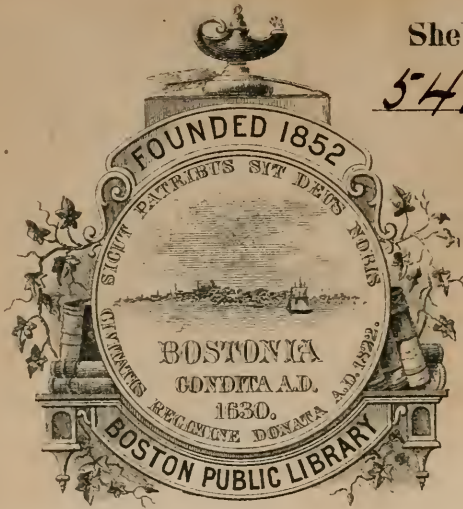




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(Supplement to "Reasonableness of Future, Endless Punishment.")

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OUR BIBLE.

NUMBER VI.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE THREE IN ONE.

(In Preparation.)

OUR BIBLE.

THERE MUST BE SUCH A BOOK as the Bible is held to be by the great majority of those who possess it—an inspired, all-sufficient revelation from God.

The same reasoning holds good here which Christopher Columbus used with regard to the globe. He insisted that there must be a continent in the west; that it was necessary, in order to maintain the equilibrium of the planet. He argued, moreover, that there was, of necessity, a nearer way to Asia than by the Cape of Good Hope. In faith, which could not be shaken because it was founded in the nature of things, he persevered in his search, till the sea weeds of the Bahama Islands floated by, and the perfumes of San Salvador came on the night airs to his ship.

Believing in the existence of a wise and benevolent God, we may, with more confidence than that which made Columbus look for a new world, declare that God has always given, and will always grant, to man, a perfect directory concerning the divine character and will, one about which an honest mind can make no mistake in its endeavors to learn its duty. It may be by direct communications from God himself to man; or by messengers, of whose authority to speak for God there can be no room for doubt; or in a written form. It is impos-

sible that there should not be such revelations. Thus, knowing that God will make men to dwell on the earth, we might insist beforehand, with absolute certainty, that he will furnish them with means of communicating their ideas one with another. It would not be benevolent, it is said, to suffer human beings, with their instincts and wants, to be, like so many islands, cut off, one from another, and each from all, by being deprived of signs and symbols to express their thoughts. There is no more necessity, in the nature of things, for language, than there is that intelligent and accountable beings should be informed, by some infallible and all-sufficient methods, what they are to believe concerning God, and what duties God requires of them. He who made the human hand, and has adapted the senses to the external world with such benevolent regard to the happiness and welfare of man; the God who has made medicinal herbs to grow in every clime suited to the diseases incident to that region; who fixed in heaven

“the stedfast starre
That was in ocean waves yet never wet,
But firme is fixt, and sendeth light from farre,
To all that in the wide deepe wandring arre;”

and who, in process of time, gave man the compass, and then the power of steam, and then the electric telegraph, has not failed, — it would be absurd, it requires too much credulity, to think that he has failed to bestow on man that which he needs above all things, and without which every thing else is comparatively without value — an all-sufficient revelation concerning his God, which, for its great purpose, is as reliable, and, in effect, as complete, as though God held personal intercourse with every man, face to face.

God at first communicated with men in person and by word of mouth; then by angels, and by fellow-men; — he, nevertheless, himself interposing continually with special disclosures

of his will, to leave men in no doubt as to that will and their duty. For reasons known only to himself, he has seen fit to withhold these immediate, personal communications with men. Has our need of a divine revelation ceased? The same necessity exists, and will continue to exist, that man should have an unerring guide as to truth and duty. If we have no such guide, the world, instead of advancing, has retrograded; and where is that benevolent God who, in the arts and sciences, by sea and land, in gold mines, in the coal, in surgery, and even in war, has progressively revealed his kind regard for the convenience of man, and his desire to alleviate his woes? Has he taken from us the most indispensable and precious of all his gifts — an authentic, all-sufficient source of knowledge respecting himself? In every thing else, we have made great advances upon those who have gone before us; the law of progression is every where seen in human affairs; but now, if we have no word of God, on which we can rely with as much certainty as Adam could upon that voice of the Lord which he heard walking in the garden in the cool of the day; if Pharaoh, with the messengers of the Almighty before him, enjoyed greater privileges than we, sinners of the nineteenth century; if Israel in the desert had its cloud by day and pillar of fire by night, its door of the tabernacle covered with the sign of the Almighty's presence, its mercy seat, its audible voice, saying, "I am the Lord;" and if all the people of God, even the children — the Samuels, the Josiahs — had clear, authentic disclosures of the divine will, and we enjoy nothing of the kind, but are left each to guess his way to heaven from certain writings which derive their authority only from their venerableness, but whose authority, even, is subjected to the varying opinions of men, — we may say with confidence that it is the greatest mystery in the whole providence of God. We hear it said that the Bible is the most wonderful of books. A

greater wonder, however, would be found in this, that there should be no Bible, no book claiming to be the word of God, possessing all the authority, the completeness, and sufficiency of a perfect revelation. The Bible is a wonderful book if it be true; it is, for every reason, more wonderful if it be not true. For then the whole analogy of God's providential dealings with men, by which he has in almost every thing advanced the race, and in nothing has deprived it of real blessings and privileges previously enjoyed, would be contradicted in the very thing in which we should most expect to behold the proof and illustration of his beneficence. We are, therefore, prepared to claim for the Bible, not only that it must be, and is, an inspired, all-sufficient revelation from God, but also that, as such, it is in no wise inferior to any form of revelation which God has ever made to men.

ONE BOOK FOR ALL FUTURE TIME.

One book for all times and all countries, it is said, is impracticable; and we cannot expect that all nations will receive it as the one only authorized and an all-sufficient directory.

Yet we know that one book, on a single subject, can be made to answer an individual, separate purpose for all future time; instances of this occur to every intelligent reader; and therefore we cannot see why one book could not be made by infinite Wisdom to answer every purpose relating to faith. Its object, if such a book is made, will be to teach man the knowledge of God and his duty. There is no reason why a book, composed, as to its different parts, through a very long period, may not sufficiently illustrate every subject relating to God and his will, so as to be an all-sufficient guide in matters of faith.

To make a volume for all ages, for every language, suited

to all the conditions of men, must require infinite wisdom, no less than any work of the divine mind. Had men or angels been deputed to make such a volume for the whole human race, not to be superseded as a whole, and as a whole never to be antiquated, — ever fresh, always profitable, capable of interesting the highest and the lowest understanding, and men under every sky, and in every condition of human life, — their wisdom would have been put to the severest trial in determining what to insert, and more especially what to omit, in what ways to secure variety, what style to adopt; in short, every thing which enters into the construction of a book would, under the circumstances, have presented formidable difficulties. It seems as though, after long consultation and experimenting, they would have reported unfavorably with regard to the possibility of making such a volume, and would have asked to be discharged from the duty; and, if the book must be made, they would have represented that nothing could be more appropriately the work of infinite Wisdom than to make the Bible. Accordingly, we find that Inspiration is represented to be as specifically the work of the Holy Spirit as the Cross is identified with Christ.

If men early forsook the worship of God, and entailed idolatry upon their descendants, those descendants were not left without admonitions respecting Jehovah, by the fame of Israel's deliverances, and by the knowledge of that wonderful journey through the desert. The "years of release," too, in after time, must have sent many witnesses of the true religion far and wide.

LOCAL AND TEMPORARY FEATURES OF THE BIBLE.

It is made by some an objection to the Bible that much of it is local and temporary, and was not originally addressed to the whole world. A collection of Hebrew histories, narratives

of personal adventure, lyrics, maxims, messages to particular kings and states, is made ; and this is held to be, in part, a revelation from God addressed to the entire human race for all succeeding time, as the expression of his will and the rule of their duty. It is asked whether the publications of the Massachusetts Historical Society might not as properly be set forth as the rule of political and civil life in the United States for all coming time.

If those publications, and they alone, could be proved to be of divine origin, men would feel that the principles contained in them could, possibly, be of universal application. But, if there were a paper among them containing plans and specifications for a state house, would it follow that all the state houses were forever to be built after that model? No ; and the directions with respect to the tabernacle and the temple are not intended as directions for the building of places of worship. How, then, it is said, can we call the minute details of the tabernacle a *revelation* to the whole earth? It is said, Let us discriminate. There is a word of God, here and there, in the Bible ; but do not require us to believe that the directions to Bezaleel or Solomon respecting the snuffers, and the censers, and the brazen sea, are a *revelation* to people in North America, three thousand, nay, perhaps ten thousand, years afterwards ; or that Paul's message about his cloak and the parchments are an inspired *revelation* to the christianized Sandwich Islanders.

