

We subject the Bible to the tests of reason and conscience, and apply to it the same laws of literary value that govern other books. . . . Every race has its Bible, and all Scripture is given by inspiration. But, little as we know of the ethnic Scriptures, we know enough to see that the Jewish and Christian sacred books are greatly superior to them in literary, moral and religious values, and this because they flowed out of a higher conception of God and man and human duty, and out of a nearer converse with the Divine."

Now let us see what a few of our own representative Baptist ministers think of Mr. Waring's definition of the inspiration of the Bible.

The Rev. J. H. Saunders, D. D., writes as follows:—"The statement shirks the issue. Did Jehovah give a revelation of things spiritual to any man? It gives the Bible no authority."

The Rev. Calvin Goodspeed, D. D., Professor of systematic theology in MacMaster University, judges it thus:—"As it is to Hebrews, Jews and early Christians, rather than to special men among them, it would seem a general evolution of thought, rather than the medium of a supernatural communication. It may be even a naturalistic evolution at that. It was a help in revealing the religious conceptions, but the great question is, how came they by these conceptions? . . . How did these religious conceptions originate, and do they furnish a safe and infallible, because God-given guide as we face life and death and eternity? . . . The fact that this literature 'secured a higher response' within and produced a greater effect upon us and the world than does any other literature," must be true to some literature, even though there be none that give us infallible guidance for there must be one that is comparatively the best. . . . It might do all this, and still give men no safe knowledge about the future life and the way to secure the highest good and destiny."

The Rev. W. L. Archibald, M. A., Ph. D., holds this opinion: "By the inspiration of the Bible we mean that special divine influence upon the minds of Scripture writers by virtue of which their productions, when interpreted in the light of their times, and by the illuminating power of the Holy Spirit, constitute a correct and sufficient rule of faith and action." "Inspiration is a supernatural fact."

The Rev. I. W. Porter, B. A., says:—"My second criticism would be that, according to the definition, nothing is authoritative, but what we in our finiteness determine to be so. Man, not God, seems to be made the seat of authority, or at least the basis of judgment concerning what is authoritative."

The Rev. R. Osgood Morse, M. A., says:—"As a definition of inspiration I consider it radically defective by incompleteness."

The Rev. W. C. Goucher, M. A., gives this view:—"I have always held that the inspiration that came to the writers of the Bible, was of a different kind altogether from the inspiration which accompanies the productions of merely intellectual genius. . . . What the Book says, God says, and what God would say the Book says. The Book says nothing that God did not wish to say. But after that, of course, I take into account that he speaks through the language of men to get it into the ears of men."

The Rev. J. B. Ganong, B. D., says:—"This definition makes the object of inspiration the ennobling of the Hebrew, Jews and early Christians, to produce a literature which revealed their conceptions of religion, and which, as he says, 'when viewed in the light of their times,' exceeds any other literature in its influence upon us; whereas it seems to me the idea of inspiration was to reveal the will of God to men—his purpose of salvation of grace in Christ Jesus. 'Holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' and when they spoke, they did not tell what their 'religious conceptions' were; but what God himself told them to say."

The Rev. D. H. Simpson, M. A., makes these statements:—"It certainly does not define the inspiration of the canonical and generally accepted Scriptures. . . . It gives no divine authority to the sacred writings. It is a very sublimated theory that in no way meets the requirements of the claims of these Scriptures. It is no vague, indefinite, vapory, an 'airy nothing,' that leaves us no real revelation from God, no sure word of prophecy, no positive gospel to preach or personally rest upon. It leaves us in the fog, if not in the darkness of midnight."

Six weeks after this definition of "What is the Inspiration of the Bible?" was given, another question and definition prepared by Brother Waring, appeared in print, and which has been criticised by some of our representative ministers.

Two weeks after this version appeared, another one, in which further changes were made, was given to the public by Brother Waring. The first one has been considered, the second I shall omit. The third one appears in Mr. Waring's article of last week; and is here reproduced, and also the several paragraphs which serve to modify it.

It will be seen that both the question and the answer differ from those first given.

"What is the Bible, and how should it be studied?" As this generally raises the question of inspiration, I have sought to help you to a good working definition of the inspiration of the Scriptures—one that would not be contrary to even the view that they are absolutely inerrant, and yet one that you could successfully maintain even where you might not be able to clear away the difficulties that, at

least to others, are in the way of believing in the Bible's inerrancy."

