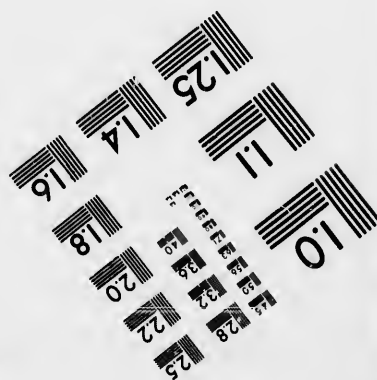
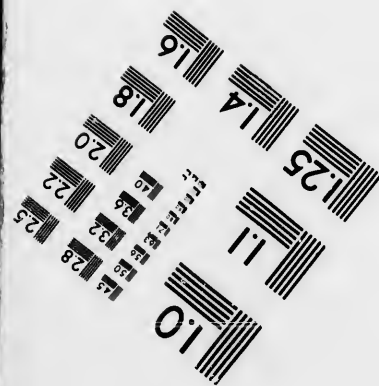
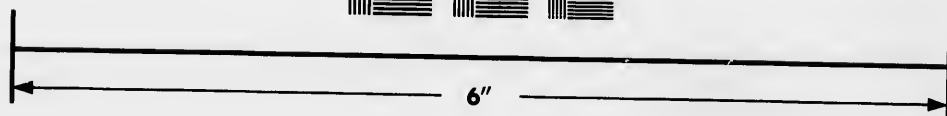
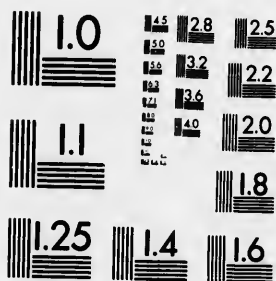


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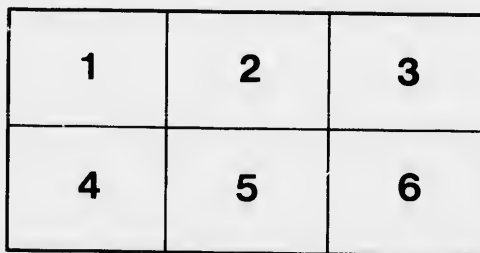
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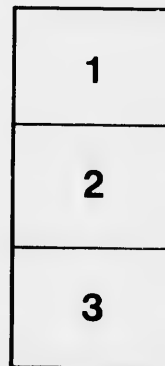
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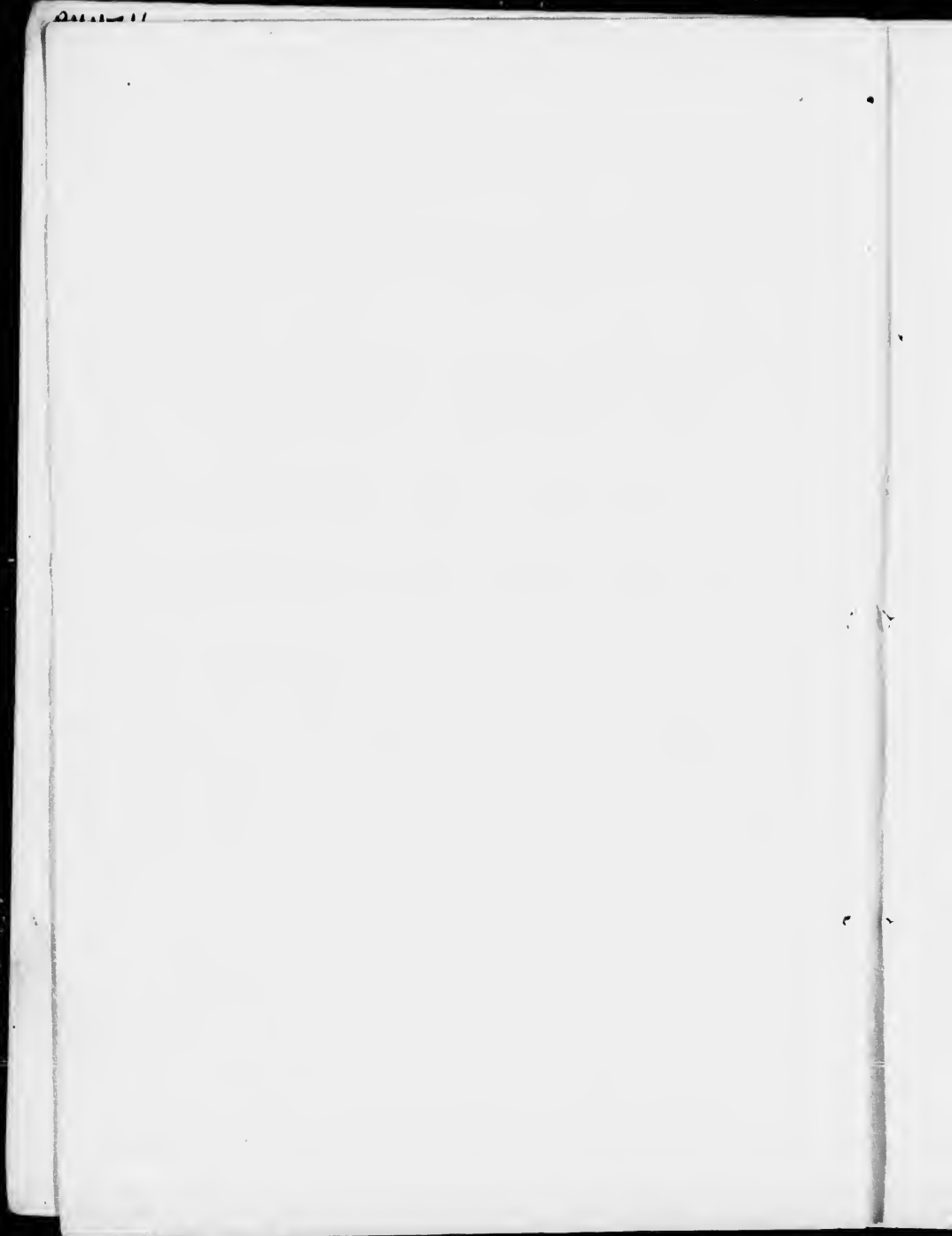
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THE
INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.
A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL UNION OF
MOUNT ALLISON WESLEYAN COLLEGE,

By REV JOHN LATHERN.



LECTURE.

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE : CURRENT THEORIES AND SCRIPTURAL STATEMENT.

It must not form any part of my plan on this occasion—except in an *incidental* way—to discuss evidences of Christianity, inquire into the formation of the sacred canon, or to attempt an estimate of the processes and value of modern biblical science and criticism. Inquiry must have exclusive reference to the inspiration of canonical books. Apologetics may be taken for granted. The temple of sacred truth, in all its magnificent proportions, walls and towers and bulwarks, the immovable strength of its foundations, you have already surveyed. But, now, “Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem!” Treading those hallowed courts, we “behold the beauty of the Lord.” Inspiration still breathes and burns as the brightness of the ancient Shekinah, and pure light streams upon the face of the reverential worshipper.

To the biblical student, in view of the stress and tendency of modern thought and research, the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures must continue to assume a proportionately greater magnitude and importance. It is of the utmost consequence, upon this subject, that we should have definite formula, and a clear enunciation of authorized belief. But the doctrinal standards of our church are somewhat meagre at this point—perhaps insufficient. Our present inquiry, therefore, cannot but be regarded as a thoroughly legitimate one. It were superfluous however, where members of the Theological Union are concerned, to adduce reasons for challenging attention to this special theme.

In dealing with the supremely important question of

INSPIRATION,

we have to seek for a definition of standard and historic doctrine; to indicate the nature of current theological theories and criticism upon the subject; to ascertain the views and claims of men who have been commissioned and accredited of God; to trace, in the application of this fact, an essential principle of biblical interpretation.

I—IT IS EXPEDIENT TO ATTEMPT A DEFINITION OF STANDARD AND HISTORIC DOCTRINE.

Inspiration, from *in* and *spiro*, has the double meaning of in-breathing and of breathing-into; and in this latter sense, we are accustomed to use the expression. It is just as when the risen Redeemer stood in the midst of His disciples, on the evening of the resurrection, and breathed upon them that they should receive the Holy

Ghost. This word finds noblest application to the sacred writings, for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God: that is to say all Scripture is God-breathed. He who is the

"Source of old prophetic fire,
Fountain of light and life."

breathed into the sacred writers the sense of what they were to write for the enlightenment of men.

Because of mental and spiritual gifts and aptitudes, men were selected as the chosen instruments of God for the communication of divine and infallible truth; and, through extraordinary action and agency of the Holy Ghost, mind illuminated and vision purified, in language moulded to accordant form, they were moved and taught when and how to speak and write for the instruction of their own and after ages.

The only definite formula upon the subject, adopted by our own Church, dates from the Reformation:—

"The Scriptures contain all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought necessary to salvation, etc.:" *

"The Holy Scriptures contain sufficiently all doctrines required of necessity for eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ." †

The idea of inspiration, or something of near affinity with it, emanates from an early period of the world's civilization. The most eminent and authentic sages and teachers of Greece and Rome were compelled to the conviction,

* Discipline, p. 14.

† Discipline, p. 196.

which was frankly expressed, that if ever truth came back to earth it must be through the medium of direct revelation. There must be an immediate communication from the gods. That deep yearning of the great heart of humanity, the sense of utter dependence, finds articulation in an utterance which has been repeating itself through the centuries, "O that I knew where I might find him!" To that appeal there can be but one sufficient and satisfying response. It can only come from the sacred oracles. The fact of inspiration, in a bible sense, and the authority with which it invests the words of an accredited teacher, were recognized far back in the history of the Hebrew people. Thus Samuel was acknowledged under the Theocracy: "The Lord was with him; and all Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord."

