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THE BIBLE IN SEVENTEENTH CENTURY SCOTLAND

I

THE attitude of seventeenth century Scotland to the Bible was that of Calvin and Knox. The Scriptures must be "believed to have come from heaven" (according to Calvin) "as directly as if God had been heard giving utterance to them." "Scripture bears upon the face of it as clear evidence of its truth as white and black do of their colour." "Our conviction of the truth of Scripture must be derived from . . . the secret testimony of the Spirit." Scripture is inerrant, uniformly authoritative, sufficient and self-interpreting.

Perhaps Calvin's theory of the Bible scarcely in all respects covers his practice. He takes a good deal of freedom as an interpreter in his *Commentaries*. But all his treatment of Scripture is governed by the fundamental conviction that it is the Word of God and therefore preaches Christ crucified from the first page to the last and is to be read in that light.

John Knox took quite the same general view and his Reformation plans for Scotland, doctrinal, liturgical, governmental and social, were put forward on the understanding that they were strictly Scriptural. The Preface to the *Scots Confession* and the *First Book of Discipline* make this sufficiently plain. Knox's words to two Queens state his position forcibly. To Mary of Scots he declared that "the Word of God is plain in the self and yf thair appear any obscuritie in one place the Holy Ghost, which is never contrarious to himself, explains the same more clearlie in other places, so that thair can remane no doubt, but unto such as obstinatlie remaine ignorant." And to Elizabeth of England he stated his policy that "whatsoever He approveth by his Eternal Word that shalbe approved and whatsoever he dampneth shalbe condemned, thogh all men on earth wold hazard the justification of the sam."

The *Westminster Confession* begins from Revelation. Its opening chapter is "Of the Holy Scripture", and teaches that God is the author of Scripture; it is infallibly true; the whole counsel of God is there available; the leading of the Spirit is

necessary to interpretation but there are matters with regard to which prudence may be a guide ; the Hebrew and Greek originals were immediately inspired by God ; Scripture is self-interpreting. An important and cautious paragraph states : “ All things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all ; yet those things which are necessary to be known, believed and observed for Salvation are so clearly propounded and opened in some place of Scripture or another, that not only the learned but the unlearned, in due use of the ordinary means, may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.” The section of the *Confession* which deals with the Bible has been very warmly praised by men of such different schools as Philip Schaff and Dean Stanley. No other view made itself evident in seventeenth century Scotland.

The translation normally used was that of Geneva. A special edition of this was issued in 1579 by Bassandyne of Edinburgh, and its sale was promoted by Privy Council order, while the magistrates of Edinburgh vigorously assisted, taking steps that all “ substantialis houshalderis ” have a Bible at home. In 1600 the Glasgow authorities were searching out those who neglected to buy Bibles. Similar versions printed abroad were available. And then in 1610 Hart at Edinburgh produced another Geneva Bible containing some modifications in the New Testament translation. This edition was recommended by the Synod of Fife in the following year. Aberdeen Session noted in 1613 that a copy of Hart’s version had just been bequeathed to the Town, and commented that “ both the Kirks have two Bibles of the same print ”.

The Geneva Bible was thus in use even after the Authorized Version made its appearance. Bishop Abernethy of Caithness in his *Physick for the Soul* (1615) ; Bishop Cowper of Galloway in his various Works (1611, etc.) ; Dr. William Guild in his *Moses Unveiled* (1620) ; J. Weemse in his *Portraiture of the Image of God in Man* (1627), all used one of the earlier versions. At the Glasgow Assembly of 1638 Alexander Henderson quoted his text according to the Geneva version. The Geneva Bible continued here and there to be read in churches, as for example at Crail till the late eighteenth century. The Session at Yester (near Haddington) in 1673 sold “ an old Church Bible of the old translation which was now of no use for the service of the Church.” Anstruther-Easter in 1717 still had “ an old large Bible in folio

of the old translation wanting a cover on the one side." Peden the prophet used a Geneva Bible in the pulpit.

In 1601 the Assembly had proposed that "sundry errors" in this translation should be amended, and this feeling no doubt contributed to the production of the Authorized Version of 1611. The first Scottish edition of this was printed by Young of Edinburgh in 1633, but the Authorized Version did not receive any official authorization from the Church of Scotland. Balcanquhal's *Large Declaration* (1639) speaks of copies of this version printed at Antwerp with plates illustrating some of the stories, which had found their way into Scotland and caused some indignation, the King being responsible for all permission to print Bibles and this being thought a deliberate attempt to irritate Scottish opinion by Romish pictures. Johnston of Warriston in his *Diary* alludes to the same illustrated Bible. John Forbes of Corse in his *Spiritual Exercises* tells how as he sat in Oldmachar Kirk the leaves of his Bible fell over of themselves to a helpful passage, and he states that his copy was of "the late English translation". The wording of any of these versions was more in line with the familiar language of the time than it is with ours, and this must have brought the Bible near to everyday life and thinking. But the clergy were equally familiar with Latin; and we find John Forbes making use of the Vulgate in his translation of his father's Works and reciting the Psalms in George Buchanan's Latin as he walked in the fields.

II

It is very noticeable that many of the seventeenth century writers are not particular to quote the words of Scripture exactly. Perhaps they were accustomed to different versions. Perhaps they were influenced by their constant reading of Latin and consequent familiarity with Latin translations. Most probably they were trusting a good deal to memory. Samuel Rutherford's *Covenant of Life Opened* (1655), R. Fleming's *Fulfilling of Scripture* (1669), Patrick Gillespie's *Ark of the Covenant* (1677) have many loose quotations. Hew Binning in his *Sermons* (1670, etc.) is very often careless and inaccurate. Clearly there was no worship of the letter. David Dickson in his *Matthew* says: "Scripture consisteth not in letters or syllables, but in sense and meaning,

for in citations of Scripture here and elsewhere the evangelists stand not for words, but rest upon the sense."

The *First Book of Discipline* declared it "a thing most expedient and necessary that every Kirk have the Bible in English and that the people be commanded to convene and heare the plaine reading and interpretation of the Scripture". In 1604 Aberdeen Session ordained that "all men and wemen in this burgh quha can read and ar of famous report and habilitie sall hawe bybles and psalme buikes of thair awin and sall bring the same with thame to thair parochie kirkis, thairon to reid and prais God, conforme to the Actes of Parliament maid thairanent." Turriff Presbytery in 1649 still found it necessary to frame a rule that "every family have a bible and a psalm book who are able to buy them and can read." The Kirk Session of Ceres (Fife) was concerned with the same matter at this time, deciding to help the poor to buy Bibles, and being satisfied afterwards upon enquiry that there were in the parish "no families wanting bibles". Dunfermline Session minutes of 1647 show how occasionally they supplied poor children with Bibles. It is not surprising that Kirkton in his credulous generalizing should declare that before 1660 "every family almost had a bible, yea, in most of the countrey, all the children of age could read the scriptures and were provided of bibles, either by the parents or their ministers."

The Episcopalians were also interested in the private use of the Bible. Thus in 1664 it was represented to the Synod of Moray by the Sheriff that the King "had ordained all families wher ther were any that could read should at the least have on bible for acquainting thes in the familie with the Scripture." The Synod welcomed the instruction and commended it to the notice of all ministers. The situation in Scotland at this time seems to have been different from what it was in Germany, for we read that in 1686 a copy of the Bible could not be found in any bookshop in Leipsic. Scottish Christians prized their Bibles very highly, and amongst the most treasured relics of the Covenanting days are the Bibles which were once the close companions of Peden, Donald Cargill, Captain Paton and William Gordon of Earlstoun.

We have to remember, however, that education in seventeenth century Scotland was not particularly widespread. A minute of the Session of Logie (in Mar) of date 1597 tells us

that none of the elders could write. A considerable proportion of the country parishes in Scotland had no properly organized school before 1696 and some not even then, while, even where there was a schoolmaster, accommodation and payment were miserable, whole districts of the parish were unprovided, and the Session found it difficult to persuade people to send their children. In any minute book to the end of the century will be found depositions by persons who declared on oath that they could not write. And the arrangements made for having the Bible read to people take this state of affairs for granted. In 1643 the minister of Grange reported that he had signed the Solemn League and Covenant and that thirty-three of the congregation had signed it with their own hands and about two hundred with the clerk's hands. That indicates something as to the number who had been to school. At school the Bible had indeed a very special place, being the chief text book. This comes out clearly even so late as the *New Statistical Account*.

The Synod of Fife in April 1611 ordained every Church to have "ane commoune Byble"; but enquiry some months later revealed that at least Uphall, Falkland, Port-on-Craig, Kilmany and Abdie had none; and the September Synod had to re-emphasize the order. The Synod of Aberdeen issued a similar instruction at this time. In 1617 it was reported that every Kirk in Ellon Presbytery was duly provided with a Bible, but in fact Slains had none in 1620. In the neighbouring Presbytery of Deer Peterhead in this same year had to be required to procure "ane Kirk Byble and ane commond Psalme Buik".

III

From an early date readers had been in the habit of reciting the liturgical prayers and reading Scripture between the second and third bells before the minister entered the church. The well-known descriptions of seventeenth century services by Cowper, Brereton and Alexander Henderson all mention this. At Rathen in 1614 the Presbytery was informed that unfortunately there was "only teaching on the sabbothe befor noune without reading throw want of ane reidder". The position would usually be occupied by the schoolmaster who would also be session clerk and precentor. We hear of readers' lecterns in both kirks in Aberdeen in 1620. An entry in the records of the Synod

of Fife in October 1624 is interesting: "Because of the grypt benefit and instruction quhilk may redound be reading of the scriptures in publict audience of the people, it was recommendit to the brethren present graivelie to advyse against the nixt Synod how the sam may be done most commodiouslie in such congregations quhair their is no ordinar readers, be the ministers themselves, and that in the interim such brethren as may conveniently do it themselves sal put the sam in practise and read sum chapters befor sermon evrie Saboth."

Scripture was further read at the daily morning and evening prayers which were held in town parishes before 1638 and continued in some places even later. John Forbes of Corse in his *Spiritual Exercises* mentions on a number of occasions the passages he had heard read at such services at Oldmachar. Most parishes had also their weekday service, though these were not generally well attended. Even in 1641 the reader was still at his post at Oldmachar. The Session in that year gave him instructions to "begin his reading precisely at the end of the second bell, and then to read a chapter and thereafter to sing two verses of a psalm and immediately thereafter the catechesis to be said and then the said Alex. to read till the minister come to the pulpit and when the minister is entered the pulpit, then to proclaim the banns of marriage."

The Westminster *Directory* dispensed with readers but made the reading of the Word a regular part of the public worship and committed it to the minister, recommending that one chapter of the Old and of the New Testament might be read at each service, the books of the Bible to be read in order, except that certain books such as Psalms as specially for edification might be more often chosen. The people were encouraged to possess a Bible of their own and to read it.

The *Directory* was strictly enforced upon the Church. At the Synod of Moray in 1646 the various Presbyteries made report that practically everyone was using it.

Forgue (Banffshire) was found to be without a kirk Bible in 1654, and the minister declined to obtain one, as there was no money available and because "it was not thought needfull for the present to have a Church byble as before when there were readers in churches, for ther is nothing read publicklye but by the minister and the minister has a Byble of his own." The minister at Slains (Aberdeenshire) bought a new Church Bible about

1642, but it was found to contain the English service and the Presbytery ordered him to have this taken out "to tak away all occasione of offence". Alvah was proposing to buy a new Kirk Bible in 1642 because the old was "riven and worne". When the Presbytery visited Drumblade in 1643 and 1644 there was still no Church Bible there. Anstruther-Wester in 1651 had to pay someone "for drying ye ould bybell which was cast in ye sea be ye Inglis qn ye town was plundered".

The Lecture was introduced at this period. Wodrow's account is the best we have. "Some time after the year 1638 at Edinburgh and in other touns the scripture was read in the Churches, two or three chapters, by the reader either with the prayers that was then ordinary, twice or at least once a day in the old church of Edinburgh. At lenth it came to be objected by some ministers that it was not so proper that the reading the scripture, which was an act of publick worship, should be gone about by one who was not a church officer. So the six ministers of Edinburgh agreed among themselves to divide the week among them; and by turns through the week to explain the scripture, and give some short notes on it when they read it, and reading and explication and prayers wer all to be confined to an hour. Thus they continued for some years, and at lenth finding it a more considerable work than at first they reconed it and it lying heavy on some who stayed closs in toun when others wer oblidged to be abroad, it was brought to three days in the week; and at lenth it fell in disuse and lectures on the sabbath fornoon came in the room of it."

From Presbytery records we find that at King Edward (Aberdeenshire) in June 1648 there was "lecture and sermon before and afternoon with psalms", and at Forgue in 1649 a lecture before noon in the Psalms and a sermon of Revelation iii., and afternoon a sermon on Exodus xx. The minister of Aberchirder (Banffshire) in 1651 reported that he lectured "half an hour's space and above" before his morning sermon every Sunday. At Kinnoir (now Huntly) the minister in 1654 had a lecture and a sermon, the former continuing an hour, and the latter two hours. In 1647 the Synod of Moray in the interests of uniformity had advised that the lecture should occupy half an hour.