"How do the 'Specially Sacred Writings' of the most important religions affect us?"

To use Coleridge's expressive word, the Bible "finds" us as the others do not. While at least in the others there is much that we by no means look upon as God's word, i. e. God's communication or revelation, at least in the Bible there is much that comes to us in a religiously so authoritative and inspiring that we are impressed that it was "given by inspiration." In spite of (or even because of) the most critical investigations into the religious conceptions, etc., revealed in the Bible as compared with those revealed in other "specially sacred" writings, the more we compare them the stronger and more intelligent becomes our belief that to Hebrews, Jews and early Christians was given a progressive revelation from God, appreciation of the progressiveness of which helps to a better understanding of both the difficulties and the truths in the Bible, and so of its inspiration.

What then is the Inspiration of the Bible?

It is at the least that divine influencing of Hebrews, Jews and early Christians in virtue of which the Bible, as the "specially sacred" literature of Christianity, is morally and religiously so much superior to the "specially sacred" writings of any of the other most important religions.

The advantage of such a view as this is, that while it is not contrary to whatever narrower (though higher) views we may hold for ourselves, it gives us a vantage-ground that we may easily take and successfully maintain in our work with any who, while believing in divine influencing, may honestly doubt the truth of any less comprehensive view. Knowledge comes through comparison. While for the sake of the right method we should be willing, in our profound confidence in the result we may well be anxious, that the Bible be intelligently compared, for instance, with S'ruti, Tripitaka, or Koran. I believe that in its production the influence of the Holy Spirit was such that, when thus compared, the Bible—especially through its revelation of the Son of God, His teaching, vicarious death, etc.—will be found to (use a paradox) to be beyond comparison."

It will be observed in the above quotation that Brother Waring says that this last definition is "a good working definition of the inspiration of the Scriptures."

The Bible, Brother Waring asserts, will be found to be superior to the sacred writings of other religions. To advance the gospel at home, the Bible should, therefore, be compared with the sacred writings of the ancients—the books of the Hindus, the Chinese, the Buddhists, the Persians, the Greeks, the Mohammedans and the ancient Romans. The impossibility of this, except for students under professors of comparative theology, is so apparent that it may be set aside without comment. For the use of the churches no argument is necessary to show that it is outside of the practicable.

It might be informing to enquire as to the practice of Paul in circumstances where it was possible to make such comparison with the ethnic Scriptures.

To the Epicureans and Stoics, before going to Mars Hill, he did not say, compare our Scriptures with the writings of the Persians, Egyptians, Hindus and your own system; but "he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection."

On Mars Hill he did not suggest to that learned audience the comparison of the Scriptures with the sacred writings of the heathen; but he preached the great God, the Creator, the guilt of man and his accountability to God, the judgment day and the resurrection of Christ and hence of all men. Not one word about comparing the ancient heathen scriptures with the Old Testament and Paul's declarations of truth. He ignored them. He won a number of souls for Christ, among them were Dionysius and the woman Damaris. Think of it! Paul telling these philosophers to compare the Hebrew Scriptures with the sacred works of the gentiles. It would have taken them years to have done it. By that time he had established churches all around the Mediterranean Sea. He believed Christ and him crucified would be to all classes, even the learned philosophers of Greece, the power of God unto salvation and he was not mistaken.

Our missionaries do the same. They follow Paul's example. They preach the gospel. They, as Paul did, denounce the doctrines and practices of heathen; but they never for once think of saying to the heathen "Let us sit down and compare our Scriptures with the systems of idolatry, with a view to prove that the Christian Bible is superior to the sacred writings of the heathen nations."

At home and in the foreign field, Brother Waring's definition of Inspiration is, in my opinion, worse than worthless. It is misleading, unsettling, and destructive.

For practical evangelical purposes, the only attempt to make such comparison was in 1893 at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago. To attend the meetings of this body, where representatives of all the great religions were heard, and where Buddhists, Brahmins, Persians, Shintoists and Taoists were lionized; and then attend the meetings in Haymarket Theatre and other places conducted by Mr. Moody, McNeill, Dixon and others, was to have demonstration to the eyes, of the utter failure of this practical comparison of the ethnic religions with Christianity. To begin with, there was on the wall leading to the large hall of meeting, a shocking prostitution of the religion of the

Bible, by having the name of Christ bracketed with those of Zoroaster, Buddha and Confucius. The thousands who frequented Moody's meetings were filled with holy awe, and great numbers were turned to the Lord in Chicago, then gorged with tens of thousands of strangers.

