

Commingl: sometimes an alloy of base,
Unpurified affection with his clear,
All-holy inspiration breathed from God,
Lading his language with a sense unmeet,
Personal spite, his own, for God's pure ire?
Forgive me, that I need to ask such things."

"Thou dost not need to ask such things, my son,"

Paul, with a grave severity, replied.

"To ask them is to ask me that I judge

A fellow-servant. What am I to judge

The servant of another, I who am

Servant myself, with him, of the same Lord?

I will not judge my neighbor; nay, myself,

Mine own self even, I judge not; One is Judge,

He who the Master is, not I that serve.

If so be, the inspired, not-sanctified,

Mere man, entrusted with the word of God—

Our human fellow in infirmity,

Remember, of like passions with ourselves—

Indeed, in those old days wherein he wrote,

His enemies being the enemies of the Lord,

And speaking he has voice at once of God

And of God's chosen, His ministers to destroy

Those wicked—if so be such man, so placed,

Half conscious, half unconscious, oracle

Of utterance not his own, yet in some part,

That utterance *made* his own, profaning it,

To be his vehicle for sense not meant

By the august Supreme Inspiring Will—

Whether in truth he did, be God the judge,

Not thou, my son, nor I, but if he did—

Why, Stephen, then that Psalmist—with more plea

Than thou for lenient judgment on the sin,

Thine the full light, and only twilight his,

With Christ, our Sun, unrisen,—the self-same fault

As thou committed. Be but thou and he

Forgiven, of Him with Whom forgiveness is—

With Whom alone, that so He may be feared!"

Abashed, rebuked, the youth in silence stood,

Musing; but, what he mused divining, Paul,

With gently reassuring speech resumed,

Soon to the things unspoken in the heart

Of Stephen, spoke and said: "Abidest still

Unsatisfied that anything from God,

Though even through man, should less than perfect be,

Or anywise other than incapable,

Than utterly intolerant, of abuse

To purposes profane? Consider this—

And lay thy hand upon thy mouth, and plunge

Thy mouth into the dust before the Lord—

That God Most High hath willed it thus to be,

That thus Christ found it and pronounced it good.

Who are we, Stephen, to be more wise than God,

Who, to be holier than His Holy Son?"