Collected Writings of
JOHN MURRAY
PROFESSOR OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
WESTMINSTER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
1937–1966

Volume one
THE CLAIMS OF TRUTH

The Banner of Truth Trust
The claims of truth are paramount. That is why Westminster Theological Seminary was founded. As members of the Faculty we should not be here if it were not for the claims of truth upon us.

But the battle of the faith is oftentimes focused in the inward travail of soul which the claims of truth demand. There are so many temptations to allow the claims of truth to become secondary.

Mental laziness is one of these temptations. We have become accustomed to a certain pattern of thought and conduct. It may be surrounded by the halo of sanctity derived from an established family, social or ecclesiastical tradition, and we are not willing to bring this pattern or conviction to the test of those criteria which the truth demands. Or perhaps after persuasion to the contrary by the evidence of truth, we are not willing to let truth have its way, just because it means a breach with the convenient and the conventional.

The temptation may come in the opposite way. Convenience or opportunity may dictate the renunciation of former conviction, and the renouncing is dictated by convenience rather than by the claims of truth. We must beware of that temptation also.

*John Murray, a fragment found among his papers.*
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Prior to John Murray’s death on May 8, 1975 the present publishers had put tentative proposals to him for the contents of a volume of his Collected Writings, and these proposals, with some recommended improvements, he had accepted. It was to be a volume containing substantial theological material, some hitherto unpublished and some which had appeared in former years in The Westminster Theological Journal. In the event this first volume differs greatly from what was then envisaged, for after his death the opportunity occurred to examine all the manuscripts of lectures, addresses and sermons which he left in his study at Badbea, his birth place and family home in Sutherland, Scotland.

John Murray rarely proposed any of his own work for publication and it was therefore not surprising to find among his papers not a little material which will be of permanent value to the church of Christ, although he had not seen fit to call attention to it. For the most part this was carefully written in his firm, clear hand, with occasional articles or sermons in typescript. The scope of his Collected Writings has thus been enlarged by the introduction of many more articles and addresses than were known to the publishers when their proposal was originally discussed with the author.

This first volume now contains a wide range of shorter articles and addresses, originally prepared not so much for ministers and theological students as for Christians in general. None of these has previously appeared in book form and together they present an aspect of his ministry which may not be familiar to those who have only seen the
major volumes\textsuperscript{1} which came from his pen. Professor Murray was best known in the English-speaking world for the ability and scholarship with which, unmoved by contemporary fashions, he exegeted Scripture and presented Christian doctrine as one who was in spiritual succession to the leading Reformed expositors of earlier generations.

But like the greatest of his predecessors John Murray was more than a theologian. It was as a preacher that he was first known in his native Scottish Highlands, and when he first appeared in print—especially in the columns of \textit{The Presbyterian Guardian} after its inception in 1935—it was as a pungent and, in the best sense, popular writer. He had more than one mode of treating a subject, believing, with Charles Hodge, that the same truth in one form is milk, in another form strong meat. As Hodge writes on 1 Corinthians 3:2: "'Christ', says Calvin, "is milk for babes, and strong meat for men". Every doctrine which can be taught to theologians is taught to children. We teach a child that God is a Spirit, everywhere present and knowing all things; and he understands it. We tell him that Christ is God and man in two distinct natures and one person for ever. This to the child is milk, but it contains food for angels. The truth expressed in these propositions may be expanded indefinitely, and furnish nourishment for the highest intellects to eternity. The difference between milk and strong meat, according to this view, is simply the difference between the more or less perfect development of the things taught.\textsuperscript{1}

John Murray's writings exemplify this difference. Although in later years he concentrated much of his thought in lectures or writings designed principally for those who handle 'meat', he also continued to prepare addresses for a wider audience. This volume, then, is an attempt to present some of the salient features of his thinking in a form which can be prized by all Christian readers. And it is not thought alone which will be found here. As he observes in these pages when speaking of Calvin, the best Christian teaching will advance piety as well as learning, it will give theology 'shot through with the warmth of ardent devotion'. There is much of that element in this volume.

The material here selected for inclusion was produced between the

\textsuperscript{1} Foremost among these are \textit{Redemption: Accomplished and Applied}, 1955; \textit{Principles of Conduct}, 1957; and \textit{Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans}, vol 1, 1959; vol 2, 1965.
years 1935 and 1973. Where an article has already appeared in a journal
or as a published lecture we have (when known to us) stated this in a
footnote. At least seven pieces come from the pages of The Presbyterian
Guardian. But a considerable portion of the contents has not hitherto
appeared in print. A number of subjects which are handled are treated
by the author in greater fulness elsewhere, either in volumes already
published, or in material which will be issued later in these Collected
Writings. For example, the theme of his address on 'The Sanctity of the
Moral Law' given in 1935 came to its full expression in his much later
work, Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics, 1957. Nonethe-
less his shorter treatments of themes to which he was to give recurring
attention are of great value; they are concise and easily-read statements
and they often show the contemporary spiritual application of the
subject in question. At the same time it should be added that this first
volume also contains his thinking on such subjects as gospel preaching,
the Lord's Day, and Christian education, which are either not treated
or only handled briefly elsewhere in his writings.

I am deeply indebted to Mrs. Valerie Murray of Badbea, Bonar
Bridge, Scotland for what I have considered to be the sacred privilege of
examining the manuscripts which her husband left. Such was the precision
with which he worked that very little indeed has been required in the
way of editing. The responsibility for the selection and arrangement of
the material in these Collected Writings has been that of the present
writer.

