

Still More About the Bible.

BY E. M. SAUNDERS.

KEEP THE REAL QUESTION IN VIEW.

Mr. Waring says the books composing the Bible are the religious conceptions of Hebrews, Jews and early Christians. Baptists say the Bible is a revelation from God. I classified Mr. Waring's views of the Bible, and found them similar to the views held by Unitarians. I do not hint that Brother Waring is a Unitarian. With evident sympathy he refers in his ommissions to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. His declarations about Christ are in harmony with his views of the Holy Spirit. What I am trying to do is, to show Mr. Waring that his views of the Bible are such as are held by Unitarians and Universalists; and are radically different from the views of Baptists. It is also my object to show Brother Waring, that it is futile for him to attempt to lead the Baptists from their solid ground to his proposed foundation of sand. Further, it is my desire and hope that Mr. Waring may abandon the ground taken in his four sermons, and in the Bible class discussion; and will yet stand with his brethren on the solid, impregnable rock of the Holy Scriptures. The Baptists will not go over to Brother Waring. That is certain. As the mountain will not come to him, let him do as Mohammed did, go to the mountain.

MR. WARING'S HUMAN AUTHORSHIP OF THE BIBLE EXAMINED.

Our brother says that the contents of the Bible are "religious conceptions of Hebrews, etc." A candidate, a little ago for ordination in Ontario, when asked for his belief on the inspiration of the Bible, answered, that the Bible was "written by men according to their own knowledge and judgments; and that God endorsed these writings." This is better than Brother Waring's view. He does not say that these "religious conceptions" have even been endorsed by God.

Certainly the note of a pauper is made of unquestionable value when it is indorsed by a millionaire; but a millionaire does not care to indorse a pauper's note. He chooses to give his own obligations. God is not indebted to "Hebrews, Jews and early Christians" for the plan of salvation.

The Rev. Dr. R. Heber Newton, Episcopalian, of New York, writes in the American review for April, making an impassioned plea that foreign missionaries in their work should recognize the religions of India, sit down and compare the Bible with their "specially sacred literature." Referring to this the editor of the Examiner says:—

"The early chapters of the letters to the Romans and Paul's address on Mars Hill with other passages in the Acts and Christ's teachings as a whole, are much more authoritative on this great subject than any fancied deductions from the so-called science of Comparative Religion."—the deductions made by comparing the Bible with heathen books and the Koran. The editor believes the Scriptures sufficient authority. The results of comparing the Bible with the sacred writings of the non-Christian peoples are to him for Evangelical purposes mere "fancies."

Dr. Newton's conclusion and the opinions of many others, show that to drop down to the Unitarian level, leads to confusion, if not to confusion worse confounded.

This noted divine says, "the missionaries should recognize the reality of the religion growing in India in such rank fertility." What will Dr. Boggs and Rev. L. D. Morse say to this?

Mr. Waring says, "all religious writings are revelations to the extent that they reveal the religious conceptions, etc. of those by, and for whom they were written," and in his last definition, that "to Hebrews, Jews and early Christians was given a progressive revelation from God," and that "the inspiration of the Bible is at least that divine influencing of the Hebrews, Jews and early Christians in virtue of which the Bible . . . is so much superior to other religious writings."

Mr. Waring seems to believe that in a long succession of centuries there was produced among millions and millions of Hebrews, Jews and early Christians, and that by evolution, sixty-six small books—a little library—the result of their thinking—these sixty-six books being their "religious conceptions." He uses the word inspiration. So do Unitarians. Dr. James Freeman Clarke, a distinguished Unitarian says—The Bible is filled with the spirit of God. As we read the Old Testament, we everywhere feel the presence of divine power and justice ruling the world. . . . As we read the New Testament, we are in the presence of a heavenly Father of an infinite tenderness, who pours blessings on the good and on the evil, and desires to save every child. The Old Testament is inspired by the sense of Divine law. The New Testament the sense of Divine love. But its unity, its sacredness, its power is of the Spirit, not the letter. . . . the New Testament comes to fulfil the Old, not to contradict it. The summit is reached in the life and words of Jesus which are full of the highest truth." But Dr. Clarke does not stop there. He says, "It is indeed said that 'all Scripture is given by inspiration,' but not that this inspiration is infallible. Inspiration is one thing infallibility another. The great poets, Homer, Dante, Shakespeare all called inspired and and truly, because they have an inward illumination which shows them forms of truth and beauty and goodness

