

The Assumption of Inerrancy.

TRADITIONAL VS. INDUCTIVE BIBLE STUDY.

Doctor Saunders has been standing for the traditional method of Bible study. I have been standing (and I still stand) for the inductive method. According to the traditional method what naturally seems to be the author's meaning must not be accepted as the meaning of the passage unless it be inerrant. According to the inductive method what naturally seems to be the author's meaning is accepted as the meaning of the passage even though it may not be inerrant. In writing of method in Bible study, the Doctor took occasion (and half a column) to tell of his studies, etc. If these were ten times greater than he would have us believe, and he still assumed the inerrancy of the Bible, his method would have to be classed as traditional rather than inductive.

Let Doctor Sanday, with a few lines, sketch "a striking resemblance" to Doctor Saunders' view. In describing the "common belief of fifty years ago" he writes of the "traditional theory" of inspiration thus:

"It may have been held somewhat vaguely and indefinitely, and those who held it might, if pressed upon the subject, have made some concessions which would have involved them in perplexities. . . . It might be allowed that the true text could not always be discovered, but when once it had been discovered it could not be otherwise than infallible."

Of the inductive method as contrasted with this Doctor Sanday writes:

"It is no doubt a great inversion of method when the books of the two Testaments are interrogated without any assumption whatever beyond that of a Personal God who might be conceived as capable of putting himself into communication with men."

"THE CRUCIAL ISSUE."

Doctor Sanday compares the traditional and inductive theories thus:

"The inspiration implied by both is real and no fiction, a direct objective action of the Divine upon the human. The danger of the traditional view is that inspiration should be thought of as something dead and mechanical; when it is arrived at inductively it must needs be conceived as something vital and organic."

On the inductive view inspiration is not inherent in the Bible as such, but is present in different books and parts of books in different degrees. More particularly in this view—and here is the point of greatest divergence—it belongs to the Historical Books rather as conveying a religious lesson than as histories, rather as interpreting than as narrating plain matter of fact. The crucial issue is that in this last respect they do not seem to be exempted from possibilities of error."

It is this "crucial issue" that Doctor Saunders seems so reluctant to face. He had to face it in our class but it was by the mere assertion of inerrancy. He has not proved it or shown his right to assume it. Did he seek to do this in his ten articles? If he did, he signally failed. Even if inerrancy had been his "last conclusion," in his use of his proof passages: it was his first assumption. However, it may have been "fifty years ago" when the Dr. began his studies in Biblical theology, it is not considered logical today (even in Bible study) to assume at the outset as true what you are seeking to prove to be true.

THREE BAPTIST GIANTS.

I wish we had time to apply to Doctor Saunders' ten articles that long quotation I gave from Doctor Burton. One of the mistakes it would reveal is Doctor Saunders' unwarranted assumption of the inerrancy of his proof passages. Bro. Chipman, however, comes to Doctor Saunders' support with an assertion against Doctor Burton of whom it now appears we "all" are not proud. It is true, Doctor Fauror, President of Brown, described him as our "foremost N. Y. scholar," but Bro. Chipman has discovered that he is "partially heretical." Bro. Chipman evidently does not agree with all his teaching, and he cites the views of Bro. D. H. Simpson as also differing from it.

Bro. Chipman also quotes as against Doctor Burton's views these words from Doctor Hovey: "Making allowance for these facts, we deny that historical errors are found in the Bible." It is true that those words are found in Doctor Hovey's "Theology" in the edition of 1877. It is also true that Doctor Hovey omitted them from the edition of 1900. (I do not believe that Bro. Chipman knew this when he wrote. I certainly sincerely hope that he did not.) Doctor Hovey's omission of these words is very significant. In correspondence from Newton Centre I am told, that in his last years he did not assert the absolute inerrancy of the whole Bible even in the original text. Instead of supporting Doctor Saunders' view of inerrancy, Bro. Chipman has thus suggested, for us Baptists, one of the most striking arguments against it.

This change in Doctor Hovey has its parallel in that of another Baptist giant, Dr. Strong. In his "Theology" of 1889 he wrote of the inspiration of the Bible, "always guarding from error in the final elaboration" and that "Scripture writers were supernaturally held back from the selection of wrong words. . . . Inspiration is therefore verbal" as to its result, but not verbal as to its method. The view that he now teaches is that "divine inspiration does not guarantee inerrancy in things not essential to the main purpose of Scripture."

