

to itself. The Old Testament prophets are continually using the words, "Thus saith the Lord," or, "The word of the Lord came unto me." How familiar the formula of the Pentateuch: "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel and say unto them." To Jeremiah it was said: "Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book" (Jer. xxx. 2); and again; "Behold I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jer. i. 9). Then we read that "the hand of the Lord," or "the power of the Lord" was upon the prophet. The New Testament cites the Old in such words as these: "God saith," "The Holy Ghost saith," "The Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of" such an one, "David himself saith by the Holy Ghost." Then we have the remarkable declaration that, "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of men, but holy men of God spake as they were moved (borne along) by the Holy Ghost."

Not less certainly do the apostles claim this special divine character for their own utterances. The things revealed unto Paul by the Spirit he spake, "Not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual," i. e., truth made known by the Spirit he uttered in words taught by the Spirit. "If any man," says the same Apostle, "thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (I. Cor. xiv. 37). The Thessalonians received Paul's teachings "not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually in them that believe" (I. Thess. ii. 13). And the Apostle Peter classes Paul's epistles with "the other Scriptures," i. e., the Old Testament Scriptures, which are so often referred to in the New Testament as the Word of God.

We thus see that no more direct and definite claims to divine authority could be made than the claim advanced on behalf of the writings of the prophets and apostles—the Old Testament and the New. The question now must be not regarding the fact of the claim, but regarding its validity. If we can believe the Bible, it is in all its parts divinely inspired.

SPECIAL DIVINE CHARACTER OF SCRIPTURE.

In speaking thus of Scripture we do not forget that "all things are of God," He is the Creator and Upholder of the universe, God has not withdrawn from His creation and left it to regulate itself, or to develop according to forces within it; "In Him we live and move and have our being." The immanency of God is an inference from all we know of nature, and is clearly taught in Scripture. "The inspiration of the Almighty gives us understanding," and when we speak of act we do so not without God, but in virtue of His power acting on us. No creature can, for a moment, be independent of the Great Being who formed and who sustains us. In all productions of men we may, therefore, see something of God. The genius and skill of the architect, sculptor, painter or poet speak to us of Him who endowed men with their talents, and with the capacity of improving them. Bezaleel and Aholiab, Archimedes, Phidias and Homer had gifts which were divine. Nay, everything accomplished by any creature in God's wide universe is proof of the divine presence and efficiency.

But we must not, by classing Scripture with human productions in general, vacate Scripture's testimony to its own special divine character. Scripture is so directly a divine product—so filled with the divine in breathing—and of such authority that we must place it apart from all human literature, and far above it. Our pastors and teachers may say to us, "This is the truth of God, and I am sure of it, for I have drawn it from the fountain of revealed truth"; but no religious teacher would dare to say, "My discourses are the words which the Holy Ghost speaketh; the word of the Lord came unto me." All human speech is not

inspired, nor is all speech which is true and holy. The distinction between the Bible and the highest utterance of men must never be forgotten; the former alone can advance the lofty claim—"thus saith the Lord."

(3) The Scriptures, then, are human and they are divine. They are authentic human speech, exhibiting the varieties of style, thought, and sentiment known amongst men, and yet they are verily the word of God, charged with a divine message and possessed of an authority which belongs to no uninspired words.

But how can these writings have both characters? The divine is not human, and the human is not divine. God and man cannot be identified; and God's thoughts are high above man's, as the heavens are above the earth.

The harmony of these two questions—these two characters of Scripture—does not consist in this—that so much of the Bible is human and so much divine. The Bible is throughout human and throughout divine. No line can be drawn between these two elements, no mechanical division made. You cannot say, this is given by inspiration of God, and this is to be credited to the human power. Neither are the human and the divine intermingled, as were the iron and clay in the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's image—which partook of the strength of the one material and the weakness of the other. The blended rays of light are separated by the prism, but no instrument and no skill can separate the human and the divine in Scripture. The union of divinity with humanity in the Person of Him who is very God and very man has been adduced as furnishing some analogy to the case of Scripture. Our knowledge in the one case and in the other is too imperfect to warrant us in saying that the analogy is faultless, and yet we may reverently present it. The Person of our adorable Redeemer is certainly one, and whilst the Godhead and the humanity are not blended, neither are they separable.

