

## The Inspiration of the Bible.

BY E. M. SAUNDERS, P. D.

NO. 2.

In the light of Bible literature and what is called secular history, we of to-day are able, in some measure at least, to put ourselves in the places of the Jews of Christ's time, and know and feel their beliefs, their prejudices, their bigotry, self-sufficiency, tenacity of purpose, their contempt for the Gentiles and their zeal for religion easily kindled into frenzy. All classes of society pass before us—the learned rulers, the sects, the priests and other officials, the people of villages, towns, and cities. We see them all—we enter into their feelings, listen to their speech and see their conduct.

The people of all classes seemed to have believed, that they had in the sacred books a final revelation. The law, the prophets and the holy writings contained God's entire will. The temple, its appointments, its sacrifices and its ritual needed no supplement. A leader, a deliverer, was indeed most anxiously looked for by all the people, but he was to come with "observation"—outward display. While in this state, satisfied with the revelations on which their religion was grounded, but yearning and praying for the appearance of the great leader who would give them civil and religious freedom, and also become the ruler of the Gentile world, there appeared among them a young man from a country town, the son of a carpenter, as it was believed, and himself a carpenter. He took it upon himself to expound the sacred writings then in the possession of his fellow countrymen, and regarded by them as the oracles of their God. He did more. He told them that he was the deliverer of whom Moses wrote, and for whom the nation had waited from the days of Moses until that day. He went still further. He declared that he was their God in human form. That in him the great God whom they had worshipped from the day that Abraham their father, left Ur of the Chaldees, was now before them in the form of man—the son of man and the son of God; and that, while in his own person, God was incarnate, God still existed as a separate person to whom he looked, to whom he prayed; and whose will and work he had come to do and was doing. This shocked and enraged the learned—the guardians of the religion among his fellow countrymen. Look at these assumptions as did the Jewish priests and rulers—the trustees and defenders of the religion handed down from Abraham—and the wonder is small that they were astounded and maddened with zeal, that they resolved to rid the country of one who seemed to them a deliberate, defiant blasphemer. To them it seemed that no time should be lost in condemning and destroying a pretender who was a menace both to their country and to their religion. Already he had taken the first step in leading the people into the belief that there were more Gods than one. For two thousand years they and their ancestors had been fighting the polytheism of the nations. For this purpose Abraham, at the call of their God, had left his own country and gone to the one they now inhabited, not knowing whither he went. Had they not in the days of Elijah and times subsequent been punished by Jehovah for fraternizing with nations who worshipped more than one God, and in going to their altars with them? What meant their deportation to Babylon and other calamities but punishments for accepting the doctrine of more than one God and worshipping them? And now here is a Nazarene mechanic setting himself up as God's equal and claiming worship. How long would it be before another deity would appear demanding their submission, reverence and worship? Indeed they did not have long to wait. He soon taught them that there was another person in the Godhead, unseen but real. After his prophesied departure from the earth, this one was to come and carry forward the work which he had taken from the hands of Moses, the prophets and other writers of their holy books. Indeed he taught them, that from the beginning, he and the Holy Spirit had been in the world; and that by them God's work had been carried on up to that time. With the rending of their garments and casting dust into the air, they shouted and raged. He makes himself equal with God. He would have us believe that the God who has led our ancestors has come down to dwell in the son of a carpenter. Three Gods, and one of the three already among them, as it seemed to the Jews, was the most horrifying of blasphemies. Added to these two new doctrines, three Gods, i. e., the trinity, and the incarnation of God in himself, the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit was inculcated—three new and startling declarations, not one, no, not even the erudite, polished Nicodemus, according to the teachings of the man from Nazareth, could either see or enter into the Kingdom of God without the new spiritual birth.

The doctrines of the existence of God, his attributes, perfections, purposes and providence—the creation and fall of man, his moral, intellectual and spiritual nature, and his salvation, the atonement (taught by their sacrifices), the existence and ministry of angels good and bad; the judgment, heaven and hell, were all revealed before Mary's Son appeared. The teachings given in the Sermon on the Mount were not new teachings—the poor in spirit, the condition of mourners, the meek spirit, the craving for righteousness, the merciful state of the soul, the purity of heart,

the peace-making souls, the persecuted for well-doing, the good being the salt of the earth, are truths which were within the reach of the honest enquirer, truths which the Jews had in their sacred scriptures. But he had new truths; they believed in redemption, he was their redeemer—they believed in atonement, he was the only sacrifice that atoned for guilt. He atoned for sin by his blood, the Holy Spirit regenerated by virtue of this blood—atonement.