The foundation of this doctrine, in its fulness, was probably first laid with the settlement of the Old Testament Canon. Inspiration must have been the governing principle in that selection—that which determined the acceptance of some books and the rejection of others. The earlier Jewish writings contain concurrent and decisive testimony upon this point. The canon, according to the first and second of Macabees, "is not a collection of ordinary writings; it is composed of holy books." "We have twenty-two books," says Josephus, "which contain the records of all past time; which are justly believed to be Divine." The completion of the New Testament canon involves the same idea. Upon what principle was the selection of writings determined by the primitive church? Was it apostolical authorship? That could not be, for

two of the Gospels were written by Mark and Luke. Might not the reception of these narratives be accounted for on the ground that they were memorials of Christ's life and ministry? That would not be a sufficient reason, for the gospel of St. James and numerous other biographies of the same class were rejected. Then, again, were not St. Mark and St. Luke companions and fellow-laborers of the Apostles? Would not that fact account for the reception of their writings? St. Clement and St. Barnabas were associated with the Apostles in planting Christianity; but, still, their epistles were excluded from the list of inspired writings. Inspiration unquestionably was the governing principle of selection—an inspiration that asserted its own claims to an absolute supremacy. "The Scriptures," said Irenæus, the disciple of Polycarp and the pupil of St. John, "are perfect: let God ever teach, and let man ever learn." "Give diligent heed to the scriptures," was the counsel of Clement of Rome, whose own epistles were rejected, "the true sayings of the Holy Ghost."

There is one chapter of early ecclesiastical history which has yet to be written. It might furnish a noble theme to any writer equal to and equipped for the task. Who shall delineate for us the acts and experiences of men who, filled with an apostolic spirit, the immediate co-adjutors and successors of "the glorious company of the Apostles," were called upon to determine the final limits of the sacred canon? The men of the primitive church, on whom that momentous measure devolved, must have been keenly alive to a sense of their great responsibility in connection with that special work. Would they not be

called to exercise an unceasing vigilance in regard to evidences of the Spirit's presence where books asserted any claim to a place in that collection? Must they not have been tremulously sensitive to the *testimonium Spiritus sancti*, the breath of the Holy One, which formed the main test of inspiration? To the godly men of that primitive age, on many of whom may have rested authentic tongues of flame, the Church of Christ in every age owes an immeasurable debt of obligation. They have left abundant evidence of clear and constant sense of spiritual and critical discrimination. With keen sagacity and unerring judgment they safely threaded their way through a dim and perplexing labyrinth of contemporaneous literature. Not for once have they been proved ever to have been at fault. Their work has been tried so as by fire. Repeatedly has it been subjected to the burning crucible of a subtle and searching criticism. But not a single leaf of the sacred, selected writings has been touched or scorched by the breath of consuming flame. Not a fragment, so thorough was the work, then excluded from the completed canon has since been able to establish the semblance of right to a position.* Each single book, then received, has stood the test of nearly two thousand years, and thus has nobly vindicated and established the validity of its claim. Through all the centuries there has been no severance of the silver cord of inspiration. The golden bowl of sacred truth is not broken. Along the corridor of ages, in clear and accordant voice, sweeps the strain of authoritative testimony. But the only conclusion at which we arrive, from an historical

*An improved *textus receptus* accounts for some omissions in Rev. Vers.

standpoint, however cursory or rapid the review, is that the fact of divine inspiration has ever been held as a fundamental doctrine of the Church of God.

II.—CURRENT THEOLOGICAL THEORIES UPON THIS SUBJECT MAY BE BRIEFLY SUMMARIZED.

In contrast with the past, especially of the Reformation period, as we come down to the strain and severity of modern criticism, we are at once impressed with the amazing rebound of thought in regard to this question. There are now keen analysis and most searching investigation. New issues are raised. Rationalistic theories are formulated, and often recommended by brilliant scholarship. Even exponents of the ancient faith, for the sake it may be of common ground, have surrendered some vital points. It may be expedient, in this examination, to glance only at a few of the more prominent modern theories.

1. The *Poetic* theory. Inspiration, according to this view, is only another name for the poetic faculty. The sacred writers are classed in the same category with men of genius. There is no essential difference in the nature of inspiration, even though you admit a difference of degree, between St. Paul and Plato—between the lofty strains to which David tuned his harp, or Isaiah's seraphic fire, and the apostrophe which the bard of Ilium addresses to his muse, or the invocation with which the great puritan, John Milton, commences the *Paradise Lost*. We are to accept inspiration not upon the valid ground of logical evidence, but from a feeling of personal experience: "The lofty strains of the Psalmist, the burning

words of the prophets, the profound utterances of John and Pauls produce elevation of mind, kindling of spirit, open vision, and depth of conviction. They have thus become the litanies of nations, and for ages the life of the soul." And here, according to that liberal and poetic idea, the theory or test of inspiration must begin and end. It resolves itself into a matter of mere emotion or of cultured taste. But while it is true that in the modern sense, there are light and sweetness in the literature of the sacred volume, it is very far from being all the truth. The serious suggestion of such a test indicates but little of critical acumen. It would in fact be equally applicable to Keble's Christian Year, or to Charles Wesley's tender and lofty lyrics, but we do not put those upon a level with the sacred writings. The inspiration of men of genius and of mental power is only the natural and necessary elevation of their own minds when filled and fired with great and burning thoughts and themes. But the inspiration of Prophets and Apostles, whose writings are the pillar and ground of truth, and the foundation of the Church of God, in addition to the natural intensity and fire of their own thought and feeling, was the result of direct and divine action and agency upon their minds and hearts.

2. The *Rationalistic* theory. From the imaginative and emotional element, which forms an essential feature of the liberal and poetic ideal, we are now thrown to the opposite extreme of cold reason and of destructive criticism. The tone and tendency of this school are indicated by favorite formula: "God's word is in the Scriptures; all Scripture is not the word of God." It almost seems

as if the very framework of the structure had been blocked out and hewn by such a scholar and exegete as Heinrich Ewald. The facts of sacred history, through the agency of supposed "redactors" and "deuteronomists," and a process of rationalistic analysis designated historical investigation, if found to be incompatible with a preconceived idea, change with the ease of landscapes in a dissolving view. Important portions of the Old Testament are reduced to composite material, of an uncertain value. "I must confess," said Dean Milman, "that I read Ewald ever with an increasing wonder at his unparalleled ingenuity, his surpassing learning, but usually with decreasing conviction. I should like an Ewald to criticize an Ewald." It is quite competent for a rationalistic critic, without violation of any established canon in that system, to demonstrate from the very writings in which they are contained the untrustworthiness of alleged facts; and, yet, strangest of all, such are the demands upon our credulity, the condemned material may still be reconstructed and built up into a goodly fabric of truth. The element of supernatural, through the exigencies of destructive criticism, is reduced to a rapidly vanishing quantity. The measure of inspiration vouchsafed to the Church, through those ages in which "God spake unto the fathers by the prophets," is to be determined by spiritual intuition. When sacred writers speak of having received "the word of the Lord" we are to understand that they "gave expression to their inward consciousness."* They were enabled by spiritual impulse to utter and write extraordinary intuitions of truth. "If God spake to them, it

* Dr. Davidson.

was not in the form or force of external or supernatural communication, but through the impulse of an inner consciousness." But, if from current history, confused tradition, fallible human opinions, and the form in which it first appears, aided only by the uncertain light of intuition and consciousness, we are left to disengage the genuine truth of God, what is the value of that residuum of revelation? Can we upon insufficient data, and without any thorough agreement on the part of rationalistic critics, accept a theory that almost destroys noble *differentiæ* of the wondrous Book.

The lectures of Professor Robertson Smith, on "Biblical Criticism," which sustain the rationalistic theory of interpretation, have excited a wide-spread interest. They furnish evidence of trenchant force, keen critical acumen, and stupendous research. The style is vigorous, their spirit is reverential; and they are the product of thorough scholarship. In regard to the transcription of ancient manuscripts, the Septuagint translation, and the formation of the Hebrew Canon, they supply valuable information. "The inspiration of the prophets," it is observed, "presents phenomena quite distinct from those of any other religion." But the drift of this historical criticism is only too palpable. The existence of Elohist and Jehovistic elements, in the Psalter and the Pentateuch, opens the gate into a region of wide and free conjecture. By a cumbrous method of historical reasoning the construction of the elaborate Levitical ritual is credited to Ezekiel in exile, its introduction for actual service to Ezra. In opposition to a mass of historic fact, the coloring of Egyptian ideas and the atmosphere of Arabian wilderness tra-

vol that cling to the narrative, and the well-considered conclusions of eminent Hebraists, the authorship of the Pentateuch is chiefly attributed to Ezra and famous Scribes of that post-exilic period. But the "criticism," whatever may be found to be its ultimate value, creates greater and more numerous difficulties than it solves. In fact nothing can be more uncertain and delusive than the canons of so called *subjective* criticism. Archbishop Whately published a smart and satirical *brochure*: "historic doubts as to the existence of Napoleon Bonaparte." The criticism was purely subjective. Internal probabilities alone were considered. External evidence was excluded. The case was complete. Napoleon was reduced to a mere myth, or historic fiction. It is still open to question whether by opposition to supernatural inspiration, historico-critical studies in the Pentateuch, the theory of a Deutero-Isaiah and other speculations, the modern rationalist has been able to construct arguments of a more specious and plausible nature. "What is the ground taken?" asked a late comer in a Scotch parish Church. "The ground," said a privileged clerical listener, "that was abandoned long ago: he is just *swimming* now!" Beyond us are deep waters of subjective criticism, rolling their limitless waves upon an uncertain shore. But for the present, we prefer to build upon the rock of established truth.