ALL SCRIPTURE INSPIRED.

(4) All Scripture is given by inspiration of God. Were we to judge by feeling alone—by any purely subjective test—we might possibly conclude that some part of Scripture, perhaps a great deal of it, perhaps most of it, was inspired; but in the Bible there is not a little the special divine character of which we cannot thus recognize and appreciate. Are these arguments of Paul?—conducted, it would seem, after ordinary logical methods—inspired? Are these historical narrations, simple, beautiful and instructive as they are, more than human? Especially, can we imagine these genealogical and various other lists inspired? The question, however, should be this, Are the passages really parts of Scripture? If they are, our text claims them for inspiration, though, when viewed apart, they may exhibit no marks of special divine origin, but seem as if any person of competent knowledge might have written them.

The difficulty which many have in attributing inspiration to passages of the kind referred to, arises often, we can hardly doubt, from confusing inspiration with revelation. Where writers of Scripture had adequate knowledge from ordinary sources, revelation was unnecessary; but the Holy Spirit, all the same, directed in recording whatever was required to the completeness of the book of God. In this book much is remote from the central truths which it was given to reveal, but there is nothing which does not contribute, in one way or another to the more perfect elucidation or defence of the great verities.

The life of the body pervades every part of it—is in the hair as well as in the heart; and in all its parts and members the body is one. The humblest organ has its place and function in the body, so is it, we may believe, in the Bible.

II. The second proposition of the text is, that all Scripture is "profitable." As already said, the second proposition necessarily follows from the first; inspired words must have great value.

It is not said that all Scripture is profitable for the same ends, nor that it is all

of equal value, nor that every part is of the same value at all times and to all persons; but from the beginning it has served—as it continues to serve—the ends here specified, "doctrine," reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness." Every part of Scripture contributes in some way and in some degree, to promote these ends, and were any part wanting, its value, in some direction, would be impaired. The Holy Spirit has spoken nothing unnecessary. Most human compositions could suffer retrenchment without loss, but no part of God's Word is superfluous.

VALUE OF SCRIPTURE: REVEALS CHRIST.

(1) To show the value—the profitability—of Scripture—let us advert to the magnitude and supreme importance of the great interest and topics with which it authoritatively deals. There are the highest in the universe, the highest conceivable. In the Scripture God reveals Himself to His children on earth. The glory of His perfection and His doings is seen as in a mirror. Not only are the teachings of creation and Providence confirmed and extended, but redemption of which nature cannot speak, is unfolded in all its rich and glorious provisions. We can answer the challenge, "How shall man be just with God?" for we "behold the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world."

He who was with God, and was God, became flesh, and in our nature, by His doctrine and miracles, His life and death, revealed the infinite love of God; while by the mystery of His sufferings He expiated the guilt of sin, and by his resurrection gave the sure pledge of our resurrection and of eternal life. Through this holy and blessed One the true life becomes ours, and heaven receives us when our earthly course is completed.

Through the Scriptures, with the institutions and ordinances attested by them, do we gain this priceless knowledge. All that is valuable in pulpit instruction and Christian literature, all that we learn from childhood concerning God and Christ and salvation and heaven—all holy lessons wherever taught us—have authority and value because they are drawn from Scripture. "The Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation." The Bible is not the Saviour—we never speak of it as such—but it surely leads us to Him and to life everlasting.

ALL DUTY REVEALED.

Not only does the Bible reveal Christ and salvation, but the whole duty of a Christian man is therein clearly set forth. The true code of Morals is in the Bible; and we may boldly say that in no land where its teachings have not gone has this code, in its completeness and its spirituality, been ever comprehended. And, if we come to the Bible with simplicity of purpose we shall never be left in real uncertainty as to the path of duty. It will be "a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path." In the faithful use of Scripture we shall find whatsoever is helpful in "doctrine, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness."