To recapitulate the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, which to his countrymen were new and startling, were these—that he was God incarnate, that the Holy Spirit, hitherto regarded as an influence emanating from God, was a person, that his own work was to perfect an atonement, and that the special work of the Holy Spirit was to apply it to human hearts by regeneration effected by the Holy Spirit and carried to perfection by his further ministrations.

How can he induce his fellow countrymen to believe these new doctrines; and receive him, accept him as the predicted Messiah? By what means had their venerable religion been commended to them? And by what means had it been undeniably proved to be from Heaven? How had it stood the assaults of the centuries? Was it not by miracles, signs and wonders, that God had established these revelations? The translation of Enoch, the flood, the ark, the call of Abraham, the heavenly visitors, eating veal with Abraham under the oaks at Mamre, the redemption from Egypt and the accompanying signs, wonders and miracles, the parting of Jordan, the fall of Jericho; the raising of the dead by Elijah and Elisha; the deportation of the nation to Babylon and its miraculous return; and many other miracles and supernatural events stood like immovable mountains of defence around their religion and their sacred scriptures. It was then most natural and reasonable as well, that the Jews should ask the son of the carpenter to give them this kind of evidence, and not sparingly to assure them that he was what he professed to be, and that he had good grounds for claims on their belief of the new doctrine he preached and the astounding claims which he made. Nor did they ask in vain. The angel appearing to Zacharias, to Mary, to Joseph, angels to shepherds, the star in the east, the symbolic dove and voice from Heaven at his baptism, the water turned to wine, the healing of a nobleman's son, the miraculous draught of fishes, the healing of the lame in the synagogue, Peter's wife's mother healed, the lepers also, and the paralytic, the healing at the pool, the withered hand restored, the centurion's servant healed, raising from the dead of Jairus' daughter, also a number of blind men cured, evil spirits cast out, five thousand and four thousand fed miraculously, Jesus himself walking on the water, one of his disciples at his command doing the same, calming the tempest and the daughter of a heathen woman healed, more blind men receive sight, the transfiguration, the miracle of the tribute money, Lazarus raised from the dead, the withering of the fig tree, his crucifixion and its accompanying signs and wonders, his resurrection and its phenomena, his mode of living for forty days and his miraculous departure in the sight of the people.

References make it plain that the recorded signs and miracles were but few of the many which he wrought. By these miracles many fair-minded, honest people were convinced of the validity of Christ's claims and of the truth of his doctrines. Others rejected him and the supernatural evidences. Nicodemus represents a class of the honest among the learned and cultured, who were persuaded by his miracles that he was from God. Others, when they saw the supernatural signs said these miracles are wrought by the help of the prince of devils; others said show us a sign from heaven, although he had already done so. The symbolic dove and the voice heard by the crowds at the Jordan were of this class. But they would not believe him. Even when some knew that he had raised Lazarus they said, "Let us put Lazarus to death."

Added to his miracles were his teachings. Not to destroy the law and the prophets have I come, but to fulfill them. He made their hearts burn while he opened to them the Old Testament and added to its prophecies.

Again, with the Jewish Bible in his hand, and supported in his claims and teachings by many miracles, signs and wonders, he declared that the Old Testament had come from God to the Jewish nation. "Search these scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they testify of me." The Messiah predicted and long expected is before you, your teacher and leader. I am the prophet which Moses said, "the Lord your God would raise up unto you like unto him whom you should hear." Before Abraham was, I am.

The personal charm of Christ's personality, the words he uttered, the spirit he ever manifested, added weight to his miracles and the exposition of the Old Testament. "Never man spake like this man," was the common verdict, and had not the larger number of the learned and ruling class turned against him, and pursued him with relentless, fiendish hatred, it is probable that the great mass of people with voice and heart would have received him and his teachings.

