



George Campbell D.D.

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# LECTURES

ON

## ECCLESIASTICAL HISTORY.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

AN ESSAY ON

CHRISTIAN TEMPERANCE AND SELF-DENIAL:

BY THE LATE

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PRINCIPAL OF MARISCHAL COLLEGE, ABERDEEN.

WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF

THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF THE AUTHOR.

BY THE REV. GEORGE SKENE KEITH,

KEITH HALL, ABERDEENSHIRE.



IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following discourses on Church History are a considerable part of a course of Theological Lectures, delivered in Marischal College. The Author had transcribed and revised them, and was every year making considerable alterations and additions to the Work. For more than the last twenty years of his life, his Lectures to the Students of Divinity occupied the greater part of his time, and those now offered to the Public were distinguished as the most curious and entertaining branch of the whole. By the hearers, and many others, the Publication has been called for with a degree of earnestness, which now seldom attends the appearance of a theological performance. Those who have read the other writings of the Author, will naturally expect here something of that clearness of apprehension, and acuteness of investigation, so eminently displayed in the Dissertation on Miracles, in answer

to Mr. Hume. And such as are acquainted with the subject, will admire the Author's well-digested learning, and will readily perceive the importance of an accurate historical deduction of the progress of church power, and the establishment of a hierarchy, and how clear and decisive it is, in all that may be termed the hinge of the controversy between high church and others. Seldom, very seldom indeed, has the subject been treated with the perspicuity, candour, and moderation, which distinguish the writings of Doctor Campbell

## LECTURE II.

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THE subject of this day's discourse is, as I hinted to you at a former meeting, some observations on the nature and utility of the history of the sacred canon; to which I shall add some reflections, tending to explain both the origin and the character of that species of history which is denominated ecclesiastical. As to the history of the canon, it will be proper, in the first place, to give an explanation of the phrase: That book which we christians denominate *the Bible*, ἡ Βίβλος, the book, by way of eminence; and which is also termed the *canon*, and *the sacred canon*, comprehends a considerable number of treatises, or pieces totally distinct, composed (for the most part) at periods distant from one another, and in sundry places, written by diverse penmen, on different subjects, and in various styles: nor were they all originally in the same language. The greater part of the books which

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compose



compose the Old Testament, are in Hebrew, a small part in Chaldee, and all the books of the New Testament in Greek; at least, if the originals of any of them were in another tongue, they are not now extant: some are in prose, and others in verse; some are historical, some juridical, and some prophetical; some instruct us by the way of simple narrative; some are written in a highly figurative and allegoric diction; some in a vehement and declamatory; others address us in a free epistolary strain: one piece is a collection of devotional hymns and prayers, another is an assemblage of moral maxims and observations. The name *canon*, in like manner as the word *Bible*, we have borrowed from the Greek. The term κανων, with them, signifies *rule*, or *standard*. Now the Scriptures are thus denominated, as being eminently the great rule or standard to the christian, in all that concerns both faith and manners. Hence also those writings, of whose authenticity and inspiration there is sufficient evidence, are termed *canonical scripture*.

Now concerning the several books of which the Bible is composed, a number of questions naturally arise in the mind of the inquisitive student. Such are the following: Who were the writers and compilers, and at what periods, in what places, and on what occasions, were the writings

writings and compilations made? Whence arises that authority they have so generally obtained? Has this been an immediate, or a gradual consequence, of their publication? Has the christian world been unanimous in this respect, in regard to all these books, or has it been divided, as to all, or any of them? And if divided, what have been the most cogent arguments on the different sides? How, by whom, where, and when, were they collected into one volume? What hath been their fate and reception since? What have been the most remarkable editions and translations they have undergone? What the variations occasioned by these, and what the most eminent paraphrases and commentaries they have given rise to? I would not be understood by this enumeration, as meaning to insinuate, that all these questions are of the same importance. There is a manifest and very considerable difference among them in this respect. A succinct account, however, of all the facts, which would serve for a solution to the several queries above-mentioned, those at least which are of principal moment to the theologian, would constitute what is commonly called the history of the sacred canon.