It should, perhaps, be pointed out that in quoting Scripture, John
Murray not only uses the Authorised Version and the American
Standard Version of 1901, but he may also render the original in his own
words. This diversity was not accidental. If, for example, he considered,
on a point of detail, that the ASV follows a better attested variant
reading, he quotes from it. Again, when, on occasions, he was con-
cerned to convey the original more exactly than either of these versions,
the reader may find a rendering which is unusual—for example, he
prefers 'form of a servant' to 'the form of a servant' in quoting from
Philippians 2:7 (cf. p. 180). The exactness with which he thus employs
the witness of Scripture is a striking illustration of what he considered
to be our chief obligation in all Christian testimony.
Preface

It is anticipated that these Collected Writings will run to at least four volumes. An index will be provided in the final volume.

Gratitude is due to Mr. S. M. Houghton for his assistance at every stage in the preparation of these volumes, and to Professors Paul Woolley and John Skilton of Westminster Theological Seminary for the advice and encouragement they have so readily provided. Doctors Arthur W. Kuschke Jr, Librarian of Westminster Seminary, and David Freeman of Holiday, Florida, have graciously provided copies of some articles and material by John Murray which would not otherwise have been available to us. Thanks are also due to John J. Mitchell, Editor of The Presbyterian Guardian, for permission to reprint material first published in that journal, and to John Vander Ploeg, Editor of The Outlook for the same privilege granted with respect to the articles entitled ‘The Atonement and the Free Offer of the Gospel’.

Finally, the publishers would express thankfulness for the response to a fund which was opened after John Murray’s death to aid the widest possible circulation of these Collected Writings. This fund, which remains open, has been generously supported by many who believe that God will be pleased to honour his servant’s work in days yet to come.

All that John Murray wrote was intended to promote ‘the obedience of faith’. To that end his one concern was to expound the Word of God. As he wrote in 1964, in the conclusion of the Preface to the second volume of his Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, ‘It is the voice of the eternal God we hear in Scripture and his glory is revealed. When the day will dawn and the day star arise in our hearts, we shall find no discrepancy between the witness of Holy Scripture and the glory then manifested’. For him that is now true. For us who read these pages a concern he once expressed about his writings remains relevant: it was ‘that by God’s grace what is accordant with Scripture will elicit the response of faith and conviction’.

IAIN MURRAY
Edinburgh, September 1976
The Holy Scriptures
I take it for granted that we all believe the Bible to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. I take it for granted that we all read the Bible with regularity. What I am going to plead for, however, is concentrated, sustained, devoted study of the Bible, the kind of study that is not fulfilled by the perfunctory reading of some passages each day. The set periods of family worship are not, of course, by any means to be disparaged. This is a highly necessary and most fruitful exercise. The influence for good exerted by honouring God’s Word in this way is incalculable for all concerned. Indeed, the minimal use of the Bible in this way has often left an indelible impression for good. And furthermore, the set periods of family worship may become the occasions for very concentrated and systematic study of the Bible.

But what I am going to stress is the necessity for diligent and persevering searching of the Scriptures; study whereby we shall turn and turn again the pages of Scripture; the study of prolonged thought and meditation by which our hearts and minds may become soaked with the truth of the Bible and by which the deepest springs of thought, feeling and action may be stirred and directed; the study by which the Word of God will grip us, bind us, hold us, pull us, drive us, raise us up from the dunghill, bring us down from our high conceits and make us its bondservants in all of thought, life and conduct.

The Word of God is a great deep; the commandment is exceeding broad; and so we cannot by merely occasional, hurried and perfunctory use of it understand its meaning and power.

Sustained and diligent study of the Bible is indispensable for several reasons. I am going to mention three of these.

1. The Bible is God’s Word, the revealed counsel of God. It is possible for us to develop a certain kind of familiarity with the Bible so that we fail to appreciate the marvel of God’s favour and mercy and wisdom in giving it to us. We need to stop and consider what hopeless darkness, misery and confusion would be ours if we did not possess the Bible. We would be without God and without hope in the world, endlessly stumbling over our own vain imaginings with respect to God, with respect to his will for us and with respect to our own nature, origin and destiny. The Bible is the infallible revelation to us of the truth regarding God himself, regarding the world in which we live and regarding ourselves. It reveals God’s mind and will for us; it declares the way of salvation; it discloses the knowledge that is eternal life. The secrets of God’s mind and purpose, secrets which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, have been laid open to us, the things that concern God’s glory, and our highest interests against all the issues of life and death, of time and eternity.

If Winston Churchill wrote a book disclosing to us in his own masterly style a great many of the secrets with respect to this war, secrets which for various reasons must now be concealed, I suppose that we would all be impatient until we should be able to read it. Very likely we would devour its contents. But how trivial in comparison are the secrets hidden in Churchill’s mind! The eternal God, of whose plan all history is the unfolding, has let us in on the secrets of his mind and purpose. The mystery hid from ages and generations, the things which prophets and righteous men desired to see but did not see, God has revealed to us upon whom the ends of the ages have come. He has not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth. His will is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

If we truly appreciate the mystery of God’s grace and wisdom, we shall study the Bible as one who has found great spoil. The very nature and content of the Bible as God’s Word will compel our most earnest application to it.

2. We must study the Bible with all diligence and persistence if we are really to know and understand its truth. It is perfectly true and an