unseen by common men. . . . Every commanding race, every vast civilization, has been controlled and directed by its sacred writings. The hundred and fifty millions of Hindoos have been ruled during twenty-five centuries by the Vedas and Puranas. Chinese civilization has taken its stamp from "The Kings" and the "Four Books." The brilliant career of the Persian Empire was inspired throughout by the Lenda Avesta. The tribes of Arabia were gathered, moulded, banded and welded in a resistance tide of conquest by the Koran. The sacred books of Buddhists have been the leaven of civilization among a third part of the human race. But for various reasons the Bible stands above them all. The others are the books of particular races—of the Hindoos only, or the Mogols, or the Persians or the Chinese; but the Bible has a constituency composed of all the races of the world."

All the above good things, and more, Doctor Clarke says of the Bible but he is a Unitarian, and could not be induced to say that it is his belief that God elected certain men and through them gave his plan of salvation and its unfoldings to the world—that these men spake supernaturally and infallibly because "they spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Doctor Clarke does not believe in the deity of Christ, he does not believe in the personality of the Holy Spirit.

Baptists find no standing room here. To them the statement that inspiration "is at least that divine influencing of the Hebrews, Jews and early Christians," seems to be a prostitution of the use of the word inspiration, as it is understood in such Scripture as this—"All Scripture is given by inspiration."

But Mr. Waring says his view of the Bible is only a working plan. The denomination is satisfied with God's working plan—the Bible, his revealed will. Preach its contents to the world—Jesus Christ and him crucified, and all that centres in that vital, basal truth of revelation. No devices, no fantastic schemes, they say. No, they will not take even provisionally, as ground on which to stand, that the Bible is superior to non-Christian sacred writings. God gave us the Bible through men whom he lifted into his presence—out of darkness into light—changing their spiritual vision, as in the case of Peter. In darkness, he forsook his Lord; in light he saw the Old Testament full of Christ and the doctrines of the Cross. When, in his illuminated state, he preached to the multitudes, they cried, "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Mr. Waring says, while I tell you that the Bible as literature is superior to all other sacred literature, you may, if you choose, believe that it is a revelation supernaturally given. Let us get inside of this view of the "Bible inspired." I take a brick of what I believe to be gold to a chemical assayer. Is this gold? I ask him. He examines it and replies, you may compare it with all the other yellow metals, and in my opinion, it will be found superior to all of them. But, can I call it gold, and give it the value of gold in my assets? The answer is you can if you choose. That, I call chemistry on the fence.

Is the Bible God's revealed truth, I ask Mr. Waring. He replies it is "the sacred literature of Hebrews, Jews and early Christians," produced by them—their conceptions." But is it a revelation from God through an elected number of men, who "spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost?" His reply is, you can think so, if you choose. That, I call theology on the fence. Analytical chemistry is a science of certainties, and the fence is no place for it. The Bible is a book of certainties on which man's welfare in time and eternity depends, and the fence is not a place for a belief in its value and authority.

Horace saw in poetic vision the Alps heaving and swaying with birth-pangs. He looked to see the birth of a baby mountain, but instead, a ridiculous little mouse. Four sermons and a labored discussion on the Bible inspired and the outcome, the Bible found by comparison, superior to the heathen Bibles—and all this for the expressed purpose of leading and teaching the denomination right views of God's Word. Let us see this position of comparing the Bible with other sacred writings in the light of comparing the two persons central in Christianity and Buddhism. The Buddhists would say their leader was never charged with being a friend of publicans and sinners. He lived in solitude, in poverty and extreme want. Hence, according to their views of greatness, Buddha was the greater person. Nothing would be gained; but much lost by the experiment of comparing the two founders of religious systems for the purpose of leading Buddhists to Christ and him crucified. Tell the Buddhists that Christ is the Son of the only true God and that he loved them before the foundation of the world, and that he came into the world and died for them. That is the way to their hearts. A young lady tried to impress her Chinese class with the divine authority of the Bible by telling them a story of Jonah and the whale but the class had Chinese miracles that cast Jonah in the shade.

A STATEMENT.

In my ten articles I sought for the inspiration of the Bible in the discussion of the following subjects, namely:—

- (1) The incarnation and death of Christ and his doctrines of the trinity, the atonement and regeneration by the Holy Spirit—all this supported by his miracles.
- (2) The old Testament, its history, men and miracles acknowledged and sanctioned by Christ.

