

A literature of a people is but a crystallization of their thoughts, feelings and actions, a mode of conserving these, and indicating their growth. It pictures the progress of the people's life. By studying it, the laws are learned by which that life progresses, and the goal to which it tends, is gradually disclosed. It is contact with that life, which makes the mind and spirit of the student live; fills him with joy and power of living, as every teacher knows.

Go a step farther. Penetration into the heart of literature invariably brings one into contact with personalities. When we have found the men and women who have lived the life there recorded, and our minds have passed through their minds, or theirs have mingled with ours; when we have been thrilled with their feelings, as we have obtained their outlook upon the great world; when we have been stirred, as they were, by mighty impulses to action,—then, and not till then, have we learned the literature. It is then we know the value of literature, when we catch the inspiration which was the perennial source of the life of the persons represented there.

God always, and only, reveals Himself on earth through human beings who permit themselves to become His organs. God does nothing on earth,—that is, in human life. He has never done anything, and shall we say never will, except as He has worked through man?

Name, if you can, any one act God has performed on earth, since man appeared on it, that He has not done by the co-operation of man. All that revelation of Himself, which He has made to mankind, through the long processes of human history, He has made solely in, and by, the life of man. There is no revelation of God's mind and will, apart from human life. There can be none. If God is seen at all, and understood, He must be seen in human life, in the thoughts, feeling, and experiences of men. There is no other way.

If the Bible, then, is to be a revelation of God, it must be a record of the experiences of human life. That is what it is, a record of the revelation of God, made in the experiences of human lives. It is a Book of Life, viz., of the joint life of God and man. This joint life finds its culmination in Jesus Christ, who, in Himself, shows in one, the life of God in the life of Man. It is Jesus Christ that gives to the Bible its unity. The study of it leads infallibly to the understanding of Him. It is an infallible guide only to Jesus Christ. Its inspiration is the spiritual life,—human and divine,—which it progressively discloses, and which can only be known by those who enter into and live that life. No theory of inspiration can convince one that the Bible is inspired. Divine inspiration is not, and cannot, be realized in a book. The life of God can only be realized and reproduced in persons. Men may be inspired, books cannot. Inspiration may pass from person to person, where through means of the book, they are brought into vital contact with each other.

METHODS OF STUDY.

No one method is suited to all. Each must find the method suited to his own circumstances and aims.

Read it. Read it as you would your newspaper, or any other book, to know what it says. Understand the thoughts of the writer, that is, get the meaning of his language. Let him speak to you in his own way, do not strain his meaning into something you want him to say. Find out precisely what he says, as a lawyer would find the meaning of a document.

To do this, the document must be read as a whole. The author's aim in writing the book cannot be reached by reading

only fragments—chapters or verses. It should be read through, as if there were no chapters or verses. It should be read again and again, until the general aim and purpose of the author when he wrote the book, is perceived, just as one would see the purpose of the writer of a business letter. Get into your mind the thing in the world's life the author had in his mind, and wanted to set forth in writing the book. Helps may be used for this purpose, but only as helps. The student must stand with the author, and see with his eyes, or he will misinterpret the author's words when he quotes his fragments.

It need hardly be said that in reading a book, it is essential that a perfectly open mind be preserved. The aim should be to

the politics, the social usages, the language, the customs and laws in which he lived, will all come up for study. None of these must be overlooked, for they all serve to explain the man and his utterance.

The study of these will lead to the study of his contemporaries, and those who preceded him, and helped to make the conditions in which you find him. You will want to see his place in the history and chronology of his own people, and know the revelation of God and human life which he inherited. This will lead you to compare scripture with scripture; to study other documents in their relation to the one you have in hand. Your aim will be to know the whole life which is getting itself impressed in the character



SOMETHING GOOD FOR BREAKFAST.

get at the facts, the truth as it is stated there, or the statements made there, whether they are true or false. It is the truth as it is in fact, one must seek for, not what he wants to find there. Adhere to the facts as they are there, however your preconceptions or desires may be traversed. Find what the author says at all costs. Let his mind, as it was when he wrote, become your mind. So will you catch his inspiration.

This you will find will involve a knowledge of the circumstances under which he wrote, and lead to a wider study than of the book itself. You will want to locate the man in the history of his people; see the forces that are playing upon him, determining his thoughts and actions in his own station in life. The geography,

you are studying; where he stands in the process of life's great unfolding, and what are his views of his situation, and how these views came to him. Seeing this, one sees the revelation of God, who always discloses Himself in the processes of human life.

When one becomes vitally interested in those sublime characters, through whose experiences, God has, down the ages, progressively revealed Himself, every side light upon their lives is eagerly welcomed, in order to an accurate understanding of the men, and of the God they disclose in their lives.

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FRIEND.

"Christianity is not a thing of the stars; it is a thing of the streets."