The utility of such inquiries to the theologian is the point which naturally comes next to be discussed. As the questions themselves are pretty different

different in their nature, however much connected by their concurrence in composing the history of the Bible, the purposes they are fitted to answer are also different. In order to prevent mistakes, let it be observed once for all, that by the history of the Bible, I do not here mean, the history contained in the Bible; but the history of the compilation, and of the various fates of the book so denominated. The same thing may be said of that synonymous phrase, the history of the canon. As to those queries which regard the origin of the sacred books, they are chiefly conducive for confirming the truth of our religion; and as to those which regard their reception, good or bad, with all the consequences it hath produced, they are chiefly conducive for illustrating its doctrines. I use the word *chiefly* in both cases, because, in inquiries into the origin of the scriptures, discoveries will sometimes be made, which serve to illustrate and explain the meaning of things contained in them; and, on the other hand, in inquiries into their reception, with its consequences, we shall often be enabled to discover the grounds of the favourable reception they have met with, and thereby to trace the vestiges of a divine original. To the former class belong questions like these: Who were the writers? When; where, for whose use, and to what purpose were they written? Whence



Whence arises the veneration they have drawn? Why, by whom, and on what occasion or occasions, were they collected? To the latter class belong the following, In what manner have they been received in different countries, and at different periods? To what causes does the reception, whether good or bad, appear imputable? What are the most eminent editions? What are the principal variations to be found in the editions and manuscripts still extant? What translators and commentators have been occupied in conveying and illustrating their doctrine to the most remote nations and distant ages? In the discussion of such questions, especially in what regards the books of the New Testament, there arises a number of curious investigations, tending to discriminate the genuine productions of the authors, whose names they bear, from the spurious pieces ascribed to them, the authentic dictates of the Holy Spirit from those which, at most, can only be styled apocryphal, that is hidden or doubtful. That the church was early pestered with a multitude of fictitious accounts of the life of Christ, and the labours of his apostles, is manifest not only from the concurrent testimony of all antiquity, but even from the introduction which the evangelist Luke hath given to his Gospel: “Forasmuch,” says he, “as many have taken in hand to set forth in  
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“ order a declaration of those things which are  
 “ most surely believed among us.” It is uni-  
 versally acknowledged, that John’s Gospel was  
 not written till a considerable time afterwards ;  
 and if none had preceded Luke in this work but  
 Matthew and Mark, he would never have deno-  
 minated them *many*. Besides, it is plain, from  
 the manner in which preceding attempts are  
 mentioned, that several of the accounts that had  
 been given, were such as could not be depended  
 on ; otherwise, this circumstance, that many had  
 undertaken the work before him, instead of being  
 a good reason for his taking up the subject,  
 would have been a very strong reason for his not  
 doing it, since christians were already so amply  
 supplied with information. But the very expres-  
 sions he uses, evidently contain an insinuation,  
 at least, that the writers he alludes to, had not  
 themselves been sufficiently informed of the  
 truth. “ It seemed good to me,” says he,  
 “ having had perfect understanding of all  
 “ things, from the very first, to write them to  
 “ thee in order, most excellent Theophilus.”

But to return to the two classes into which  
 the questions relating to the history of the canon  
 were divided, they will generally be found, agree-  
 ably to the observation already made, concern-  
 ing the principal utility of each, to be treated by  
 authors of different denominations, and with  
 different

different views. Those who, as defenders of revelation, have entered the lists with its adversaries, more especially those, who, like Stillingfleet, in the last age, or Lardner, in the present, have applied themselves to support the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures, did always consider themselves as under a necessity of doing something for our satisfaction, in regard to the questions of the first order. Those, on the other hand, who have assumed the character not of the champions of religion, but of its interpreters, do commonly attach themselves more to the discussion of the questions of the second order. Accordingly, we find a great deal of information on these topics in the works of some of our scriptural critics; whether they come under the denomination of scholiasts, paraphrasts, commentators, translators, or barely editors, particularly the two last. The only examples of these I shall now mention, are, Houbigant's prolegomena to the different parts into which he has divided his Latin version of the Old Testament, and Mill's and Wetstein's prolegomena to the splendid and valuable editions they have given of the Greek New Testament, with the various readings. These I only mention by the way as deserving to be carefully perused by you, if you should happen to meet with them. For all the three (especially the first) being voluminous and expensive



expensive works, and not very common, there are not many that, in this part of the world, have an opportunity of consulting them.