(3) The separation of the inspired books from the apocryphal writing—the separation of the sheep from the goats.

(4) The unity of the Scriptures, the waiting of which extended over more than a thousand years—the 23rd Psalm and the 14th of John alike voicing the heart of the Christian.

(5) The love in the soul of the believer—illiterate or learned—enabling him to know that the Bible is true—true in its condemnation of sin, the regeneration of the heart, justification by faith, assurance of faith, the fellowship of the saints and of the spirit.

All these and other truths within the reach of all Christians, ignorant and learned, enable all alike to know that the Bible is from God. Here then, in their own hands, they have the evidence that the Bible is inspired—that it is from God. The unity of truth from the Genesis to the Revelation, and the consciousness by which the Christian knows that the Bible is true, because of its adaption to the wants of the soul, are special means, common to all believers, by which the heart can say, "I know whom I have believed." As the ear is the medium through which the orator teaches and thrills the soul; and as the eye is the medium through which the flaming glory of the light and color of a sunset pass into the immortal spirit, so the Bible is the channel through which flow the waters of life, which refresh every true disciple of Christ.

A STATEMENT AND A QUESTION.

From the above sources, accessible to all Christians, I draw the conclusion of inspiration—"the last conclusion," as Doctor Denny says. I here thank Brother Waring for his quotation from Doctor Denny. It sustains my views of inspiration.

Let me here ask the readers of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR a pertinent question—are not the above views of the Bible, in your opinion, the God-ordained means of obtaining the assurance, that, in the Bible, we have God's revelation of his plan to save the world?—that the Bible is inspired—rather than that the entire denomination should migrate to the East, as Mr. Waring's scheme of determining inspiration seems to indicate, and there burrow in the mounds on the plains of Babylon, and search through unknown languages the origin and history of the ancient oriental religions in order to find out whether or not the Bible is true? Leave that work to the specialists and linguists, distinguished for their knowledge of the ancient and modern languages of the East. God has put into the hands and hearts of believers abundant proofs that the men who wrote the Bible, wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. God gave to all men his word, and, with it, the means of knowing that it is his word—that it is inspired.

A PREDICTION.

Now, with confidence, we can say, Brother Waring, the denomination will not follow you. The ministers and churches will continue to love you and rejoice in your success; but in regard to following you the voice is an emphatic no. If you choose to drift on the yeasty waters of speculation, you must allow the denomination to remain on the firm, impregnable rock—the old Bible.

But if after you have been tossed about on the "choppy" sea of rationalistic speculation, and whirled hither and thither by its cross currents, and swung around the rim of its eddies and whirlpools, you should desire to turn your prow toward the old rock, you will find the Baptist denomination calmly standing there to welcome you. They will extend to you a whole-hearted welcome. Not that you will be alone in your speculative experience in sea-faring. Many men are adrift. The last to launch forth are Canon Hensley Henson, Dr. Heber R. Newton and Sir Oliver Page.

Don't bother with the Saundersian method or any other method, but just tell us in plain language what your opinions of the old Bible are. Here are mine. I believe the Old and New Testament are God's only revelation of the plan of salvation to man, given to the world supernaturally and infallibly by men selected and inspired by the Holy Spirit for this purpose.

You have undertaken to teach the denomination in this matter. Let us know, therefore, what you believe. Don't treat the denomination as the man treated the scape goat—lead it into the wilderness and turn it loose to wander in unknown solitudes.

Remember, Brother Waring, that the Book is very old. On it are accretions gathered through the centuries of its transmission. Let keen scholars cut them away, but keep their knives out of its heart. Do not for a moment think that the Baptists have any intention of throwing their dear old Bible into a pool of heathen books, nasty and absurd as they are, to scramble for pre-eminence. It is God's book. So they have regarded it, so they doubtless will ever regard it.

Come, Brother Waring, do not blind and bewilder the people, in a "blizzard" of rhetoric; but tell them plainly whether or not you believe the Bible came from God, through men elected and inspired to write it.

Let next week be the end.

From Maine.

The Quarterly conference of the Baptist Association for Washington Co. Maine, has just held its regular meeting at Pembroke, a finely situated town on the Eastport branch of the Washington Co. R. R.