According to the benevolent and condescending manner in which God has been pleased to educate the race, there are some divine communications to them, now on record, whose chief purpose was local and temporary ; and at the same time they are still, and ever will be, of such use to mankind that they cannot be spared from the sacred canon. All that relates to the ceremonial law is of this nature. The minute directions about the altars and their victims are of no specific use to those

who have ceased to offer sacrifices ; yet, if Christ be the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, every thing relating to the preparation of the world for his coming and his sacrifice is important and interesting ; it cannot be taken away without impairing the historical evidence, which belongs to the great sacrifice for sin. He that would separate Leviticus, for example, from the New Testament, might be expected, in presenting us with a water lily, to cut off the stem close to the calyx. Every speech, every letter, every tradition, relating to our revolutionary war and national independence, is now extremely interesting, whether it gives evidence of strong-sighted vision respecting the future, or appears only as a faint gleam in the mind of some yearning patriot. We do not despise these things ; they were the beginnings of our national scriptures ; and by reading them we more fully understand and appreciate our whole political history. Who objects to them as a part of the nation's biography ?

Thus the men who worshipped at the ancient altar had "received not the promise, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Our superstructure is now firm and strong, because of that underpinning which it received in the days of the Old Testament. Some who criticise the Books of the Chronicles, and the Book of Esther, and also particular portions of other Old Testament books, as wholly local, and now, as they tell us, unedifying, and incapable of being, in any sense to us, a *revelation*, forget that these things were, to resume the figure, really the underpinning by which our Christian faith is supported, though it requires some discernment of spiritual architecture to perceive it. Take, for instance, a passage which will serve several purposes of illustration at once. The revolting story of Judah's incest breaks in abruptly upon the narrative in Genesis. Its seeming intrusiveness and uselessness, but, above all, its offen-

sive character, make it a stumbling block to many an honest and conscientious reader. But, when we come to the genealogy in the first chapter of Matthew, we find that the fruit of this incest is a link in a chain on which the credibility of the Messiah's lineage depends. True to history, the direful origin of one ancestor of the Messiah is plainly given; all questions of descent, which, in royal or in noble houses, or among heirs at law, have been the occasion of trouble without measure, are settled, in this case, beyond dispute, by the intrepid honesty of the narrative. The story of the Levite and his concubine is another instance of the same kind with the foregoing. Why introduce such a sickening tale into the sacred word? For one most important reason, if for no other. The event there related was the occasion of the most fearful civil war which ever happened to Israel. The tribe of Benjamin was greatly depopulated by it. The history of the Hebrew nation demanded that all the incidents belonging to such an eventful page of it should be faithfully recorded. And is there no moral for every nation in that sad passage of Israel's history? Every people which is divided on any moral questions relating to their internal affairs, is instructed by the spirit and the manner of the proceedings which, in this case, resulted in the slaughter of more than ninety thousand brethren by the hands of brethren.

The seemingly useless, and, to us, the unedifying, lists of names in several places of the Old Testament had great importance in determining claims to estates, settling boundaries, and establishing the rights of personal property. All these things were necessary to bring forward the purposes of God relating to the Jewish people, and thus to prepare the way for the Messiah's kingdom. That is not a comprehensive view of things which now saunters among the older parts of the divine economy, and demands that one thing and another

be hewn down because it does not obviously, and in a striking way, contribute to a direct modern use. It requires consideration, good sense, an appreciative eye and heart, to know whether a thing is or is not of use; and the Goths and Vandals who failed here, have given their names and reputation to others. Since their day, indeed, none are more liable to just reflections upon them in the same line, than some who, with great pride of scholarship, have proved themselves incapable of appreciating the historical uses of the Old Testament, in some of its less practical parts.

The Book of Esther is much spoken against as professedly a part of revelation, because it is wholly confined to Jewish affairs, and relates the "incredible" story of a nation doomed to massacre with notice served upon them, eleven months beforehand; of seventy thousand Persians being killed by this same people, who escape the intended massacre; and, moreover, the book does not contain the name of God, nor make recognition of his providence.

But might we not almost as well complain that the Builder's name is not set in stars on the firmament of heaven, as that the providence of God is not emblazoned in words upon a history which, from beginning to end, teaches, most impressively, the doctrine of providence? In nothing is it seen more conspicuously than in the notice, eleven months beforehand, which was given to the devoted nation, who were, at the expiration of that time, to be cut off. Haman was led to consult his heathen god as to the day when the massacre which he had contrived should be perpetrated. "In the first month they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month,"¹—not that they spent so much time in casting it, but they tried each day of the year, by lot, to determine when the

¹ Esther iii. 7.

massacre should take place. "The lot is cast into the lap but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." He makes the lot wander to the eleventh month. Time is thus given the Jews for preparation, and also for a change in their affairs, such as came to pass. The great feast of Purim, which to this day is celebrated by the Jews in commemoration of this deliverance, and on which the Book of Esther is publicly read, as we read our Declaration of Independence on the nation's birthday, is a memorial of divine providence, which serves a purpose such as no abstract maxims with regard to confidence in God, whether addressed to men or nations, could possibly accomplish.

Public events recorded in the Old Testament have a singularly powerful effect on the private conscience and heart of an attentive, prayerful reader. "I understand, indeed," says Professor Stuart, "what is meant when we are forbidden to exult over misfortunes. But when Edom is held up before my eyes by Obadiah, as having rushed upon the Jews in the day of their humiliation by the power of Babylon; when the imbittered enmity, the spirit of vengeance and rapacity, and the unspeakable meanness of the Edomites, and their consequent punishment, are embodied, and made palpable, and held up to open view in this way, — I am far more affected, and even instructed by it, than I am by the abstract precept in question." So true is it that "*whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope.*"

As to the lateness of the time when the Bible was finished, it is well known that for a long period God communicated with men by word of mouth, often immediately, and also by the ministrations of angels and men. The Old Testament grew to its present size while events were occurring to make up an instructive history of divine providence; and during

this period God, at sundry times and in divers manners, was speaking to the fathers by the prophets. We will not impugn his wisdom in deciding as he did when the fulness of time should be regarded as having come, and the Messiah should appear. Unless the world had been eternal, its creation must inevitably have been "late," in one sense, let it have taken place when it would; for as eternity had no beginning, the question could still have been asked, why the world was not made sooner. Though the New Testament greatly enhances the value of the Old, and was necessarily connected with the progress of the divine purposes, and must, therefore, in due time, be written, yet the Old Testament was all sufficient for the knowledge of God and salvation; for the apostle bids Timothy remember, "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus."

If it be required that, to make a proper Bible, every question, and every case, which can possibly arise, shall be recorded and considered, we must abandon the idea of one portable convenient volume; and the great majority of the world will be prevented, by the expensiveness of such records, from possessing a written revelation. Divine wisdom is conspicuous as to the size of the Bible, making it accessible to all. God had kept the nations apart for ages, by withholding from them the means of easy and rapid transition from place to place; but when many ran to and fro, knowledge was also increased, and the Bible came forth in forms suited to universal distribution. But who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor, as to the long period during which a completed Bible was withheld from the race? Enough, from age to age, was afforded, in various ways, so that God did not leave himself without witness; but why the Bible, in its completed form, has been enjoyed for only eighteen hundred years past,

is a question which must be left without any answer except that such was the divine will.

LOST BOOKS OF SCRIPTURE.

It is said that some inspired books have been lost. They fulfilled their purpose, however, and were suffered to perish. The ark of God has perished, with the tables of stone, the pot of manna, and Aaron's rod. Many of the words and works of Christ were not recorded; this, however, does not weaken the evidence of inspiration in those which have been preserved.

VARIETY OF WRITERS.

The employment of many men to compose the Bible, instead of being an argument against unity of design and origin, is a proof of divine wisdom, for it secures a necessary variety of style and subject. The seemingly accidental way in which the book is made up, — an event, a character, being taken here and there, to constitute the volume, — gives the book a charm which redeems it from all imputation of monotony. — God designed to teach the world, for all time, one instructive lesson with regard to his control in human affairs; how he frustrates wicked men, how he delivers the innocent, and that, in times of great extremity, he, by a simple event, can not only deliver, but send prosperity. In what way shall he most impressively teach this? He causes the Book of Esther to be written, and no romantic tale or veritable history illustrates in so signal a manner the doctrine of God's providence, whether towards a man or a nation.

He designs to teach this great, important truth, that this life is a state of trial, not of reward, and that prosperity and adversity are no evidence with regard to character; that un-

questioning submission to God under chastisements is the duty of all.

The Book of Job is prepared, and goes into the inspired volume; those subjects are discussed, illustrated, finished, for all generations.

Devotional poetry, prophecy, history, sententious sayings, the history of Christ, and the exposition of Christian doctrines and morals, make the volume complete; it is tested by succeeding ages; the evidences of inspiration in each of its parts satisfy its contemporaries, and at length the completed volume goes forth to the end of time, the work of infinite wisdom; such, that if Almighty God should now propose to make a revelation to the world in the shape of a book, to instruct men as to his character and their duty, we see no reason why it would not be just such a book as we now have. Had the book been written in heaven, on the throne of God, and had been visibly handed down to men, it would not be more truly the inspired, all-sufficient word and revelation of God than it now is.

HOW THE BIBLE WAS ESTABLISHED.

The Jewish church, after much investigation and experience, protracted through many years, finally settled the question of inspiration with regard to every Hebrew writing that laid claim to a divine origin. It is interesting to look at the history of opinions with regard to various books professing to be divinely inspired, and to watch the waning credit of many of them, till at last none but those which remain to the present day took their permanent place as the acknowledged word of God.

Great objection is felt by some to this method in which so important a thing as a Bible for the whole race, to the end of time, should have been produced; for it appears too accident

al, too entirely human, the result of mere popular opinion, aided, perhaps, by influences which were not consistent with entire liberty of thought. We know not, it is said, what bribes, what coercion, were employed, here and there, to gain currency for one book, and to depreciate another. A revelation from God for the whole race to the end of the world, it is claimed, ought to be accompanied with infallible signs of its being the work of God ; it should wear a broad seal, which none could mistake nor counterfeit.

To this it may be replied, that the manner in which the most essential truths are every where established, corresponds to this very method in which the Bible itself was given. Those truths are the subjects of investigation and debate ; the history of their influence is ascertained ; their present practical effect, their consistency, one with another, are considered.

The laws which regulate the formation of a character, and of a reputation, seem to have governed in the establishment of the Scriptures as of divine authority. Men in trouble, in prison and banishment, under confiscation of goods, bereaved of dearest friends for the truth's sake, the sick, the dying, the emperor, the peasant, the slave, the counsellor, the sellers of purple, the tent makers, the rich and the beggar, were led to test the various writings claiming to be inspired ; and the result was that some of them were not found to answer the purpose of a divine guide ; for some unaccountable reason there was no response to them from the recesses of the soul ; they did not lodge in the memory ; they were not often quoted ; the assemblies in which they were read showed signs of indifference, and yet men were aroused when certain other manuscripts were unrolled, and the public teachers stood up with them for to read. Now, instead of objecting to all this as too casual, too much like good and ill luck, caprice, it may rather be said that there is something divinely appropriate and beautiful

in it, honorable to the human understanding and heart, and laying the deepest foundations for a lasting hold upon the confidence of the world. An author, whose great desire is to establish his doctrines in the approbation and love of men, would prefer to have them received, at first, cautiously, and with a spirit of free inquiry, and obtain a permanent place in the human mind from their intrinsic excellence, and the experimental evidence of their adaptedness to the moral feelings of men, rather than obtain implicit deference to them from his position. We may, therefore, confidently ask if the way in which the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures has been verified, by subjecting them, with other writings, claiming inspiration, to the scrutiny of experience, be not more in accordance with our ideas of the highest liberty, and more honorable to God and man, than though they had been enjoined upon us by the simple, direct injunction of Heaven.

If it be said that this method of establishing the authenticity of a revelation from Heaven leaves too much to the caprices of the human mind, it may be replied, that if the writings in question be inspired, and are designed by the Most High to be his revelation to the world, they will surely, in some way, gain credence; for his word shall not return to him void; therefore the only question is, In what way do we agree that the authority of these writings can best be established? Allowing that God will bestow upon us certain inspired writings, is there any better way in which they can obtain power and authority than by their intrinsic influence over the human mind? Now, if the Holy Scriptures are not inspired, the hold which they have gained over the human understanding, conscience, and heart, is a greater miracle than their inspiration.

If it can be shown that the Old Testament Scriptures in the time of Christ were altogether genuine, and had not been corrupted nor diminished by the Jewish scribes, and if then

it appears that the Saviour recognized them as of divine authority, we see not how any can refuse to apply the name "word of God" to those writings. If errors could creep into them and corrupt them in their essential parts, so that no one could tell whether they were divine or of merely human origin, of course their authority would cease.

CHRIST DID NOT AMEND THE SCRIPTURES.

It is remarkable that among the severe reproofs which Christ addressed to the Jewish scribes, in which he accused them of making the word of God of none effect through their traditions, he never accuses them of altering the Scriptures. On the contrary, he appeals to those Scriptures as the authentic word of God. If among the received Scriptures there were a single book of doubtful authority, we must believe that, among his other instructions, he would have taught the people what was the true word of God. Much more, if one of those books had no right in the sacred canon, the Great Teacher would, first of all, have purified the source of religious instruction in the writings which were read to the people as the words of the Most High. He who made a scourge of small cords, and drove out the traffickers from the temple, would not have been less jealous against a lying pentateuch or a false prophet. Esther, the Song of Solomon, David's imprecations, Jonah, were not expunged by Him who, in the Sermon on the Mount, reviewed the traditionary laws, corrected the glosses, set aside the impositions of the Jewish teachers, and pronounced "woe" upon those who tithed mint, anise, and cummin, to the neglect of weightier matters; and surely it were a weightier matter to reform a nation's Bible than to correct the practices relating to temple offerings. "All things," said he, after his resurrection, "must be fulfilled which were written

in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.”

CHRIST LEFT NO WRITING OF HIS OWN.

Up to that time, he found no occasion to make any new inspired book to reform, or to complete, the Old Testament Scriptures. The Great Teacher was himself satisfied with “the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms.” Though he were expecting that his disciples would write his own history, it is a marvel that he did not write or dictate some book which should be a Key, or an Index Expurgatorius, to the Old Testament, if there were a hundredth part as much necessity for it as some of our freethinkers assert. He, however, had nothing to write in emendation of the Old Testament. “He saw that it was good.”

NATURE OF INSPIRATION.

What kind of inspiration does the word of God possess? Or in what sense, and to what extent, is the Bible the word of God?

The answer is, God imparted revelations, guidance, and superintendence to the sacred penmen, so that the Holy Scriptures were sanctioned by him as his authorized word.

To paraphrase this proposition: When it was necessary that the sacred writers should know things which the human mind could not discover, as, for example, future events, or the will of God relating to particular things, God made special revelations to the writers of the Bible.

When they were writing histories, God assisted and guided their recollections, and provided them with suitable sources of information, so that they wrote true history.

When they recorded common things, he superintended them,

so that they made no mistake, nor inserted any thing inconsistent with, or prejudicial to, the harmony of truth, either in thought or expression.

This, it will be perceived, amounts to what is called "*plenary inspiration*," from the Latin *plenus*, full.

PLENARY INSPIRATION.

Let us take it for granted that the things recorded in the New Testament did actually occur. It would occupy space to prove this which cannot now be so employed, especially as it is generally admitted that the New Testament, whatever may be said of its inspiration, is an honest record of events;—those things happened, which are there narrated by men who had nothing of a worldly nature to gain by believing and asserting them; but they did, many of them, suffer stripes, imprisonment, persecutions, and death, in attestation of the things which they had seen and heard. We take the records of these men, sealed with their blood, and from them we prove the inspiration of the Old Testament and the New.

Christ promised those who were to write the New Testament that they should be divinely inspired for their work.

In his last discourse with his disciples before he suffered, he said to them, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." "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."

