

Epistles were written and signed by men whom they well knew. Paul wrote, "The salutation of me, Paul, by mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle, so I write."†

Now, what did these writers testify? They testified things which they knew. The apostle John does not say, "That which we have dreamed, imagined or guessed at, that thing do we declare unto you;" but, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life." I. John i. 1. This was their testimony. They testified that they saw Christ in his life and in his death; that they saw him after his resurrection, and felt his hands and feet, and saw the nail-prints and the spear-wounds; and they knew these things and testified of them, and they preached Christ, who had died and risen again.

When Lepaux, a member of the French Directory, complained to Talleyrand that this new religion, "Theophilanthropy," made little headway among the people, the shrewd old statesman replied:

"I am not surprised at the difficulty you find in your effort. It is no easy matter to introduce a new religion. But there is one thing I would advise you to do, and then, perhaps, you might succeed." "What is it? what is it?" eagerly asked Lepaux.—"It is this," said Talleyrand: "go and be crucified, and then be buried, and then rise again on the third day, and then go on working miracles, raising the dead, and healing all manner of diseases, and casting out devils; and then it is possible that you may accomplish your end!" The philosopher went away silent; and no infidel has succeeded in fulfilling these conditions. But Christ has died, and has risen again, and these apostles suffered the loss of all things, and even of life itself, in proclaiming these facts; and they left their testimony on record in this Book. Then the apostles quote from the prophets, and the prophets quote from the Psalms, and refer to the Law which was given on Mount Sinai; and so we go back from book to book, until we reach the book of Genesis, and that does not quote from anybody or anything. You have then reached the fountain-head.

"But," says one, "I think that the Bible may be a true history, but that is no proof of its inspiration. It does not require divine inspiration to write a true history." So you think it an easy matter to tell the truth, do you? I wish you could make other people think so. Suppose you go and read a file of the newspapers published just before the last election, and see if you do not think it requires divine inspiration to tell the truth, or even to find it out after it is told. Truth is mighty hard to get at, as you can see by pursuing the daily papers on the eve of an election.

There are certain things in the Bible which, to my mind, bear the impress of Divinity. A skeptic will tell you what a race of old sinners we read about in the Bible! Noah got drunk; David was guilty of adultery and murder; Solomon was an idolater, and wrought folly; Peter denied his Lord, and Judas sold him for thirty pieces of silver; all these people that the Bible talks to us so much about are a pretty set of men! Very well; what kind of men do you expect to read about in the Bible? Noah got drunk. Is that strange? Did no one else ever get drunk? Peter cursed and swore. Are there not other men who curse and swear? Judas, an apostle, sold his Lord, who said he had chosen twelve and one of them was a devil. Do you not sometimes find a Judas in the church even now-a-days? One in twelve was a thief and a traitor then; and we need not be surprised if we find about the same average now. But you seem to think that when you read about a man in the Bible he is sure to be free from all kinds of errors, frailties, faults, and sins. You have formed this idea of men from reading in

Sunday-school books about good children, who usually die young; or perusing excellent biographies, which, as you read them, cause you to exclaim, "I wish I could be as good as that person was; but I never shall." No, I presume you never will and if you knew the whole story about the person you might not feel so deeply on the subject.

Do you suppose that if the Bible had been written by some learned doctor, revised by a committee of eminent divines, and published by some great religious society, we should ever have heard of Noah's drunkenness, of Abraham's deception, of Lot's disgrace, of Jacob's cheating, of Paul and Barnabas' quarreling, or of Peter's lying, cursing, or dissembling? Not at all. The good men, when they come to such an incident, would have said, "There is no use in saying anything about that. It is all past and gone; it will not help anything, and it will only hurt the cause." [Applause.] If a committee of such eminent divines had prepared the Bible, you would have had a biography of men whose characters were patterns of piety and propriety, instead of poor sinners, as they were. Sometimes a man writes his own diary and happens to leave it for some one to print after he is dead; but he leaves out all the mean tricks he ever did, and puts in all the good acts he can think of; and you read the pages, filled with astonishment, and think, "What a wonderfully good man he was!" But when the Almighty writes a man's life he tells the truth about him; and there are not many persons who would want their lives printed if the Almighty wrote them.

