

## PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

KNOX COLLEGE.  
OPENING OF SESSION, 1878-79.

On Wednesday of last week Knox College was formally opened at noon. The Rev. Principal Caven, D.D., was accompanied to the platform by Revs. Professors Gregg and McLaren, Dr. Reid, Dr. James (Hamilton), Dr. Wardrope, Dr. Topp, and Thos. Lowry. The audience was very large, in which we noticed many of the ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, and of which the ladies formed no small portion. After singing and reading of Scripture, Rev. Dr. Topp led in prayer. Principal Caven then made a few remarks in which he stated that at the close of last session a larger number of students than in any previous year had gone forth to the ministry. He wished to direct attention to the prospect of a special call being made upon the friends of Knox College for its efficient endowment. He was glad that Principal Grant had been so successful in his efforts for the increased endowment of Queen's. He only sounded a note of warning, not of alarm, in urging this matter. The Principal also spoke of the deficiencies of the library, and appealed to those present and friends throughout the country to aid them by donations of money or books.

Rev. Professor McLaren then proceeded to deliver his address. He said. In taking up the inspiration of Scripture the question which comes before us is the degree of authority we are warranted in ascribing to the sacred writings. It pre-supposes that a measure of authority is due to them which does not belong to ordinary human compositions. It is not, therefore, a subject which we require to discuss with avowed unbelievers. It concerns only those who accept the Scriptures as in some sense the record of a supernatural revelation. And, as the Scriptures supply the only *data* by which their inspiration can be judged, it is evident that we have no common ground of reasoning with those that reject their voice.

Two positions must be held as settled before the consideration of the inspiration of Scripture is in order, viz.: (1) that there is a personal God, the Creator and Moral Governor of the universe; and (2) that He has made a supernatural revelation of himself to mankind of which the Scriptures are a record historically trustworthy. These positions, covering substantially all that the Christian apologist seeks to establish, while they stop short of the assertion of the inspiration of Scripture, are essential to its rational discussion. Until these positions are granted it is as hopeless and as useless attempting to prove the inspiration of Scripture as it would be to discuss the military tactics of Napoleon with a man who denied that the Corsican had ever led an army to battle. If there is no personal God, whatever involves the supernatural must be ruled out as impossible and absurd. It scarcely admits of question that the reason why many who examine the inspiration of Scripture fail to recognize it is that their minds are enslaved with the notion that the supernatural is impossible, and that whatever therefore involves it must either be set aside or explained away. But the only logical basis for such a pre-supposition is speculative Pantheism or Atheism. For, if there is a personal God, the Creator and Moral Governor of the Universe, the supernatural must be acknowledged, not only as possible; but as a fact. It is involved in creation. And how often the Most High has been pleased to exert his power supernaturally is a question to be determined, not by blind pre-suppositions, but by a careful examination of evidence. The existence of a personal God renders a supernatural revelation possible, but the fact that such a revelation has been made and recorded in the Holy Scriptures, with as much accuracy as we ascribe to the best class of human writings, must be established before we are prepared to take up the inspiration of the sacred volume. This, we presume, has been done to your satisfaction when you were studying the evidences of Christianity. You have satisfied yourselves that God has not only made a supernatural revelation of himself to men, but that we have a record of it in the Scriptures which is historically trustworthy; or, in other words, the Scriptures were written by men of competent information and thorough honesty, and consequently, the revelation given to them must be held to be recorded in Scripture with as much correctness as we attribute to the best class of human writ-

ings. The acceptance of the Scriptures as a record historically trustworthy of a supernatural revelation carries with it a decision, substantially complete, as to the books to which this character is ascribed, and also as to the fact that they have been transmitted to us with at least as much purity as distinguishes the works of ancient authors which we accept as genuine and authentic. When we have reached this point, to which you are supposed to be carried by your studies in Apologetics, we are prepared to take a step in advance, and ask whether we are not warranted from an examination of the contents of Scripture to claim that the record was not only made by men of competent information and thorough integrity, but by holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. We may enquire whether the sacred writers were left to themselves to record as best they could the mysteries of divine revelation, or whether they were guided supernaturally to embody correctly in human language the revelation which they had received. This is the question of inspiration. In this lecture all we shall attempt is to state what we regard as involved in an adequate doctrine of inspiration, indicate a line of argument by which it is established, and answer some of the more common objections urged against it.

We shall not discuss the various theories which have been invented to explain, or to explain away, inspiration. They proceed largely upon the assumption that the mode of inspiration admits of explanation. This we regard as entirely inadmissible. All we can know of anything supernatural is the fact. The mode of the supernatural, if such language has any meaning, is known only to God. Our doctrine of inspiration must be reached, not by theorising, but by a careful examination of the contents of the Bible. The facts and phenomena of the Scriptures must determine whether the writer wrote with or without supernatural guidance. One fact which strikes us in perusing the Bible is that it was written by men. It carries upon its face the impress of the distinct style and character of various human authors as plainly as any collection of books. It bears all the marks of having been produced by its numerous writers in the full exercise of their natural powers. Each book is as perfectly human in its individuality of structure and style as if God had nothing to do with its composition. No view of inspiration which does not fully recognize this fact can be satisfactory. But, as we read in the Sacred Volume, the evidence of a second fact forces itself on our attention, viz., the Bible is also the authorship of God. Its human authors wrote under supernatural guidance. If we recognize its writers as honest and intelligent men, we are compelled to believe that a higher intelligence than their own guided their hands. These facts do not contradict each other, although we may not be able to explain how they meet in harmony in the same composition. Each is established by its own evidence. There are two statements warranted, as we judge, by the facts and phenomena of Scripture, which appear to us to contain all that is essential to an adequate doctrine of inspiration, viz.: (1) The sacred writers intended to give to mankind in their writings only what God had supernaturally given to them; and (2), God enabled them by His special aid to do what they intended. In one word, the Scriptures have been so written that God has made Himself responsible for their contents. They are a supernatural record of a supernatural revelation. When, in the first statement, we assert that all that the sacred penmen designed to put on record was the communication of truth which had been supernaturally given to them by God, we do not say that all they felt themselves impelled to write was a revelation from God in the highest sense of the term. It was not all new truth before unknown to man. What we mean is that the contents of Scripture were designed to be in such a sense from God that He would be as truly responsible for them as an author is for the subject-matter of a book which he writes. In order to this responsibility, originality of matter is not necessary. When an author sends forth a new work some of his ideas and facts may be new, others may be presented in new relations, and not a few of them may have been presented in substantially the same manner by others, but he deems it essential to his design to incorporate them in his book, or perhaps to stamp them with his authority. But this complex whole, in which things new and old mingle, he makes his own, and he becomes responsible for every part of it to the extent to which he sanctions it. In like manner, whatever may be the character of the truth to be recorded in

the sacred Scriptures—whether something made known for the first time, old truth presented in new relations, or familiar truth gathered by the writers under Divine guidance from common report, existing books, or public archives—the whole moulded by Divine wisdom into a complex communication of truth where every part ministers to the design of the Divine author, was what the Scripture writers intended to give to the world. The entire subject matter which they designed to embody in their writings was God's message to men. When, in the second statement, we assert that the sacred writers were enabled by God's special aid to do what they intended we complete the idea of the Divine authorship of the Holy Scriptures. This gives us a supernatural revelation embodied supernaturally in human language. It is not enough for us to know that the truth was lodged in all its purity in the minds of the sacred writers, unless we are certified also that they were enabled to transfer it without error to the written page where alone we have access to it. An author must not only have correct ideas in his mind, but he must clothe them in such words as are fitted to convey them clearly and effectively to the minds of his readers. Those who are familiar with the endless disputes which arise from inaccurate language are not likely to undervalue this portion of an author's work. It may also be easily seen that in the case of writers subject to the prejudices, passions, and infirmities which cling even to good men we have poor security that, if left to themselves, they would not err seriously in attempting to give expression to the unfamiliar mysteries of a new revelation. The admission of such an undefinable amount of error in the record would certainly deprive us of many of the benefits of a supernatural revelation as a rule of faith and life. For in every appeal to the Holy Scriptures the bewildering doubt assails us whether the very words to which we appeal are not rather the product of human imperfection than of divine wisdom. This is a very different thing from a measure of uncertainty as to the correct reading of particular texts. In the one case the doubt can always be localized, and the uncertainty of one text can be supplemented by the undoubted teaching of another. In the other case the same uncertainty hangs over all, and in no instance can we be assured that we are not, at least to some extent, building upon what is human as if it were divine.

There are two features which necessarily distinguish any book or utterance of which God, in the sense we have defined, is the author, viz.: infallible truth and divine authority. Whatever shows that either of these characteristics attaches to any word spoken or book written by man proves its inspiration. These are attributes which can be predicated only of divine words. Whatever, therefore, makes it manifest that the Scriptures are clothed with such unerring truth and supreme authority that it is sin to disbelieve what they teach, or to disobey what they enjoin, establishes their inspiration in the only sense in which Christians need contend for it. It is admitted on both sides of this controversy that the Scriptures are the only authoritative source of information as to their own inspiration. Ellis, a leading Unitarian divine of New England, and a strong opponent of plenary inspiration, declares "that the prevailing popular view of the authority, the inspiration, and the infallibility of the Bible has been superstitiously attached to it, that it did not originate in the Bible, is not claimed by the contents of the Bible, and cannot be sustained by any fair dealing with them." (Half-Cent. Unit. Contr., p. 239.) Jowett, in his contribution to the notorious "Essays and Reviews," says that "the nature of inspiration can only be known from the examination of Scripture. There is no other source to which we can turn for information." (p. 381.) And he boldly asserts that "for any of the higher or supernatural views of inspiration there is no foundation in the Gospels or Epistles." (p. 379.) This is a plain issue. What idea do the Scriptures give of themselves? Do they claim infallible truth and divine authority for their contents? Do they represent God as their author? In thus appealing to the Scriptures for the evidence of their own inspiration there is no reasoning in a circle, as some worthy divines have dreamed. We do not seek to prove their inspiration by tacitly taking their inspiration for granted. For we do not appeal to the sacred writers as inspired, but as the credible historians of a divine revelation. We do not quote them as infallible, but as honest and trustworthy writers. Were the appeal made to a few isolated expressions