3. The *Illumination* theory. This has been advocated by Bishop Wilson and other distinguished biblical scholars. The usual contention is for a three-fold degree of inspiration or of illumination. The fact of supervision might suffice for Chronicles and the historic books. Ele-

vation breathes through the Psalms and all doctrinal compositions. Direct suggestion would be demanded for prophetic utterance and for authoritative doctrinal enunciation. What the measure of inspiration may be at any given point or passage, whether of supervision, elevation of mind, or of divine suggestion, where nature ends and inspiration begins, it is not for fallible men to determine. But do the Scriptures sanction such speculations? Is it not the tendency of such a theory, no matter by what venerable names it may be urged, to cut us adrift in matters of faith and morals?

In a modified sense Dr. Christlieb seems to sanction the degree-theory. "The best methods of counteracting infidelity," equal in cultured thought to any modern production, contains a caution against an attempt to occupy untenable ground, and thus to weaken or to expose the citadel of revealed truth. "In matters of detail we should not forget that the Divine Revelation in Scripture is vouchsafed to us in a form not purely divine, but at the same time human; and that even St. Paul distinguishes what he has received from the Lord from that which is merely his own opinion as well-meant counsel from one who has the spirit of the Lord." But upon comparison of the passages, in the first Epistle to the Corinthians, where the Apostle speaks of having "no commandment of the Lord," to which specific reference is made, it will be found that he only means to say there had been no formal injunction authoritatively communicated; but that divinely directed, having without doubt the spirit of the Lord, his judgment was to be accepted as equivalent to such command.

4. The *Plenary* theory. To this view of inspiration, that the holy scriptures are the true and essential word of God, divinely breathed, the great heart of the evangelical church beats in responsive and supreme accord. Definition has been already attempted. The office of the Holy Spirit, as we understand the idea of Inspiration, was to select writers of a certain natural and spiritual endowment and capacity for the work assigned; to give some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists; to assign to each one the department of truth for which his mind might have nearest affinity or such as was immediately required for the edification of the church of God; to strengthen and refresh the memories of sacred writers for the recollection of known facts, for such a selection from all varied sources as would be of permanent value, and for such an application of facts and forms of truth as could not have occurred to their own unaided minds; to suggest to their thoughts and convey to their mental vision a clear and vivid impression of all matters that could only be known by revelation; and, finally, to so direct them in utterance and in all knowledge that their writings would be sufficient for doctrine and for instruction in righteousness.

"By inspiration," says Richard Watson, the luminous author of *Theological Institutes*, "I am to understand that the sacred writers composed their works under so plenary and immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, that God may be said to speak by them to man, and not merely that they spoke to men in the name of God, and by His authority." *

Works: Vol 6, p. 11.

"Inspiration," says Dean Alford, in the prolegomena to his edition of the Greek Testament, "I believe to have consisted in the fulness and influence of the Holy Spirit, especially raising them to and preparing them for their work in a manner which distinguishes them from all other writers in the world and their works from all other works. The men were full of the Holy Ghost; the books are the pouring out of the fulness through the men, the conservation of treasure in earthen vessels; but it is ours only as it can be ours, in the imperfections of human speech, in the limitations of human thought, in the variety incident at first to human character, and then to manifold transcription and the lapse of ages."

III.—WE MAY ASCERTAIN HOW FAR THE VIEW OF A PLENARY INSPIRATION IS WARRANTED BY THE INTIMATIONS AND DEFINITE STATEMENTS OF MEN THAT HAVE BEEN ACCREDITED OF GOD.

It may be of advantage to us, in this examination, to gather up first the side-lights of sacred suggestion; we can then look at other explicit and effulgent passages of the Scriptures. In the heart of the Pentateuch, as we open the book, are the ten commandments of the Moral Law. These were originally inscribed by the finger of Jehovah upon tablets of stone; they were promulgated from amidst the thunderings and lightnings of Sinai, and therefore were received directly from the Eternal One. Opening to the introductory page we read with solemn awe: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." When the foundations of the earth were laid, and corner-stones clasped together, there were hosts of spectators. Celestial choirs

chanted their strains. Morning stars sang together for joy. They "touched their golden harps, and hymning praised God and His works."

But there were no human witnesses. Transactions such as those, if written down at all, quite as much as the commandments of Sinai, demanded direct communication from God. Through all that old-world history, commencing with Genesis and closing with Deuteronomy, at the death of the earliest inspired writer, extending over a period of twenty-five centuries, and through all the ancient record, whatever of floating patriarchal tradition may have come down the ages, we trace legibly the finger of God—as when He wrote upon tables of stone. The patriarchs, for many centuries, were signally favored with direct revelation. There was a special sense of Divine manifestation in which Jehovah was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. On the mount, amidst the splendor of an ineffable glory, Moses conversed and communed with God. Through all the mazes, flexures, and sinuosities of human history, the prophetic vision sweeps far away into the ages of the future. "I beheld," says Daniel, in visions of the night, "till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; His throne was like the fiery flame, and His wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him: thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him: the judgment was set and the books were opened." We readily admit whatever our theory of in-

spiration may be, that all such communications were received immediately from God. Direct messages from heaven constituted a most important proportion of the Old Testament. They include, according to Garbett, the latter part of Exodus, the whole of Leviticus, many chapters in Numbers and Deuteronomy, the greater part of the prophecy of Isaiah, thirty chapters of Jeremiah, nearly thirty-five of Ezekiel, twelve chapters of Hosea, almost the whole of Joel, six chapters of Micah, nine of Zechariah, and the whole of Zephaniah, Haggai and Habbakuk.

The testimony of sacred writers is both emphatic and explanatory in regard to the fact of inspiration. "I am not eloquent," pleaded Moses at the burning bush of Midian, feeling that he stood upon holy ground, but reluctant to accept the office of an inspired messenger of the Lord. "I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? Have not I saith the Lord? Now, therefore, go and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." We have intimation of the impressive manner in which inspired men were inducted into the duties of their solemn and responsible office. Sense of utter insufficiency must have been keenly realized: "I am a man of unclean lips," said the youthful Isaiah, "for mine eyes have seen the King the Lord of Hosts." Beneath the searching purity of a light which flashed from the throne of God, in the temple scene, there was a profound and penetrating sense of sin and of self-abasement. But, with a burning coal from the altar-fire, a seraph touched his lips. Iniquity was purged, and sin was

taken away. The energy of that hallowed flame purified, thrilled, transformed. The spirit of consecration was intensified. Sanctity was preparation for needed service. "Also," says the rapt prophet, "I heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, here am I: send me." "Lo!" said the Lord to Jeremiah, "I have put my words into thy mouth." "His word," says the prophet, "was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones; and *I was weary with forbearing*, and I could not stay." "Thus saith the Lord," unto this prophet, "stand in the courts of the Lord's house and speak unto all the cities of Judah, that come up to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them: *diminish not a word*." "Speak my word unto them," was the commission of Ezekiel, "and say unto them, the Lord, the Eternal, hath spoken." "The spirit of the Lord hath spoken unto me," said David, the son of Jesse, "and His word was upon my tongue."

In "divers manners" God operated upon the minds of inspired men. By audible words and visible signs, dreams and visions of the night, direct inward suggestion, the Urim and Thummin, and frequently by angelic announcement. In some exceptional cases, for a special purpose, the gift of inspiration fell upon men undistinguished by sanctity of character. "After that thou shalt come to the hill of God," said Samuel to Saul, while the unction of consecration still glistened upon his brow, "thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place, with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp before them; and they shall prophesy.

And the Spirit of the Lord shall come upon them, and thou shalt prophesy unto them, and shalt be *turned into another man.*"

From the heights of Beth-Peor, Balaam beheld the tents of Israel as over a vast space they whitened the acacia plain of Moab.

"He watched till knowledge came
Upon his soul like flame ;

Not of magic fires at random caught,
But true prophetic light
Flashed o'er him high and bright,

Flash'd once, and died away, and left his darken'd thought."

There was also a line of distinction, broadly marked and fully recognised, between the breathings of genuine inspiration and the hallucination of a mere clairvoyant:

"Thus saith the Lord God, Woe with the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit and have seen nothing." It was a mark of false prophets: "they speak a vision of their own heart, and *not out of the mouth of the Lord.*"

In the New Testament we have the authentic attestances of the Son of Man. If Jesus Christ was what he professed to be, the Truth as well as the Life, a teacher come from God—and we must believe Him for His very works' sake—the resurrection fact alone authenticates His mission and attests the validity of His claims—then must we accept his testimony concerning the Old Testament as final and infallible. Twice in the wilderness temptation the Saviour appealed to the Pentateuch and once to the Psalms. By an impressive formula, *It is written*, He repelled the fiercy assaults of the Evil One. "Ye do err," He said to misbelieving Scribes of the time, "not knowing the Scriptures"; and thus the holy writ-

ings were clearly indicated as the only means of avoiding erroneous ideas in regard to spiritual things. "Have ye read the word of God?" was the question of Christ to the cavillers of that day; and, upon the lips of Jesus, it suggests the one potent solution for every doubt. "Search the Scriptures," said Christ, "for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me;" and whether you construe that passage in the indicative or the imperative sense, the force of the argument is equally clear and cogent. "If thou be the Christ," said Jews to the Saviour, as one day he walked in that superb colonnade which formed the eastern porch of the temple, "tell us plainly." A point of argument in vindication of the magnificent assumption, "I and the Father are one," was based upon a passage in the Psalms. That section of the sacred volume was spoken of as "the word of God;" and at the same time, there was enunciated the sublime fact: "the scriptures cannot be broken"—cannot be *dissolved*, for they are unchanged and indestructible. "These are the words," said Jesus, in one of His exegetical discourses, speaking to His Apostles, "which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding that they might understand the scriptures."

To the Apostles of Jesus Christ there was a promise of infallible guidance: "Howbeit when He the spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things

to come." The Apostles received an assurance that, when arraigned before human tribunals, they need not premeditate what they should say. It would be given them in that moment what they ought to say. "For it is not you that speaketh, but the Holy Ghost that speaketh in you." And surely if, for their defence before rulers and judges of the earth, there was a promise of direct and plenary inspiration, they would not be left to their own weakness, their own light, or even their own words, they would not be forsaken when commissioned to communicate that truth upon which the world was to live through coming ages. "We speak," they say, "as of God." "Which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in words which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Thessalonians were commended because they received the word "not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God." The Epistles of Paul, even in his own time, were classified with the writings of the Old Testament: "Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in his Epistles speaking of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, *as they do also the other Scriptures*, unto their own destruction." The writers of the New Testament evidently claim an authority for their writings equal to that which was accorded to the early Scriptures. St. Paul certified to the Galatians that the doctrine which he unfolded was not any human device: "For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by direct revelation of Jesus Christ." With the flame and fulness of Pentecost, they

felt that a more glorious ministration had been inaugurated. The mystery of Christ, not made known in other ages, was now revealed by the Spirit unto the apostles. The testimony of these same apostles was also clear and definite in regard to the divine inspiration of the authenticated writings. The Old Testament Scriptures, a privileged possession of the Hebrew People, are collectively designated "the oracles of God." When in prayer, a passage from the Psalms was quoted by St. Peter, immediately after the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, they are words which the Lord spake "by the mouth of His servant David." When the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews quotes from a psalm of David, it is as the Holy Ghost saith; and, in the same Epistle, a passage from Jeremiah attests that "the Holy Ghost is also a witness unto us." "The prophecy," according to St. Peter, "came not in the old time by the will of man: but holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." * That which they were moved to communicate, no more and no less, and when they were moved, they spoke and wrote. There can be no clearer theological formula, and there can not be a more satisfactory scientific statement than that explanation of the Apostle Peter, "they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." That one passage, more than all the volumes which have been written, defines the Bible idea of inspiration.

In the last Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, in a passage of supreme interest, the inspiration of the Scriptures is emphatically affirmed: *Pasa graphē theopneū*

* "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost."—*New Ver.*

stos ; in the Vulgate, *Omnis Scriptura divinitus inspirata*. In the New Testament, there is no recognition of uninspired *writing*. The word *graphe* is never secularised by such an application. In the Gospels and Epistles—"Did ye never read the Scriptures?"—"Search the Scriptures"—"the place of the Scripture"—"the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh"—"the Scripture foreseeing that God would justify"—"the Scripture hath concluded all under sin"—in singular or plural form, it is applied to the Old Testament. Technical use determined the *sense*, and the *article* is therefore omitted. The books of the New Testament, now mostly completed, were also to form part of the sacred writings. The other weighty word of this important passage *theopneustos*, from *theos* and *pneo*, *God inspired* or *inbreathed of God*, carries its own meaning. It is to be understood as a predicate, not a mere epithet. In the language of the authorised version, inspiration is predicated of all Scripture, and this is unquestionably the genuine sense of the text. The alternative rendering, "Every Scripture inspired of God," adopted for the revised version, affirms inspiration to be an essential attribute of the sacred writings: "Every Scripture inspired of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be completely furnished unto every good work."

But is there not, it may be urged in opposition to this view of plenary inspiration, throughout the sacred Scriptures, an impression of individuality? Has not each book, in thought, manner, style, all the distinctiveness which stamps merely human composition? Are

not the varied mental characteristics of the several writers clearly indicated? Was not Moses indebted for his noble style to the culture of the Egyptian schools? Do not the Epistles of St. Paul bear the mint-mark of Tarsus College and of studies at the feet of Gamaliel? Was there not in sacerdotal allusion, and temple imagery of writers selected from priestly caste, a constant trace of early association? Does not the raciness of the soil and of early occupation cleave to the prophetic utterances of Amos, the herdsman and gatherer of sycamore fruit, whom the Lord took from following the flock to go and prophesy unto Israel? These characteristics of mental caste and culture may be readily admitted. But do not these very facts illustrate an important feature of inspiration? The great and glorious God, in the communication of his will to men, through every part of the sacred volume, might have adopted a style solemn, severe, and judicial, as that of Sinai. The word of God from first to last, might have been a code of law, or a table of commandments. It is quite within the range of our conception that holy angels might have been the commissioned messengers of God's will to our world. But when, "instead of the syntax of heaven and the vocabulary of archangels," the Most High selected human instruments as the medium of communication, why should He not make use of their style and personality, as well their speech and national tongue? If a main design had been to furnish a purely classic style, then would the most cultured scholars only have been designated to this work. It may be doubted, however, whether as the vehicle of evangelical truth, for all purposes, the style

of Demosthenes or Cicero would have been at all equal to that of Mark or St. John. The Greek of the New Testament, according to the most accomplished masters of grammar, and of classical and sacred literature, has a caste and a complexion essentially and distinctly its own. It cannot be compared in some respects with the exquisite purity and grammatical smoothness of Attic eloquence. But while lacking some of the finer lines of Greek beauty, the style of New Testament writers has greatly gained by the infusion of *aramaic* robustness and richness, simplicity and fire. Modified by Hebrew idiom and magnificence of idea, especially moulded and reformed by the mind of the Eternal Spirit, it became a forceful and fitting medium for thought that breathed and burned—thought that was new to Greek tongue and language. But though, in comparison with literary productions of Greece's palmiest days, a certain quality of roughness may be thought to cling to the style and manner of certain portions of the Scriptures, they bear none the less distinctly the impress of an inspired origin. But for the breathings of divine light and life these wonderful words of Galilean fishermen could not have charmed the intellectual taste or have deeply moved the heart of the world. In the Seville Gallery of Spain there are said to be eighteen pictures by the great Spanish master Murillo. One is the gem of the collection. The material is coarse enough, only a common napkin, but it reveals all the more the unrivalled genius of the illustrious artist. Murillo, as the story runs, was accustomed for a few days occasionally to seek a quiet retreat with a certain house of Friars. The brethren of the order were cordial-

ly esteemed. The painter was also a favorite guest. A wish was expressed for some memento of those pleasant visits. An old brother begged Murillo to paint a Madonna for the Monastery. He would be delighted to comply with that request. But where was the canvas? There was no suitable material for the purpose. Spanish friars have always been adepts in their art. The brethren were not to be baffled. Would this do? asked the brother who had solicited the boon, as he pointed to his napkin. Why not! said the painter, and entered into the humor of the proposal. A less consummate master would have hesitated to try his hand, or trust his fame, with such material to work upon. But the roughness of texture only made the genius of the production all the more conspicuous. That piece of square, coarse cloth was firmly stretched upon the board. Beneath the wondrous skill of the immortal Murillo that Madonna of the napkin, a master-piece of Europe, the gem of that Seville gallery, was rapidly produced. And so in regard to the communication of revealed truth: "the treasure is in earthen vessels" that the excellency of the power may be of God. The literary plainness, through which, in some exceptional cases, inspiration wrought its marvels, only reveals more palpably the source and secret of a light which streams over the sacred page. The woof through which the fabric of inspired truth has been woven, may seem at times to be sober and homely fibre and shade; but it is shot with golden hues and threads; and, with all the ease and flowing softness of a silken robe, the style of inspired writers adjusts itself to the form and substance of revealed truth:

"Thenceforth to eyes of high desire
The meanest things below,
As with a seraph's robe of fire
Invested, burn and glow."

Is it designed, you may ask, through means of argument and illustration, to emphasize the doctrine of verbal inspiration? If by verbal inspiration, not perhaps the most felicitous phrase, you mean the inspiration of *dictation*—the idea that sacred writers only acted as amanuenses of the Holy Spirit—that they were passive instruments—that their function was purely mechanical—that they had to express divine thoughts in given words—that the *ipsissima verba* of every part was supernaturally determined—if you mean inspiration in this mechanical, automatic and rigidly inflexible sense, I must answer No! But if you mean verbal inspiration in a *dynamical* sense—intellectual, emotional and imaginative faculties and temperaments of the several writers acted upon, directed, controlled, and purified by divine agency, the fulness of the Holy Ghost—I say Yes! Words and metaphors, the vehicles of thought, are all inspired. Through and through they are filled and vitalized by the breath of God.

"With thee," said the Psalmist, when this question came up for solution, "is the fountain of life. In thy light we see light. All the words of the Lord are pure; they are as choice silver tried; yea, seven times purified." Silver is purified in the burning crucible. The refiner subjects it to the action of searching flame until the dross is completely consumed, and he finds his features reflected in the molten metal. Have we not in this.

passage a forcible presentation of the Scriptural view of inspiration? The discussion, as ordinarily conducted, has to do mainly with a matter of verbiage. But to the mind of David, divinely illumined, there were interior operations of which the pure words were only an ultimate product. Our thought is first led up to the original source: with Thee is the fountain of life; then we have mental illumination: in Thy light we see light; and as the result, all the words of the Lord are pure as choice silver seven times purified. The purity of moral inculcation is one of the marvellous results of inspiration. Biblical inculcation, it has been eloquently pleaded, "can be absorbed into the veins of nations, and there shall be nothing but health as the result." No other sacred literature of the world stands the same test. That "one strange volume, coming from a remoter antiquity than any other sacred book, is kept so pure, in spite of all the tempests of time that have swept through its sky, that above the highest heavens opened to us by genius, and beyond our loftiest ideal, the biblical azure spreads out as noon risen upon mid-noon."*

The distinction between mechanical and dynamical, in this idea of inspiration, implies a fundamental difference. A good deal of mental confusion and of consequent divergence of expression has to be encountered at this point; and hence the need of definite statement. Many speak of verbal inspiration who do not by any means believe that the sacred writers were merely passive instruments. They believe that the Holy Ghost employed human faculties in conformity with their own natural laws.