There is, indeed, one author, who, in a particular work written on purpose, has, with a good deal of judgment and acuteness, treated all the questions of both classes above enumerated: the author I mean, is Richard Simon, a priest of the Oratory, commonly known by the name of Father Simon. This man first published, in French, a book, entitled, *A critical History of the Old Testament*, which was soon after followed by another in the same language, entitled, *A critical History of the New Testament*; both which together complete the history of the sacred canon. This work has been translated, not badly, into Latin. There is a translation of it into English [which I have seen] that is very ill executed, in regard both to the sense and to the expression. In relation to the character of the performance, it will not be improper to make here a few observations. In the first place, it clearly evinces in the author a large fund of erudition, accompanied with an uncommon share of critical sagacity and penetration; and, I may justly add, a greater degree of moderation, than is generally to be met with in those, either of his sect as a romanist, or of his order as a priest. What particularly qualified him for the task he  
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has undertaken, was not only his thorough acquaintance with ancient history, sacred and profane; but his profound skill in the oriental languages, and in all branches of rabbinical literature. To say thus much is no more, in my apprehension, than doing justice to his abilities and indefatigable application: at the same time, it is but doing justice to you, my hearers, to take notice of what I think amiss in his performance. I told you, and told you truly, that he shows more moderation than is customary with those of his sect and order, yet not so much of impartiality, as not to betray, on several occasions, that (if he was not a disguised freethinker, as has been suspected by some eminent catholics) he was deeply tinctured with the servile spirit of his church. Hence the implicit deference he sometimes officiously displays, to human prescriptions, to oral tradition, to those customs which can plead the sanction of antiquity, or of a general reception, however absurd they may be, when examined on the principles of reason, however unscriptural, or even antisciptural, when examined on those of holy writ: nay, I might add, his deference to those practices and tenets, concerning which his knowledge and discernment must have satisfied him, that their origin was such as could by no means serve to recommend them. Hence also the propensity

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he shows, on every occasion, to insist on the ambiguity and obscurity of the scriptures, which he greatly exaggerates, and on the need of an infallible interpreter. Hence the straitened and ambiguous manner wherein he expresseth himself on some delicate points, which he could not altogether avoid mentioning, and on which it is plain that he did not think himself at liberty to speak out his sentiments. On such topics, ye will perceive a timidity and caution very unlike the generous freedom and boldness of a man, who hath ever been unaccustomed to the galling yoke of human authority. He puts one in mind of the situation described by the poet, and even appears to consider himself; as, *incedens per ignes suppositos cineri doloso*. But I shall say no more here of this author, having had an occasion, of late, both of giving, and of supporting my opinion, of him, more fully in the third preliminary dissertation to the translation of the Gospels, to which I refer you. As to his work, I may justly say, that on the whole, with all its errors and defects, (and what human composition is exempt from errors and defects?) The critical History of the Old and New Testaments contains a valuable fund of knowledge, and deserves an attentive perusal from every serious inquirer into the divine oracles. On some points, he has been warmly opposed by some protestant divines,

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to whose animadversions on his work he has returned answers. The controversy is published in the later editions of his book. In some things they appear to be in the right, but not in all.