Family worship was a strong point with the Covenanters. In 1648 a special effort was made to encourage the exercise and

books of devotion were distributed by elders. The minutes of the Presbytery of Cupar state the number of copies which the various parishes will require. At Alves (Elgin) in 1659 "the Session find it expedient that the minister visit the families along with the elders of the district to enquire if familie dutie be performed especiallie on the Lord's day and also on weekdays". Elders in particular were expected to be strict in their own observance of this duty. The Bible and the Psalms must have been made very familiar by its practice.

IV.

With the Restoration readers were re-introduced. Some churches had to be provided again with Bibles. At Oldmachar in 1661 the Session delivered the Kirk Bible to the bookbinder so that the reading might begin again. It was actually resumed on July 21st "according to the appoyntment of the provinciell assemblie". Newhills (Aberdeenshire) in 1662 bought "a bible in folio of the new translation with the psalms bound in the end of it". At Aberdour (Fife) the Session record in 1668 that they have "several times before been thinking how they might attain to a Kirk Bible". A special collection was taken and was so satisfactory that they were enabled to purchase one for £18 18s. Scots. Kirkcaldy Session minutes in 1674 state that "the new kirk Bible which Thomas Whyte was commissionate to buy according to the will of the defunct Mr. David Pearson who left money for that effect is come home and pleases the session very well". In 1678 Newmachar (Aberdeenshire) procured a large Kirk Bible which cost £14 Scots, "there being never any kirk bible here before". Monymusk Session in the following year "considering that there is no church bible" bought one in Aberdeen for £15 6s. 8d. Scots, and this Bible is still extant. At Dunfermline there is an entry in 1683 with regard to "a new great byble for the use of this kirk from Andro Simson clerk who brot ye same out of Holland, the pryce qhrof being 50 mks": which sum the Session paid. Cullen Session in 1703 was charged: "for a calf's skinn to be a cover to ye kirk bible 7s; for dressing ye skinn bought to cover ye kirk bible and alm'd Leather to fasten ye cover to ye brods, and for sowing therof 10s; for keepers to ye clasps, brass nails, putting on ye stoods and gluing loose leaves 14s."

Henry Scougall when he went to be minister at Auchterless in 1673 abandoned the custom of entering the church only at the third bell, "thinking it very unfit that the invocation of Almighty God, the reading some portions of the holy scriptures, making a confession of our Christian faith and rehearsing the ten commandments should be looked upon only as a prelude for ushering in the people to the church and the minister to the pulpit." In the same spirit the Synod of Aberdeen in 1684 recommended ministers to be present at and countenance the reading of Scripture in their churches before sermon to encourage the people to attend.

The Lecture was generally abandoned in the Restoration period. The Privy Council in 1670 forbade the practice and took steps to stop it. But the Synod of Edinburgh in 1683 still found it necessary to ask ministers who "used lectures" "to forbear them".

The Lecture system was revived at the Revolution. At Stobo in May 1689 a proclamation was read with regard to thanksgiving for the Revolution, ministers to lecture and preach in the forenoon and to preach in the afternoon. The Session records of Yester bear that on October 29th, 1693, "the minr began to expound the Epistle of Paul to the Rom: in the afternoon having now fullie expounded the Acts of the Apostles by way of lectures in the preceding afternoons on the Lord's dayes". In 1696 he was similarly going through Ephesians. Many Session minute books note both the subject of the sermon and that of the lecture and we find the lecture in use late in the eighteenth century, for example at Daviot (Aberdeenshire) in 1784.

The straightforward reading of the Scriptures was dropped from the service. An attempt was made in some places to maintain it. In 1694 the Assembly enjoined ministers "in their exercise of lecturing to read and open up to their people some large and considerable portion of the word of God that the old custom introduced by the *Directory* might by degrees be recovered". It was, however, necessary to repeat the injunction in 1704. Boston mentions that when he entered Duns church to preach in March 1698 he "heard the precentor reading and found them singing Psalm lvii. 3". The Oldmachar Session in 1698 had the clerk again allowed to read the Scriptures before sermon both morning and afternoon; and it was apparently

being done also in Aberdeen and some neighbouring parishes. But as a rule the precentor now confined his attention to the praise.

There is in existence a manuscript copy of a petition which the people of Cabrach sent to Queen Anne asking for an Episcopalian minister, and this includes a very clear distinction between Episcopalian and Presbyterian services in Scotland at the time: "We cannot endure to hold divine worship among us mutilate by being deprived of the public reading of the Scriptures, our Lord's incomparable prayer, and that primitive summary of our faith, the Doxology; we judge it an insufferable usurpation to have the *Westminster Confession* foisted in at Baptism in lieu of the Apostles' Creed, and so our children instead of being entered into the Christian religion made proselytes to a faction."

Sage in his *Brief Examination* (1703) attacked the Presbyterians for having "sent a packing the publick reading of the scriptures". George Meldrum replied in *Vindication and Defence*, pointing out that though the precentor no longer read, the minister expounded; but Sage followed up his charge in *Reasonableness of a Toleration* (1704): "How do they read then? Two or three verses by way of text to a lecture and sometimes perhaps but a corner of a verse by way of text for I cannot tell how many sermons." This he declared to be contrary to early Church custom, to Reformation practice, to the *Directory* and to the belief in the perspicuity of Scripture. At the same date another Episcopalian pamphleteer in *Toleration Defended* made a similar assault, and James Ramsay of Eyemouth retorted in *Toleration's Fence Removed*. George Garden's *Case of the Episcopal Clergy* (1703) also hits at the Presbyterians when he says that Episcopalian did not think the Holy Scripture "so obscure in things necessary to salvation that they might not be read to the people without an human gloss".

Tait's *Border Life* describes a Border Secession Church in 1771 and mentions that there was "a lecture and a sermon occupying with singing and prayer but no reading of the scriptures all the time from eleven till two o'clock"; and he tells how a Secession minister at Kelso about 1830 introduced the practice of reading the Scripture statedly as part of the sanctuary services, "a habit unknown at that time in the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland." Things were not exactly so bad as that, but the Church

of Scotland Assembly in 1812 found it necessary to recommend ministers to read at one of the meetings for public worship such portions of the Old and New Testaments as they may judge expedient, and the Assembly of 1856 enjoined the observation of this recommendation and applied it to each diet of worship.

