

The Home Mission Journal.

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The Bible as Literature and Much More.

ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR.

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(Continued from last issue.)

Proofs of Inspiration.

To deny that the Bible is a divine book, on the ground of its real or supposed imperfections, is as unreasonable as to deny that the world was created by God because of its imperfections, or to deny Jesus Christ was perfect simply because His character is inexplicable, judged by the standards of human conduct usually recognized among men. We must hold clearly in mind the purpose for which the Scripture was given, in order that we may rightly judge of its character. We have no right to criticize the Bible because it does not contain truths which it never was designed to teach. As well might we find fault with a volume of poetry because it does not contain all needful knowledge of mathematical problems; as well might we object to an oratorio because it does not give us knowledge of hydrostatics or hydraulics. Men have been most unreasonable and uncritical, because unwisely critical, in their treatment of the Bible. It has suffered alike from cynical foes and heedless friends. We should judge it chiefly as a work of religious faith and life; and in this respect it is an infallible guide to duty on earth and to glory in heaven. This is its chief function. This exalted aim enables it above all other books. Thus it is appropriately a divine human work. Its specific design, its distinctive glory, must necessarily limit its range of topics and its method of discussion. We do not expect it to be a treatise on railways, steamships, telegraphs or telephones. If it completely discusses the sublimest and divinest of themes, that ought to be glory enough for one volume. Its chief purpose, as we have seen, its divine prerogative, is that it is a text-book of religion. If I have a guide-book to India giving me correctly the time-tables on railways and steamships, and a thousand other things immediately connected with my journey in India, I shall not reject it even if I find in it some incidental allusion to the United States containing a slight error in American history. Its function is as a guide to India. It may still be that to an admirable degree, even though it contains some erroneous allusion to botany, geology, or some other science unconnected with its purpose. It is true that some of the Bible's doctrines involve historical facts, but it is easy to make distinctions between historical facts of vital importance and those of merely incidental relation to the purpose for which the Bible was given. The existence of scientific errors in the Bible is not yet proven. A careful and unprejudiced study of Joshua x:12-14 will conclusively show that the Bible does not affirm that the sun and moon stood still, or that Joshua prayed to God that they might pause in their course. The passage shows, when properly interpreted, that Joshua did not pray to God at all, but that he simply apostrophized the sun and moon. The time has come when we must make sharp distinctions between the revelations. The time has come when that passage should no longer be a stumbling-block to either saints or sinners. It has too long received a degree of importance alike from the friends and foes of revelation, of which, when truly interpreted, it is utterly undeserving.

Direct Proofs of Inspiration.

The Gospels claim that Christ promised inspiration to His apostles: John xiv:16, 17, 26;

xv:26, 27; xvi:13-15. It is also claimed in several passages that in accordance with Christ's promise the apostles received inspiration in their teachings. But a few of these passages need here be cited; Acts iv:8; xi:15; xv:28; I Pet. i:12. The apostles did not hesitate to put themselves on a level with the Old Testament writers, and to these writers they granted inspiration. They thus claim for themselves the degree of inspiration which they attribute to the writings of the more ancient Scripture. 2 Tim. iii:16; 2 Pet. i:19-21. The meaning of this passage from Timothy has been much discussed, but it refers of course to the Old Testament. The revised version gives the rendering, "Every Scripture inspired of God is, etc." Is this a true rendering? According to the common rendering of this passage inspiration is affirmed of all Scripture. According to the rendering of the revised version the inspiration is greatly limited. One hesitates to affirm his conviction that the common rendering is the true one, when scholars and the revised version seem to prefer another interpretation. Scholarship, however can match scholarship on both sides of this subject. Rules of Greek syntax can be marshalled to show that the common rendering is conformable to the recognized laws of this most accurate of all languages. It is difficult to believe that the apostle meant to affirm that divine inspiration belongs to a part of Scripture, but not to the whole, or that he meant to give us a rule by which to judge whether or not any part of the Scripture is inspired, and that rule or criterion being simply its utility. Who is to be the judge of its utility? If that rule be adopted then every man makes his own Bible. Neither Christ nor any of His disciples ever named a distinction between different parts of Old Testament Scripture. The doctrine plainly taught in the text under consideration, and the doctrine sustained by many other Scriptures, is that all the writings called the sacred Scriptures are divinely inspired. In the Old Testament the authors frequently testify to the divine origin of their message. They use such language as "the word of the Lord came," or "the Lord spoke by His servant." We know that the prophets were specially called of God. The New Testament writers make most explicit statements regarding the inspiration of the writers of the Old Testament. The inspiration of the New Testament is also affirmed by the apostles resting upon the infallibility of their words: 1 Cor. ii:13; 1 Thess. ii:13; 2 Thess. ii:16. No one can intelligently affirm that the apostles were not competent witnesses, or either will any one dare say that they were dishonest or faratical. Their lives were singularly transparent and beautifully consecrated. Apart from the superintendence of the Spirit of God over their lives and words, we cannot account for the purity of the one or the divinity of the other. With all the diversity in the style of the various writers, there is such a unity in thought as to suggest a superintending spirit which ruled over the work of all. These writers never wrote with the thought that they were contributing each his part toward harmonious and immortal literature. Each wrote of his own individual taste and with his special purpose and designs; and yet all contributed toward one complete whole to such a degree as to evoke the admiration and enthusiasm of the world.