Houbigant, also, another priest of the oratory, has, in the work of his above-mentioned, freely animadverted on some of Simon's observations. He too is no inconsiderable critic, though of a very different turn. The excess of Simon (where alterations appeared necessary) perhaps was diffidence; of Houbigant, temerity. I am not sure, that some of our modern English critics on the Hebrew scriptures are not chargeable with this fault of Houbigant; I mean their making too free with the text, in setting aside the common reading for the sake of emendations merely conjectural. But as to these things, every person ought to judge for himself. I purpose to lay only the materials before you, which may serve as premises: it is yours to canvass and arrange them, and to draw the proper conclusions. It is not my province to dictate, but to suggest. Your assent to any opinions, that might be laid before you, would be of little value, if it were the result of a lazy and implicit confidence, and not of a careful examination and rational conviction. Let me only subjoin, before dismissing this article, a recommendation of Michaelis's Introductory Lectures to the sacred books of the New Testament,

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Testament, which will deserve your serious perusal. Thus much shall suffice for what concerns the history of the canon, and the valuable purposes to which this branch of knowledge is subservient.

I proceed now to consider the ends which may be answered by ecclesiastical history, and to inquire what is the readiest and most profitable way of studying it. Before that memorable era, the incarnation of the Son of God, the history of the church of God was the history of one particular people, first distinguished by the name of the patriarch Israel, (otherwise called Jacob) whose descendants they were; and after the loss of the ten tribes, who were carried into captivity by Shalmanezzer, king of Assyria, denominated from Judah, one of the sons of Jacob, and one whose progeny the greater part of the remnant were, the nation of the Jews. The history of that people, and the history of the church, was under the Mosaic economy the same thing. Neither do we find in the annals, and other remains of those ancient times, the least vestige of the distinction of a community into church and state, such as hath obtained universally in the nations who have received the christian law. This distinction hath given rise to a species of history, whereof the world before had not conceived so much as an idea. It may not there-



fore be improper, in the first place, to trace its origin, that we may the better apprehend what is meant by the history of the church.

When we consider attentively the institution of Moses, we perceive that it comprehends every thing necessary for forming a civil establishment; not only precepts regarding the disposition and morals of the people, and the public and private offices of religion, but also laws of jurisprudence; such as regulate the formalities of private contracts, inheritance, succession, and purchases; such as fix the limits of jurisdiction and subordination of judicatories, appoint the method of procedure in trials, both civil and criminal, and the punishments to be awarded by the judges to the several crimes. I may add, it comprehends also a sort of law of nations for the use of that people, in adjusting the terms of their intercourse with other states and kingdoms, and prescribing rules to be observed in making and conducting peace and war, entering into public treaties and the like. In this polity or state, however, we find that what concerns religion forms an essential, or rather the principal part. Every thing in their constitution seems to act in subserviency to this great end, the preservation of the purity of their faith and worship. In this there was a very material difference between them and pagan nations. In these last, the established superstition,

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tion, in whatever popular traditions it may have been originally founded, was modelled by the ruling powers in such a manner, as that it might best answer the purpose of an engine of government. The religion of such nations, therefore, can be considered in no other light, than as one of those political machines which in various ways co-operated for the support of the whole. With the Jews, indeed, the case was totally different: for, in their establishment, the religion was manifestly not the means but the end.

God hath been considered as in some respect the chief magistrate or head of that community, and the government for that reason has been not unfitly termed a theocracy. Thus much seems even implied in the words of God to Samuel, when the people became solicitous to have a king. And even when the kingly sway was established among them, the preservation of their religion, and of their code of laws, contained in the Pentateuch, (for they had no other) effectually prevented this change from being a subversion of their polity. The king himself was considered (though in a way somewhat different) as a minister of religion. His office was holy, and he was inaugurated with the like religious ceremony of unction, with which the high-priest was separated for the discharge of the duties of his sacred function; and the king's person, in consequence  
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of this rite, was accounted holy as well as the priest's. A strong evidence of the influence of this circumstance we have in the behaviour of David to king Saul, his enemy, who sought his life. David found him asleep and unattended in the cave of Engeddi; and when desired by some of his followers to kill him, answered, "The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord: so David stayed his servants with these words." Nevertheless the legislative power was not in the monarch. God was the sole legislator; for, as was observed, they had no permanent body of laws other than the books of Moses: besides, on every emergency of importance, the deity was consulted by Urim and Thummim.

