crowning revelation of

God, asserts that the Old Testament Scripture is irrefragable—*οὐ δύναται λυθῆναι* cannot be loosened, undone, dissolved. Turn, in addition, to Luke 24: 25-27, Christ is saying to the despairing disciples on their way to Emmaus: “O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.”

Join with this the 44th to the 48th verses of the same chapter, Jesus is saying to the affrighted disciples after He had assured them that though risen from the dead, He was veritably Himself: “These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.”

Notice these words, “Moses and all the prophets”—“in all the scriptures”—“written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms”—might understand the Scriptures—“thus it is written.”

How more unequivocally could even this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, dignify, enhance, glorify, declare the mighty and limitless value of the Old Testament Scriptures? Whatever these Old Testament Scriptures may be to the modern destructive critic, they certainly were to this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, august, commanding, sacred.

And such instances of such recognizing of the Old Testament Scriptures—and we possess them substantially in the shape in which He taught and used them—

such instances of such recognizing of the Old Testament Scriptures by this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, could be indefinitely multiplied.

And will you go on to notice that this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God to man, was a great and habitual quoter of *proof-texts* from the Old Testament Scriptures. Let an instance or two suffice. Amid the stress of His temptation this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, vanquishes Satan by texts quoted from the Deuteronomy of these Old Testament Scriptures. "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." "Again it is written, Thou shalt not make trial of the Lord thy God." "Get thee hence Satan; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shall thou serve."

To the Sadducee's quibbling about the seven times married woman and the resurrection, Jesus replies: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, *have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*"

To the young man who came asking what good thing he should do to inherit eternal life, Jesus quoted the Commandments as written in Exodus, Deuteronomy and Leviticus. The solemn and repeated "I say unto you" of the sermon on the Mount concerning murder, adultery, profanity, retaliation, enemies, is not abrogation of the law, but is declarative and applicative of the law concerning these things. Jesus quotes that He may disclose how the law of God pushes and pierces to the thoughts and intents of the heart.

And almost the last word of this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, is a quotation from the twenty-second Psalm: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken

me"? And there is scarcely a book in the entire range of these Old Testament Scriptures from which He does not frequently quote.

To this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, these Old Testament Scriptures are, most manifestly, standard and directive.

But what of the relation of this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, to the Scriptures of the New Testament?

During the sojourn on earth of this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, the Scriptures of the New Testament were not yet written. But the Scriptures of the New Testament are, by anticipation, and in the clearest way, shielded and authenticated by the special promises of this Jesus. And surely, if this Jesus be the best, worthiest, ultimate revelation of God, as Dr. Clarke admits and so constantly insists on, this Jesus had both the right and the ability to make such anticipating and authenticating promises. Listen to John, 14:25-26:

"These things have I spoken unto you, while *yet* abiding with you. But the Comforter, *even* the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you."

Here this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, puts this stamp of authentication not only upon a divinely given teaching which should be ministered to the Apostles, but also upon their divinely helped and so trustworthy *remembering* of what this Jesus Himself had taught the Apostles.

Listen again to John 16:12-15: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, *these* shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine,

and shall declare *it* unto you. All things whatsoever the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he taketh of mine, and shall declare it unto you."

Could promise of a divine assistance, of a divine inspiration, if you choose to call it such, of a divinely-helped disclosure and unfolding of truth concerning this Jesus—truth as yet dim and latent in the minds of these apostles—but to be revealed to them; of a divine guidance into all such truths—could promise of a divine superintending, enlarging and quickening of perception, ability of grasping and setting forth, could such promise be at once more abundantly and unmistakably given? As another has suggested, the cry "Back to Christ," is a good cry. Christ is forever to be the name and standard of interpretation of what apostles say. But when you get back to Christ must you not hear Christ saying, "On to the apostles," if you would know the fuller, deeper, larger meaning of that which Christ Himself had taught? And that this anticipatory promise of Jesus was a real and valid one, the Day of Pentecost is, at least, beginning proof. His to-be New Testament Scriptures are sanctioned and authenticated by the promises of Jesus. And surely, if this Jesus be, as Dr. Clarke so steadily asserts, the worthiest, truest, crowning revelation of God, this Jesus had both the forecasting ability and authority to make such authenticating promises. The Scriptures of the New Testament are authoritative because this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, promised His apostles divine guidance into all the truth.

But now let us open the pages of Dr. Clarke. I quote freely that I may not misrepresent.

"The ground for the ancient manner of use"—of Scripture—"in the doctrine of an equal and infallible inspiration is gone." Page 50.