(To be Continued)

Salvation, Deliverance, and Association with Christ—Luke vii:36-50; viii:43-48;

x:33-42

(Concluded.)

H. S. COSMAN.

3. ASSOCIATION WITH CHRIST. Thirdly, let us consider our Saviour's visit to Bethany in the hospitable home of Martha and Mary to which we are indebted for the lessons taught of association with Christ.

"Now it came to pass as they went, that He entered into a certain village and a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus feet, and heard His Word. But Martha was troubled about much serving, and came to Him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid

her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her; 'Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'" Luke x:38-42.

Here we have illustrated in this narrative the climax of Christian life and activity in this world, and that is association with Christ. Could any circumstance be more vivid for example as this sublime picture affords? Here is the culmination of all Christian endeavour, here is the man of God taking unto himself the whole armour of God, becoming perfect, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works, or as the Apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians; "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to apprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."—Eph. iii:17-19.

We find Martha receiving the blessed Son of God into her house, and although busily occupied with domestic duties, her sister Mary also sat at Jesus feet and listened attentively to the gracious words that fell like pearls from his sacred lips. I am glad for that little word "also," as it implies that Mary had finished her domestic duties and was now willing to hold communion with her Lord. Martha represents the Christian occupied with household duties, ministering to the needs of those around while neglecting the things that feed the soul.

She needed to realize the necessity of getting near to the heart of Christ with that consciousness of abiding in Him as Mary in her simplicity of faith happily experienced; but instead allowed the cares of life to so perplex her as to rob her of this privilege. There are very many believers just like Martha in this particular: Somebody uttered a truth some time ago that is worth meditating over: "Some Christians are so busy trying to do something for Jesus that they have no time to let Him do something for them."

How true has this been in our experience. We become occupied with ourselves and the needs of those around us, and shut ourselves out of the personal blessings that we need, and that are freely given to us for the development of the divine life within. I am not denying the responsibility of helping others, but along with this precious quality of disposition the soul should ever be in conscious association with its risen Lord, and experience for itself those heavenly delights of joy and communion as to be enabled to say in the opening sentences of the twenty-seventh psalm: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid."

There is a dissipation of soul which comes from entering needlessly and too deeply into the interests of the world. Every one of us has his divine calling; and within the circle pointed out by God Himself, interest in our work and its surroundings is a duty. But even here has the believers need to exercise watchfulness and sobriety, and still more do we need a holy temperance in regard to things not absolutely imposed upon us by God. If fellowship with Christ and abiding in Him really be our first aim, let us beware of all needless excitement. Let us watch even in lawful and necessary things against the wondrous power these have to keep the soul so occupied, that there remains but little power or zeal for fellowship with God. Then there is the restlessness and worry that come of care and anxiety about earthly things; these eat away the life of trust and communion, and keep the soul uneasy like a troubled sea, so that the soul cannot enter into the blessed experience of unmoored association with Christ. The heart occupied with its own plans and efforts for doing God's will instead of consciously abiding in Christ must fail continually.

We learn in order to have power for good to those around us, we must be in intimate communion and fellowship with Christ, and have our hearts enriched with those truths that have been spirit taught.

Francis Ridley Havergal, who has given us some of the sweetest poetry of modern times, has written a verse that may aptly be applied to the devoted life of many, in that it shows forth the love that actuated her every movement: