

Poetry.

HEROISMS.

With his trusty sword and shield
Rides the warrior to the field :—
For his bleeding country's wrongs,
Valiantly he goes;
Daring danger—braving death,
'Midst her tyrant-foes.
If he fall—some pilgrim-feet,
To his lonely grave,
Will in reverence come and bend—
Worshipping the brave:
If victorious—he will win
Laurel-wreaths of fame,
While applauding multitudes
Shout the hero's name!
So, with trusty sword and shield,
Rides the warrior to the field.

With the homely spade and hoe,
To the fields the labourers go:
For their hungry families
They bestir betimes;
Digging on from early dawn
To the latest chimes.
Should they rear them honestly,—
When the battle's won,
Unconcernedly they're told,
" 'Tis but duty done."
Should health fail, and pinching want
Send them to our door,
Seldom do we stop to read
The history of the poor.
Yet, with homely spade and hoe,
To the fields the labourers go.

By a dying brother's bed
Sits a maid, and sews for bread :—
When the lark's first silver note
Comes upon the air;
And when tolls the midnight bell,
Ever sits she there—
Watching him, and speaking hope,
Tho' her soul is sad—
Dropping tears upon her task,
Yet appearing glad;
Grueling every moment's rest,
Every sleepy hour—
Yet will wander miles away
For a wayside flower!
Few know this—yet by this bed
Sits the maid, and sews for bread.

God! who seest not in parts,
Strengthen those heroic hearts!
Those who, with a strong endeavour,
Win the noblest fight,
Conquering self,—and yet all lowly
Bend them in Thy sight.
Those who by the sacred hearth-stone,
Where great trials come,
Yet with peace, and gentle voices,
Make it truly home:
Those encased in Love's strong armour,
Doing valiant deeds:
For all such true heroism
Our poor praying pleads.
Strengthen those heroic hearts,
God, who seest not in parts!—*The People's Journal.*

STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

BY A. P. PEABODY.

What is requisite in order to render scriptural inquiry judicious and profitable? I answer, a clear understanding of the respective offices and mutual relations of reason and revelation, and also freedom from prejudice.

1. A clear understanding of the respective offices and mutual relations of reason and revelation.

Reason is that faculty of the mind which draws or approves conclusions from given premises. Revelation implies the discovery of what was before unknown, or the confirmation of what was previously open to doubt. Its office is to inform us of truths which were beyond the province of reason, or to assure us of truths which to the eye of reason were probable but not certain. At the present day two opposite faults prevail in the study of the Christian Scriptures. There are those who, while they admit the authority of reason in every other department, exclude it from religion; and there are those, on the other hand, who, forgetting that the mind knows not all things, and that reason can draw conclusions from known premises only, hold that we are bound to receive on the authority of revelation no truth the reasonableness of which is not perfectly obvious.

The first class of inquirers draw from Scripture, and feel themselves bound to believe doctrines which, as they themselves confess, are contrary to reason. But when is a doctrine contrary to reason? When from incontrovertible premises we draw a conclusion which cannot be true if that doctrine be true. Now I maintain that a revelation from God cannot teach such a doctrine. For whence did we derive the faculty which we now call reason? From God. And for what end did he bestow it? To guide us in belief and action. And what must be his purpose in giving

us a revelation? To guide us in belief and action. Do reason and revelation contradict each other? If so, God has given us two inconsistent guides for belief and action. But this is impossible, if we believe the divine character is one of consistent veracity. If, therefore, we admit the divine veracity, we must reject one of these guides; or if we doubt it, we can depend upon neither. Thus the fact that its doctrines contradicted reason would be a sufficient ground for denying the divine authority of what purported to be a revelation from God.

But you may say that we cannot pass sentence upon a doctrine of divine revelation, because human reason is fallible and often leads to erroneous results. That it often leads to erroneous results every one must admit. But I maintain that it is infallible, that every conclusion drawn by it follows necessarily from the premises from which it is derived, and we are led to wrong conclusions simply because we adopt wrong premises. It has been well observed that the fool reasons wrong even on right premises, and the madman right on wrong premises. Indeed the infallibility of his reason is the only thing which distinguishes the sane man from the idiot, and in many respects we are all madmen. On the most momentous subjects, with reference to the relations which we bear to God and eternity, we madly receive as truths propositions for which we have not the slightest evidence. Upon such premises we indeed reason correctly; but our conclusions may be false, may be absurd, since they are based upon premises which have not been submitted to the test of reason, upon false premises. Our systems of faith are thus like the house in the parable, skilfully framed, skilfully erected, but founded upon the sand, and therefore at the mercy of the first breath of wind or dash of the torrent's spray.

If, then, it is impossible that a revelation from God should teach doctrines contrary to reason, it is of prime importance in our study of the Christian Scriptures to ascertain whether they actually teach such doctrines. As firmly as I believe that they were written by holy men moved by the Holy Spirit, so firmly do I believe that they contain no such doctrines. But such have been drawn from single, disconnected passages. Such passages it is the duty of the inquirer after truth to compare with their context, and with the circumstances, modes of expression, and general purpose of the author; and he who can thus enlighten himself or others as to the true meaning of a text which ignorance and party zeal have long quoted in support of an absurdity, does an essential service to our religion by depriving its adversaries of a valid argument against its divinity. Let us, then, in our scriptural researches ever remember that while God disciplines us in the midst of those things which are seen and temporal, he has made it the privilege, the noblest prerogative of reason, to interpret his oracles concerning things unseen and eternal.

But while we admit no doctrine contrary to reason, let us carefully guard against the opposite error, an unwillingness to receive, on the authority of Scripture, doctrines which might not have been rendered probable by reason independently of revelation. Reason is the power of drawing conclusions from given premises. But where no premises are given, no conclusion can be drawn. Revelation may communicate truth on subjects on which we previously had no premises whereon to ground a process of reasoning, on which we were previously ignorant. And in that case it is our duty to follow implicitly the instructions of revelation, which we should not have needed at all had reason been able to take cognizance of all the sources of truth. On such subjects as the future destinies of the world, the state of the soul after death, the certainty, nature, and duration of future punishment, reason has no premises from which to draw its conclusions. Yet these are subjects, if there are any such, worthy of a divine revelation; and if we find competent proof that the Christian Scriptures contain such a revelation, it becomes us on those momentous topics to which it principally relates to adopt its instructions, without attempting to modify them by the suggestion of reason. The truths which they reveal to us are indeed above reason; but unless they contradict reason, it is presumptuous to gainsay them. When we assert the sufficiency of reason to guide us into all truth we deny the necessity of a revelation, which God forbid we should do.

From what has been said as to the mutual relations of reason and revelation, we derive the following practical rules: First, reason being infallible so far as its province extends, we should on no consideration, adopt tenets contrary to reason; and second, on subjects above the cognizance of reason we should be ready to receive whatever doctrine Scripture fairly interpreted teaches, whether reason independently of revelation teaches it or not.

2. But would we profitably conduct our scriptural researches, something more is

necessary than the mere recognition of these principles. We must disrobe ourselves of prejudice.

Personal, local, sectarian prejudice has done infinitely more to retard the progress of truth than misapprehensions on the subject already discussed. In fact it has occasioned such misapprehensions. The instructions of consciousness and experience as to the nature and province of reason, the dictates of reason as to the design of revelation, have all been set aside by prejudice. We are either educated in some system of doctrines which before we are able to judge for ourselves we are taught to regard as of divine authority; or else we derive our first religious impressions from some teacher ardently attached to a particular system, which we, by the instinct of gratitude or by some nameless impulse, are led to adopt and cherish as our own. When we begin to consult the volume of inspiration, we read, not to see what truth is actually revealed there, but to seek confirmation in the belief of doctrines which we are previously assured must be found there. We consider as essential to the Christian system or scheme the doctrines which we have imbibed, wrest in their support every text of doubtful import, and too often apply the threats and denunciations against unbelievers to those who cannot interpret Scripture as we do. We sit down to the perusal of the gospel with a determination to find such and such doctrines upon its pages,—not with a resolution to receive whatever truth may present itself. And in this case, whether the doctrines which we hold are true or false, they are mere prejudices, since we found them neither on impartial examination nor rational conviction.

Now this is the way in which the partisans of different sects confirm themselves in the belief of the tenets of those sects. Of course so many contradictory doctrines are not found in the scriptures; but the imagination of every man arrays the oracles of divine truth in the dress which his prejudices would have them wear. Thus the Trinitarian sees a God, the Humanitarian a man, in every act of the suffering, dying, risen Saviour. The Universalist applies himself to the study of the Scriptures with a full belief that it is inconsistent with God's mercy to punish sin in another world, and the magic of this belief softens in his eye the harshest expressions of the divine displeasure, and strips the day of judgment of its terrors; while his no less prejudiced opponent sees vials of fiery indignation poured forth over those pages that beam with pure, unmingled love. The Episcopalian marks out nice distinctions of office in the apostolic church, and arrays its overseers in robes of episcopal authority; while the Presbyterian, in his zeal for equal rights among the clergy, snatches the mitre from the head upon which an apostle's hand had placed it. Would we derive truth from the Scriptures we must adopt the opposite course. We must apply ourselves to their study with childlike simplicity, with a sense of our ignorance, and of the inadequacy of human knowledge, and a willingness fearlessly to embrace its dictates, however much opposed to the prejudices which friendship, parental love, virtue, or piety may have hallowed.

