

Catechetical Lessons on Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism. – D. Meibohm.

(Submitted for publication by request of the New Orleans Teachers' Conference.)

3. THE PRINCIPAL PROOFS OF THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE.

Dear Children: – In our last lesson we learned what the Bible is, and that it is given by divine inspiration. But there are many people who attack the Bible, saying that it contains many errors, and that it is only a book similar to other books written by men. These people are entirely wrong, and we should always be ready to defend the Bible.

Tell me again, What is the Bible? It is the Word of God.

But do all people believe the Bible to be God's Word? No, they do not.

As whose word do all unbelievers regard the Bible? They regard it as the word of man.

Which people only regard it as God's Word? Only the true Christians regard it as such.

Now, what will you answer if unbelievers ask you what the Bible is? The Bible is certainly God's Word.

But they will not take your word for it; they will not believe you. What must you do then to convince other people of what you say about the Bible? I must prove what I say.

What must you prove the Bible to be? I must prove that the Bible is God's Word.

Let us now speak of the principal proofs that the Bible is God's Word.

Of what shall we speak today? We shall speak of the principal proofs that the Bible is God's Word.

I. The Miracles.

Which men wrote the Bible? The prophets, apostles, and evangelists wrote it.

One of the prophets is Moses, whom the Lord called to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. But Moses said, "They will not believe me." How was Moses to prove that the Lord had sent him? He was to prove it by doing miracles.

And what effect had the miracles on the children of Israel as soon as they saw them? They believed that God had sent Moses.

As whose word did they then accept the word of Moses? They accepted it as God's Word.

By what were they assured and convinced that what Moses said was really the Word of God? The miracles which he did assured them of this.

And what did the widow of Zarepath say to the Prophet Elijah when he had raised her son from the dead? "Now I know that the word of thy mouth is true."

How, then, did the prophets prove that their word was God's Word? They proved it by doing miracles.

What did also the apostles do to prove that their word was truly God's Word? They also performed miracles.

From whom did the prophets and apostles get the power to perform miracles? They received this power from God.

If they had not been messengers of God, what power would not have been given them? The power to do miracles would not have been given them.

Hence, as whose messengers were they approved by having this power? They were thereby approved as God's messengers.

Whose word therefore is it which they taught, and wrote in books? It is the Word of God.

That the miracles prove this is plainly stated by Nicodemus, who came to Jesus and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him." (The Bible texts should be repeated by the catechist, and then by the pupils.)

Why did Nicodemus believe that Jesus was a teacher who came from God? Because Jesus did great miracles.

What does this prove as to His teachings? It proves that He taught God's Word.

Christ Himself said (John 10:37-38) to the Jews who would not believe Him: "If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not. But if I do, though ye believe not Me, believe the works."

In which case should the Jews not believe Christ's teachings? If He did not do the works of His Father.

What is meant here by the works of His Father? The miracles are meant.

But what does Christ earnestly request of the Jews on account of His miracles? They should believe Him.

For what purpose, then, did Christ and also the prophets and apostles perform so many miracles? To prove that their teachings were God's Word.

We read of the apostles: "They went forth and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and *confirming the Word with signs following*," (Mark 16:20). What were the signs that followed their preaching? The signs were the miracles.

What did the Lord confirm, or render certain, by miracles? He thereby confirmed the Word they were preaching.

As what did He confirm, or render certain, their Word? He confirmed it as His Word.

What, therefore, is a sure proof that the Bible written by holy men is the Word of God? The miracles are a sure proof.

II. The Prophecies.

Yet there are still other proofs for its being the Word of God, which are likewise sure, and cannot be disputed. The prophecies contained in the Bible are another proof. A prophecy is the foretelling of things that are to come to pass in the future.

Of what do prophecies foretell something? They foretell things that will come to pass in the future.

Who alone can tell what will happen in the future? Only God can do this.

The Prophet Isaiah (41:23) writes: "Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods." In speaking to the false gods, the prophet tells them to prove that they are gods. How should they prove it? By showing the things that are to come hereafter.

Why would that be an undeniable proof? Because only God can foretell the things that are to come hereafter.

But if man foretells future events, and they come to pass, how does he know them? Then God has told him.

And what does this prove as to his teachings? It proves that he is teaching God's Word.

Whenever false prophets tried to foretell the future, what was the result of their prophecies?

They were never fulfilled.

But what do we know regarding the fulfillment of the prophecies recorded in the Bible? All these prophecies were fulfilled.

The Prophet Isaiah (34:16) says: "Seek ye out of the Book of the Lord, and read; no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate." What does he mean by saying that no one of these prophecies shall fail, and that none shall want her mate? They shall surely be fulfilled.

Why is he so sure? Because it is the Word of God.

What, for instance, did the Prophet Micah foretell of the birthplace of Christ? He was to be born in Bethlehem.

How was this prophecy fulfilled? Christ was born in Bethlehem.

The Prophet Isaiah says of Christ that He was numbered with the transgressors or evildoers. How was this prophecy fulfilled? Christ was crucified between two evildoers.

What was prophesied concerning the city of Jerusalem? It was to be destroyed.

And what, as we all know, happened to that city? It was destroyed by the Romans.

From whom, then, must the prophets, apostles, and evangelists have received their doctrine since they foretold future things which only God knows? They must have received their doctrine from God.

In which book is their doctrine written? It is written in the Bible.

Hence, what does this prove the Bible to be? This proves that the Bible is the Word of God.

III. The Witness of the Holy Spirit in the Heart of Man.

But the strongest of all proofs for Christians that the Bible is God's Word is the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man.

Which is the third and strongest proof for Christians that the Bible is God's Word? The strongest proof is the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man.

Who bears witness for the Bible? The Holy Spirit bears witness.

To what does He bear witness? That the Bible is God's Word.

How is this witness, since it is the Holy Ghost Himself that testifies? It is sure and certain.

That the Holy Spirit does this is plainly stated by St. John, who writes (1 John 5:6): "It is the

Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.” Who is meant by the Spirit that bears witness? It is the Holy Spirit, or the Holy Ghost.

Why does the Holy Ghost bear witness? Because the Spirit is truth.

“The Spirit is truth” means, the Bible or the Word of God is truth. For God’s Word is often called the Spirit, because all Scriptures are given by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What does this mean, “the *Spirit* is truth”? It means, the Bible is truth.

Hence, what is the Bible truly and surely because the Holy Spirit bears witness to it? The Bible is the Word of God.

Where does the Holy Spirit bear witness to the fact that the Bible is God’s Word? He bears witness in the heart of man.

Christ Himself tells us in whose heart the Holy Spirit bears witness to the fact that the Bible is not the word of men, but God’s Word; for He says: “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself” (John 7:17).

Who shall know, as Christ says, whether His doctrine is of God or of men? Any man who will do His will.

Of whose will does Christ speak in saying “*His will*”? He speaks of the will of His Father.

What the will of God the Father is with regard to His Son, He made known to us when He spoke from the heavens: “This is My beloved Son: *hear Him!*” And Christ Himself said: “This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and *beliveth* on Him, may have everlasting life.”

What, then, is the will of God with regard to His Son? That we are to hear His Word, and believe in Him.

What shall we know of the doctrine of Christ if we hear Him and believe in Him? We shall know that it is of God.

To “know” it is to be quite sure and convinced of it. When do we really know the doctrine to be of God? When we are quite sure, and convinced of it.

Is this surety and certainty only of our mind or our reason? No, it is also a surety of our heart.

Then we can say with Peter: “We believe and are *sure* that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:69). Where are we sure that the doctrine of the Bible is truly God’s Word? We are sure in our hearts.

Who makes us quite sure of it? The Holy Spirit does it.

What is it that makes us sure of it? It is the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

Then our hearts trust in God's Word, and find peace, comfort, and joy in it. Thus we experience its truth and power in our own hearts, for we "have tasted the good Word of God."

What must we say when other people despise the Bible and mock at it? We must say, It is surely God's Word.

If, for instance, a man has discovered that a certain medicine is good, because it cured him of sickness, what will he do when others despise it? He will still cling to it.

Why will he still cling to it? Because he has experienced its healing power.

What will, likewise, those do who have experienced in their own hearts that the Bible is God's Word? They will be sure and certain of its truth and cling to it.

Now, to sum up, which are the three principal proofs that the Bible is the Word of God? They are: the miracles, the prophecies, and the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of man.

Therefore, children, believe your Bible to be the Word of God, which can save your soul now and forever, and confess with St. Paul: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." Amen.

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