Since these, two of our greatest and most conservative Baptist leaders, thus modified their views concerning inerrancy, we will not give up hopes concerning Doctor

Saunders. What a pity that he so recently (1903) asserted his belief in the inerrancy of the original text. It will make it more difficult for him to "quietly" get "into harmony" with the inductive view held by Doctor Burton, Doctor Strong and other Baptist leaders of whom we "all" have so much reason to be proud. Appropriate here are Doctor Strong's recent words concerning the inductive method:

"Whatever theory of inspiration we frame, should be the result of a strict induction of the Scripture facts, and not on a priori scheme to which Scripture must be conformed. The fault of many past discussions of the subject is the assumption that God must adopt some particular method of inspiration, or secure an absolute perfection of detail in matters not essential to the religious teaching of Scripture."

In their views to which I have called attention, I must admit that I agree with Drs. Burton, Hovey and Strong, even though it means differing from Bros. Chipman, Simpson and Saunders.

OUR "WORKING DEFINITION"—AND ITS PURPOSE.

I believe that, speaking generally, inspiration is to be felt rather than critically defined, save to correct or prevent a view of it that interferes with the true inductive method of Bible study. The assumption that the Bible is inerrant interferes with this method. With this in mind I gave a "working definition" of inspiration. Its object was to correct or prevent that view of inspiration which is back of that assumption of inerrancy. My purpose was to help both those who do and those who do not believe in the Bible's inerrancy. Without asserting its inerrancy I sought to incite both classes to come to its study without assuming its inerrancy.

To this end the definition spoke of the "specially sacred" writings of other religions. The ordinary Christian can easily be led to see that in these religions there are writings in and for which claims of inspiration are made similar to those made in and for the Bible. He can easily be led to see that though the results of the testing be very different, yet the methods of the testing of the claims of all these religions ought in all honesty to be the same. As he can readily see that the adherents of other religions have no right simply to assume the infallibility of the claims in and for their "specially sacred" writings, he can easily be led to see that he himself has no right merely to assume the infallibility of the claims made in and for the Bible.

"SPECIALLY SACRED" WRITINGS.

In opposing different persons, Doctor Saunders, as one who had been there, gave two very, very different representations of the Parliament of Religions. We have quoted them. He has not harmonized them. (This suggests that neither has he harmonized those two different references to the relation between the Convention sermon and his Lecture or ten articles—the one, it will be remembered, at the beginning of these articles, and the other in the notice of his lecture that he wrote for the daily press.) Why did he give such a "grotesque" misrepresentation of my references to the "specially sacred" writings of other religions? I did not urge even my intelligent Bible class to spend much time in the study of these. I did not even suggest that it was necessary for them to throw "their dear old Bible into a pool of heathen books" in order to believe that it was the Word of God and to be enriched by its revealed truths. I did teach them however that even a slight knowledge of comparative religion wisely used may be very helpful in Bible study. The thought suggested by the expression "specially sacred" leads to a truer method of testing the claims in and for the Bible and so to a truer method of Bible study. The ordinary Christian can easily be led to take hold of that thought. It is the thought of comparison.

PERSONAL VIEWS AND PURPOSES.

Let me in Doctor Sanday's words express the purpose of my summary. I sought "by strict and rigorous induction, . . . scientific propositions which alone can be rightly pressed upon the unbeliever and which alone the believer can take as his foundation in his method of Bible study. My personal views includes these propositions but that it is not confined to them the summary itself shows. In the last sentence of the section preceding our working definition I expressed my belief in the supernatural revelation of the Bible. In the last sentence of the section in which this definition is found I expressed my belief that in the production of the Bible the Holy Spirit (especially in the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God etc.) made it beyond comparison with other "specially sacred" writings.

Why did the Doctor ignore these and similar references in my writings? Publicly and in the Doctor's presence, in the Convention sermon and since, I have expressed my belief in the fact of the supernatural inspiration of the Bible. In this all Baptists as Baptists must agree. In this the Doctor and I agreed. I also said: "In view of our limitation we would not be dogmatic about the methods and degrees of this inspiration. It is about these that the Doctor and I differ. But about these Baptists as Baptists may differ. Why did the Doctor ignore this? Why did he omit quotations from evangelical scholars (including Baptists) whose views, to say the least, have a striking resemblance to mine? Were they omitted in ignorance or on purpose? Why did he by general references, half truths, etc. leave the impression with some that I am out of harmony with the denomination without giving a single sentence I said or wrote that is not

supported by leading Baptists to-day? Was it that in his inability to face the real issue concerning inerrancy, he subtly evaded it by raising this unwarranted cry of denominationalism. Is it thus he would throw dust into the eyes of the denomination?