After his resurrection, Jesus met them, and said, "Peace be unto you; as my Father hath sent me, even so send I

you." No commission could be more complete. "And when he had said this, he breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." With such promises, and such a commission, it is reasonable to believe that whatever they did or wrote, professing to be the will and the truth of God, was under the full direction of the divine Spirit. Christ here gives them an unqualified appointment to act in all things pertaining to his religion. But nothing could be of greater importance to the world than a faithful record of what he did and said, and correct expositions of divine truth for the use of generations in all future time. We may rest our belief of the full inspiration of all which the New Testament contains on this, that Jesus Christ promised his disciples that the Holy Ghost should abide with them forever, so that in every thing essential to correct religious knowledge, they should be led into all truth. Two writers of the New Testament are not included in the number of those to whom these promises were personally made. PAUL was, however, called to be an apostle by Jesus Christ himself, and of course was invested with all the powers and privileges of apostleship. LUKE was his companion; and the agreement of Luke's Gospel with those of the three disciples and evangelists, confirmed his claim, in the minds of the early Christian world, to equal inspiration with the rest.

The writers of the New Testament received and gave the fullest evidence that, in their apostolic office, they were commissioned from God.

By the miracle at Pentecost, soon noised abroad, they were proclaimed to the promiscuous multitudes from many parts of the world, who were present at the feast, as the authorized and commissioned apostles of God. So that, whether they published the gospel, by preaching or writing, to their contemporaries or to future times, all that they said was authorized of

God, unless we can find something which recalled or limited their commission. The presence of God was with them in their ministry. Ananias and Sapphira fell dead at the word of Peter; the cripple at the temple walks; Dorcas is brought back from the dead by the same word. An angel described one apostle to Cornelius, an inquiring Gentile, as the man appointed of God to teach the Gentile world the Christian religion.

John in Patmos was commissioned by the Saviour in person to write. Paul is caught up to the third heavens. Such acknowledged ministers of God could not be permitted to record any thing as truth, or as direct revelation from God, for the use of men in all ages of the world, and be neglected or forsaken of God while they did it. The same necessity that the Holy Ghost should lead them into all truth while they were speaking, existed when engaged in so great a matter as composing the Bible for all coming time, when inspiration should cease.

Admit, then, that what the New Testament asserts respecting these men is true, and the inference is reasonable that in all which they did, said, and wrote, connected with the knowledge of Christ and of religious truth, they have, unless there be express notice to the contrary, the sanction of Almighty God.

Receiving, then, the New Testament as written by divinely inspired men, we come to consider that

Christ and the writers of the New Testament appeal to the books of the Old Testament as of divine authority.

If one asked the Saviour what was the greatest commandment of all, Christ said, "What saith the Scripture? How readest thou?" He quoted Moses, and David, and the Prophets; he "came not to destroy, but to fulfil" them; and, after his resurrection, he set his seal to them all by saying,

with reference to the sufferings, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead." He had forborne to use his power in self-defence, saying, "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?" "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

- Some of the sacred writers were miraculously informed of future events.

The prophecies respecting Tyre, Nineveh, and Damascus, compared with their subsequent history, are illustrations. How did Isaiah know that there was to be a monarch on the throne of Persia whose name would be Cyrus, and that he would restore the Jews from their captivity? How, without divine aid, could he describe the minute circumstances of the Saviour's appearance, death, and burial, seven centuries before Christ was born, with such accuracy, in things improbable and seemingly contradictory, that Porphyry insisted, with the early Christians, that these words of Isaiah must have been written by an eye witness of the crucifixion, and were therefore a forgery?

If we can establish the inspiration of a single writer of the Bible by showing that future events were miraculously made known to him, or if by any other method of proof his divine authority is proved, it serves for evidence that all whom he recognizes as inspired, are, equally with him, entitled to full belief as commissioned by Heaven.

The writers of the Bible had divine aid in recording things which were past.

It is not unfair to take the Bible as it now is, and with its present influence over the human mind, and argue, that such records as many of them are, would not have been allowed to take their place as chronicles of divine providence, and the

only connected history of the intercourse of God with men, without superintendence on the part of the Most High. But apart from this, how can we think that Moses would have given the history of the creation with such particularity, without divine aid? Or how can we believe that, if he received all those particulars from tradition, God would have left him to the liabilities, to which every unassisted mind is exposed, of mistake? As to the evangelists, they were uneducated men, of humble life; if a record of Christ's life, and a knowledge of his gospel, are important, in that proportion we may have assurance that the Holy Spirit would, as Christ said, bring to their remembrance all things which he had uttered. We sometimes hear the writers of the Gospels referred to as "humble note takers and reporters." The idea of their making a record, at the time, of the words of Christ, is not consonant with the impressions which they make upon us in their daily life. Indeed, is it not slightly ludicrous? They seem never to have had such forecastings, or to have reflected upon the passing events of their intercourse with Christ in so studied a way, as to make us feel that the taking of notes was any part of their occupation. Had they done so, we should, probably, have found them anxious to establish the authority of their writings by informing their readers that their reports of the Saviour's words were recorded at or near the moment when they were spoken. Instead of this, however, we find the Saviour promising them that the Holy Spirit would supply their memories with all needful information. This being so, we can see, from our own experience, how unlikely it is that such men should, of themselves, have recorded such discourses as those of the Saviour, without supernatural aid. It is difficult for most hearers, — sometimes for the preacher himself, to recollect the text, after not many hours, or a day or two, have passed; and every one knows the difficulty of giving a con-

nected account of a discourse to which we have listened. In giving a friend at home some account of an address which had given us pleasure, we are always reminded how imperfect is our recollection; we are pained at our inability to repeat things which, at the time, it seemed to us we could never forget; and we summarily conclude our narrative of the address by saying, "I wish that you could have heard it," which is regarded rather as a confession of our incompetency than a consolation, by the listener.

One of the most difficult parts of the Bible, and one of peculiar importance as to perfect accuracy of thought and expression, is the Sermon on the Mount — that code of Christian morals, that exposition of first principles in the new system by the Great Teacher. It seems to be morally certain, with regard to this record, that no unassisted human mind could have written, or would have been permitted to write, such a portion of the Bible. What nice discriminations have we here! what important strictures upon the hitherto received doctrine of the public teachers! what vital truths relating to spiritual religion! and what a lucid order and unencumbered statement characterize this remarkable record! He who believes that it could have been written, or would have been permitted to be written, by the publican Matthew without divine aid and sanction, ought not to charge believers in revelation with credulity.

VERBAL INSPIRATION.

While it was by no means necessary that every word which the writers of the Bible recorded should have been suggested to them by the Holy Spirit, nor that He should inform them, for example, how far Bethany was from Jerusalem, yet it is reasonable to suppose that he superintended all which they

wrote, so that they should be correct in their expressions and statements. This is essential to a professed revelation from God; for while the natural faculties of men may be employed in writing it, we must feel that God superintended them, so that they might not err. For the same reason that we believe that God gave a revelation, we must believe that he superintended and guided those who wrote, so that it should be his approved and sanctioned word.

If it be asked, then, whether we believe that all the words of Scripture were inspired, that is, divinely suggested, the answer is, Of the direct suggestion of many of them there can be no question; for the writers themselves report what they heard the Almighty speak. As it regards other cases, words are essential to thought; we cannot have a definite thought without the help of silent words. The sacred writers could not, in the nature of things, have received even a direct, silent communication from God without the suggestion of words. When a symbol is suggested to awaken thought, for example, figs to Jeremiah, or the sheet filled with animals to Peter, the thoughts suggested by them must clothe themselves in words before they could become intelligible. When the prophet or apostle came to utter or record these thoughts, he would be most likely to use the words which had vividly shone into his mind at the moment of inspiration. It seems reasonable to suppose that he would speak as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

But it is said, there are some remarks in Job, for example, and in Ecclesiastes, which, by themselves, are not true. Were they inspired? — They are uttered in order to be answered; or to make out a drift of discourse which shall illustrate something, and help on the great purpose of the writer. A preacher who should take some of these words for texts, separated from this drift and design, would err; and many do.

We must not take some of Satan's words concerning Job, and try to deduce a truth from them ; yet we may take such passages in their connection, for texts ; and in so doing we shall fall in with the plan of inspiration.

But it is said, there are many statements in the Bible which any man could write as well as one who was inspired ; for instance, that " Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews," that " Solomon built him a house," that Emmaus ' was about threescore furlongs from Jerusalem.'

But surely there is nothing credulous or irrational in supposing that the Holy Spirit watched over the sacred writers to see that they did not err in their incidental statements. The smaller and the more seemingly unimportant the statement, the more necessary, on some accounts, that it should be correct. In cross-questioning a witness, one catches at the incidental expressions, and from them sometimes constructs his most powerful arguments. The undesigned coincidences between the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, are made, by Dr. Paley, a strong argument in favor of the credibility of the New Testament. Suppose that the sacred writers had made mistakes in geography, and infidels could prove it? We see from the discussions connected with the geology of Scripture, and with the errors in dates, distances, and numbers which have crept into the Bible, what use would have been made of errors which could be proved upon the writers. It is true they could tell, without inspiration, whether Derbe and Lystra were near together ; but suppose that the historian, instead of saying Lystra, had said Iconium ; it would have disparaged his credibility in important things. It is reasonable to believe in a *superintending* divine influence extending to those narratives and observations which needed no *suggestive* inspiration, but which it was important should be correct. — Some alleged errors of statement by men while confessedly under inspiration will be noticed hereafter.

HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS OF INSPIRATION.

Here we may notice, once for all, those obviously human characteristics of the Bible which lead some to question its inspiration. Paul leaves his "cloak" at Ephesus, and his "parchments," and he sends directions with regard to them in immediate connection with what are claimed to be divinely inspired precepts. Is that verse relating to the cloak and parchments inspired? we often hear it asked. If not, perhaps some other verses are not inspired. How shall we discriminate?

We will add to this a few more cases, and consider them together:—

"Now Bethany was nigh unto Jerusalem, about fifteen furlongs off."

"And there were set there six water pots of stone, containing two or three firkins apiece."

"The number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty."

Were these verses inspired? If so, why did not the inspired writer give us the exact measurements and numbers in these cases? He knew, of course, how many names more or less than a hundred and twenty, were assembled; and so in the other instances of ambiguous statement.

The principle of explanation is this: Human modes of thinking and speaking are used by the Holy Spirit in the composition of the Bible. Angelic forms of expression would have been out of place. Of the many different writers of the Bible, no two are alike in style; the wisdom of God has adapted himself to the tastes and feelings of men in causing those by whom he speaks, to think and speak in the way peculiar to their own genius and habits. As the same wind has different voices among the leaves of oaks and in the pines, so the breath

of the Almighty has different tones in the hearts and lips of inspired men. The style in the book of Ruth, and in Nahum, varies with the subject. John is different in his modes of thought from Luke ; there is a diversity of operations, but the same spirit. The human qualities of the writers are never confounded by the highest measure of inspiration, but, on the contrary, are intensified. Then, again, the weaknesses, and the social feelings, the private friendships, and the minute affairs of the writer are allowed to infiltrate themselves with the flow of inspired thought and feeling, all serving to give the book, as it were, incarnation ; “the *word* is made flesh and dwells among us.” As the Saviour’s hunger and weariness, limited knowledge, and prayers, are as essential to his effect upon us as the proofs of his Godhead, so when we read that Paul had no rest in his spirit because he found not Titus his brother at a certain place, notwithstanding “a wide door, and an effectual,” of usefulness was opened to him, and when a score of verses in an inspired book are occupied wholly with messages of salutation to Christian friends, and the inspired man is found forgetting, perhaps, his parchments, and is compelled to leave the burdensome cloak behind him, and then speaks of it in his inspired letter ; and when he cannot, by any effort, remember how many people he had baptized in a certain place,— we think that we may seem deficient in some of the qualifications necessary even in judging works of art, if we take exception to these shadings, this obscuring, which give the otherwise intense supernatural light a tone suited to the best effect. The fairest cheek on canvas, viewed from a wrong point, looks inconsistent ; the proper angle of vision reduces the crossed lines to harmony.

No work of art, indeed no work of God himself, could stand before the rules of criticism which are sometimes applied to the Bible. The true theory of inspiration is in harmony with

the true theory of every thing else in which God and man are co-workers; for since man is not a Memnon's statue, with its films of mica for the wind to breathe in, but is a free agent, whose freedom is never destroyed by the divine agency, we must expect to see human qualities exhibit themselves even amidst the highest inspiration. Old Jacob, on his dying bed, rapt in vision, pauses, leans back, and ejaculates, "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord." Come, now, let us feel for the pulses of human emotion, and of the divine afflatus, while he is thus resting with a long-drawn sigh; let us accurately determine at what second, by the watch, inspiration ceased, and the merely human feeling coursed through him; for, if we cannot thus, or by some spirometer, or stethoscope, distinguish between the breath of the Almighty and the breath of Jacob, how can we tell what part of the forty-ninth chapter of Genesis is inspired?—And yet, what harm will happen in such a case? Let the devout aspiration of the dying saint prove to have been such as any uninspired man could have expressed,—is there error in it? Is it not in such contiguity with supernatural vision that it will be safe to regard it as permitted, superintended? and even if there be no practical use in it, as there surely is to every dying Christian who may be expiring in old age, like Jacob, we may as well object that the grains of earth which come to us upon the roots of a plant, are inconsistent with the perfection of the flower. Those grains of earth are a witness for the soil in which the plant grew.

INFIRMITIES OF THE SACRED WRITERS.

The plenary inspiration of the Bible does not make it necessary that Paul and Barnabas should not have disputed and separated; or that Peter should not have used dissimulation and be blamed by Paul. Inspiration in writing, the

inspired directions which they gave, the inspired truths which they taught, the divine miracle which they performed, do not cover all their thoughts, words, and actions, at all times with sanctity; nor make them omniscient. Paul did not know the High Priest before whom he was speaking. These fallible men were endued, upon occasion, with a divine authority; all which they did and said at such times is the word and the act of the Almighty.

But there are alleged errors of inspired men which are capable of solution. An instance is in the speech of Stephen, who, while full of the Holy Ghost, speaks of the burying place of the patriarchs, and the number of Jacob's family in Egypt, in a way to occasion trouble to many. These, however, can be explained. So with regard to the allegation that the apostles believed and taught that the end of the world was nigh.

Paul is careful to tell us at times, that he is not speaking under divine direction, but is giving his private advice. We are left to infer, therefore, that at other times when he speaks to us, and we are not otherwise notified, it is by divine inspiration.

It is interesting to reflect that the Bible has no one character, real or fictitious, which it exalts, as writers of poems and certain histories do their heroes or worthies. We find in Scripture no Cyrus, with his Xenophon, no Achilles, with his Homer, no Æneas, with his Virgil to laud his virtues and conceal or apologize for his mistakes and follies. It is wonderful in what contrast to all this is the manner in which the Bible portrays its powerful characters. Abraham, and Lot, and Jacob, and Moses, and David, and Solomon, and some of the best of the kings, are set forth to us without the least concealment; no effort is made to palliate their faults by offering a sympathizing word as to the strength of temptation, or the frailty of our common nature. Transparent honesty marks every delineation.

tion of a life and character. It is not presumption to say that none but God would have made such a book, — the God who requireth “truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden parts, will make us to know wisdom.” But now, in return for all this candor, — if we may use the term in such connection, — all this divine simplicity, this perfect truthfulness, many speak of the good men of the Bible in ways which do not show that they appreciate the manner of the Bible in this particular, or that they have ever seen each the plague of his own heart. They wonder at Abraham; they call Jacob by opprobrious names; David is a perpetual subject of their irony; they cannot speak of Solomon without lifting a hand to conceal a smile on their half-averted faces. It is not demanded of us that we approve or excuse the sins of these good men. But, it is becoming in us to remember, that it was from amid the ruins of fallen human nature that God was obliged to select his saints; that we know the worst of these men; that their repentance and confession, in some instances, are known to be proportioned to their fall; that the mercy of God, which we all so much need, is illustrated in commending and loving those who had been guilty of such departures from him; and that the Saviour of the world recognized them as good men. If, instead of forgiving them, and calling them, still, men after his own heart, God had cast them off, he would have been reproached for severity, as now for leniency. True, some are not satisfied by this last consideration, but they rather impeach Christianity and its Founder for not complying with their own standard of morality. It is enough, however, for the disciple, in his moral sense, to be as his Master, and the servant to be as his Lord.

It will not be amiss for certain writers who take special pleasure, we fear, in holding forth the sins of good men, to ponder the following words: “Some men’s sins are open

beforehand, going before to judgment; and some they follow after."

DAVID'S IMPRECATIONS.

But was David inspired when he uttered his imprecations against his enemies?—If those imprecations, properly understood, were contrary to the mind and will of God, "David's Lord" would not have given his sanction, as he did, to the Psalms as a whole. He who wrote those imprecations would not have been permitted to say, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue," without a cautioning word from him who so explicitly corrected or qualified things which were "said by them of old time."—As to David's imprecations, it may be remarked in passing, they are none of them, nor all of them together, more severe than the imprecation of Paul upon Alexander the copper-smith, for doing him much evil. In his one brief sentence, he expresses all that David meant and said, with the same motive, and in the same spirit.