V

Extemporaneous prayers were used alike by Presbyterians and Episcopalians in the seventeenth century, and these were full of Biblical expressions which must have sunk into the popular mind. The prayers attributed to Alexander Henderson in the published volume of his Sermons present a suitable example. The sole praise was also Biblical, metrical psalms being sung at all services and at family worship. Catechetical instruction was regular and would familiarize people from an early age with the Scripture proofs of doctrine. And no one was admitted to Communion who did not know the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments as well as the Creed. Indeed in the Synod of Moray a rule was passed in 1642 that persons without that knowledge might not even be married. Thus directly and indirectly the Bible was brought very thoroughly into the lives of all.

We find it entering even into popular superstitions. At Aberdour (Fife) in 1669 and again in 1678 we come across cases where people are charged before the Kirk Session with attempting divination by means of a key and a Bible. The Presbytery of Kirkcaldy declared that the custom "savoured of diabolical arts and indirect contact with Satan". But the Session minutes of Kirkcaldy in 1690 record a further case where an endeavour has been made to discover a thief. The "works of the key" were placed upon Psalm 50, verse 17 and then the question was put whether this or that person was the delinquent and when the right name was mentioned, the key and the Bible were said both to have turned about and the key fell down. Garden in his *Funeral Sermon of Henry Scougall* (1678) refers to the practice of "making a lottery of the Holy Scriptures", opening the Bible at random and seeking guidance in the first words observed. Bibliolatriy was a possible danger for Protestants.

The standards of Ethics, personal and social, were Biblical, and the Ten Commandments were regarded as the sum of human

duty as the popularity of such a book as Durham's *The Law Unsealed* makes manifest. There was no serious attempt to discriminate between Old and New Testament codes, the difference being apparently not felt, and the whole Bible being regarded as equally authoritative. Hence the possibility of the slaughter of prisoners by the Covenanters after Philiphaugh, and the quotation of the example of Samuel and Agag, and that of Jael. Hence also the attitude of Presbyterians and Episcopalians alike towards suspected witchcraft, and the frequent use of the text, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live". The position of women was affected by Eastern limitations. The general features of Sabbath observance were very much those of the Old Testament. And in the politics of the time the Bible was a constant book of reference. Rutherford's *Lex Rex* is full of Scripture. *Naphtali* claims that the Covenants were "founded upon the Word of God". And more dangerously *The Hind Let Loose* finds in certain verses of Esther justification for those who "destroy, slay and cause to perish and avenge ourselves on them that would assault us". Under Covenanting rule Presbyterians strictly observed how ministers preached "to the times", and this involved the use of Biblical applications and illustrations.

All sermons were Biblical and most were expository. The theological basis of these was also Biblical. One finds the appeal to Scripture in all kinds of theological and religious literature of the seventeenth century. Apart from lectures and sermons, we have Biblical studies such as William Guild's *Moses Unveiled* and Robert Fleming's *Fulfilling of Scripture*. Controversial theology such as Strang's *de Voluntate* (1657) or Rutherford's *Examen Arminianismi* (1668) is quite as much Biblical, and the influence of Cocceius introduced the Federal theology of which the *Sum of Saving Knowledge* (1650) and Patrick Gillespie's *Ark of the Covenant Opened* (1677) may be cited as examples offering what we would more technically term Biblical theology. But the Bible is quite as much in evidence in works on Church Government such as those of Rutherford, George Gillespie, Calderwood, Wood and Forrester; in Dickson's *Truth's Victory*, a survey of the *Westminster Confession*; in historical sketches such as Blair's *Autobiography*, Brown's *Apologetical Relation, Naphtali* (1667) and its counter-irritant *Survey of the Insolent Libel* (1668), and Jamieson's *Apology for the Oppressed Ministers* (1677); and in devotional books such as William Guthrie's *Christian's Great*

Interest (about 1658) and Henry Scougall's *Life of God in the Soul of Man* (1677).

VI

Of first importance in seventeenth century thought was the controversy with Rome. One of the main differences between the Protestants and their opponents had reference to the Scriptures. Both accepted the same basic view of Scripture as indited by the Holy Spirit, but they differed on the matter of authority. The Romanists put the Church before the Bible and the Protestants reversed the order. For Protestants it was therefore imperative to uphold the necessity and clarity and sufficiency of Scripture.

Perhaps the most weighty Scottish contribution to the discussion of this matter was the *de Interpretatione et Perfectione Scripturae* of John Strang, posthumously published in 1663. Strang had been Professor of Divinity at Glasgow and was a bold thinker for his day, both his Presbyterianism and his Calvinism being for a time in doubt. He inclined to the views of Cameron and Amyraut in theology. His *de Interpretatione* is very formally logical and strictly controversial, emphasizing the perspicuity, perfection and sufficiency of the Bible. "Summa totius scripturae" he says "quae consistit in praeceptis decalogi, symbolo apostolico, oratione dominica, et sacramentis, aperta habent testimonia in scriptura: ergo scriptura clara est in necessariis ad salutem." The references are largely to the Fathers, especially Augustine, Chrysostom, Jerome and Tertullian. There are a few classical quotations. He knows the Romanist writers of his period and directs himself mainly against Bellarmine; but he does not quote Luther, Flacius, Grotius, Rivetus or the English exegetes.

John Menzeis, Professor of Divinity at Aberdeen, also took up this controversy in his disputes with Dempster (published in 1668 under the title *Papismus Lucifugus*) and more systematically in the third chapter of his *Roma Mendax* (1675). Menzeis was a great fighter of the not very polite or charitable type of the period. He had intimate knowledge of the Romanist literature of his subject, and the book is a mass of references. His chief Protestant authority is Rivetus, but he makes frequent

mention also of English writers—"learned and judicious"—Richard Baxter, Hooker, Chillingworth, Tillotson, Field and others. For him "scripture, both in the originals and when faithfully translated is the Rule of Faith. If an ambassadour deliver his mind by an interpreter, are not the words of the interpreter the words of the ambassadour?" With regard to the vexed question of the Hebrew points, he accepts—as Scots generally seem to have done—the verbal inspiration view of the Buxtorfs as against the more advanced critical opinion of Louis Cappel. We find interesting mention of More's *Utopia*, and of the Jansenist struggle in France.

At an earlier date several points of the Romanist controversy with regard to the Scriptures were incidentally treated by John Forbes of Corse in his *Instructiones Historico-Theologicae* (1645); but unfortunately he only managed to write sixteen of the twenty-five projected books, and it was in books 21 to 25 that he had meant to deal with the authority of Scripture, canonicity, editions and versions, the perfection of Scripture, the place of tradition, and the perspicuity and interpretation of Scripture.