The miracles and supernatural phenomena of the Old Testament and the unique history of the descendants of Abraham, from the day that he left Ur of the Chaldees until the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, added to the fact that Christ accepted the sacred writings of God's revealed will

to the Jews; and the further fact, that his claims were justified by miracles and signs which he did in public and private, put the Old Testament before us as a book or a number of books inspired of God according to the claims of its authors and the belief of the Jews.

In the next article, I will refer to some of the evidences, in the light of which we can regard the Old Testament as we now have it, as containing the writings referred to by Christ, when he told the people to search the scriptures for evidences of his Messiahship.

## "I Am So Hungry."

BY REV. S. A. DYKE.

Such was the reply of an earnest Christian woman to one who noticed, with no little surprise, that she had come through all weathers to a series of Bible readings, which were held at some distance from her home. The one who conducted these readings had much in himself personally which was not attractive to a person of education or refinement. The speaker was both educated and refined. Though young, she had passed through deep waters of bereavement and sorrow. She was bearing heavy burdens of responsibility, and she had learned how unsatisfying to the soul in its extremity are mere earthly things. Though the Bible reader intruded himself, his experiences, and his interests needlessly and offensively, he nevertheless brought out things new and old from the treasury of God's Word in a striking and impressive way; and it was for the sake of the Bread of Life which he dispensed that she endured the offensive ways of the one who dispensed it. Had he been wiser and more winning in his methods had he kept himself as a servant should, in the background, his ministry would have been wider and richer. Hence, when the question was put, "Why do you come so regularly, and at so much inconvenience?" her answer was, "I am so hungry!" There was a pathos and a yearning in her words, and such an earnest look in the sad, pale face and the words haunt the writer still.

A little window sometimes lets in a lot of light, and in the light of that face and of those words he sees an image of a multitude of souls hungry for the Bread of Life, some of whom, perhaps, do not know what they want, or where it may be found. God has made man for Himself, and man never can find satisfaction, lasting and full, until he returns to Him, the One who is the fountain of life. Until he looks to Him man is never satisfied with seeing; until he is filled with His life and love he is never satisfied with possessing. But when he turns with full purpose of heart to Him, then are the words of the Master true: "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

But the question came again and again "Why was she so hungry?" Was the Bread of Life not broken to her, or was it given in so scanty measure that she was starving still? Or was it, as it sometimes is with children, that a change of fare, and of the way in which it was served, had whetted her appetite? Much of the enjoyment of one's food depends upon the skill of the cook and the variety and order of the viands which he brings to the table. Savory food will whet even a dull appetite, and a change in the order of the table will awaken interest in one to whom things have become somewhat monotonous, and sometimes one is helped by a change of cook and of diet. Nevertheless, careful observers have noted that the food of which we soonest tire is that which is the most highly flavored; and that that of which we never weary has the least distinctive taste. Water, bread, meal, rice, meat, the more wholesome they are, the less distinctive flavor they possess. So a highly spiced and flavored ministry is not likely to be either wholesome or lasting; and frequently that becomes nauseating which, like honey, was received at first with avidity. It may draw for a time, but only for a time, and men will weary of it soon. The ministry is ever most lasting which is simplest, plainest, clearest, and that stand truest to those substantial, fundamental truths of the Word upon which alone a strong and sturdy Christian character can be nourished.

But again the question comes: Why are souls so hungry and why so often tempted to wander far afield for food? No doubt there are many who have itching ears, and care only for novelty and excitement; and perhaps, the time has come when many "will not endure sound doctrine but after their own lusts heap to themselves leaders." But this is not so often true of God's children to furnish a satisfactory answer. More frequently will it be found in the fact that the food is adulterated to such a degree that its life and power are taken away. It is so diluted with politics, science, art, philosophy, sociology, literature, and criticism that the hungry soul cries out, "They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him." If they have not taken Him away, they have buried Him out of sight, or thrust Him into an obscure corner. Then, again, the Bread of Life is often so refined that its most nourishing elements are eliminated. In the good old days, before the demand for the most delicate brands of flour, and the whitest loaves of bread, the phosphates, the brain and nerve and bone nourishing elements were left in the flour. And now, by the new-fangled roller process, the bran and shorts are crushed off and cast out, while men grow lean and women with starved nerves go to the chemist for neuralgia remedies