WATCHFULNESS.

Why you are to be always watchful over yourself, is easily perceived. In this world of sensible objects and temporal pursuits, you are constantly exposed to you have your thoughts absorbed by surrounding things, and withdrawn from the spiritual objects to which they should be primarily attached. You are incited to forget them, to slight them, to counteract them. The engagements, the anxiety, hurry, and pleasures of life, thrust them from your thoughts; and desires, propensities, passions, are excited quite inconsistent with the calm and heavenward affections of Christ. All these tendencies in your situation are to be resisted. You are to be ever on the alert, that they may not lead you into any course of thought or of action at variance with the principles to which you are pledged as a believer in Jesus Christ, and which form your delight in your hours of devotional enjoyment. Such inconsistency may be sometimes witnessed. But what can be more melancholy than to see a rational being, deeply convinced of the truths of religion, in his sober hours of thought dwelling on them with fond and delighted contemplation, excited by them to a devout ardor of communion with God, and sometimes to a glow of holy rapture which seems to belong to a superior nature;—and then sinking into worldliness, governing himself in ordinary life by selfish maxims of temporal interest, obeying the passions and propensities of his animal being, and, in a word, living precisely as he would do, did he believe that there is nothing higher or better than this poor life? I ask, what can be more sad or pitiable than such a spec-

tle? Let it be your earnest care to guard against so deplorable an inconsistency. Now, while your mind is warm with its early interest in divine things,—now, while they press upon you in all their freshness,—now, take heed that you do not concentrate that interest, and use all its strength, in the luxury of devout musing, or the excitements of study and devotion; but carry it into your whole life; let it be always present to you in all you do, in all you say; let it form your habitual state of feeling, your customary frame of mind and temper. Make it your constant study that nothing shall be inconsistent with it, but every thing partake of its power. This is the watchfulness in which you must live. This is the purpose for which you must exercise over yourself an unremitting and ever-wakeful discipline; seeing to it, like some magistrate over a city, or some commander over an army, that all your thoughts, dispositions, words and actions be subject to the law of God, and the principles of the Christian faith.

There is a superficial religion, not unpopular in the world, which is limited to the outward conduct and the external relations of life; which is made to consist exclusively in rectitude of behaviour and uprightness of dealing. Into this error you are not likely to fall, if you learn your religion from the New Testament; and I should not have thought it needful to warn you against it, had it not been so prevalent. Nothing but its commonness could render it credible, that men, who possess the Scriptures, and fancy they understand them, or who are simply capable of observation on the nature of man and of happiness, should persuade themselves that the character which God demands and will bless, is independent of the state of the mind and the frame of the affections. Is it not the mind which constitutes the man? Is it not the mind which gives its moral complexion to the conduct? Is it not certain, that the same conduct which we applaud as indicating and upright character, we should disapprove and condemn, on discovering that it proceeded from base and improper motives? So that even men judge of character rather by the principle which actuates, than by the actions themselves. How much more completely would this be the case, if instead of being obliged to infer the principle from the act, they could discern the principle itself as it lies in the mind of the agent! Who, in that case, would ever judge a man by his actions alone? Who would not always decide respecting his character from the principles and motives which guided him,—his thoughts, dispositions, and habitual temper? And thus it is that the Deity judges and decides. He looks not on the outward appearance, but on the heart. Consequently, how obvious is the position, that, in seeking the Christian character, the first and most diligent watch must be placed over the inner man! "Keep thy HEART with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life."—*H. Ware.*

LOVE TO GOD.

The God who made us all, is a God for us all to love. He is not like the imagined deities of heathenism, who were, by the partial exercise of their powers and bestowment of their favors, objects of worship to one tribe and of abomination to all others. His righteous claim is on the human hear. He is the personification of its noblest notions of supreme benevolence. His excellence rises above the loftiest height to which imagination can climb, and spreads beyond the widest expanse to which it can extend. The frame of man is his temple; the heart of man, his altar; the soul of man, his priest and worshipper. The identity of our nature, in the multiplied millions of its individual possessors, is a monument and emblem of the identity of his love, in the multiplied millions of its eternally varied acts of beneficence. "All that have breath praise the Lord," said the Hebrew bard; and so says the voice of universal nature. If there be any manifestations of his Almighty love in which we should exult; if we should praise him in the review of our own little vicissitudes of joy and sorrow—in the contemplation of the heavens which his hand has spread abroad, and the earth which he has established forever; in the prospect of the better heavens and earth wherein dwell eth righteousness, which he hath prepared; surely also we should exult in the fact that he hath made of one blood all the nations of men, and feel the force of the apostolic argument, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."—*W. J. Fox.*

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