But was the writer of the one hundred and thirty-seventh Psalm, "By the rivers of Babylon," inspired, when he placed those words on record: "Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones"?

God had purposed to destroy Babylon, root and branch. Let us read the preceding verse: "O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed, happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us." They had seen their own little ones dashed against the stones by the hand of Babylon. When men see their wives and children destroyed before their eyes by savages, and these husbands and fathers, afterwards, in war, take the savages captive in their wigwams, and crush out every life, in young and old, they are not justly chargeable with immorality, nor is the present of a sword to the leader

of the destroying band, as a token of gratitude, generally deemed inconsistent with morality. There are exigencies in human affairs, there are agonies of experience, there are St. Bartholomew's days, there are Piedmontesè scenes, when all the imprecations in the word of God are necessary, and just, and true.

DISCREPANCIES OF SCRIPTURE.

It is said, There are discrepancies between the sacred historians in their accounts of the same events. For example, one says, "the thieves which were crucified with him cast the same in his teeth." Another says, that one of the thieves was penitent, and rebuked his fellow for upbraiding Jesus. The argument is, One of the evangelists, therefore, did not speak correctly; at least there is a degree of carelessness in his statement, which is inconsistent with his being inspired.

This objection, so far from disproving the inspiration of the evangelist, is a striking illustration of the truth that inspiration follows the common laws of human speech and of thought. Suppose that you were giving an account of the ill treatment which a good man received from a mob. After describing the indignities which he suffered, you say that he was hurried away to jail. As he passed through an entry of the prison, where two convicts of the lower class were confined, the prisoners hissed at him. Now, you are brought before a court of justice to testify on this point. Did one or both of those prisoners hiss at this man? Your answer might be, My object in the narrative was to show that this good man was hissed even in prison; I was not giving evidence for or against the prisoners, but was describing the humiliation of my friend. It was that, and not the number of those who were concerned in the act, which made its impression upon me, and which I sought to convey.

No one would say that you had been incorrect in your statement, even should it appear by the confession of one of the convicts that he alone insulted your friend.¹

When we read in the newspaper three or four different accounts of the same thing, all varying in some particulars, one giving more details of one part of the story, another passing over that part with a general statement, and dwelling more upon another part, we feel that this is natural. Four accounts of the same transaction about which there was controversy, all drawn up with most minute resemblance, would excite the suspicion that the writers had been together, and had agreed in their statements. Moreover, of what value would such mere duplicate writings be? But let four men, whose reputations, and whose all, are concerned in the transaction, differ in certain things, while they agree in the essentials of the story, and we naturally say, If these men were rogues, they would have used more carefulness; now, their discrepancies show that they are so much absorbed in the truth and importance of the things narrated, that they think little of the variations in their stories. Liars are ingeniously accurate in little things when they compound a lie; honest men can afford to differ in the circumstantial parts of a story. When God employed men to give us the history of the gospel, he might have made them coincide in the minutest things. But where, then, would have been the necessity or use of more accounts than one? We think that there is divine wisdom in permitting the evangelists to differ in certain unessential things, and at the same time superintending and guiding them so that they should not differ in any measure or kind, whereby their credibility could be impaired.

¹ This particular discrepancy respecting the two thieves may be satisfactorily disposed of by supposing, with some, that the penitent thief, at first, also reviled Christ.

It is known that the Books of Chronicles differ, in some important respects, from the books of the Kings. The question is, Which are true? and, How can both claim to be inspired? Rationalists have made some of their deadliest attacks here. — The Chronicles were not written for the same purpose as the Books of the Kings. The “Kings” are political history; Chronicles are ecclesiastical: the Kings are historical in their design; the Chronicles didactic, and were written after the captivity, are brought down to the end of the exile, were compiled after the time of Jeremiah. The object of the writer seems to be to inform the Hebrews, returning from captivity, respecting their pedigree, and to clear the line of descent in which the Messiah was to be born; hence the family of David is particularly regarded. Directions are given as to the restoration of divine worship; the priests and Levites are furnished with the most careful genealogies of their line; the ordering of their appointments under David and Solomon is specially given. In doing these things, it was not to the writer’s purpose that full histories of all the kings should occupy his pages; he had accomplished his most worthy purposes, as here described, and he sought to confirm the piety of his countrymen, after their banishment, by dwelling upon the examples and the prosperity of good kings, and the sins of the nation which led to its downfall. But because the stream of history in those books does not run into the same creeks and bays with that in the Kings, the writer is, by some, impugned, and his books are set at nought. — But there are errors, in names and numbers, which cannot be explained. Copyists have here, no doubt, left proofs behind them that they were not inspired. These errors do not at all invalidate the credibility of the writer; for, in the most palpable case of all, in which a certain king appears, by computation, to be two years older than his father, we cannot

impute so foolish a thing to the writer ; we see that the record has not been kept, by a miracle, from certain numerical errors.

ALLEGED IMMODESTY IN THE SCRIPTURES.

There are parts of the Bible which we would not choose to read before others, or to hear read. They relate to things which, it is commanded, should "not be named among you, as becometh saints." These things, however, enter deeply into human character and conduct ; and a revelation to man, as he is, which should omit to deal plainly and faithfully with regard to these things, would be deemed deficient. As to their disparagement of the Bible as the word of God, a good and sufficient answer was given by a late distinguished and excellent civilian and Christian,* who mentioned it himself to the writer. Falling into religious conversation with the driver of a vehicle in which he was riding, the man objected to the Bible as containing things which he would be ashamed to read before his family ; therefore he argued that God could not be its author.

Our friend asked him if he would think it proper, and would be willing, to uncover his feet and sit with them naked before his family. The man promptly said, No. "Then," said our friend, "God did not make your feet!"

The suitability of a thing to be read or rehearsed on any and every occasion, is not the test of its truth and propriety, nor of its divine origin. Other uses, of vast importance, may be effected by it. Some of our laws cannot be read in a family.

Solomon's Song is the subject of great animadversion with many, of great difficulty with others, and indeed there are few who are not, in some way, perplexed by it. Several

* Hon. Simon Greenleaf, late Professor of Law, Harvard University.

things are to be considered. It was in the canon at the time of Christ. Many things in the original are expressed in a less literal manner than in our translation. Mixed society did not and does not prevail in Oriental countries. Eastern nations have not the same modes and standards of taste and manners with people in other latitudes; and there is a large part of the world, in those latitudes, who are yet to receive the Bible, and who will not adopt our modes of thought in all respects. In Lane's "Modern Egypt," we have, perhaps, the best explanation of this song. He himself tells us that in listening to the dervishes, as they sang their religious odes for purely spiritual purposes, though couched in the language of love, he was persuaded of the propriety and the divine origin of Solomon's Song, used for the purposes for which it was designed. The most approved explanation of it is, that it is intended to express the love of the soul for God; and if some prefer to say, of the soul for its Redeemer, they are warranted in thus giving it an application to him who is the alpha and omega of Scripture. But after all is said, this is true,—and the remark will apply to other parts of the Bible besides this,—that the different portions of the Bible are not all of them of equal use for edification, nor suitable to be read by all persons at all times. This is but the expression of every reader's experience, and of his history as a reader of the Scriptures.—But when we read the wholesale condemnation of Solomon's Song by some writers, we may profitably consider that there is more than one kind of modesty; and that, in professing much of one sort, we should be careful not to make ourselves liable to the imputation of boldness and effrontery. For, when we repudiate that which Christ did not condemn, and forget that there are other latitudes, not only of the earth's surface, but of Christian experience, than those in which we dwell, we need to be reminded that there is such a thing as prudery as well as virtue.

There must be mysteries not only in the Bible, but in its preparation, if God is the author of it. Some things which the Bible clearly exhibits as peculiar to the manner of its composition, we cannot wholly account for to the satisfaction of one another. We should all have arranged some things differently, or should have omitted some things, or have said less, or more, about them. He who finds and acknowledges no difficulties in the subject of inspiration, has something yet to learn. Far better is it to say to certain questions, "I do not know," than to ask those questions with a contemptuous feeling, and to hear such an answer with an air of triumph.

Some tell us that if we will abandon the doctrine of plenary inspiration, all the difficulties on the subject of inspiration will vanish. They are mistaken, and in the same ways as when they tell us that if we will give up the doctrine of the Trinity, we shall have no difficulty with the person and character of Christ. But the doctrine of two natures in Christ explains to us all the facts relating to him, which, otherwise, are greater mysteries even than the Trinity. So it is with plenary inspiration. The highest ground here is the easiest to maintain.