It must be acknowledged, that this original constitution was gradually corrupted by them. Having found means, in prejudice to the divine commandments, to foist in rules and precepts of their own devising, under the specious name of oral traditions, they rendered them equivalent to laws; but still, as appears from the name they gave them, under the pretended sanction of divine authority. Thus their religious and civil rights were so blended, as not to admit a separation; the same judges indiscriminately took cog-



nizance of both. These were the elders of the city in smaller matters, and in the first instance; and the great sanhedrim, senate, or council of the nation, composed of seventy senators and a president, commonly called the elders of the people, in greater matters, and in the last resort. And in this body there was generally a considerable number, though not any fixed proportion, of priests, levites, and scribes. I mention, in conformity to our modes of thinking, the religious and the civil as different kinds of rights. Their customs and modes of thinking, on the contrary, prevented their making this distinction; all being alike comprehended in the same code, established by the same authority, and under the jurisdiction of the same magistrates. An attention to this is necessary, in order to make us understand the import of some expressions used in the New Testament. Thus the terms *νομικοι* and *νομοδιδασκαλοι*, which our translators render lawyers and doctors of law, are precisely equivalent to what would be termed by us theologists and doctors of divinity. Not that the words are mistranslated in our version; it was even proper in this case, by paying a regard to the etymology of the names, in rendering them into English, to suggest to the unlearned reader the coincidence of the two professions, divinity and law, among the Hebrews. With them,



them, therefore, the divine and the jurist, the lawyer and the scribe, were terms which denoted nearly the same character; inasmuch as they had no other law of nations, or municipal law, but their religion, and no other religion but their law. Of any of the Pagan nations we may say with justice, that their religion was a political religion; but of the Jews we should say more properly, that their polity was a religious polity.

What may serve to give us an idea of such a constitution is the present state of the Mahometan world. Though Mahometism, in regard to its doctrine and its rites, borrows somewhat both from Judaism and from Christianity, it is, as an establishment, raised more on the Jewish model than on the Christian. With them the Alcoran is the only standing or statute law of the country; and as it is conceived by them to be of divine authority, and therefore unrepealable, it is both the only rule in all judiciary proceedings, and the only check upon the despotism of their princes. Hence it has happened, that though there never arose such a conception among the Jews, as what I may call the history of the synagogue, or among the Mahometans, as the history of the mosque, distinct from the histories of their different nations; the christian church and christian empires, or commonwealths, form histories, which,

though connected as those of neighbouring republics or kingdoms may be, are in their nature perfectly distinct. It is worth while to inquire, what has given rise to this peculiarity in the religion of Jesus. An inquiry of this kind is a proper introduction to the study of ecclesiastical history. It will serve to throw light on the spirit and genius of our religion, and may lead to the detection of the latent springs, whence originally flowed that amazing torrent of corruption, by which, in process of time, this most amiable religion has been so miserably defaced.

The moral precepts of our Lord Jesus Christ are remarkably sublime and pure. They are admirably calculated for regulating the passions and affections of the heart, out of which, as Solomon has observed, are the issues of life. The doctrines he taught, which are the motives whereby an observance of the precepts is enforced, are all purely spiritual, arising from considerations of the divine nature, and of our own; especially of God's placability and favour, of the testimony of conscience, of the blessedness which the principles of true religion, faith, and hope, love to God, and love to man, infuse into the heart; and from considerations regarding the future retribution both of the righteous and of the wicked. The positive institutions or ceremonies he appointed, are both few and simple,  
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serving as expressions of the love and gratitude of his disciples to God, their common parent, and to Jesus their master, the oracle of God; of their engagements to the christian life, and their perfect union among themselves. And that whilst these institutions were suffered to remain in their native simplicity, which constituted their true beauty and excellence, it was impossible they should be misunderstood. With regard to the founding of what might be called a polity or state, it is manifest that nothing could be farther from his intention. "His kingdom," he acquaints us, "is not of this world." It is not of a secular nature, to be either propagated or defended by the arm of flesh, or to have its laws enforced by human sanctions, or any such temporal punishments as merely human authority can inflict.