*Joseph Cook.

They are not open therefore to Coleridge's charge of attempting to resolve inspired utterance into a species of divine ventriloquism—a mere simulation of the thoughts, feelings and words of men. But they do believe in the immediate action of the Holy Spirit upon the intellects and hearts of inspired men. The divine and human, though distinct in their individuality, are nevertheless thought to be perfect in harmony, thorough in the interfusion of their elements, and completely concurrent in act and utterance. Is not this the significance of finding and formula: *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us?* There was concurrence of testimony: "We are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost." "The Bible is" therefore, "authoritative, for it is the voice of God; it is intelligible, for it is in the language of men." There is of course in such a union a fact of profound mystery. The *modus operandi* has not been defined. Who could presume to lead us in search of a scientific frontier? Who shall attempt to tell us where the higher agency ceases, and the human comes into full play? Must it not be analogous to other incarnations, and therefore absolutely inexplicable?

When the Divine Redeemer became incarnate, He came down easily to the lowest level of human life. He took upon him the form of a servant. There was, through every scene, a most intense humanness of thought and feeling. But that form of humanity could not conceal the splendor of Godhead. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us and we beheld His glory, as of the Only-begotten of the Father." Is it not so in regard to the written word? There is a thoroughly human element

in the Bible. It readily touches the deep chords of thought and feeling. Its familiar tones are as the words of the household. But inspiration proves its heavenly origin. There is a breath of God in every utterance. It burns and glows with celestial fire. That marvellous passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, indicating essential attributes of the Divine Logos, finds application alike to the Incarnate and the written word: "For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." In the *In Memoriam* of Tennyson, where lips of genius and culture have been steeped in sacred truth, there is a passage with somewhat of the same dual idea:

"And so the Word had breath and wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds,
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought :
Which he may read who binds the sheaf,
Or builds the house, or digs the grave,
And those wild eyes that watch the wave
In roarings round the coral reef."

IV.—THE FACT OF INSPIRATION EMBODIES AND SUPPLIES AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT AND A FUNDAMENTAL LAW OF BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION.

The fact of Inspiration, as mainly held by the Christian churches, enables us to account for most distinctive phenomena of the sacred writings. Over much that must otherwise remain inexplicable, it throws the luminous light of heavenly law.

In former centuries, before the invention of printing,

illuminated copies of the word of God were laboriously and splendidly executed. Some of these I have seen in the Bodleian Library, at Oxford. Even as works of art they are exceedingly beautiful. Each word is a picture, and the rich vellum page is all bright with gold and vermillion. There is an Italian legend to the effect that a devout Monk of the Middle Ages, who possessed some artistic skill, and whose pencil had already adorned the walls of the monastery, determined to attempt an illuminated copy of the Holy Scriptures. He was fired with the thought of achieving a work for the Master. But the undertaking was a stupendous one. He was not equal to the task. The ideal of beauty at which he aimed could not be realized. Baffled and disappointed, he threw aside the work and sought a lowlier ministry of love and self-sacrifice. But while threading his way through scenes of suffering, an angel-hand wrought upon the baffling page. Every letter and line glowed with the radiance of celestial light. To us, as students of divine mysteries, inspiration works as that angel of God, and brightly illuminates each hallowed page:

“For only when on form and word obscure
Falls from above the white supernal light
We read the mystic characters aright :
And light informs the silent portraiture,
Until we pause at last, awe-held, before
The One infallible Face, love, wonder and, adore.”

1. Inspiration vouches for the *accuracy* of Scriptural statement. *

Even where Inspiration does not affix the stamp and seal of divine approval, it still vouches for accuracy of

* For verbal accuracy of transcription and translation, we do not of course contend.

statement. It is of course essential, in the application of this principle of Biblical interpretation, that we should draw a line of discrimination and clear distinction between Revelation and Inspiration. The one receives; the other communicates. The one may be mainly attributed to the personality of the Eternal Word; the other to the agency of the Holy Spirit. The patriarchs were abundantly favored with divine revelation; but as far as we know, unless fragments of theirs were afterwards embedded in canonical books, they were not commissioned or qualified by inspiration to write for the benefit of men. The beloved physician, St. Luke, was not seer or Apostle, yet "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first," he was inspired to write the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. In the Old Testament, where the facts of an earlier and ruder and sterner age loom up along the frontier lines of revelation, this distinction needs to be ever borne in mind. The promulgation of holy law from Sinai and the rebellion of Korah, Dathan and Abiram—the psalms of David, chanted beneath the brightness of the Shekinah, and adultery with Bathsheba, a dark and sinful episode in the life of the same royal psalmist—have been alike faithfully recorded. "Yet one other instance," says Coleridge, with reference to the speculations of Job's friends,—“orthodox liars for God” these Arabian reasoners are called by the Highgate Sage, and their words are compared to the oil of vitriol poured upon a smarting wound—“one other instance, and let this be the critical test of the doctrine: the hollow truisms, the unsufficing half-truths, the false assumptions and malignant insinuations of the supercilious bigots

who corruptly defended the truth"* An obvious and most important principle of interpretation was evidently overlooked by the acute critic, when the above confession of "an inquiring spirit" was made: The words of Jehovah that He spake out of the whirlwind—the pathetic appeal of the stricken patriarch of Uz—the sophistical reasonings of Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite—the slur and calumniation of Satan on the day when he came among the sons of God, as they presented themselves before the Lord—varied matters of life and interest have been written down with the same pen; and hence the character and dramatic power of that matchless Oriental book. But, while inspiration vouches for the accuracy of each statement, and guarantees absolute fidelity, it does not imply any divine approbation of half-truths, change their original nature, or invest them with the authority of biblical inculcation. The confused sense of critics, consequent upon want of discrimination at such points as these, has kept in countenance many a heavy indictment against the Bible.† If from Coleridge we turn to Carlyle, we shall be less likely, so far as this book is concerned, to stumble over any suggestion as to the insufficiency of inspiration: "A noble book; all men's book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never ending problem—man's destiny and God's ways

* "Confessions."

† "If there be one uninspired word, one word in the wrong place, or a word that ought not to be there to that extent the Bible is an uninspired book." God "would not have allowed the ideas and mistakes of pretending prophets and designing priests to become so mingled with the original text that it is impossible to say where He ceased and where priests and prophets began." R. G. Ingersoll, in N. A. Review.

with him here upon this earth. Such living likenesses were never since drawn, sublime sorrow, sublime reconciliation; oldest choral melody as of the heart of mankind;—so soft and great;—as the summer midnight, as the world its seas and stars.”*

2. The fact of Inspiration lights up *contrasted statements* of the Bible.

By contrast, I do not mean contradiction. Great principles cannot be reduced always to the simplicity of an elementary expression. Profound verities of revealed truth can only be set forth in clear and cleaving contrast. Apparent contradictions some times startle and surprise the most thoughtful and devout student of the Scriptures. Bitter opponents of the Bible have in seeming discrepancy found some of their sharpest weapons of assault. If, upon clear and critical investigation, apparent contradiction was found to be absolute, the supreme claim of the sacred writings would be thereby invalidated. That fact would prove the existence of error, or the insufficiency of inspiration. But it will be found, upon closest scrutiny, that these statements are communications of essential truth, that they merely conform to the conditions of limited intellect, and to the restrictions of human speech. Balanced truths abound in the Bible: the Trinity in Unity—divine and human in the Person of Christ—sovereignty and free will—infinite beneficence and human suffering—the final perseverance of the saints. In one chapter of Samuel, we read that God cannot repent; and twice in the same chapter, in startling juxtaposition, we read that the Lord repented that he had made Saul King

* “Hero Worship.”

of Israel. On one luminous page, we trace the wondrous record that God is love; and upon another leaf, in lurid lines, stands stern affirmation, "for our God is a consuming fire." "No one," said the Redeemer, "shall pluck them out of my hand;" and yet He emphasizes the solemn fact: "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth." In the Epistle to the Romans, we have St. Paul's doctrine of Justification by faith: which according to Luther was *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesie*; but in the ethical Epistle of St. James, denounced by the Reformer as one of straw, we learn that "by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." But these and other balanced statements of the Bible are not contradictions. They are extreme poles and opposite hemispheres in a perfect and rounded orb of sacred truth. Altogether unique is this combination. Every book has its own special burden. Each separate part, in right sequence, is the required complement of every other part. Contrasts are harmonized. Discordancies are reconciled. Problems are solved. There are "unknown quantities," and deep calls unto the deep. Voice answers to voice. Psalm chords with prophecy. Missing links are supplied. The New Testament completes the old. Mercy and truth meet together. Righteousness and peace kiss each other.

3. The fact of Inspiration suggests the secret and the solution of *gradual development* in the fulness of revealed truth.