The early seventeenth century would still study Rollock's *Treatise of our Effectual Calling* in which he devotes some chapters to the stock scriptural controversies, and these are also treated by Robert Barron in his *Apodixis Catholica* (1631).

Some learned commentary was also directed against Rome, particularly in works on the Book of Revelation. John Napier of Merchiston, the originator of Logarithms, had published his English commentary as early as 1594, a second edition appearing in 1611 and a fifth in 1645, while the book was also translated into several foreign tongues. He sought to search and prove the true interpretation of Revelation and to apply the same paraphrastically and historically and so to refute the Roman position. A commentary on the same book by Patrick Forbes of Corse was printed in 1613 and issued by his son John in a Latin translation with additional notes in 1646. This is composed in a very clear, straightforward, confident style, showing intimacy with the whole Bible, and careful word for word pondering over Revelation, but little interest in linguistic discussion. Rome to the author is Antichrist, and he is indignant at the Romish attitude according to which "Antichrist his great booke of human traditions, unwritten verities, apochriphe scriptures, decretals, canons, and manifold legends" are set upon practical equality

with canonical Scripture. Bishop Cowper also wrote on Revelation (1619), giving an interesting list of earlier commentaries. He holds that "it is sufficient for us that in these books wherein the Lord teaches us the way of salvation, he speaks so plainly that the entrance into his word sheweth light and giveth understanding to the simple." In discussing the temptation of Jesus he says that Jesus answered by Scripture when tempted out of Scripture, "not to oppose scripture unto scripture, for it cannot bee contrary unto itselfe, but to prove that to be the wrong sense of scripture which Satan would have enforced upon it, and out of this also we learne how the best way to attaine unto the true sense of scripture is to conferre scripture with scripture."

In another of Patrick Forbes's books (*A Discoverie of their perverse Deceit*) we have reference to the Romanist position: "one did not stick (O prodigious blasphemy) to answer, Away with your scriptures! You may prove a hundred lyes from scripture." But this he meets in still another work (*Defence of the Lawful Calling of the Ministers of Reformed Churches*): "We know that howsoever the careful reading of scripture is both recommended to all and is commendable in all, yet that for understanding what we read the common sort have need of an interpreter and a messenger who is a man of a thousand: we are so far herein from permitting every man to his own sense . . . that we constantly avouch that whoever contemneth the Lord his ordinance herein he contemneth the Lord." His general position is plain from his words in his *Revelation*: "There can bee no tryall of true Christianitie, neither any other refuge for Christians willing to know the veritie of the Faith but the divine and holy scriptures."

VII

In the matter of Scripture the Scots were as hostile to Anabaptists and Quakers as they were to Romanists. Robert Baillie is typical. In his *Anabaptism* (1647) he writes: "Having cast away first the Old Testament as removed by the Gospel, and then the Gospel itself as a shadow put away by the greater light of their new prophets, these impediments of holy scripture being fully removed, the new perfect doctrine which they bring . . ." John Menzeis was quite as virulent and venomous in his

disputations with Quakers as against his Jesuit controvertor. George Hutcheson in commenting upon Joel ii. 28, is careful to emphasize the appeal to Scripture as against those who might use the passage in the interests of new prophecy. Fraser of Brea speaking of the Quakers declares: "I looked on the inward testimony and guiding of the spirit (as they say) in the heart but as a device of Satan to cast off the scriptures." And Robert Leighton, though always sympathetic towards mysticism, says in commenting upon 1 Peter i. 2: "If any pretend that they have the spirit and so turn away from the straight rule of Holy Scriptures, they have indeed a spirit, but it is a fanatical spirit, the spirit of delusion and giddiness." The Scottish insistence upon an educated ministry is in line with this general attitude to the Bible.

No book by any Scottish writer took up the systematic study of Scripture. Rivetus in his *Isagoge* remained a valued guide in this department. Of special introduction there was none because there appeared no problem as to Scripture in its literary aspect. Scottish theologians were intensely prejudiced against such critical attitudes as were adopted by Hobbes, Spinoza and Simon. The humanist view with reference to Greek and Hebrew was, however, accepted, as by Protestants generally, and this none the less because the Romanists as represented for example by the Sorbonne had long been exceedingly suspicious of linguistic enterprise. But Scots did not contribute much themselves in this department and continued to depend upon Tremellius and Junius and of course the Buxtorfs in Hebrew and upon Erasmus and Beza in New Testament Greek. Scots ministers seem to have known Greek fairly well, but their Hebrew was decidedly poor. At King's College, Aberdeen, in 1619 it was found that practically no Hebrew was being taught. Two years earlier a Scot, William Symson, had published in London a small work, *de Accentibus Hebraicis*; but the son and especially the grandson of John Row the Reformer were Scotland's earliest Hebraists of distinction. The last named was encouraged by the Town Council of Aberdeen, who appointed him to teach Hebrew once a week at Marischal College in 1642, and who next year allowed him 400 merks "for setting furth ane Hebrew dictionar, and dedicating the same to the Counsell". Presbyteries were seldom exacting in their demands in the matter of Hebrew in trials for licence and ordination; but at St. Andrews

in 1666 it was agreed that "for the stirring up of young men for the studieing of the Hebrew more accuratlie, it is appointed that whosoever shall not giv satisfacione in the Hebrew in exponing aine of the first 30 psalmes *ad aperturam libri* so much shall be signified in ther testimonies." Boston's waste of time and ingenuity on the Hebrew accents early in the next century must have followed a good deal of similar laborious exercise in other Scottish manses; and we find seventeenth century sermons occasionally censured (as by Amesius in Holland) for their inclusion of Hebrew and Greek words which could inspire nothing but misguided feelings of awe in the congregations.

The common judgment as to interpretation emphasized the plainness of Scripture. This was very necessary if the place given to the Bible by Protestants was to be maintained. Thus we have an Antiochian attitude as opposed to an Alexandrian. Theodore of Mopsuestia writing on Galatians attacked the method of Origen according to which Adam is not Adam and paradise is not paradise and the snake is not a snake. The Scottish exegetes would have agreed. Sometimes, however, they do in spite of good intentions fall into the error which Spinoza notes and "wring their inventions and sayings out of the sacred text". Bacon's views on Scripture interpretation would have met with acceptance. "The scriptures being given by inspiration and not by human reason do differ from all other books in the author, which by consequence doth draw on some difference to be used by the expositor. For the inditer of them did know four things which no man attains to know, which are the mysteries of the Kingdom of Glory, the perfection of the laws of nature, the secrets of the heart of man and the future succession of the ages." And further: "I do much condemn that interpretation of the scripture which is only after the manner as men use to interpret a profane book."