DIFFICULTIES OF DEISM. — INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

Here is a book composed of parts written at various times during a period of several thousand years, by about forty men, of every variety of tastes, talents, and occupations. Yet the book is one in its purpose and influence, all parts of it conspiring to confirm, and to fulfil, one the other. Was there no guiding, superintending influence from on high directing the composition of these books? Did men without any more divine aid than Cicero, or Franklin, throw out these writings so connected in their design that they could be

gathered into one volume without discordance in their statements, or discrepancies in their moral and religious opinions? Then we might believe that the different parts of an organ were made at different times during several thousand years, by men who had no design to make a complete instrument; but one made a pipe, another a stop, the other a key, at random; but the keys, pipes, and stops, being brought together, were found to be exactly fitted to each other — the keys all level, the pipes proportioned and voiced, the stops with their couplings; and the first time the instrument was played, it was in tune, and has been so ever since.

Here is a book written, in part, by herdsmen and fishermen, the parts which they wrote, as well as the others written by kings and prophets, having a style which belongs to no other writings. There is something in the language of the Bible which affects every mind unlike any other language. Let a secular orator quote a passage of Scripture: what force it gives to speech! and how entirely different is its effect, in every thing, from his own style, even though he be the most eloquent of men! No wonder that the human mind, weighing and pondering the words of different writings claiming to be inspired, sifted out those which were uninspired, and gave, at last, its irrevocable suffrage to those which we hold to be of divine origin. When we compare the books of the Apocrypha¹ and the Canon, we are not surprised that the common mind retired from such pastures and streams as the “Wisdom of Solomon” and “Ecclesiasticus,” to the Book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Indeed, the only way in which it can be explained that some uninspired writings had power so long to maintain a place so near the sacred Scriptures is, that the common people, who have always been the true umpires in

¹ APOCRAPHA — *things not made public, or sanctioned*; — from a Greek word, *to conceal*.

things pertaining to the human conscience and heart, had not had familiar possession and use of the religious scriptures. Moses had, in every synagogue, them that read him on the Sabbath days; but the press and Bible societies had not given the records of religion to every one who would reach forth a hand to take them. Hence it required longer time for writings which, though of good moral effect, were not inspired, to find their relative places in the judgments of mankind. But there must have been, there must be, an invincible conviction in the minds of men with regard to a supernaturalness in certain writings, that other writings, equally good in their purpose, and as unexceptionable in their effect, were entirely set aside, and became discredited. This is a strong proof of the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures. For if, as some say, every thing wise and good is inspired, we cannot account for it that large passages by the Son of Sirach, for example, should have been rejected by the concurrent feelings of believers, not long after they were written, as not worthy to be ranked with other writings whose authors were, nevertheless, men of like passions with their contemporaries. If the intrinsic goodness and truthfulness of a writing constitutes inspiration, we cannot account for the place which the sacred Scriptures have taken and held, invested as they are with a sanctity which no *Paradise Lost*, or *Pilgrim's Progress*, or *Olney Hymns* of Cowper and Newton, have been able to acquire.

JEALOUSY OF OUR REVERENCE FOR THE BIBLE.

But there are those who are jealous of this sanctity; and they regard it and speak of it as an unenlightened superstition. There is too much blind reverence, they think and say, for the Bible. It is undoubtedly the best of books; but they pray us to be more discriminating in speaking of it, and not

to let our feelings towards it approach so near to worship, that we cannot endure to have it spoken of as sharing in the infirmities of all things of human mould. They say, We truly wish that the Bible were an infallible guide, it would be so comforting and safe to feel that every thing in its pages is infallibly right and true. But alas! the discrepancies of the writers, and the errors of copyists, the mutilation of texts, and "the hundred thousand various readings," make it appear no less than presumption, if not effrontery, or, to say the least, it is fanaticism, to claim infallibility for such a book.

We reply to them that every thing which is essential to the knowledge of God and salvation is essentially the same in the earliest and the latest copies of the Scriptures. Errors of translation, and mistakes of copyists, and it may be, here and there, fraud, have marred the literal accuracy of the original in places some of which are greatly disputed, and others are generally acknowledged to be wrong.

We are asked, Is all which is within the covers of the Bible inspired? Is that book, in the sense of every thing which it contains, "the word of God"? They who ask such questions are, some of them, well acquainted with the discussions on the subject of "Personal Identity." How far may a house be altered, even allowing it is for the worse, and yet be the same house? or, May a vehicle be honestly sold as the manufacture of a distinguished builder, when a new and crooked spoke has been inserted by another hand, or a bolt with a head not uniform with the other bolts; or a lost curtain has been replaced by another maker?

We would none of us feel unwilling to buy a "Guido" or a "Titian," for knowing that a mutilated finger has been painted with a modern brush. But, Is that a real "Titian," one may say, with its mutilation? Here is the written evidence; the authenticity is capable of demonstration; the

changes in the piece are all manifest to a practised eye ; the picture, with all its injuries, is a "Titian ;" and, with far less essential damage than such a picture is supposed to have received, the Bible is, in the same sense, the same identical "word of God" as it was from the beginning. We maintain this on those principles of personal identity which are every where received and acted upon by mankind. Assertions to the contrary have been abundantly refuted by biblical critics, who have patiently taken up and examined each case in which the text of Scripture has received injury. Let no believer in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, especially let not young men, (who are prone to regard such appeals,) be afraid, when the inspiration of the Bible is assailed by those who make claims to freedom from credulity. In examining their writings during the preparation of these pages, the impression has been deepened that none are less free from credulity than they. While they promise you liberty, they themselves show that there is a fanaticism of unbelief, which is not equalled by any alleged superstitions which they so much dread.

We have reason to complain of some who profess to have a high regard for the Bible, and yet endeavor to lessen the popular reverence for the book. We look upon them as the very worst enemies which the Bible has ever had to encounter ; for they make great protestations of regard for the Bible, only they ' would not have the people receive it with such awe and idolatrous reverence.' But they well know that the line between faith and superstition in every human mind is movable, and it is impossible to fix it ; that reverence lies hard on the border of enthusiasm, and no philosopher, certainly no philanthropist, will venture to prescribe the demarcation. Sometimes we feel towards such men as a child would feel towards an apparently friendly man who should say, "I would not have you abate any thing of your reasonable love for your father's

or mother's memory; but be truthful and discriminating in your judgment of their character: you may not be aware that some who knew them best perceived that they had their failings; indeed, in an acquaintance with them of fifty years, several candid persons, who really loved and respected your parents, saw evidences of human imperfection in them, and were led to say, Are these persons really such saints as their pious children regard them? Are they worthy of all this indiscriminate —?" But a child's agony would by this time be more than his civility could control, and this imitator of him, who, in paradise, was found, "like a toad," at the ear of Eve, and poisoned her dreams, would, in some cases, receive, and in all cases would richly merit, summary leave to depart. The illustration will not hold good in every particular; for we do not admit that the Bible is intrinsically imperfect, — in the same sense that the best of men are imperfect. "I know," says the child to himself, "that my parents walked before me in uprightness; they were honest, virtuous, sincere, without guile, generous, unsuspecting; but withal, they met with tribulation, and injuries from open foes and pretended friends; without a constant miracle, they could not have passed through such things, in such a world as this, without contracting some injury."

So we feel towards the word of God. In such a world as this, and with such fearful treatment as it has met with, nothing but a standing miracle could have preserved the Bible from certain injuries. It is an interesting question, How far shall He who does not interpose to prevent fire from burning the flesh of a good man, work a constant miracle, to keep a book, transcribed, translated, so many times as the Bible has been, from mutilation? It is injured enough to vindicate the one great impartial law of providence towards the evil and the good; it is not injured so as to affect, in the least degree,

its credibility. The injuries which it has received are far less, in every sense, than some would make us feel them to be. As it regards their spiritual effect, they are no more than the tarnish which may have happened to the ark of the covenant, the mildew which gathered upon the folded curtains of the tabernacle in its removal from place to place, or the dust and cobwebs which may have eluded the Levite's eye and care on the wings of the cherubim. Take the Bible to a sick bed, to a funeral, to the cell of the condemned ; open it in the family, in the place of secret prayer, at an ordination, a social gathering, or where two or three are met in Christ's name ; and what listener or reader will be made to feel that it is any less the word of God, to the conscience and heart, than though the original manuscripts of the Bible were produced ? And yet there are, by actual count, as Kinnicott and De Rossi tell us, more than eight hundred thousand various readings as to the Hebrew consonants, in different copies of the Hebrew Scriptures. But they are generally of no more importance than our different spellings of *Mohammed*, *Mahomet*, and *Muhamet*. There is not a doctrine, nor a moral precept, in the Bible which is in the least obscured by any of the casualties to which the text of Scripture has been subjected ; no, not one. Though numerical mistakes occur which it is hard to explain, and dates are confused, and names appear, in genealogies, in seeming contradiction, to statements elsewhere, yet the moral impression of every narrative is uninjured. We might challenge the host of ancient and modern unbelievers to produce a single instance in refutation of this statement. All the loud warnings, therefore, against corruptions of Scripture, and all the sleek words of seeming candor, praying for more discrimination in our judgments of the word of God, are not warranted by any real harm which the sacred text has suffered.

