

GOD'S WORD THROUGH MEN TO MAN.

Portions of an address delivered before the Bible Society of Maine, May 15, 1887, by Dr. G. D. B. Pepper.

All the reasons for the universal distribution of the Bible to which your attention is now invited may be summed up in this one general reason: the genuine, complete humanity of the book. I know, we all know, that the Bible is "the word of God." It is his word truly and fully because he is truly and fully its Author. When we get at its thought we have reached the thought of God; when we have breathed in its spirit we inbreathe his spirit. God's heart is the heart of the Bible and its life is the life eternal. We love it as we love nature, because in it we hear the voice of our Father, see the Father's face, and feel his heartbeats.

Just because it is thus utterly divine it is also utterly human. Our heavenly Father knows his earthly children better a thousand fold than they can know themselves; better a thousand fold than even the great masters in the interpretation of the human soul have known them. Not a spring in the life of any one is hidden from his view, not a human possibility, whether of good or ill, can escape his notice. Body, soul, and spirit; individual, family, and community; the life that now is in time and sense and that life which is to come in the eternity beyond; all, all this is clear to his vision and facile to his exposition. His word is a word to man and for man. He undertakes to find and fit the race, and in this undertaking he succeeds. In speaking to man he has spoken through men. Nor have the prophets been his merely passive tools, conveying the divine voice as dumb, dead things, mere hollow tubes. Into the inmost being of men did the spirit of God enter as an inspiration of life, and so caused their tongues and pens to give out and send along his words, aglow not less with human than with divine life. Before the coming of the Son of God, the light of heaven, all humanized in this passage into and through human experience, came in flashes and gleams, in reflections and refractions. But when he came who was himself the word, "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person," there shone for man and among men "the Sun of Righteousness," full-orbed, the solid globe of pure white light. But even then this, too, was a human light, for "the Son of God" was "the Son of Man." The word had become flesh and dwelt among us. He was made like us in all save sin. How human was "the Man, Christ Jesus!" human in body and soul, in form and features, in sense and spirit, in mind and heart and will, in his needs, his sympathies, his conditions, his activities—human in the totality of his life and relations, utterly, purely, mightily, multitudinously human—utterly but not exclusively—for he was as truly and purely divine as human. So was the personal word and so also is the written word. Because it is man's book, complete in a genuine humanity, we give it to men.

We ought to distribute the Bible *because it is the mightiest factor in mental development*. No one need tell us the value of intelligence, of a mind thoroughly disciplined, trained to clear and accurate and strong thinking. Mind has a worth which is all its own. A richly cultivated mind is the choicest of treasures. And when a whole people are educated, intelligent, and refined, we have that which every man of sense places far above the wealth that is measured in terms of money.

Now it is certain that the Bible is a mighty power in awakening mind. Arresting the attention even of the little children and engaging their interest, it keeps its hold on them through life. It gives themes for thought that are high and worthy. It reveals the value of the soul as immortal, and so induces it to find value in something else than gold and silver and lands. It presses home and keeps pressed home upon the conscience the greatest ques-