"The Scriptures contain that indispensable material without which theology would not be Christian or rise to the height of truth, and they contain a great deal more.

Speaking in terms of time we can say that they contain a Christian and a pre-Christian part; speaking in terms of quality they contain a Christian and a non-Christian element. What is pre-Christian, or non-Christian, may lie close upon the spiritual borders of Christianity, or may be far removed from the Christian view of things."

"The point to be held fast and for certain is that the Bible does bring us the contribution of Christ, together with much that did not proceed from Him; and this besides, that the difference between these two elements is not necessarily a difference in quality. That great word, Christian, is not merely a term that belongs on one side of a time boundary; it is a descriptive and qualitative term, with a meaning in itself. There certainly is non-Christian matter in the Old Testament, and for aught we know there may be in the New. In either place the question is one of spiritual quality, character, kinship with the revelation that we have in Christ.

"It is the Christian element in the Scriptures that must be received as constituent element into our theology, for it is indispensable and formative there. But non-Christian matter contained in the Bible need not, and must not, be so received. Nothing that is not Christian in its genuine quality has any place in our Christian theology, even though we may have read it on the pages of the Bible."

"It might be thought that the Christian element in the Scriptures consisted of the words of Jesus, or was co-extensive with the record of His life. Or it might be identified with the New Testament, the part of the Bible that was written by Christians. But the test already proposed, of character and quality, is more internal and searching than any such test of localization and measurement. That is Christian which enters into or accords with the view of divine realities which Jesus Christ revealed." Pages 53, 54, 56.

And the norm of discrimination, by which we are to

judge of and separate the non-Christian, pre-Christian and Christian elements in both the Old Testament and the New is, perhaps, most clearly stated by Dr. Clarke in this sentence: "The Christian element, or the gift of Christ, is not a body of words, or even a body of thoughts, but a body of truth." Page 60.

But yet, concerning this "body of truth" which finds expression necessarily in neither words nor even thoughts, Dr. Clarke goes on in almost the next sentence to confess it is something somewhat difficult of comprehension. Dr. Clarke says: "I have often found students unable to grasp the distinction between a body of truth and a body of thoughts, or even words. They have always thought of truth as expressed in words, and of the most exact wording as making the best expression." But Dr. Clarke goes on to say "the Christian body of truth is a body of spiritual reality put into life. Until we make this view of Christ's gift our own, we shall not rise to the spiritual clearness of the true faith, or appreciate the true glory of theology." Pages 60, 61.

Dr. Clarke goes on, but I think vainly, to reply to objections to such a norm of discrimination amid the Scripture as this. Such a norm of discrimination is nothing plain and steady, it is a "moving point," says one. But is it not possibly that and necessarily, a moving point, when your norm is not definitely what Christ has said and done, but is really what you chance to think Christ ought to have said and done?

But your standard is altogether *subjective*, says another. Dr. Clarke denies this. "But," I quote his words, "I freely own," he says, "that the principle gives the need of a standard visible and audible, so unequivocal that it can be understood only in one way." What is that but confusing, after all, the real and masterful subjectivity of the standard? For here, again, the standard is not definitely what Christ did do and say, it is what, in

this doing and saying, seems to you, for the instant, fitting that he do and say which is the standard.

So then this "body of truth," so nebulous and various that, as Dr. Clarke himself confesses, it is quite difficult to get students to comprehend it; what shall we say of the difficulty it flings in the way of the men of the street, the usual throng of the persons who make up our churches? To them this unworded and even dimly conceivable "body of truth" is to be the test and standard of decision as to what to accept in them or to reject in them, as we go through the Scriptures, both of the Old Testament and the New.

Well, what will the acceptance of this cloudy and varying so-called "body of truth" do for us in our use of Scripture?

(a) It will deliver us from the need of quoting proof-texts. This Dr. Clarke is constantly asserting. But is this a real deliverance where Jesus Christ, the crowning revelation of God, was so constantly falling back on the "it is written" of the Scripture? was Himself so constantly quoting special texts of Scripture?

(b) This so-called "body of truth" will set aside and exclude from use large portions of the Scripture, both Old Testament and New.

According to Dr. Clarke this "body of truth" will exclude all acceptance of the Genesis statements of the origin of man and the origin of sin. Jesus Christ makes no statement or quotation as to either of these. Says Dr. Clarke: "Theology needs a right conception of the human race, but does not obtain from the Bible an account of its origin, or the origin of the world. The facts must be learned from other sources. This is a case in which the Scriptures, rightly read, withdraw their sources." Dr. Clarke also says: "We have no historical narrative of the beginning of sin, and theology receives from the Scriptures no record of that beginning. Theology must

account for sin, if at all, without the aid of such a narrative.”