Capacity for nearer and remoter fulfilment has been designated a *duplex sensus* of the sacred scriptures. But, at the outset, we must bear in mind that there is nothing in the Word of God that corresponds to the

"double sense" for which ancient oracles were sometimes severely satirized. When Pyrrhus the King of Epirus was about to make war with the Romans, he consulted the Delphic oracle as to the probability of success. The answer which he received, *Te Romanos vincere posse*, might mean "thou canst conquer the Romans, or that "the Romans can conquer thee." The chieftain construed the prediction in his own favor. After defeat in battle, he complained of deception. But the juggling oracle vindicated veracity and maintained credit by an opposite interpretation. But never thus do the Oracles of God play fast and loose with the hopes and fears of men. Utterances of revealed truth are at the utmost extreme from equivocation, and from the semblance of duplicity. There are no Sibylline leaves in the inspired volume. But there is a marvellous fulness of meaning that gradually unfolds itself through successive ages. The divine message contained instruction for the time and people to whom it was first declared. A deeper meaning was reserved until the sayings should be fully accomplished. The Old Testament abounds in typical and symbolic teachings, with a literal form, and a deeper spiritual significance. Messianic strains based upon national and political fact and movement found an immediate application to the circumstances of the Church in that age; but, in transition of thought, and a loftier sweep of vision, the inspired writer celebrates the reign and glory of the Redeemer. The final fall of Babylon, predicted when that city was at the height of its magnificence, took the form of literal fulfillment; but, none the less, it assures the ultimate and complete overthrow of stupendous error. Return from

the captivity furnished a framework for things of deeper spiritual import: "and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." In the New Testament, we have intimations concerning the gradual development of important spiritual truth. "I have many things to say," the Great Teacher saith, "but ye cannot bear them now." "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Thus "the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith." This wonderful capacity for *development* belongs only to the inspired writings, and stamps them as of divine origin. There is nothing of the same kind to be found in the ample range of uninspired literature. These passages apply to nearer and to more remote events. They have first a temporal and then a spiritual fulfilment. "They are not fulfilled punctually at once, but have springing and *germinant* accomplishment through many ages, though the height or fulness of them may refer to some one age."*

4. The fact of Inspiration accounts for the manner in which New Testament writers make their *quotations* from the Old Testament.

Appeal to standard authors, in secular literature, must be governed by a canon that binds to rigorous exactness of quotation. But in the New Testament we find great diversity of method. There are direct rendering of the Hebrew text, literal extract from the Septuagint, and passages that have been modified from both these sources. It has been computed that out of two hundred and seventy-three quotations, from the Old Tes-

* Lord Bacon.

tament, there are only fifty-three in which the Alexandrian version accurately agrees with the Hebrew. Seventy-six passages differ from the rendering of the Seventy, and still more from the original text. In ninety-nine quotations the Old Testament, the New, and the Septuagint vary from each other. But it is scarcely a matter of surprise that we should encounter such divergence. The sterling currency of inspired truth was utilized; but it repassed the mint, was moulded and marked to meet the demands of a new age, and there is still the freshness and brightness of living thought. The inspired writers of the New Testament were not jurists whose explication of an ancient code would receive cast and complexion from the minutiae of expression. They were not philologists whose exact and ample erudition could be exhaustively expended upon the niceties of merely verbal criticism. "Their function," says a Bampton Lecturer, was *not so much to quote as to interpret*: to snatch from their dark places the scattered lights of earlier teachings, to rearrange them, and to disclose the convergent witness which they bear to the central revelation of our Lord." Inspiration was not bound by any law to repeat itself, or to tread always in the same track of expression; it might condense, paraphrase, expand, and make new application of its own forms of speech. The question of verbal discrepancies, so far as it relates to New Testament quotations, resolves itself into one of the doctrinal value of inspired verbiage, and the extent to which a form of expression may mould the very substance of vital and saving truth; and, viewed from this stand point, the mists of controversy, that have thickened around the subject, are at once and forever dispelled.

5. The fact of Inspiration accounts for the *incomparable majesty* of the Bible.

It will be readily conceded that, of uninspired writers the Bard of Ilium comes nearest to the Bible. But the inspiration of classic genius, however keen its vision, or steady its wing, never soared above the snowy heights of Olympus. The gods of Grecian mythology have with good reason been pronounced "a turbulent aristocracy." Jupiter, mightiest of the immortals, shook his ambrosial locks, and made Olympus to tremble. But, at will, the thunderer could act an undignified part; and for some offence his consort, Juno, was suspended from heaven by a golden chain, with an anvil at her feet. But of such puerilities, we find no trace in the inspired writers. They move on an infinitely loftier plane of thought. What a contrast between Jove and Jehovah! "Before the mountains were brought forth," says the inspired Psalmist, "or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." The elders of Israel went up with Moses into the mount that burned with fire: "They saw the God of Israel, and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in clearness." The rapt prophet in sanctuary service beheld "the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up and His train filled the temple." Flaming seraphim stood with veiled face and folded wing; "And one cried to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried and the house was filled with smoke."

The dread majesty of that temple-scene even at this distance of time awes, subdues and fills the soul. There was the uncreated and ineffable glory of Jehovah, too bright and effulgent for celestial gaze, except with veiled face—the fervor and devotion of seraphim breaking and burning into reverential and reiterated ascription—the very threshold of the magnificent sanctuary, its ponderous and polished pillars of brass, Jachin and Boaz, trembling beneath the excessive weight of glory—a smoke or splendor, as of the Shekinah, mingling with fragrant clouds of incense, rising from the golden altar to thick cedars of the panelled roof. From that source of old prophetic fire, John Milton caught the inspiration of an immortal strain:—“a song so sublime and so holy that it would not have misbecome the lips of those ethereal virtues whom he saw, with that inner eye which no calamity could darken, flinging down on the jasper pavement their crowns of amaranth and gold”—

“Dark with excessive bright thy skirts appear,
Yet dazzle heaven, that brightest serphim
Approach not, but with both wings veil their eyes.”

6. The fact of Inspiration explains the marvellous *unity* of the Bible.

This book, or rather library of books bound into one volume, was written in different ages and in different climes: on the banks of the Nile, in the desert of Arabia, by the rivers of Babylon, beneath the shadow of Solomon's temple, amidst the stir of Asiatic cities, in the deep gloom of a Roman dungeon, and in the solitude of the isle called Patmos. It contains the philosophic thought of Moses, the consecrated genius of David, the wondrous wisdom

of Solomon, the seraphic fire of rapt Isaiah, the lofty grandeur of Ezekiel, the matchless simplicity and graphic power of the four Evangelists, the luminous intellect and mighty conceptions of St Paul, the Apostle of Jesus Christ, and the magnificence and burning splendors of the Apocalypse:

"A voice high and clear
From lips of heaven-taught seer,
From harps of Zion that charm the ear,
From choirs where seraph-ministers glow."

But through all variety of theme and composition there runs a golden thread of unity. The Book is an *organism*. There is never a break in the line of continuity. Inference is irresistible. Evidences of controlling mind are incontestable and overwhelming. In a grand symphony, where in the execution of several parts, a variety of performers contribute to perfect unity of result, do we not feel and recognize the power and presence of a mighty Master? Is it not the triumph of genius to carry unity of idea through every wondrous combination? It breathes in the prelude, whispers in the tenor, murmurs in the base, swells through each vibration and variation of voice and strain, and sweeps up to full and magnificent chorus. It will be readily acknowledged that Handel's "Messiah" is one of the greatest of human compositions: It comprehends Messianic prediction. "Unto us a child is born"—pastoral symphony and *gloria in excelsis*—the personal ministry of the Son of Man, "for His yoke is easy"—the unprecedented sorrow of the Man of sorrows, embodied in sounds of wondrous power and pathos—the sublime

burst of resurrection strain—the magnificence of Hallelujah chorus—the believer's hope, "I know that my Redeemer liveth"—the exultation of apostolic defiance, "if God be for us, who can be against us—the Apocalyptic inscription, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain"—an *Amen* that gathers up all harmonies and sends its vibrations through all time. When the voices of earth are hushed, we feel as if it were only to mingle with the exultant choirs of eternity. That great composition mainly owes its varied magnificence, and noble unity of idea, to the seven-fold symphonies of revelation. It is largely the Bible set to music. But could we believe for one moment that the several parts of the "Messiah," which in combination constitute a supreme unity, could have been the independent work of numerous authors, or that such perfection of harmony could have been achieved without the inspiration and action of one controlling mind? And can we believe, but for infallible guidance, that the one economy of salvation—*unum continuum systema**—could have been carried through the several books that make up the Bible? But the book of Genesis commences with Paradise lost, and Revelation closes with Paradise regained—a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

The argument from *design*, applied to the material universe, in evidence of the existence of the Supreme Being, we rightly claim to be irrefragable; but with flawless and conclusive form and force, when applied to the sacred writings, the same process of reasoning demonstrates the divine inspiration of the Book we love so well.

* Bengel.

"We had rather believe," to adopt the idea and phrase of Lord Bacon, "all the fables in the Legend, and the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame" of sacred truth, "is without a mind."

The argument from *design* in Nature, as evidence of the existence of a Supreme Being, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, we rightly deem to be irrefragable; but with flawless and conclusive form and force, applied to the writings of the Old and New Testament, the same line of reasoning demonstrates the fact of the Divine in Revelation, and the plenary inspiration of the Book we love so well."

7. The fact of Inspiration assures *perpetuity*, and accords with the ever-cumulative evidence that attests the authority of the Bible.