James Durham, who was one of the most popular preachers and exegetes of the century, discusses some problems of interpretation in the Introduction to his *Clavis Cantici* (1669). He points out the distinction between allegorical interpretation of Scripture and interpretation of allegorical Scripture. The first will "fasten many senses upon one Scripture" and is "unsafe and justly reprovab", and "obtrudeth meanings on the words never intended by the Spirit". Durham sets himself to "draw plain doctrines out of allegory and not to draw allegories out of plain

histories and doctrines". He desires to be dogmatic and practical in his teaching. Scripture is to be regarded as definitely allegorical "when the literal proper meaning looketh absurd-like or is empty and nothing to edification" and when "the literal sense agrees not with other scriptures" and so on. Some passages "reach not the scope of edification intended by them if literally understood, as when Christ hath spoken of sowing . . . for his aim could not be to discourse of husbandry to them". The *Song of Solomon* he regards as suitable for allegorical interpretation because "all the absurdities mentioned would follow if the song were literally and properly expounded". "There can be no edification in setting out humane love so largely and lively and yet edification must be the end of this song, being a part of scripture; it must have therefore an higher meaning than the words at first will seem to bear."

VIII

Interpreters in Scotland in the seventeenth century all hold Scripture to be a unity, no difference being suggested between book and book. The whole shows forth Christ. It is Christ for whom we have to look everywhere. The Old Testament is full of types of Christ. For David Dickson the Ark of the Covenant is the type of Christ for from it God uttered His voice and Christ is the Word incarnate. The Tables of the Covenant were put into the Ark, and this signifies that the fulfilling of the Law is only to be sought in Christ. Hew Binning has left us several very readable sermons on the authority and use of the Scriptures which show how emphatic was the Church's conviction that they were the very Word of God and that it was Christ Himself who was the treasure for which their readers were to search. Leighton has a good deal to say about Scripture. He had the general scholastic and uncritical ideas of his age as to its authority and composition, and he expresses the usual view when he writes: "The resemblance holds good between the two Cherubim over the mercy-seat and the two Testaments: *those* had their faces toward one another, and both toward the mercy-seat; and *these* look to one another in their doctrine agreeing perfectly and both look to Christ, the true mercy-seat and the great subject of the Scriptures." The Scriptures "are the golden

mines in which alone the abiding treasures of eternity are to be found, and therefore worthy all the digging and pains we can bestow on them." "Therefore is his name as precious ointment or perfume, diffused through the whole Scriptures: all these holy leaves smell of it, not only those that were written after his coming, but those that were written before."

Most of the exegetes concerned themselves with the "scope" of the passages and books. We find the word employed explicitly by Dickson, Durham, Hutcheson, Ferguson and Nisbet. It is the *σκοπός* of Aristotle. The idea was applied by Luther and from him by Matthias Flacius. Lord Bacon also has the word. It means "corpus ipsum", the intention, end or purpose of what the author has written.

Questions of authorship aroused little interest. The general view was that the writers were a mere pen or hand used by the Holy Spirit. Durham asks, "Did Solomon know what spiritual doctrine the Song contained?" and answers, "Our great purpose is to know what the Spirit intended and not what Solomon understood." Solomon is "honoured to be the amanuensis of the Holy Ghost in putting this song upon record." Elsewhere Durham refers to Solomon as the "penman". Ferguson says: "The scriptures of the Old and New Testament were indited by the Spirit of God, . . . the penmen thereof were not acted with human policy, but immediately inspired by that unerring Spirit." The *Westminster Confession* did not include Hebrews among the Epistles of Paul; but we find it usually so classified. Rivetus assumes the Pauline authorship. David Dickson says it was not important to have Paul's name given originally as that of the author for "it is not always necessary that we should know the name of the writer of every part of Scripture, for the authority thereof is not from men but from God, the inspirer thereof." Scottish writers did not find difficulties as to the Canon. The *Apocrypha* is stated in the *Westminster Confession* to be "of no authority in the Church".

Scripture is almost invariably interpreted and illustrated by reference to other parts of Scripture or to the Fathers. Grotius in his *Commentaries*, which were well known in Scotland, made use of classical and Jewish illustrations, but there was little of this in Scotland even in sermons. The notable exception is Leighton who introduces many classical quotations and historical allusions. On the other hand the Scottish commentators as

a whole show themselves concerned about the practical Christian life rather than about speculative theology, and we find many homely and sensible applications, though their relevance may sometimes be questionable.

Scottish ministers did not find it easy to procure much literature to help them in their Bible study. Boston makes repeated complaint regarding the want of commentaries, and this must have had some serious results; but of course it had the benefit of compelling men to read the Bible itself rather than merely books about the Bible, and to attempt to think out the meaning of Scripture for themselves rather than take it second-hand. Some of the best commentaries in use were foreign, the Latin in which they were issued proving no obstacle in seventeenth century Scotland. Calvin's *Commentaries* were respected. The editor of Nisbet's *Ecclesiastes* mentions numerous English commentators who had dealt with that book. But Dutch exegetical works were the favourites, and for thoroughness nothing produced in Scotland equalled them.

Scottish commentaries on the whole were not—like those of Grotius—intended primarily for the scholar. John Cameron's *Myrothecium evangelicum* (1632) was indeed a profound linguistic study of difficult passages. And no one would question the amazing erudition of Robert Boyd of Trochrig who contrived to read into *Ephesians* (1652) the complete system of Christian theology, quoting all the authorities. In his massy folio he follows chapter and verse through the epistle, but misses no opportunity of digressing and omits little that could justifiably be considered by a Professor of Divinity. On somewhat similar lines (though scarcely so extensive, and in English instead of Latin) is Durham's volume of lectures on *Revelation* (1660), an extremely learned work, including essays upon a number of controversial themes and displaying acquaintance with the whole range of theological and historical literature both ancient and modern. From a study of it one can form a fair estimate of the reach of thought in educated clerical circles in Scotland at that time.

IX

The early publications were mostly in Latin, but sometimes posthumous English translations were made, as of Rollock's

Colossians (1603) and Charles Ferme's *Romans* (1651). David Dickson's *Expositio Analytica Omnium Apostolicarum Epistolarum* appeared in 1647 and was translated in 1659. Most of the Scottish exegetes, however, seem to have written for persons better acquainted with English, and to have preferred the doctrinal and practical to the grammatical. Dickson in his *Exposition of Matthew* (1647), which Spurgeon called "a perfect gem" says that the book is intended for people who are busy at work most of the day but who are prepared to set aside say half an hour for Bible reading. The fundamentals of Calvinism are introduced, and many simple practical reflections put forward. He does not trouble about other commentators. In his *Expositio Analytica* he makes it plain that it would have been easier to write lengthy commentaries, but that he preferred to make them "packed". He had noted how many books Divinity students had to read and how little time they spent reading their Bibles, and he was ambitious of encouraging "noble Bereans, Scripture disciples". These studies of the Epistles are indeed very brief and confine themselves to essentials. Dickson had done a rather fuller study of *Hebrews* (1635), where we find some characteristically suggestive passages and interesting expressions. Christ is "put in the number of the Covenanters". God sees "what infidelity lurks within us under the vizard of an outward profession". Even where a man has most right to be in the world "he ought to have a pilgrim's mind". A sentence with a modern ring is this: "Find wee Christ good and merciful, loving and pittiful, meek and lowly, not abhorring the most vile and miserable, whether in soul or body that cometh unto him for relief, wee may bee assured that such a one is the Father and no otherwayes minded to such as seek unto him through Christ." It is difficult to think that the author of such a sentence could have been so enthusiastic about the murder of Philiphaugh prisoners as tradition has reported.

Dickson's three volumes on the *Psalms* (1653, etc.) have been commended with special cordiality by Spurgeon who himself read and re-read them. The Davidic authorship is assumed, the Psalmist being "the Lord's penman". David is believed to have known himself to be a type of Christ. There is no attempt whatever to face textual difficulties. The exegete is careful to urge that "in the Psalms, as the matter will suffer, Christ is much to be eyed". Interpretation is often very definitely theological

and strictly Calvinistic as one would expect from this Covenanting Professor of Divinity; but a great deal is tender evangelical suggestion, which reminds us that we have to do with the unctuous revivalist of Shotts and Irvine. In so very great an analytic undertaking there are naturally many commonplace observations, but there are not a few pregnant sentences. A few typical utterances may be given. "It is not for any good we deserve or have done or can do for which he taketh such care of his weak and foolish children. It is for the glory of his free grace, constant love and sworn covenant, even for his own name's sake" (Psalm xxiii.). "No light save the light of God's revealed word in Holy Scripture for the mirrour, no light but the light of God's spirit—illuminating the soul looking upon the mirrour, can make a man understand or believe or sensibly discern the wisdom, comfort, and felicity which is held forth to his church in his ordinances and felt in himself by experience; in thy light (he saith) shall we see light" (Psalm xxxvi.). "God's presence among his people will not exempt them from trouble, but from perdition in trouble: he will not exempt the bush from burning, but from being consumed" (Psalm xlvi.). "Above all which promises what can be more added to enduce a soul to embrace the free offer of grace in Christ tendred in the Gospel to sinners or to move him to entertain friendship with God by still believing in him and resting on him?" (Psalm xci.).

Dickson deserves very special mention, for he was actuated by a desire to induce his "godly learned" friends to provide similar brief commentaries upon other books of the Bible to encourage intelligent Bible reading amongst ordinary Scottish Church members. Something of his spirit appears in the work of George Hutcheson, an Edinburgh minister who took an active part in the Church life of his times as shown by the many references to him, for example in Baillie's *Letters* and Livingstone's *Life*, and with regard to whom Wodrow quotes some interesting notes. Spurgeon says: "Whenever the student sees a commentary by Hutcheson let him buy it, for we know of no author who is more thoroughly helpful to the minister of the word. He distils the text and gives his readers the quintessence ready for use." Edmund Calamy's words may be added: To Hutcheson, he says, "God hath given an excellent and peculiar gift whereby he is enabled in a very short and yet substantial way to give the sense and meaning of a text and to gather suitable, proper

and profitable observations out of it for the help of weak Christians."

Hutcheson speaks of Scripture as "His infallible Word and the rule for finding out truth and deciding all controversies in religion." In it the way of salvation is fully revealed. It is plain in all things necessary for salvation, but its truth is "a treasure in a mine", and hence the duty of searching the Scriptures, the "scope" of which is to bear witness to Christ, the whole aim in reading the Scriptures being "to find Christ in them". Hutcheson does not refer to modern commentators or the Fathers, and there is only an occasional allusion to the Greek and Hebrew or to different renderings and interpretations. There is no disputation or hair-splitting. He states briefly the gist of the narrative and proceeds to deduce "doctrines" of general application. As an interpreter he shows no special ingenuity or originality, insight or depth, but is practical and commonsense. His theological position is clear. "The first fountain and rise of the salvation of any of lost mankind", he reminds us in *John* (1657), "is in the absolute and sovereign will of God." "Nothing we have can be right or acceptable without faith laying hold on Christ and his righteousness. Humility without it will prove but discouragement, a study of holiness and conformity to the law but a stumbling at his righteousness, and diligence will but tend to security." "Conversion and coming unto Christ is not a cause, nor is the foresight thereof antecedent to election, but it is only a fruit following thereupon, for such is the order here they are given by the Father and upon that their coming necessarily followeth." In this commentary Hutcheson introduces many practical exhortations—for example, regarding sabbath keeping, private and public worship, and various needful virtues, while there is also an occasional interesting phrase like "returning to God by the chariot of his sufferings".

In his *Exposition of the XII small Prophets* (3 vols., 1653-5), he seems more prosaic and does not contrive to educe much high moral or spiritual doctrine. The prophet was "the penman" who "received the ensuing message by inspiration and extraordinary revelation", and the message is one for direct application to the life of the Christian Church. From Hosea ii. 15 he was able to make the inference: "that vocal singing to the Lord's praise is a gospel ordinance may appear in part from this place . . . though musical instruments and dances (which were used then

also) are abolished as being ceremonial." His view of the problem of evil was the common one—all afflictions were either punishment or trial. Judgments "are sent upon an errand, and we must do what they are sent to do work before they be removed" (Amos iii. 5). The duty of daily worship was drawn from Amos iv. 4.

His commentary on *Job* (1669) is a large work containing the substance of several hundred lectures. As Scripture is silent regarding the "penman", "it is sufficient for our faith that it was written by the direction of the Spirit of God". In his remarks concerning Chap. iv. Hutcheson gives an interesting guide as to the treatment of certain difficulties in Scripture. "When we consider that both parties are rebuked by God for what they utter in the debate, and that they speak of many things in contradictory terms, we can no further justify the purpose uttered by them, than we find the general consent of other Scriptures bearing witness thereunto, as we cannot either justify the complaints and tentations of saints which are recorded in the Book of *Psalms* and elsewhere as sound Divinity, but we look upon them as recorded in Scripture only for this end that their example and experience may serve for caution and instruction to the godly in all ages."

