

The Home Mission Journal.

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The Bible as Literature and Much More.

ROBERT STEART MACARTHUR.

VI

(Continued from last issue.)

The True Theory of Inspiration.

What is known as the dynamical theory is that which is supported in these lectures; it also has the support of the best theological thinkers of our time on both sides of the Atlantic. This theory holds that inspiration is not a natural but a superhuman fact, and that it is a special and unique work of God in the soul of man. It holds with great earnestness to the affirmation that the Scriptures are neither exclusively human nor entirely divine. It must be affirmed that the Scripture writers wrote not passively, but actively; not mechanically, but consciously; and not impersonally, but personally. Inspiration used all the personal peculiarities of the writers; it employed all their excellencies in conception and expression, all their abilities in reasoning toward conclusions, and in formulating those conclusions; and it also used even their defects in reasoning, and their incongruities of literary style. The Bible thus presents God's truth in human forms. Paradoxical though the statement may seem, it is literally true that the humanity of the Bible is a conclusive proof of its divinity. The writers of the Bible were not typewriters, but typists; they were not God's pens, but God's penmen. The bush in which God appeared to Moses remained the bush, while yet it glowed with supernatural splendor. The apostles did not cease to be men when they became apostles. The Spirit of God took the faculties with which they were endowed, and wrought through them for the declaration of truth and the revelation of God. These writers were thus so guided by the Holy Spirit as to secure absolute accuracy in all the ethical and doctrinal teachings of the Bible. Their thoughts were inspired, but their words were not dictated. They were so controlled as to make no error of doctrine, though in all that pertains to the mode of expression each writer was left to the spontaneous movement of his own mind. This theory is to-day accepted by the majority of English, Scottish, and American theological writers.

Infallible Record.

Thus inspiration secured an infallible transmission of God's thoughts through the minds, tongues, and hands of holy men of old. Inspiration was neither omniscience nor sanctification. Sometimes it communicated new truth; sometimes it simply guided men in collecting and arranging existing material. The union of the human and divine in the construction of the Bible is one of its striking glories; it is not too much to say that it is one of its divine excellencies. Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, was both human and divine. The Bible, as the revealed word, is both human and divine. The union of humanity with divinity in Jesus Christ uniquely fitted Him to be the Saviour of men. The union of the human and the divine in the Bible uniquely adapts it to be the infallible rule of faith and practice of men made in the image of God. Any criticism of the Bible because of the human element which it contains is utterly illogical; as well might we criticise Jesus Christ because of the human element in His birth, life, character and work. It is possible to prove the divinity of Christ because of the perfection of His humanity. No stream of human thought and life ever flowed through this world and reached so high a point as the life of Christ; but no stream can rise higher than its source. If we deny the divinity of Christ, we cannot explain His unique humanity. We are bound to account

for Jesus Christ as we account for other great characters of history, ancient and modern. But we never shall be able to explain the height to which the stream has risen, except we acknowledge its source at the throne and in the bosom of God. It is easier to believe in the Scriptural account of Christ's divine origin as seen in His unique birth, than to attempt to account for Christ's life in its purity, power, and divinity, if we deny the unity of His birth. In like manner, it is easier to believe that the Word of God was written by holy men of old as they were inspired by the Spirit of God, than it is to explain the Word if we deny that fact. The union of the human and the divine in Christ is an element of His perfection as the Saviour of men. So this twofold element in the Bible is a proof of its fitness as the revelation of God to man. If God is to communicate truth to men, He must talk to men as men and not as angels or seraphs.

The Bible thus remains a unique book. Every Christian mind recognizes in it a fuller knowledge and a diviner authority than are found in any other book. The Divine Spirit makes Himself felt on every page; He shines forth in matchless glory in every chapter. In these sacred pages God's mind comes into conscious contact with our minds. We may well believe that the Scriptures were inspired, among other reasons, because of their inspiring effect upon the thought and speech of all their students. Here light breaks forth as from the very throne of God. We are conscious of the enlightening, ennobling, purifying, humanizing, divinizing influence of the mind of God revealed in the Word of God which we call the Bible.

In a later chapter reference will be made to views originated by English deists, German rationalists, and by positivists of many shades of thought. Objections which are made to the inspiration will also be named and answered, and positive proofs of the inspiration of Scripture will be adduced. Let us hold fast to this holy book as the word, not of men, but of God, as the word which is to be our guide in life, and by which at the last we are to be judged in the immediate presence of its divine Author.

(To be Continued.)

Wanted—A Church.