THE AMERICAN BIBLE LEAGUE.

There are in its membership two classes. To the one class belong such men as Pres. Patton of Princeton, whose position is thus described: "The critics of the Bible he acquitted of malice or of the intention of doing wrong and added: "We want criticism, intelligent criticism of the Bible. We can't shut it up in a glass case." If I were a member of the League (and to the view of the Bible that it makes a condition of membership I could subscribe) I would belong to this class.

To the other class belong such men as Dr. Burrell who likened "the higher critics to a little dog running out to bite an army." This is suggestive of some of Doctor Saunders' effusions against the higher critics. It also suggests the words of the Independent:

"If these men do not think the conclusions reached by nine tenths of our biblical scholars and ninety-nine hundredths of our scientific men are true, let them meet the enemy in the fair field of discussion; one David, even a Burrell could overthrow the whole army if armed with the sling of good argument and genuine scholarship. That is better and braver far than to stand off and make faces at the Philistines. . . . If certain venerable beliefs get argued out of court, let them; it will be 'dangerous' then to cling to them. And let this be always remembered that high ethics and genuine religion are safest with the newest discoverable truth; and that, above all other liberty, must we value the fearless untrammelled search for truth, which has no fear of the consequences."

STATEMENT AND RESOLVE.

Under the heading "Mr. Waring's Resolve" the Doctor suggestively calls attention to my repeated statement that "the denomination must face the issue." A word about the statement. The Doctor himself has called attention to the fact that the issue is not local, it is world-wide. It is so in the air everywhere that the denomination must face it. My repeated statement, then, is simply the statement of a very evident fact.

A word about the "resolve." Years ago I held to the view of the Bible Doctor Saunders expressed in the class. My studies brought me face to face with that in the Bible which it was difficult to harmonize with this view. I had been taught that it was Hobson's choice—this view of the Bible or no Bible at all. For a time it seemed the end would be no Bible at all. It was a sad experience. In my despondency and doubt I came in touch with the writings of those Christian scholars who did not hold the traditional view and yet believed in the Bible as God's Word. It was then no Hobson's choice after all. With their aid and by God's grace I faced the issue. The result was that the Bible became richer to me than before because it gave me a more real living, revelation of God. My prayer and resolve since has been to help the increasing numbers who cannot accept the traditional view, and also the many others who would be enriched by accepting the inductive view.

Since as a matter of fact the denomination must face it I believe it is better that the issue be brought to our members by those who have been enriched by facing it rather than by those who have not. This is not a conviction of only a few months. It has been deepening for years. I can easily understand how many (especially of the older members) easily misunderstand the inductive method of Bible study, I am sorry for their disquietude concerning it I should be more sorry however to learn that they had been disquieted in vain. I sympathize with those who are pained at any questioning of the traditional method. My prayer is that our pains be pains of growth to the inductive method held by increasingly large numbers of Baptists to-day. In the interests of this method and so of a truer appreciation of the real living divine revelation of the Bible, My "resolve" is stronger than ever to help as many as I may to the belief that in true Bible study they may and ought to come to the Bible without assuming that it is absolutely inerrant.

H. F. WARING.

Delayed Blessings.

BY REV. WAYLAND HOYT, D. D.

There is a little book called "Expectation Corner; or Is Your Door Open?" It is the story of one Adam Slowman. He lived in a cottage on a far stretching estate called "The Redeemed Land." But though Adam Slowman had full title to his dwelling place, and on an estate so fair and wide, he did not get, by any means, the good he might from living there.

But one day a messenger came from the Lord of this spacious estate of the Redeemed Land, who was bidden to show this Adam Slowman the mansion in which the Lord of the estate lived, and the various out-buildings and offices connected with the administration of the estate. Such exploration, although he was tenant on the estate, and with complete title, this Adam Slowman, under the guidance of the messenger, is much surprised at the splendour, plenty, various provision which he everywhere sees. After a time, one storehouse particularly attracts his attention. He asks the messenger the name of it. There is a peculiar