It is impossible to conceive a greater contrast between the spirit which his instructions breathe, and that spirit of pride and domination, which not many centuries afterwards became the predominant spirit of what then came to be denominated the church. Again and again did Christ admonish his apostles, and other followers, to live as brethren and equals, not to affect a superiority over their fellow-disciples, or over one another; inasmuch as in this, his kingdom would differ in its fundamental maxims from all the



the kingdoms of the world: that that person alone would there be deemed the greatest, whose deportment should be the humblest, and he alone superior, who should prove most serviceable to the rest. As to worldly monarchies or commonwealths, of whatever kind, he taught them to regard it as their duty, to submit to such powers as providence should set over them; chearfully paying tribute, and yielding obedience to every human ordinance and command that should not be found to contradict the law of God. “Render to Cæsar,” said he, “the things which are Cæsar’s, and to God the things which are God’s.” Far from affecting any secular power himself, he refused a royalty of this sort, when the people would have conferred it, and would not take upon him to decide in a matter of civil right and property, though desired. “Man,” said he to the person who applied to him, “who made me a judge or a divider over you?” Then he said to the people, “take heed and beware of covetousness:”—supporting his admonition as usual by an affecting parable. It was the end of his institution to purify the heart, and his lessons were ever calculated for extirpating the seeds of evil that remained there. In a similar manner, when the disciples privately contended among themselves who should be greatest, he took occasion to warn them against ambition.



ambition. Jesus calling to him a child, placed him in the midst of them, and said, “ Verily I “ say unto you ; unless ye be converted,” quite changed in your notions and conceptions of things, “ and become as children, ye shall never “ enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, “ therefore, shall become’ humble as this child, “ shall be the greatest there.” The same maxims were warmly inculcated by his apostles ; and in their time, under the happy influence of their instructions, generally prevailed among christians.

Now indeed was formed a community of the disciples of Jesus, which was called his church, a word that denotes no more than society or assembly, and is sometimes used in the New Testament with evident analogy to the common use, to signify the whole community of christians considered as one body, of which Christ is denominated the head, and sometimes only a particular congregation of christians. In this general society, founded in the unity of their faith, their hope, their love, cemented, as it were, by a communion or joint participation, as occasion offered, in religious offices, in adoration, in baptism, and in the commemoration of the sufferings of their Lord, preserved by a most friendly intercourse, and by frequent instructions, admonitions, reproofs when necessary, and

and even by the exclusion of those who had violated such powerful and solemn engagements: in all this, I say, there was nothing that interfered with the temporal powers. They claimed no jurisdiction over the person, the liberty, or the property of any man. And if they expelled out of their own society, and, on satisfying their conditions, re-admitted those who had been expelled, they did in this only exercise a right, which (if we may compare great things with small, and heavenly things with earthly) any private company, like a knot of artists or philosophers, may freely exercise; namely, to give the benefit of their own company and conversation to whom, and on what terms, they judge proper: a right which can never justly be considered as in the least infringing on the secular powers. The christians every where acknowledged themselves the subjects of the state, whether monarchical or republican, absolute or free, under which they lived; entitled to the same privileges with their fellow-subjects, and bound as much as any of them (I might say more, in respect of the peculiar obligation which their religion laid them under) to the observance of the laws of their country. They pleaded no exemption but in one case; a case wherein every man, though not a christian, has a natural title to exemption; that is, not to obey a law which is unjust

unjust in itself, and which he is persuaded in his conscience to be so. But in regard to rights merely of a personal or private nature, over which the individual has a greater power, far from being pertinacious asserters of these, they held it for an invariable maxim, that it is much better to suffer wrong, than either to commit or to avenge it. This, in my judgement, is the true footing on which the apostolical church stood in relation to the secular powers. To what causes the wonderful change afterwards produced, ought to be attributed, I intend to make the subject of another prelection.