ALBERT E. FINN.

This pastor is not without a church, but has in mind the kind of a church he wants should the Spirit direct a change.

1. Wanted.—A church that is a body of believers and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ and not a mere social organization.

2. Wanted.—A church that will depend more on the Holy Spirit for success than on an orator.

3. Wanted.—A church that will make intellectuality subordinate to spirituality.

4. Wanted.—A church that has not become so set in its ways that it will object to modern aggressive methods of work.

5. Wanted.—A church composed of members who will regard it a privilege and a duty to attend its stated meetings.

6. Wanted.—A church that desires the gospel preached.

7. Wanted.—A praying church. The devil is not afraid of a broad, liberal, intellectual church, but he is terribly afraid of a praying church.

8. Wanted.—A church that will pay its expenses promptly.

9. Wanted.—A church that will not set up in the "ice cream business," to pay the pastor's salary nor any other church expenses.

My ideal is fully met in the I now serve. I am not sure that when the Spirit directs a change he will send me to the church I want, but at any rate, I know what I want just as much as the church knew that adopted the set of resolutions headed, "Wanted a Pastor," printed in your issue of June 29th.—*The Commonwealth*.

CHERRYVILLE, N. J.

Do not blow your own trumpet; nor which is the same thing, ask others to blow it for you; No trumpeter ever rose to be a general.

The New Heart.

Ezekiel had exhausted all the resources of human persuasion in his attempt to reform the nation. At last, when the fortunes of Judah had reached their lowest point, it was given him to see that the hope of the future was in God's gift to the people of a new heart and a right spirit. He learned the lesson that the hope of every one who seeks to lead individual men or a nation to better ways of life is not to be found in "resident forces," but in a supernatural impulse.

If there has been a tendency in our day, as some allege, to make education, culture, and civilization the substitutes for the regenerative power of the gospel, we can well understand why it is that apparently we make so little headway against the worst evils of our time. Christianity is vastly more than a system of truth. It is a power, supernatural but not magical, working through truth, making the heart responsive to new motives, cleansing the affections, clarifying the vision, and bringing the interior life into fellowship with God.

Because this power of the gospel touches the secret spring of human activity, it is the source of every good thing in life. That is the thought that particularly fastens the attention of Ezekiel. He sees that the new heart is the condition of restoration to the land of promise, of deliverance from sin, of earthly prosperity, of right living, of national good, and of character that honors God. Each of these points he elaborates by appropriate imagery. But the root idea behind all of these representations is that the true ideal of human life can only be realized as the outcome of the regenerative work of God upon the human spirit. He sees in the new heart the promise and the power of everything that makes human life strong and beautiful.

We can hardly fail, also, to notice that this message of Ezekiel marks a transition in his own views of the power that is to reform men and institutions. Hitherto he has spent himself in showing the folly and wickedness of the times. He has sought to strengthen the best in man against the worst. He has believed in the goodness of resident forces. Now he does not speak of something to be done, but of a gift to be received. God Himself is to purify and invigorate human souls, not because men are worthy, but for the sake of His own name. The new heart is not something to be merited or earned, but a gift to be received. We cannot command it, but we can take it. It is the very simplicity of this truth that obscures the gospel to so many minds. We find it hard to conceive that the choicest experience and possession of life should be a gift. And then, sometimes, our minds opened to the fact that God only wanted us to receive his gift, and we took it honestly and responsively, and behold, the subtle, mighty, inward change of the regenerate life was wrought in us.

Such lines of reflection, suggested by this lesson, lead us to a new appreciation of the work of preaching the gospel, and the ministrations of the Christian church. It is not art, or education, or culture, or civilization that brings to sinful men the forces that change dispositions, and impart the vital energies that blossom in lovely and strong character. That force resides only in the gospel, and the man or the church that brings this power into relation with the world is doing the most for the world.—*Watchman*.

A Question of Marriage.

The United Presbyterians will not yield to the common sentiment on the right of a man to marry his dead wife's sister, if he wants to. The Westminster Confession's dictum remains inviolate that a man may not marry any of his wife's kindred nearer in blood than he may of his own. The ecclesiastical conscience has tremendous power in its grip. It holds on to what the standards declare to be right in spite of changing sentiment, and sometimes in spite of reason's better judgment. Now, it appears to many that if a man is under necessity to seek a second wife, a sister of his children's mother would be most adapted to give them a mother's love and care. But ecclesiastical eyes see untold danger in permitting this thing to happen. For many years the Bishops of the English Church