

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?"