Dr. Buggs who got the full benefit of the reports of the heathen representatives on their return to India, denounced the Parliament of Religions in strong and unqualified terms at a meeting of the Maritime Convention at Bear River. He said in effect that the heathen representatives returned to India more expert in lying than ever they were when they left home. If after all this, any one thinks it duty to press the comparisons of religions with a view to determine the Inspiration of the Bible, I do not know that there is any help for it.

By carefully reading the varied and qualified definitions given by Brother Waring of the Inspiration of the Bible, it will be seen that, whatever his intention may have been in giving his first belief in respect to Bible Inspiration, it would now seem that not one of them or all of them taken together, express his views on this basal subject.

Now that our Brother has asked the attention of his church and the denomination again and again to this subject, in the pulpit and in the press, it does seem to me, that, if he has not already done so in his first definition, he now owes it to himself and to the interests of truth, to tell the denomination just what are his personal views of inspiration. The first definition, as has been shown, leaves his belief on Unitarian ground. The final one is seen, not only not to be of any practical value; but for general use unsettling and confusing. My brother is now face to face with a duty from which I am sure he will not shrink—to give the denomination his views on this subject of revealed truth.

The denomination, I assume, cares but little about methods and processes of investigating the Scriptures; but the results of such investigation are of vast importance, and should be clearly stated. Upon any definition so far given, it is scarcely necessary to state, that a system of evangelical truth cannot be founded.

It is most gratifying to read above the independent, and yet harmonious judgments given by some of our representative ministers on the inspiration of the Bible. These views indicate maturity of conviction after a careful examination of theories of the higher critics and of the rationalistic analysts. These brethren have evidently torn to shreds, webs of fallacy and dogma, and hold to sound views of God's Word, which vitalize their souls with the burning facts of revelation, especially the deity of Christ, the incarnation and the atonement, which tend to make them able ministers of the New Testament.

In Everything Give Thanks.

Surely this is a hard saying? Am I to thank God for everything? Am I to thank him for bereavement, for pain, for poverty, for toil? I may believe that the time will come when I shall thank him; that is an act of faith. But am I to turn faith into fruition? Must I celebrate the victory before the battle? Must I lift up my hands over my head and cry, "Father I thank thee thou hast taken away my friend?" Is it possible? Is it human? Is it desirable? Is it the will of love that love should violate its own law? Is it pleasing to my Father that loss should be pleasant to me? Is my heart to make no distinction between the sunshine and the cloud? Is not one half of my joy just the absence of pain? If I cease to shrink from pain, how shall I keep my joy? Is it good that I should be told to give thanks for everything?

Be still, my soul; thou hast misread the message. It is not to give thanks for everything, but to give thanks in everything. It is not to praise God for the night, but to bless him that the night is not deeper. Bethink thee; thou hast never reached the absolute depth of any darkness, never come to the step which has no step below it. I have read of the Son of Man that he gave thanks over the symbol of his broken body. What does that prove? That he rejoiced in being sad? No, but that he was not perfectly sad. It tells me that the Man of Sorrows had not reached the uttermost sorrow. Not for the pain, but for the mitigation of the pain, did the Son of Man give thanks; not that his body was broken, but that it was broken for me. In thine hour of sorrow give thanks like Jesus. Keep thine eye, not on the step above, but on the step below—the step to which thou hast not yet descended. Look not up at the height thou has lost; look down on the depth thou hast not sounded.

There might have been no ram caught in thy thicket. There might have been no dream dreamt in thy dungeon. There might have been no bush burning in thy desert. Herod might have come without the sages; Bethlehem might have come without the angels; Judas might have come without the Passover; Calvary might have come without the garden.

Thy Father has never allowed the uttermost deep of misery to any human spirit; the cable may creak and strain, but it is anchored within the veil. God never fills the cup of Jesus to the brim; there is always a vacant space reserved for light and air. Is it not written that he has put my tears into his bottle; the quantity of thy griefs is measured; there is a bound which they cannot pass? Thank God for that boundary, oh, my soul.—Geo. Matheson.