It is true that Jesus Christ makes no direct statements as to the origin of the world, the race, or sin. But it is also true that this Jesus Christ, this crowning revelation of God, quotes again and again from the Scriptures of Genesis; speaks as though the flood was an historic verity. Is this fact of our Lord's reverent quoting from Genesis to be entirely ignored?

Besides, though Jesus makes Himself no reference to the origin of sin, His apostle, St. Paul, does make such reference largely; does fall back upon the Genesis statement, and does steadily declare that the Gospel he preached and wrote was given him by direct revelation of Jesus Christ. Is such fact to be slightly ignored? Also, according to Dr. Clarke, this so-called “body of truth” excludes from Scripture and theology all vicarious, propitiatory element in the atonement of our Lord. Rule out the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is only a lot of Alexandrian allegorizing. Says Dr. Clarke: “The book of Leviticus has done more to give form to the doctrine of salvation than any single book of the New Testament.” And the Hebrews is a Christianizing statement and application of Leviticus. But Dr. Clarke declares that the “altar forms” of Scripture are clashing with this “body of truth.” So rule all out. And St. Paul's statement of the vicariousness of the atonement, why St. Paul states the atonement under the forms of Jewish and Roman law, therefore rule out such statements. Dr. Clarke does not think that they comport with this “body of truth.” Therefore rule them out. And all this notwithstanding the fact that this Jesus, this crowning revelation of God, Himself expressly declared that He came to give His life a *ransom* for many—ransom, *lutron*—a peculiarly vicarious word—notwithstanding the further fact that this Jesus, the crowning revelation of God, quotes Leviticus as Scripture; notwithstanding the further fact that this

Apostle St. Paul, whose statements concerning our Lord's sacrifice for us are red with altar forms, makes declaration that the good news of God he was commissioned to preach was veritably given him by revelation from the risen, ascended, glorified Jesus Christ.

But Dr. Clarke would also, testing them by this so-called "body of truth"—this subjective standard, this standard of what anybody may think—ought to go to form this body of truth. Dr. Clarke would rule out, by this standard, from Scripture and from theology the "advent—expectation" "which can be quoted from the lips of Jesus Christ Himself." No, either this is true concerning this advent-expectation that Jesus Christ falsely conceived the time and form of the kingdom, or that the synoptic writers have falsely attributed to Jesus the advent-expectation.

And this notwithstanding the fact that our Lord's prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem which was prefigurement of the advent-expectation, was, how precisely, fulfilled.

Is it not a fair question? Does Dr. Clarke in his even slashing excision of Scripture at all follow that loving and reverent use of Scripture set us by the example of our Lord? If Jesus Christ, as Dr. Clarke so steadily insists, is the crowning and authoritative revelation of God, has Dr. Clarke, or anybody else, a right to so clash with the example of Jesus Christ in the use of Scripture?

I think this word of Prof. George Adam Smith, whether he always consistently practices it or not, a word far truer, more reverent, limitlessly more Christian: "The Bible of the Jews in our Lord's time was practically our Old Testament. For us its supreme sanction is that which it derived from Christ Himself. What was indispensable to the Redeemer must always be indispensable to the redeemed."

Another question. Is not Dr. Clarke's use of Scripture, in his so wildly slashing way of using it, radically destruc-

tive of the basal principles of our Baptist denomination? Certainly Dr. Clarke's way of using Scripture at once and forever relaxes the grip of Scripture as Scripture. This so-called "body of truth" possessing such elements as Dr. Clarke declares it does for himself, what is there to prevent anyone from saying, "But my 'body of truth' does not for me hold either this element or that?" What is to prevent any one from saying, "I exclude from *my* body of truth the demand of Jesus for the new birth, it is only a Johanine notion foisted into the teaching of Jesus, I exclude it, if you please." What is to prevent any one from saying, "My body of truth excludes baptism by immersion; the great commission is only a synoptic addition to the teaching of Jesus?"

According to Dr. Clarke any man may have, indeed, ought to have, his own shifting "body of truth." If anybody, for reasons good to himself, shall exclude the doctrine of the New Birth, or the duty of Baptism by immersion in obedience to Christ, what is to hinder him? In the light of Dr. Clarke's norm of discrimination amid the Scripture, all Scripture has lost its authoritative grip.

But the fundamental and persistent position of the Baptist denomination has always been the sceptre of the Scripture. Because the authoritative Scripture so commands and demands we believe and practice as we do.

But Dr. Clarke's notion of the unauthoritative Scripture puts dynamite under the foundations of our Baptist faith.