

Definition, Method and Quotation.

In Doctor Saunders' "Some Criticisms" only three paragraphs remain for us to consider.

In the first of these the Dr. writes:

By carefully reading the varied and qualified definitions given by Brother Waring of the Inspiration of the Bible, it will be seen that, whatever his intention may have been in giving his definitions, in respect to Bible inspiration, it would now seem that one of them or all of them taken together express his views on this basal subject.

Whatever the Doctor's intention in writing the above let me write that my "first belief" is my present belief and with the same intention. Each of my varied and qualified definitions, for the purpose for which it was given expresses my present belief. "Not one of them" however was ever intended as more than "a good working definition." Note in passing that it is the Doctor who writes of inspiration as "basal."

In the next paragraph the Doctor writes:

"Now that our brother has asked the attention of his church and the denomination again to this subject, in the pulpit and in the press, it does seem to me that if he has not done so in his first definition, I now owe it to himself and to the interests of truth, to tell the denomination just what are his personal views on inspiration. The first definition as has been shown, leaves his belief on Unitarian ground. The final one is not only not to be of any practical value, but for general use unsettling and confusing. My brother is now face to face with a duty from which I am sure he will not shrink—to give the denomination his views on this subject of revealed truth."

Let us take the two middle sentences first. "On Unitarian ground" is suggestively indefinite. (This suggests my somewhat "indefinite" use of the term Saundersian has applied to a brother minister's letter in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR of April 20th. Let to some, it suggests what would be unfair to him let me say that I had no thought of suggesting that my brother himself was using the Saundersian method, but rather that the misrepresentation of same in his letter concerning Doctor Saunders, was evidently the result of that method. With not only "the first definition" but also "the final one" the Doctor himself might meet even Unitarians on common "ground," if he would, in order to help them to the high ground of inerrancy—if he could. As misrepresented by the Doctor the "general use" of this "final one" might be "unsettling and confusing" but wisely used it may be of considerable practical value for truer Bible study. It is a helpful substitute for the Doctor's hampering assumption of inerrancy.

In the first sentence of this paragraph is the characteristically curtailed truth of the first paragraph of the Doctor's "some criticisms." My emphasis was rather upon the Bible as literature, and it was in considering this that I gave a "working definition" or two of inspiration. (I am however free to say that my "personal" view of inspiration is, speaking in a general way, that it is to be felt rather than critically discussed save to the extent it is necessary to correct the hampering influence of a view of it that prevents truer appreciation of the Bible.) The Doctor's emphasis on the other hand has most manifestly been upon what he calls the "basal subject" of inspiration. His criticism of my summary is directed almost entirely against two definitions of inspiration, one of which he had to go out of my summary to find. In the last paragraph that we shall quote from his "criticisms" he seems to imply that "a system of evangelical truth" is to be "founded" upon a definition of inspiration. Yet despite all this the Doctor has not yet given as his own definition. Would it be unreasonable therefore for me if I should say "that it does seem to me that the Doctor is now face to face with a duty from which I hope he will not shrink,—he now owes it to himself and to the interests of truth, to tell the denomination just what is the definition (of "this basal subject") upon which he has "founded" his "system of evangelical truth."

Why should the Doctor shrink? If he were not willing to affirm the inerrancy of the original writings he might well shrink from attempting anything more than "a good working definition." A definition however, is quite easily made for the inerrancy view to which the Doctor committed himself in the class, and which seems to be more than merely suggested (though we can see not "necessarily" so) in some passages of the Doctor's articles on inspiration. For instance "The Sacred Scriptures, as God's word, imply the inspiration of the writers, and the inspiration of the writers implies the infallibility of their writings. God's word is the infallible word of the infallible God who makes no mistakes—who cannot lie." Though "word" is here spelled with a small "w", yet, if, to the great majority of those whose belief the Doctor wrote to "confirm", this did not imply what the Doctor affirmed in the class, one might be pardoned, for saying in the language of another: "it was the prettiest imitation on't that ever I heard."

Does the Doctor still hold to a belief in inspiration that implies the inerrancy of the original writings? If so why? We do not ask reasons for inspiration in general but for that view of inspiration that assumes inerrancy. In his ten articles the Doctor gave some strong arguments for inspiration in general. To these we all gladly assent. He has by no means however, proven the inspiration that means inerrancy, and that as far as the question of inspiration goes is the question at issue between us. The view the Doctor

presented in our class certainly interfered with my method of Bible study. It may be the Doctor's view has changed. However that may be in view of his emphasis on inspiration and its definitions, it does seem that Doctor Saunders ought to clearly state whether or not, and why, his present views implies the inerrancy of all the original writings; for this and not the mere wording of a definition, is the important question bearing upon the right method of Bible study. This in the presence of the God of Truth and of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR witnesses, it seems, in all honesty, the Doctor ought to "now declare" or forever after hold his peace when tempted to write that some one else has no fundamental definition for this "basal" subject of inspiration.

