

## STAND STILL.

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The Christian should stand still, when he is about to enter on a new and untried course. It was in this position that God's people of old were asked to stand still. They had lived down in Egypt, and served the Egyptians in the brickyards, and on public works. Liberty, rest, comfort, they had never known. They were now turning their backs on their oppressors and taking on themselves an independent existence as a nation. A sea which they had never crossed, a wilderness they had never trod, were before them. Their surroundings were all new; their course in every way an untried one. How appropriate, then, for them to stand still.

We need in these more modern times a little of that grace by which we can stand, and stand still. In many of our undertakings for Christ we rush as unthinking as Job's war horse to the battle, and the result is, very often, failure. We need, sometimes, to view calmly our surroundings; calmly to look at the difficulties, and amidst the quiet, send up to the Throne, Nehemiah-like, a request for "the wisdom that cometh from above."

Further, when we are beset by difficulties, and are unable to see our way out, we should stand still. Going back to the Israelites at the Red Sea, once more, for an illustration, we see a people encompassed with difficulties. There were Egyptians armed to the teeth in the rear; and there, too, was the Red Sea, rolling, breaking, hissing in front of them. To go back was to be slaughtered, or sink beneath a cruel bondage; to go forward was to be drowned. No way of escape for the pilgrims, and they simply stood still. It was indeed a time for the suspension of all human effort, and a looking for help from the One alone mighty to save.

Many are hedged in now as were these people in their memorable exodus.

Here is a family, the heads of which—father and mother—toiled early and late when work was to be had. They saved as much as possible of their earnings, in prospect of a hard winter. The winter came, and on its arrival their employment ceased. They then began to draw on their small store. Each week saw a decrease till the last of the reserve is gone. Here is a position in which they should, with a firm trust in God, stand still and see His salvation.

Over the way, is a merchant, who, four years since, entered into business, putting in a thousand dollars. During this period he has given to it close attention. But in spite of all his efforts the enterprise did not pay. At last he was unable to meet his notes at the bank. What could he do? Why, nothing but stand still and look up to Heaven expectantly for help.

## EXPLORATION AS VERIFYING REVELATION.

The Bible is not a revelation of abstract truth; it is mainly a record of God's dealings with, and instructions to, His people. In it we have a history, sometimes of families, sometimes of tribes and nations; and we observe that in instructing and guiding them God did not, as a rule, remove them from their ordinary homes and spheres of duty. When he did remove them, it was because of some pressing necessity, and because, humanly speaking, their moral training and influence on the world for good required it. Usually He dealt with men as they lived; and He was pleased to adapt His government and His instructions, whether providential or supernatural, to the circumstances in which they were placed for the time being.

Another marked characteristic of the Bible is the minuteness of its ethnological and geographical details, and the clearness of its historic statements. The division of the original human family into nations and tribes; the countries they colonized; their subsequent migrations; the cities they built, and the empires they founded, are given in the Book of Genesis with a circumstantiality which, considering the remote age of the document, is altogether unparalleled. That book, in fact, especially the tenth chapter, forms the basis

of the science of ethnology; and the most recent and exhaustive researches in the languages, the monuments, and the records of antiquity tend to establish its accuracy.

Then, again, we have in the concluding chapters of Genesis, and in the beginning of Exodus, some very graphic sketches of nomad life in Canaan and settled life in Egypt; we have in the remaining books of the Pentateuch topographical notes on the peninsula of Sinai, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and the old kingdoms of Sihon and Og east of the Jordan. The Book of Joshua is the Domesday Book of Palestine, not only describing, with the fulness of a government survey, the various tribal boundaries throughout the land, but containing long lists of the towns and villages allotted to each tribe, in the order, as recent research has shown, of their geographical position. In the records of King and Chronicles, and the parallel fragments of history in the writings of the several prophets, we are brought into contact with other ancient nations and peoples—the Phenicians, the Aramæans (Syrians) of Damascus, the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Chaldeans, the Medes, the Persians; and we have some vivid pictures of the power and conquests of their monarchs, and of the splendour of their courts. The Book of Daniel is a life sketch of the dazzling but transient glories of Babylon; while Esther is an invaluable monograph in the Persian court of Susa. In the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and some of St. Paul's Epistles, we observe the same geographical precision and strong local colouring. One can follow to this day, as the writer has done, the footsteps of Jesus over the mountains of Judah, along the banks of the Jordan, by the silent shores of the Sea of Galilee, marking, as he proceeds, those characteristics of each district, and of each class among the people, which suggested His beautiful parables and gave point to His illustrations and discourses. One can also follow the track of the great Apostle of the Gentiles from country to country, and from city to city, by land and by sea, and observe at every stage of his journey the clear topographical details and the thoughtful and profound delineations of national character which leave on the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles the indelible stamp of authenticity and genuineness.