ALL SCRIPTURE ENTIRELY TRUSTWORTHY.

(2) We observe, again, that in all its parts, from beginning to end, Scripture gives right instruction, and is altogether trustworthy.

That there is progress in the unfolding of God's character and purposes in the Scriptures is a familiar truth. To every one who studies the Old Testament chronologically, and keeps before him the specific purpose of its several parts, this progress is manifest: he can, as it were, observe with his own eyes the brightening of the sky. But in reading the New Testament "the darkness is past, and the true light now shines." As the night yielded to the dawn so the dawn has passed into noonday. But false or wrong teaching the Bible never gave. God cannot teach falsehood. "The words of the Lord are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." (Ps. xli. 6). In no age of the world, in no stage of society, will God mislead His creatures. The light vouchsafed in earlier times may be dim, but it is real light, and

suited in its degree to period and conditions. Dark indeed was the old dispensation when compared with the brightness of the new. Imperfect was that dispensation compared with the harmonious completeness of the new. But we know that He who is evermore wise and good adapted the earlier economy in everything to the ends which it was intended to serve, and a thing is good when it properly serves its end.

Our Lord abolished the ceremonial law, but He did so by fulfilling it. He rejects Pharisaical glosses on Scripture—Pharisaical misapplications of Scripture—but he never censures Scripture itself, or intimates disagreement with it. If Moses suffered the Jews to put away their wives (a thing which was not from the beginning, and must not continue), "the hardness of their heart" justified the temporary permission. Not one word in the Lord's teaching discredits any part of the Old Testament, but steadfastly are its divine origin and infallibility asserted or implied.

But is not much of the Old Testament for us Christians, at least, quite obsolete? Yes, so far as ceremonial is concerned, obsolete. The yoke of the law is removed from the neck of the Jew. Upon the Gentile church it never rested. But the essential teaching of the Old Testament is not obsolete, nor ever will be. The God of the Old Testament is identical in character with the God of the New—the same in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth. The crowning proof of God's goodness is the appearance for man's redemption of His beloved Son; but this event the Old Testament foretells, and for this the Old Economy, in all its parts, was the preparation. Would we study the process and history of redemption, and trace the wisdom, love and power which mark the unfolding of the divine plan, the writings of the former Testament are indispensable. If the "understanding is opened to understand the Scriptures, we shall see 'Moses and all the prophets'" testifying of Messiah's sufferings and glory, (Luke xxiv., 26, 27). The Levitical sacrifices, the types and ceremonies, will no longer be a mystery and a stumbling-block, but divine pre-significations of the Saviour's conflict and victory, of His spotless life and atoning death. Then also shall we get the point of view for comprehending the moral character of God as portrayed in the ancient Scriptures. The awful revelation of God's holiness—His hatred of sin—in Old Testament history and prophecy, as in the constant flowing of sacrificial blood, will prepare us to apprehend the meaning of Gethsemane and Calvary—of the scene which ended when the expiring Lord uttered the words, "It is finished." Men tremble, do they, as they read the terrible things of the law? It is meant that they should, and that the sense of sin should be deep and effectual. It is meant that the darkness, and the sin, and the sorrow should be intolerable—that the thunders of Sinai should arouse and affright the conscience, and thus bring us to welcome with great joy Him who is "the light of the world," and who "saves His people from their sins."

We thus see that a large part of the Old Testament which, at first sight, may seem quite out of date, remains of great value for all. But our text does not require us to believe that every part of Scripture is of equal importance—is equally profitable—and has the same claims upon our study. There are parts (it is not irreverent to say it) which are the members or parts of the body least essential to the vitality and activity—which are but the outworks of the central fortress, the skirmishers of the army. Such parts have, nevertheless, their value, and must not be termed useless or unnecessary. But were we to maintain that the genealogies in the Chronicles, because inspired, should receive equal attention with the Gospel of John and the Epistle to the Romans, we should only misrepresent the doctrine of inspiration and expose it to ridicule. Christian intelligence and the sense of our personal necessities, or the necessities of those we teach, must largely direct