In the third and last paragraph the Doctor writes: "The denomination I assume cares but little about methods and processes of investigating the Scriptures; but the results of such investigation are of vast importance and should be clearly stated. Upon any definition so far given, it is scarcely necessary to state that a system of evangelical truth cannot be founded."

Let me again say: *The denomination, I assume, cares more than a little (and well it may) about methods and processes of investigating the Scriptures; and just because the results of such investigation are of vast importance and should be clearly stated.* The difference between the Doctors sentence and mine is the key to the whole Biblical difficulty between us. The Doctor has emphasized inspiration and practically ignored what I have emphasized, i. e., method—a right method of finding out what place the Bible has in religious literature and in order that we may get a more correct method of studying it. I have sought by the method of comparison to answer our first question: "What is the Bible?" and for the purpose of getting a more correct method in answer to our second question: "How should it be studied?" As I hope sometime later, to return to this subject of method let me, for the present, call your attention again to my two articles in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. "What is the Bible and How should it be studied?" (March 23rd) and "Why we should study the Bible. (March 30th)

In contrast with the Doctor's tactics of attacking only a few lines of my summary, in order that I might do him no injustice, I reviewed his whole article. If there was to be found in it little to commend and much that reflected against its author it should be remembered that it was the author himself and not the reviewer who was responsible. In view of the Doctor's use of Unitarian quotations I cannot do better perhaps than to fill what space remains with quotations from eminent scholars, thinkers, writers and speakers who are not Unitarians. "I want in the last place to show the striking resemblance between" their "views and the definitions and other views I presented in my class and summary. Let me ask again: Were such quotations ignorantly or purposefully omitted by Doctor Saunders?

The writings of Pro. W. Sanday, M. A., D. D., LL. D., Professor of Exegesis at Oxford are referred to by Prof. G. P. Fisher, D. D., LL. D., as "an example to contemporary scholars, of thorough investigation and faultless candor." His long article on "Jesus Christ" is worth the price of the great work in which it is found. His "Bampton Lectures" on inspiration at least in scholarly evangelical circles is considered the masterpiece on inspiration. The scholarly, candid, evangelical Dr. Sanday writes in this masterpiece thus:

"In claiming for the Bible Inspiration we do not exclude the possibility of other, lower or more partial degrees of inspiration in other literatures. The Spirit of God has doubtless touched other hearts and other minds (I use the double phrase because in these matters thought and emotion are in close union) in such a way as to give insight into truth, besides those which could claim descent from Abraham. But there is a difference. And perhaps our language would be most safely guarded if we were to say that when and in so far as we speak of the Bible as inspired in a sense in which we do not speak of other books as inspired, we mean precisely so much as is covered by that difference. It may be hard to sum up our definition in a single formula, but we mean it to include all those concrete points in which as a matter of fact the Bible does differ from and does excel all other sacred books."

Since this has a more "striking resemblance" to what I gave the class than any of the Unitarian quotations the Doctor has given why did he omit it? It would be strange if in spite of all the Doctor's discussion of inspiration and his seeming familiarity with Unitarian writings, he had overlooked Prof. Sanday.

The late and great Dr. A. B. Davidson of Edinburgh wrote thus concerning inspiration:

"I think we do but wrong the Bible and wrong ourselves when we proceed to interpret Scripture with any a priori conception of what this quality must contain or preclude. By inspired we mean that by the divine influence upon the writers Scripture is what it is. What it is we can only learn from itself, from what it says and what it seems. The only thing the term postulates is the divinity of its production, but what that involves or excludes examination only can determine."

In keeping with these are the words of Prof. A. F. Kirkpatrick, Professor of Hebrew in Cambridge:

"The idea of an inspired record is the natural correlative to the idea of a divine revelation, and the inspired record may be expected to reflect the characteristics of the revelation. But as we have no right to determine for ourselves a priori what the character and methods of a Divine revelation must be—Bishop Butler long ago warned us against that—so neither have we any right to determine a priori by what methods that Divine revelation will be recorded and what must be the precise character of the record."

Concerning the authority of the Bible the eminent Prof. Robert Flint, D. D., LL. D., of the University of Edinburgh writes:

"Belief in the authority of the Bible is as obviously bound to give reasons for itself as belief in the authority of the church. The authority of the Bible cannot reasonably be taken on trust any more than the authority of the Pope. The Bible, too, must produce its credentials and submit its claims to criticism."