The inspired Scriptures have been subjected to the test of searching and successive ordeals. Thomas Paine, with his simple axe, went through the Christian's garden of Eden, and supposed that he had left scarcely a single sapling standing. David Hume saw, or thought he saw, the twilight of self-styled revelation; but, as it proved, it was the light of morning, about to break into the splendor of perfect day. Occasionally we are startled by some new phase of unbelief; and, not unfrequently, on the part of opponents, a manifest unfairness has to be encountered. In so-called modern criticism, with much vaunt of scientific precision, the *raison d'être* of the Bible is completely ignored; mainly the record of historical manifestation and development of redeeming purpose—fulfilled in Christ. Details are frequently sundered from the system of truth to which they belong; and, as if invol-

ing the existence of fundamental revelation, they are keenly criticised. But research only reveals the perfection of inspiration. Historic accuracy, on subjective grounds, has been seriously impugned; but marvellous and indisputable and constantly cumulative are evidences that attest its character. From the lands of the Bible, the ruins of ancient cities, hieroglyphical record and cuneiform inscription, and from the most recent and brilliant research and discoveries of science, confirmatory testimony rolls in upon the Biblical student, and puts its seal upon the ancient record. The compact framework of Scripture history is strengthened and buttressed by a mass of corroborative evidence: such as cannot be adduced in support of Thucydides, Tacitus, or the best authenticated works of ancient and secular history.

The records of Assyrian cylinders as they have been interpreted by competent scholars, completely dissipate the main philological hypotheses of rationalistic critics, in regard to the Pentateuch; and no solvent has been found to "dissolve the sculptured stones and burnt tablets of Chaldea." Professor Rawlinson of Oxford, an expert in deciphering ancient Oriental inscriptions, claims that a theory of inspiration, which is *not plenary*, "cannot be supported by any correlative argument, and is opposed to the latest results of modern ethnological science."

Very recently, for controversy upon the subject has not yet been exhausted, we heard of discrepancies between Genesis and Geology, the Revelation and the record of the Rocks. Testimony from those widely distant domains was thought to be in direct collision. Time and space in this lecture are limited. Exhaustive dis-

cussion cannot be attempted. But this geological objection, once persistently urged, may stand for all others. "Examine it as a Geologist," say Dr. Dana of Yale, an eminent scholar and scientist, speaking of the first chapter in Genesis, "I find it to be in perfect accord with known science: therefore as a Christian, I affirm that the Bible narrative must be inspired." To my own mind, accustomed in early life to mines and mineralogy, during repeated and careful examination of successive strata, that dispute and alleged discrepancy had a very special interest. To put the argument clearly and forcibly upon this one subject, indicates the commanding attitude and abundant resources of the Apologist: "You find a book written in the first of Egyptian schools, and consequently versant in their system of cosmogony; written for a people still sunk in the ignorance attendant on serfdom, and thus prepared to receive blindly any feasible speculations on subjects beyond their reach; written in the desert where there were no schools to criticise, no enlightenment to detect errors, no rivals to expose them; written, in fine under every imaginable temptation for the author to indulge his fancy, or to display his learning. Yet while the sea of advancing knowledge has swept into the sea of fiction all other records of creation, this one stands proudly against the tides which fret upon its borders, but bear not an atom away. The very torrents that have overwhelmed its counterfeits flow around it, an unfordable defence, while every tributary poured in from some new source of knowledge, only swells the stream that bears down an assailant. He who believes that any man by his unaided foresight could have chron

icled creation's birth in times when its system was grossly misconceived, without assuming principles and hazarding facts which would be falsified by the discoveries of subsequent ages, not only displays a capacious credence, but contravenes the facts which the sacred literature of ancient nations develops." *

8. Because of the fact of inspiration, for the most earnest student, the Bible can know no exhaustion.

The "wondrous things" of revealed truth are deep and marvellous as inspiration itself. They grow upon the vision of patient love and reverence until all things are filled with the great and infinite glory. The youthful inquirer, like Dr. Kitto, may put his mark over against special passages; and years afterward, when vast stores of biblical knowledge have been accumulated, and his hair silvered with age, he can write *probatum est* over against that symbol of his earliest faith. Mr. Spurgeon tells us that there are many books in his library that he never reads, and shall never read again, for they have lost their interest and he has left them behind; but no one ever outgrows the Bible.

"Read the Gospels," was the advice of an eminent Oxford scholar. Dr. Martin Joseph Routh was for more than half a century the President of Magdalen College. His knowledge of *patristic* literature was exact and exhaustive; and he was versed in all sacred science. Counsel was sought by a graduate of Oriel, who was carefully "read in Eusebius and Pearson," as to the most desirable course of divinity to pursue. The veteran theologian and scholar of ninety-one, after a survey of the entire field, advised an immediate and thorough peru-

• William Arthur.

sal of the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Epistles of St. Paul in the order of *Annales Paulini*. "I would read," he said, "if I were you, first of all the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Read a portion *every day*.*

"It is impossible to forget," says Dean Stanley, who as an Oxford student sought an interview with Dr. Heinrich Ewald at Dresden, "the noble enthusiasm with which he grasped the small Greek Testament in his hand, and said *In this little book is contained all the wisdom of the world*.†

"Who," asked Edmund Burke, "has read one word of Collins, and Toland, and Tindal, and Chubb, and Morgan, and that whole race who called themselves free-thinkers?" Since that time many a brilliant reputation has utterly failed with the rolling years, but the Word of God endures. A single fact speaks volumes. In one week no less than four million copies of the Revised New Testament are reported to have been sold in London and New York. But we must now reach a

CONCLUSION.

An attempt has been made to define the doctrine of Divine Inspiration; and thus at the outset of this inquiry, for the chain of sequence, to obtain a staple-ring of firm and formulated thought. The main idea of this subject, as developed in the earlier ages of the Church, has been cursorily traced. The nature of prominent theological theories concerning this question has been succinctly stated, and the drift of recent "biblical criticism" indicated. We have been solicitous above all to ascertain the claims of men who have been commissioned

* Quarterly Review, 1868.

† History of the Jewish Church : vol. 3. Preface.

and accredited of God; and it has been apparent that, "while the Law speaks in the tongue of the sons of men," restricted by the exigencies of human speech, subject to the incidents of manifold transcription, they believed the Scriptures to be *the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever*. It has also been indisputably shewn that this theory of direct and plenary inspiration must account for some of the most distinctive phenomena of the sacred writings; and, as noon-day light is self-revealing, each illustration strengthens the main induction: abundantly the argument substantiates our *definition* and demonstrates,

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

In a closing word, standing upon a platform dedicated alike to Religion and Science, I may remind you of the inestimable advantage of devout and reverential dependence upon Him who is the source of all illumination. The Divine Spirit has never departed from the living Church. We believe in abiding inspiration, and therefore say

"Spirit of truth, essential God,
Who didst thy ancient saints inspire,
Shed in their hearts thy love abroad,
And touch their hallowed lips with fire;
Our God from all eternity,
World without end we worship thee!
Still we believe, almighty Lord,
Whose presence fills both earth and heaven,
The meaning of the written word
Is by thy inspiration given;
Thou only dost thyself explain
The secret mind of God to man."

"If we would know Virgil," said Augustine, "we must have sympathy with the mind of Virgil; how much more with the mind of Christ."



A SERMON

DELIVERED BEFORE THE THEOLOGICAL UNION OF MOUNT
ALLISON WESLEYAN COLLEGE

BY THE

REV. H. McKEON W.



SERMON.

Seeketh not her own.—1. Cor. xiii: 5.

I shall use these words this morning rather as a motto than a text, comprehending, as they do, in their completeness, the true, pure, and noble spirit of Christianity. In the preceding chapter we learn that the Church at Corinth was divided into parties, jealous of each other's gifts, and envious of each other's honors. They had, therefore, ceased practically to walk and live in the unity of the Spirit and bonds of peace. This led the apostle to declare that all their labor and gifts were valueless, since they had lost the spirit of true religion. In this chapter the apostle gives the true temper, disposition, and spirit, in which all Christian duties should be discharged and without which all efforts must be ineffectual. And this he does with so much clearness that none can fail to understand him. The word "Charity," better translated "love," contains the true motive in every duty, and if this be absent our work is all for nothing. "If I give my goods to feed the poor, and my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

Many are the virtues which spring from charity as their source—charity furnishes clothes for the naked, bread

for the hungry, a home for the homeless, in a word—hence all the Christian graces grow and ripen to maturity, leaving a name and legacy to the church truly fragrant with labors of love, while their works follow to enhance the joys of an endless life. Among the other graces claimed to belong to charity, is the one embodied in the expression, "Seeketh not her own." Looking at the extent of meaning contained in these words, we find the principle which they express furnishes the motive power for all the works of love, and deeds of benevolence, that have ever blessed the world. Following up these rays of light we come to the revelation "God is love." Then all his works must be but manifestations of himself, since we read that in love hath he ordained them all.

This will appear if we look at creation in its various departments, beholding the abundant provision God has made to meet the wants of every form of life, whether it walk the earth, float in the air, or traverse the pathless deep. The great Creator in all these wonderful works is evidently governed by this principle of love. But it is in the work of redemption that this principle appears in its clearest light. Redemption has been justly called the crowning work of God, inasmuch as it makes all others both in earth and heaven resplendent with his glory. In creation God spoke—and it was done. Infinite power is here displayed. In Redemption, God "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" as the ransom price. Something more than the infinity of power is here shown, there is an infinity of love—not the love of a human being who loves when he is loved, but that of a God who "so

commended his love toward us that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." This love was the essence of his own beautiful nature, full of goodness and charity—like himself, in every way suited to induce sinners to give themselves up to him and receive this love as their sweetest connection with a higher sphere.

There are two points here raised by the Apostle which justly claim our attention, and throw light upon the fact that charity "seeketh not her own." *First*: while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. Before we sought his favor he came to our help, came to us in our guilt and shame offering to bear it for us. When we were bankrupt and lost in moral ruin, Christ undertook to cure our sin-sick souls, to retrieve our ruined fortune, opening up to us the way of salvation. This will further appear if we call to mind that this was a forgiving love—man had sinned against God. With man, and man alone, was the fault. Should our brother sin against us we do not forgive him until he repent in word or deed. It is said of Cato that he never forgave an injury done him even by himself. Fearful would be our condition to-day were we not loved with a love different from that of Cato, or even of ourselves. Christ did not wait for man's repentance. Had he done so our doom would long since have been sealed. But influenced by that charity—which "seeketh not her own,"

"He saw, and O amazing love,
He flew to our relief."