X

James Durham is amongst the best known of our seventeenth century Bible students. To Spurgeon he is "a prince among spiritual expositors". His chief contributions to exegesis are his elaborate series of lectures on *Revelation* (1660), a small volume on *Job* (1659) and his *Clavis Cantici* (1668). Although the first mentioned is so learned it is there in an essay on Ministerial Qualifications that Durham approvingly quotes Basil "that as dyers, when they are to dye purple, do first put some common colour on the cloth to make it receive the purple the better, so humane learning is useful for fitting one for the more profitable study of Divinity", but goes on to refer to many abuses of erudition by schoolmen and by preachers. The most popular of his books was his *Clavis Cantici*, an exposition of the *Song of Solomon*, which he regarded as a mystical account of the relations between Christ and the Church. This type of interpretation is due chiefly to S. Bernard. It is curious how this book of Scripture seemed to

appeal to the seventeenth century. Calvinism has little use for mysticism, but in Scotland "nuptial mysticism" found famous expression in Samuel Rutherford's *Letters*. When Bishop Patrick Forbes was dying one of the last things his son John Forbes said was to remind him of the Scripture words: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." Robert Leighton repeatedly quotes the *Song of Solomon* and in his 1 Peter calls it: "that divine song of loves wherein Solomon borrows all the beauties of the creatures, dips his pencil in all their several excellencies, to set him forth unto us, who is the chief of ten thousands." William Guild of Aberdeen had published a commentary upon the *Song of Solomon* under the title *Love's Intercourse* (1658). Spurgeon preferred Durham's, and Durham is certainly much the more spiritual man, but Guild really excels himself in this book and spends great labour and shows great address in interpreting the allegories. Origen himself could scarcely have done better. Here are a few sentences which reveal not only him but his times. "This love which is carried to Christ as Moses' rod devoured the rods of Aegyptian sorcerers when they were turned into serpents, even so it mortifies in us that selflove which is an enemy to salvation, and the love to sinne, to the mammon of iniquity and all the inordinate affections which by the Apostle we are commanded to mortify." "He standeth behind our wall. . . . His deity stood behind the wall of his humanity—our wall, because he took upon him our nature." "O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock . . . Christ is the rock to her, in the cliffs of whose wounds she places all her safety." In chapter vi. 11 the godly are compared to nut-trees "(1) because as nuts has the best unseen within it, which is the kernall, even so the best side of the godly is the inner man, contrary to hypocrites; (2) the nuts with the greatest shours of rain are washt onely the more but nowaies harmed, even so by affliction or persecution are the godly profited but not prejudiced." Durham reads tamely when compared with this.

Guild was also the author of a commentary on *Revelation* (1656); and of another on 2 Samuel, *The Throne of David* (1659) which Dr. Owen strongly commended, but about which Spurgeon is inclined to be sarcastic. Guild, though a charitable man and trained among the Aberdeen doctors, was not of a very high level intellectually or spiritually and his writings are mostly dreary and unfruitful.

It is somewhat surprising that so little was written on Romans. Andrew Melville, Robert Rollock and Charles Ferme had all attempted it in the early days and David Dickson of course surveyed it in his *Expositio Analytica*, while John Brown of Wamphray left behind him unpublished expositions of Romans and Thessalonians in lectures. James Ferguson of Kilwinning published brief expositions of Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians (1656-74) which are decidedly after the manner of Dickson and Hutcheson, and deserve to be classed with their productions. Spurgeon was impressed by this work and proclaimed Ferguson "a grand, gracious and savoury divine". He succeeded Baillie at Kilwinning and is often mentioned in the *Letters*, while Wodrow reports Stirling's gossip regarding him. Wodrow also says that a commentary by him on Timothy was ready to print.

In treating of the Epistles, Ferguson had abundant opportunity of taking up points of theology and his position is always pointedly stated—as for example with reference to Galatians i. 4 : "Nothing less could be a satisfying ransom to the Father's justice than the offering up of Jesus Christ, the holy, harmless and spotless lamb of God, both in soul and body, as a sacrifice, by death upon the cross. The wrong was infinite, and so must the price be, even no less than the blood of God." His philosophy of Providence appears in what he says on 1 Thessalonians ii. 2 : "It often falls out that they meet with most of trouble and suffering at the close of some notable piece of service done to their master Christ. Satan's malice is hereby more provoked, and God giveth way to his malice then, to teach his servants that their reward is not to be expected here, and to divert them by this humbling exercise from being transported with lofty thoughts of themselves." On the whole his observations are not very illuminating or stimulating but he is a well-meaning and pains-taking exegete.

Alexander Nisbet (who like both Dickson and Hutcheson was minister of Irvine) issued in 1658 a commentary on 1 and 2 Peter ; but his better known *Ecclesiastes* (1694) was not published in his lifetime. It is interesting to find him admitting the importance of context. In the *Ecclesiastes* he says : "Every expression in the scriptures is not to be looked upon apart ; but some are to be considered jointly with others, sometimes with such as go before, sometimes with such as follow after, else men will be in

hazard to wrest the scripture to their own destruction." Nisbet is not very bright or resourceful in dealing with allegory himself, but he gives sensible advice that "when ministers make use of allegories to illustrate the truth, they ought to join therewith such plain expressions of the meaning of them as may clear the scope they aim at lest continued allegories breed vanity and wantonness of the wit, divert the mind from delighting in the simplicity of the truth and form in the heart misapprehensions thereof." Spurgeon found Nisbet heavy.

XI

Few, if any, of these exegetical volumes we have mentioned are now in use. The only immortal amongst the Scottish commentators of the seventeenth century is Archbishop Leighton. As far as the Bible was concerned his general outlook was that of his period, but none of the other commentaries is so truly spiritual as his 1 *Peter*, so fresh and suggestive, so interestingly illustrated, so generous in its spirit, so free from pettiness and nearsightedness. To apply words of his own, he had "the spirit of humility and obedience and saving faith that teach men to esteem Christ and build upon him." A saintly Christian, with an intimate knowledge of the Scriptures, a sound scholar, a wide reader, a man of travel and experience, much concerned for religion and not at all for controversy, he was able to speak to the earnest soul of any generation. His commentary is easy to read and to grasp, but shows insight into both holy writ and human nature. It is full of things worth saying and well said, and is altogether one of the most helpful books that Scotland has produced. "The Scriptures", Leighton tells us, "are a deep that few can wade far into and none can wade through." But he did as much as any man of his day to sound the depths.

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