Hence, in considering the evidences of the Divine authority of the Bible, we ought never to forget that its fundamental doctrines are all, more or less, connected with and woven into the facts of history, and, in many instances, in such a way as that the proof of the reality of the facts recorded involves the truth of the doctrine. Nearly every great doctrine has been either developed in or illustrated by some historic event, upon which we can as fully and as safely exercise the powers of our mind in eliciting and testing truth, as we can upon the facts of science. The Bible, as a revelation of dogma, has in this way been subjected to the scrutiny of historical criticism. It has been subjected to it in every age since the completion of the canon, but more especially within the past half century, and though assailed with every weapon which ingenuity could invent or an exhaustive scholarship rake up, it has uniformly come forth, in the judgment of impartial men, triumphant.

Then, again, the Bible contains a series of prophecies, clear, detailed, in many cases most startling in their nature, and in some cases altogether improbable—many would say incredible. The future history and final doom of nations, countries, and cities are portrayed with singular clearness. No amount of political sagacity could have foreseen what is predicted; no depth of philosophical speculation could have divined it; no breadth of research could have discovered it; and yet time has converted all those strange and varied and astounding prophecies of Jewish seers into facts which historians have recorded and travellers have witnessed.

In Scripture, *faith* is enjoined as the great requisite—the first duty of man. "Without faith it is impossible to please God." But it is not a credulous or blind faith. Faith is the fruit of knowledge, not the offspring of ignorant credulity. The doctrines of Scripture, which, in one sense, constitute the objects of our faith, are developed through the medium of

facts, which are exhibited openly before the eyes of men, coming within the range of observation and reason, and thus challenging investigation according to the principles of pure science. Faith and reason go hand in hand, because reason judges of the evidence on which faith rests. Every attempt made to undermine the basis of faith in the progressive development of all the forms and phases of human error, it is within the province and power of reason to meet and counteract.

Now, scepticism is progressive. In each succeeding age it assumes a new form; but it so happens that the evidence of the facts on which faith rests is also progressive, and keeps pace, as it were, with the advance of scepticism. It would almost seem as if it had been so ordered in the councils of the Eternal, that the new discoveries made in the fields of Biblical research should be exactly suited to meet and counteract the new errors and objections of each successive age.—*Dickinson's Theological Quarterly.*

## RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN THE UNITED STATES.

We find in the "Herald and Presbyterian" the following statistical table said to be compiled from the latest reports, exhibiting the numerical strength of the several religious bodies in the United States:

Adventists	10,000
Anti-Mission Baptists	40,000
Baptists	2,024,224
Church of God (Winebrethren)	30,000
Congregationalists	365,658
Disciples (Campbellites)	300,000
Episcopal, Protestant	268,534
Episcopal Reformed	15,000
Freewill Baptists	74,851
Friends	100,000
Lutherans	640,415
Mennonites	20,000
Methodist Episcopal*	1,573,287
Methodist Episcopal, South	724,346
Methodist Episcopal, African	214,806
Methodist Episcopal Zion, African	200,000
Methodist Episcopal, Colored	80,000
Methodist Evangelical Association	105,013
Methodists Free	19,232
Methodists Independent	12,000
Methodists, Primitive	3,332
Methodists, Protestant	113,405
Methodist Episcopal Union (Col.)	2,500
Methodists, Wesleyan	25,000
Moravians	9,212
Presbyterian, Cumberland	100,250
Presbyterian, North	557,674
Presbyterian, Reformed	10,250
Presbyterian South	112,550
Presbyterian, United	77,014
Reformed, Dutch	78,831
Reformed, German	154,955
Roman Catholic†	5,000,000
Seventh-Day Baptists	7,336
Six Principle Baptists	2,000
Tunkers	50,000
United Brethren	143,841

\*Including 200,281 members on probation.

†Entire Roman Catholic population.

From this it would appear that the Methodists of all names have the largest number, 3,080,971, the Baptists of all names next, 2,138,224. Next the Presbyterians of all names, 1,090,574. Then follow in order, the Congregationalists, 365,658; the Episcopalians 268,534. From the tone of the Anglicans or Anglo-Catholics, as they love to call themselves, one might be led to suppose, that they represented at least three-fourths of the Christian people of the country, instead of being 288,224 against near six and a half millions of evangelical Protestants, or in the proportion of about 1 to 22. It will be observed also that the actual church membership of the Methodists and Baptists outnumbers largely the entire Roman Catholic population of the country. This remarkable contrast between the statistical facts and the popular impression as to the comparative strength of the religious bodies shows the results of blowing one's own horn. Prelacy, whether Roman or Anglican, seems to have a special gift at performing on the horn.

LIFE being short, and the quiet hours of it few, we ought to waste none of them in reading valueless books; and valuable books should in a civilized country be within the reach of every one.—*Ruskin.*