He came to us in our guilt and rebellion, offering us forgiveness, pleading with us to be at peace with him.

Second : this principle is further seen as it developes itself into sacrificial love. That alone led Christ to lay down his life for his enemies. "For while we were yet sinners Christ died for us," What love is this which leads him to die to save his enemies from death ! Here truly is that charity that "seeketh not her own." Here we have reached the fountain head of the infinite love of God. From this source have flowed all the streams of love, benevolence and truth, that have come to cheer and bless mankind in the house of his pilgrimage. This is the principle that moved the hand of omnipotence to lay in Zion the stone for the foundation of his Church in oaths and promises, and blood, against which the powers of darkness shall spend their strength in vain ; and the Church to-day with all her beauty, and stateliness and perfection, is still resting on that weather-beaten stone—other than which no man shall lay—whereon is inscribed with the finger of the Almighty, "Upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

"Seeketh not her own." This must be ever characteristic of the church purchased by the blood of Christ. This is that which is to qualify her to carry out the great mission of doing good both to the bodies and souls of men, and to abide with her until the work is accomplished. The Church thus equipped and honored was not to live in the selfish enjoyment of the blessings Christ purchased and bestowed upon her. But being qualified by that spirit which seeketh not her own, she was prepared to put forth every effort to save a world previously lost, but now ransomed by the blood of a com-

mon Saviour. The first apostles, animated by this spirit, planted themselves on the field of moral effort, lifted high the standard of the cross, declaring their intention to disciple the world to God. This implied on their part great self-denial—enduring hardships as good soldiers—encountering strong and bitter enemies—in a word, not counting their lives dear unto them that they might, in life and death, magnify the spirit of the text. This is, doubtless, the spirit that must control every true minister of Christ in every department of his work. Thus every faithful servant, as he enters upon his life of self-denial and toil, is truly imitating his Divine Master, who came to seek and save that which was lost; we may judge how near the Master each one comes, when he pursues his labor to the loss of all things, even of life itself.

It is apparent that this should be the governing spirit of the ministers in every age of the Church. If the minister have not that charity which “seeketh not her own,” how can he impress upon his church the need of a deeper and truer spirit of love towards lost sinners? But if he be full of the Spirit, and if on him rests in an abundant manner the portion of God, then will he be able to draw his church nearer and nearer to their divine Master and example; and if Church and pastor be united by the common bond of love and good-will towards the souls of men, then will the Church be efficient, and her ministers true heralds of that God who shall reign “from the river unto the end of the earth.”

If this be the spirit of Christianity that manifests itself in the minister, ought not the same spirit to be found producing like fruit in the hearer? Every Christian man

and woman should be governed by the same spirit. If this were truly the experience of all professing to belong to Christ, what strength, and life and beauty would it impart to the Church, making her appear "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners!" Love can only be satisfied in the welfare and comfort and salvation of all, regardless of their condition; and this heavenly desire in the Christian's heart will find expression in earnest believing prayer. Now, let both minister and people be in possession of this desire to save souls, and what works of labor and love will be performed! There would be nothing too precious to be given up. No labor would be too hard to be performed, for under this desire it would be the will and desire of all—both minister and people—to do the will of the Master. Then would he overcome that spirit of selfishness that has, by stiffening the noble limbs of benevolence, so weakened the Church of Christ. Being under the influence of this spirit, we are led to the just conclusion that the gold and silver, as well as the cattle on a thousand hills, belong to God; and if entrusted to my keeping, I am but the steward of that which belongs to God. How, then, can I use that which belongs to me to the best promotion of his glory? Let this spirit but have the ascendancy in the Church, and the cry of an exhausted treasury, with no further means of doing good, would soon cease, her agencies for good in every department would be multiplied, until the kingdoms of this world would be at the Saviour's feet. Whenever this spirit has had the control of the heart and the life of an individual, great things have been wrought for God and humanity. To honor

such men, even a selfish world comes forward with its meed of praise. The names of Howard, Wilberforce, Peabody, Rich, Drew, and our own honored Allison, are immortalized. These names are honored among men because of the noble deeds they were prompted to perform, and their monuments are with us to day, more lasting than bronze, and which neither the countless series of years, nor the flight of ages is able to destroy.

Dr. Adam Clarke, in his notes on this passage, says,—"That man is not a Christian who is solicitous for his own happiness alone, and cares not how the world goes, so long as he is comfortable." Every man has his field of labor and his talents appointed him: he may so improve them as to secure a reward, or he may hide them in a napkin and meet a fearful recompense. The number of our talents may not be large, the circle of our influence may not be as extended as was that of those names just mentioned, yet duties await us of as much importance to us, individually, and which will, if rightly improved, secure to us as immortal a wreath as now encircles their brows:

"Who does the best his circumstance allows,
Does well, acts nobly, angels could do no more."

The man who is faithful in the little, receives his reward as well as he who is faithful in the much. We may not be stewards of much of the world's gold or silver, and perhaps on that account we may endeavor to excuse ourselves from the duty of feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. But the question for us to answer is—have we the spirit which prompts the relieving the destitute? Would we bless, if we could, all those among us

in need? Will we do what we can to better the condition of our fellow-men? Paul and Silas had neither gold nor silver, but such as they had they freely gave. Every true disciple has in his possession that which is of more value than silver or gold,—Religion.

Religion, what treasures untold,
Reside in that heavenly word.
More precious than silver or gold,
Or all that this earth can afford."

Then let us be liberal with the grace we have so freely received, and to the extent of our power do good to the souls and bodies of men. For let it be remembered that we cannot long maintain our evidence of our salvation if we make no effort to save sinners from the doom that awaits the impenitent. The Christian is not to put his light under a bushel but upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. If we do not feel and labor for all who are around about us unsaved, we have unmistakable evidence that we are not sufficiently under the power of that spirit that seeketh not her own." Have we accomplished our work, or are not there fields before us white to the harvest, awaiting our noblest efforts? And what work greater than ours—to save souls from death! A work which angels might truly covet both in point of honor and reward. But to us is this grace given that we might preach amongst the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and though our life be one of toil and self-denial, we are not without encouragement from the words of the Master, for when the soul seems wearied and the heart sick, there comes the comforting word of the Master, "He that reapeth receiveth wages and gathereth.

fruit unto everlasting life," and, "Let him know that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his ways shall save a soul from death, and hide a multitude of sins."

My dear Brethren in the ministry of Christ, shall we not, under the inspiration of this hour, resolve, God being our helper, to preach the word with greater power, and zeal and faith, than we have ever done before, as instruments in the hand of the blessed Spirit who has called us to this work? May we not determine to increase the number of the white-robed assembly, and augment the revenues of the Redeemer's kingdom. To accomplish this we need a larger measure of that spirit that "seeketh not her own." Let us pray for it, remembering that those who labor for God are doubly blessed—first the blessing that comes to their own souls in the act of doing good, and then the reward—souls for their hire.

This spirit does not acknowledge the duty and then put off the performance of it. When the course is indicated, it is the characteristic of this spirit to enter at once upon the work. All other duties must yield to this most important one, for as the love of the Master is supreme, so his commandments are the ones to be first obeyed. It is not enough to know and acknowledge our duty, it must be discharged seasonably and well if we would have a reward. As members of the Christian Church our labor is before us, precisely suited to the talents entrusted to our care. Shall we not then adopt the words of the Master. "I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

The Church of God is the mightiest seat of power on

earth to-day. This is seen by the hold it has upon the nations of the earth. The mightiest nations are the most Christian nations, those most under the control and influence of that true spirit of that Christianity and charity which "seeketh not her own." It is this spirit that gives wings to the Angel of the Apocalypse having the everlasting gospel to preach unto all people, kindreds, and tongues, that dwell on the face of the earth. Are not our missionary enterprises and operations of to-day, of which we are so justly proud, the legitimate offspring of this noble spirit? How encouraging it is to know that the same spirit that gave birth to this noble cause, continues to sustain it with both men and means, and has promised its presence and aid until the work is done. We might refer to those numerous Institutions founded throughout the Christian world to meet the necessities of a suffering humanity—from the home for the aged, to the house of correction for the sinner—all given birth and sustained by the same spirit that "seeketh not her own." Is not this the spirit of the great Master which we are called to imitate that led him to spend his days in labor and his nights in prayer, that he might supply the wants of the needy and make the widows heart sing for joy.

Many are the opportunities which our Heavenly Father has afforded us by which we may enhance our eternal reward. If a cup of cold water given under the influence of this spirit does not lose its reward, what an opportunity have we of enriching ourselves with treasures laid up in that store-house, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through

and steal." While opportunity is afforded us to improve the talents entrusted to our care, let us determine by the grace of God to make our ten gain for us other ten, and their corresponding reward. With stronger faith in God, and with increased love for the work, will we not enter the field of moral effort determined to be faithful until the day is ended and the Master calls us to higher employment.

To the members of this Union the Master has promised a crown of life. Brethren, let us by the grace of God make it a crown studded with many stars. For if there be one thing which we as ministers should especially dread, it is not so much that we may be called upon to endure hardships, it is not so much that we undergo toil, but it is that ours may be a barren ministry. The days of our toil and hardships will soon be over, and we shall be called to give an account of our stewardship to the Judge of the quick and dead. What minister does not desire to present himself at that great day before his judge and, pointing to the souls he has been instrumental in saving, say, Here am I and the souls thou hast given me? Then shall the Master say to all such—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."