Suppose a young man goes, say from the country, down to the city. Perhaps he is a rich man's son, who has had more money than was good for him at home, and comes to the city to see the sights. He sails around in dangerous waters, and slips into various ports that are not exactly safe, and the next morning finds him hauled up before His Honor in the police court. You get a morning paper, and you expect to find the full particulars of the case. You do, do you? You find a paragraph on this wise: "A certain young man from the rural districts came to town yesterday, sailed around in different parts of the city, and fell into rather bad company. This morning he was brought up before His Honor, who admonished him to be more careful in the future, and he departed a sadder and a wiser young man." This is the kind of paragraph you will find in the papers when a rich man's son comes to the city, goes on a spree, and has his head smashed and his eye banged in a fight, you don't get many particulars. But if he is a poor vagabond, without a second shirt to his back, you can get his name, and perhaps his genealogy for generations, and all the particulars of his case. This is the way men write history; but when the Lord undertakes to tell his story of a sinful man, he does not select a poor, miserable beggar, and show him up; he does not give even the name of the thief on the cross, nor of the wretched outcast who bathed the Saviour's feet with her tears, nor of the guilty woman to whom he said, "Neither do I condemn thee; go in peace, and sin no more;" but he takes King David from the throne, and sets him down in sackcloth and ashes, and wrings from his heart the cry, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out all my transgressions." And then when he is pardoned, forgiven, cleansed, and made whiter than snow, the pen of inspiration writes down the whole dark, damning record of his crimes, and the king on his throne has not power, nor wealth, nor influence enough to blot the page; and it goes into history for infidels to scoff at for three thousand years. Who wrote that? [Continued applause.]

You find a man who will tell the truth about kings, warriors, princes, and rulers to-day, and you may be quite sure that he has within him the power of the Holy Ghost. And a book which tells the faults of those who wrote it, and which tells you that "there is none righteous, no, not one," bears in it the marks of a true book; for we all know that men have faults, and failings, and sins; and among all the men whose lives are recorded in that book, each man has some defect, some

blot, except one, and that is "the man Christ Jesus."

MAKE THE BEST OF IT.

Ah! don't give it up as a bad job, and say that the tools are blunt and won't cut, and that it is of no use trying; it is of use trying, not only once, but over and over again, if any good is to be done. We have looked sometimes at a young apprentice doing his work in a half-hearted sort of way, glad of any excuse for a rest, or the chance of a walk up to his master with some idle complaint about the difficulty of his task. It is not surprising that now and then the foreman gets a bit impatient when he sees the young fellow so unwilling to do his best in making the best of what he has to do with.

All lives are not alike by a long way, and some folks seem to get on so easily, and all the fish appears to come to their net without the trouble of catching, which others have to endure. But we should be a deal wiser if, instead of thinking them "lucky," and neglecting our own duties in gazing at them with envy, we were to buckle to and try what, by the help of God, we can do ourselves.

Take our life, for instance—what is it? Nothing very particular, you answer; just a plain out-of-the-way sort of life, with nothing great about it—indeed, hardly known to more than a dozen or so. Getting up in the morning to a hurried breakfast, then the same round of work all through the day, and at night just a few hours' rest and quiet before going to bed—not much of a life that, anyhow! Ah, my good friend, it is much more, much greater than you imagine.

Over in the brickfield yonder is a horse, harnessed to a long piece of wood, and it walks round and round all the livelong day just grinding at the clay there. There is a very pretty view from that hill, but the horse does not care; some sweet flowers are growing close to its tramping hoofs, but it cannot see them. A bunch of fresh hay to eat, a little less whip from its cruel master, and an old stable to sleep in, that's all it wants to make it happy.

But you are not a horse, my friend, neither is your life the dull and senseless walk-round of that poor animal. To you the prospect is something very pleasant; the flower you pluck makes your face glad to look upon, and you can lift your eyes to the blue sky and say, "God loves me, and has placed me here to be happy and to do His will." When you think that the eye of our Heavenly Father is ever upon us, that he sees all our efforts to be good and do good, that He knows when we are in trouble, and is ready to help and comfort us, that indeed our life, such as it is, known or obscure, is not forgotten by Him—when we remember all this, we pluck up heart and say, "By His grace I will make the best of it."

The organist would fare very badly if it were not for the little boy that blows the bellows; the architect would never see the fine houses he planned if it were not for plain bricklayers with their hods and trowels; the great ship could never float so proudly if humble men had not worked with hammer and rivet. So let us be patient and contented to do our part with all our heart and skill. It is only given to the few to have their names known and to be cheered with waving of caps when they come forth, but though our place be in the background, it is quite as honorable, and may, by the help of God, be made very useful.

Our life is our little day of work, not very long at the longest, and we must make the most and the best of it. Many things we should like to do which must be left undone, but what we can we must do. And let us remember that the great Master of the vineyard is walking to and fro among the laborers, grieving over the idleness of some, marking with pleasure the industry of others, and ready to help them to do more, for "unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance."

Then the evening comes and the tools must be laid aside, and one by one we lie down to rest till the dawn of that great morning when every one,—man, woman, and little child,—shall receive their reward.

† For a brief exhibition of a few of the overwhelming proofs of the authenticity and integrity of the books of the New Testament, consult *The Corruptions of the New Testament*, by H. L. Hastings. To be had of the publishers of this work.