Rev. Geo. C. Lorimer, D. D., the great Baptist preacher whose name is a household word in so many Baptist homes writes concerning the Bible thus:

"The investigations which have so completely revolutionized modern religious thought . . . logically necessitate the inference that the trustworthiness of the Scriptures, and not merely their inspiration, constitutes the true basis of their appeal to reason . . . It is truth that proves the inspiration not inspiration the truth . . . I must ever regard it as perilous to the interests of morals to speak in unguarded terms of everything in the Bible as equally inspired and equally divine authority . . . Neither science nor higher criticism has invalidated nor can invalidate its authority and trustworthiness when it is not hampered by indefensible views of its nature and composition . . . Recent research having helped us to a definition of inspiration, and having suggested the necessary test of its genuineness, proceeds yet farther and vindicates it from the assault of those who deny it altogether by sanctioning and sustaining the gradualness of revelation."

Concerning the Vedas Doctor Lorimer writes:

"Some of the ancient hymns contained in these books are not without affinity for several of the Davidic Psalms. It is well to note this fact the amplest justice may be done to heathen religions." It is in this spirit that he writes: "One thing already has been made perfectly evident: It can no longer be assumed that there are no flashes of heavenly light in the Eastern world and that no stars glimmer in what may be considered as its canopy of night. However impotent for good the venerable cults of the East may be, they are not altogether destitute of wisdom, lofty longings and some sound principles of morality. To denounce them as systems of lies and only lies is to betray either extreme ignorance or intolerance. The facts do not warrant the accusation, and were it tenable there would be involved in it a very severe censure both of God and man. It would imply that the largest portion of the human family was incapable of discovering or prizeing truths and that the Almighty had left it entirely to itself while he lavished his attention on a few millions in the West. "This is very difficult to credit."

In my first article I quoted from Prof. E. D'Burton, D. D. If that quotation were used as a touchstone for Doctor Saunders' ten articles on inspiration it would show how unwarranted (and in the places where we look most for proof) are some of the Doctor's assumptions and assertions. As Doctor Burton takes such a high rank among us that the Baptist President of Brown's University refers to him as among Baptists "their foremost New Testament Scholar" let me quote from him again in this connection:

"Interpretation of the biblical record to obtain its meaning must be supplemented by interpretation of the facts to find the truth . . . Facts can be interpreted only in their relations. The material for the historical setting of the biblical narrative is indeed partly in the Bible itself, yet partly in extra biblical sources . . . If we are to read the teaching of history it must be history that we study, with the smallest possible admixture of fiction or error of any kind. A false reverence may demand that we ignore the possibility of any error in the biblical narrative. But a true reverence will set truth above theory and presupposition, etc.

Of "the sources of theology" he writes:

"The history of heathen religions and their sacred books must receive some attention, for however inferior these books may be to our own Sacred Scriptures, however little or great their intrinsic moral and religious value, it is scarcely conceivable that that literature in which the nations of the world have attempted to frame their conception of God and of human duty should afford us no information concerning God's dealings with men . . . Despite all the progress that has been made in the recognition of the unity of the universe, and of the all-inclusiveness of the divine thought and plan, we still have occasion now and again to remind ourselves of the apostle's indignant demand: "Is God then the God of the Jews only? is He not also of the Gentiles? yea of the Gentiles also, if so be that God is one."

Not long after my Convention sermon on: "The Bible as Religious Literature—Inspired and Inspiring" The following was given by the Halifax Herald as the words of Dr. Saunders:

"I can do better than to give you my views of the Rev. H. F. Waring's Convention sermon. I can give you the opinion of another man, better qualified and better conditioned to judge impartially of it than I am. Among others present at the convention, was the Rev. Henry C. Vedder, D. D., professor of Church History in Crozer Theological College, near Philadelphia. Dr. Vedder was for years editor of the New York Examiner, and is a well-known and highly appreciated author. In the presence of a small company in a parlor, immediately after the deliverance of the sermon in question, and which Dr. Vedder had heard I put this question to him:

"What, Dr. Vedder, is your opinion of the views of the inspiration of the Bible presented this morning by the Rev. H. F. Waring?"

To this Dr. Vedder made the following reply:

"After Mr. Waring has explained a few points, capable of the explanation I have in mind, I would say that Mr. Waring's views on inspiration are the same as those now taught in the theological colleges in the United States."

Because of the service I felt the above would be to me and because of what I felt it implied concerning Doctor Saunders' own views, I wrote thanking the Doctor for it. This however was some time before we considered in our class;