It deserves to be said to all who seek to impair the enthusiastic love of the people for their Bible, that they are the worst enemies of mankind. Who are more so? The men who corrupt the word of God by their false doctrines and inventions, may still leave that word to have its proper effect upon the conscience and heart. But he who by any means weakens the authority of the Bible, as a supernatural revelation, takes a risk for which no reflecting person would be the underwriter for the wealth of the world.

What possible good these men really believe that they accomplish, it is hard to say. It may truly be said of them to the humble, devout believers, "There be some that trouble you." They love to arrest a cup of cold water on its way to a thirsty soul, and compel us to look through their microscope, and see the animalcules which seem to make the element alive. "And now," they seem to say, "you will drink with some scientific knowledge of what you are about to swallow. Knowledge is never hurtful; ignorance is not the mother of devotion; always remember when you drink that there is no such thing as pure water." If we remonstrate at this, then we are "bigoted," "illiberal," "enemies of science;" we "cherish ignorance," we "foster a blind attachment to old things."

Let us suppose that some speculative, experimenting, or malevolent, or trifling hand could disturb that mysterious power of magnetism which resides in the north. And now the needles of all the compasses are false guides; every mariner in the dark, watching, by the light in his binnacle, the little trembling finger ordained by a benevolent God to guide him over the deep, sails wrong; and in the morning Old Kinsale is heaped up with wrecks; the Bahama reefs have caught the keels of a fleet; many find themselves in strange ports, far off from their destined places; the explorers, the

surveyors on land, are all at fault ; a vane cannot be set, nor a sundial ; property, happiness, life, beyond computation, are sacrificed. All this would be less than the mischief of disturbing the power which the Bible has upon the hearts and minds of our fellow-men. A man had better be in his grave than to make men lose their implicit faith in the Bible. Call it "scholarship," "literary acumen," "discrimination," "hatred of superstition," or by any other plausible name, — it is, in effect, cruelty ; it carries desolation to the interests of men farther than any other form of infidelity. Every periodical, or column of a newspaper, or pamphlet, which professes to cast an honest doubt upon the inspiration of the Bible, ought to be compassed round with heavy black lines ; the writer or speaker should bow down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother ; his words should falter on his tongue ; his lips should quiver ; "I am sent to thee with heavy tidings," should be his preface and his peroration. Instead of this, what do we find ? Sarcasm, ridicule, insinuations, a titter, pity, a sneer, wonder, amazement, at the intrepidity, or weakness, of those who will persist to regard the Bible, the whole Bible, as the word of God. This is the shape in which deism is now showing itself among us. The battle was formerly on questions of interpretation. Every proof text of every great doctrine of the Bible, especially such as relate to the deity of Christ, has been disputed. Some of them, and the attempts to destroy them, make one think of noble hawsers and chain cables bearing the marks of teeth which nibbled where it was hard to bite. But the supreme deity of Christ, and its kindred doctrines, maintain their hold upon the understanding and heart ; and the most effectual way to impair them would, certainly, now be, to cast suspicion on the book which seems to teach these doctrines. Give us liberty to regard the Bible as imperfectly inspired, and our own tastes and our various disposition to believe

will dictate what doctrines, or precepts, we shall regard as of divine authority. And thus, every man will make his own Bible, as every heathen has his own little god. If one ever hears a religious teacher throw doubts upon the supreme authority of the Scriptures, or detract from their plenary inspiration, he should give no sleep to his eyes or slumber to his eyelids, but deliver himself as a roe from the hunter, and as a bird from the hand of the fowler. Once admit that the Bible is any thing less than "the word of God," and the voice of God no longer speaks to the conscience authoritatively from its pages; but men, fallible while they wrote, have merely given us their best recollections and impressions.

CONFESSION AND TESTIMONY OF THE JEWS TO THEIR BIBLE.

One of the most remarkable things in regard to the Bible is this — that while the Old Testament is to a great extent a record of the sins and follies of the Jewish nation, setting them forth in the most odious light, as a nation of fickle, ungrateful rebels against God, the Jews regard the Old Testament with little less than absolute worship. Here is a singular spectacle — a whole nation binding to them, and wearing, as a diadem of glory, a book which exposes their sins and chastisements before all nations. Were they a humble, pious nation, we might account for this from their humility and godly sorrow. But they are proud and scornful towards all other people. Yet they had kept the Old Testament so pure that Christ did not reprove them for making the least alteration in their sacred canon, nor in the text of Scripture; and to this day their Bible is their glory and joy. It is not usual for men to prize so highly the indictments which are found against them. If the Bible were ordinary histories by uninspired men, like the histories by Herodotus or Josephus, it

could not have acquired such sanctity, and have kept it for so many centuries. He who says that the Bible was written, like all other books, with no supernatural aid and guidance, or superintendence, does not account for this prodigy.

The Pharisees were the Romanists, and the Sadducees were the Protestants, of their day, with regard to the Scriptures. The two sects originated soon after the return from the captivity, the Pharisees being in favor of traditionary additions to the word of God, and the Sadducees being their opponents, not chiefly on the question of "angel or spirit," but, on the subject of the corruptions of Scripture. We have in this a strong warrant for believing that the canon and text of Scripture were watched with jealous care.

"ALL SCRIPTURE GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD."

In the original, this verse reads as follows: "All Scripture given by inspiration of God, and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished to every good work."

The word, *is*, in the first two lines, is not in the Greek. The reader of the English Bible can readily find many a case where the word, *is*, is Italicized, showing that it does not occur in the original, but is supplied by the translator. Now, the question arises, whether it is to be supplied in this case; if not, how shall the verse be rendered?

Some eminent scholars render it thus: "All Scripture given by inspiration of God is also profitable," &c. The learned Greek scholar, Bishop Middleton, says, that the Greek word, *and*, does not allow of this rendering. The more common way of rendering the passage is that adopted in the English Bible, supplying the word *is*, in two places. "All Scrip-

ture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable," &c. Professor Stuart says, "all Scripture" here means, in the original, every constituent part or portion of the Scriptures. The famous De Wette, the foe of supernaturalism, says of the word *theopneustos*, (translated, — "given by inspiration of God,") — "here it means *inspired, durchgeistet*, i. e., animated through and through by the Spirit; *geistvoll*, i. e., full of the Spirit." Looking back, we find that Paul had been speaking to Timothy of "the Holy Scriptures," which "from a child" he had known; of these he speaks when he says, "All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God." Such, in Paul's view, was the Old Testament, with all the books which it now contains.

INCIDENTAL EXPRESSIONS.

"The Scripture cannot be broken."

Such is the declaration of Christ. It is a hard saying for some of his readers. Oftentimes an incidental remark has as much power as a labored argument. It would not be possible to add any thing to the effect of these few words of Christ. He here propounds a general truth; he declares that whatever was within those parchment rolls on which their Scriptures were recorded, was incapable of refutation, and left no room for doubt or cavil.

"Doth GOD take care for oxen? or saith HE it altogether for our sakes?"

Here it is implied that it was God who spoke in the law of Moses.

"Searching what or what manner of time the Spirit which was in them did signify," &c.

Here we see men, under a supernatural guidance, endeavoring to find out the meaning, in some particulars, of that

which they themselves had uttered! "Unto whom it was *revealed* that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you," &c.

"Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his sayings, how shall ye believe my words?"

We have here an indorsement of Moses from the Saviour's own lips! "*He wrote of me.*" Christ is in the pentateuch, therefore. Some cannot find him there. They need the disciples' walk to Emmaus, in which Jesus, "beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

"They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

So spake Abraham to the rich man "in torment." Moses and the prophets are all sufficient, if obeyed, to save a soul from future punishment; and their testimony is such that one reappearing from the dead could add to it nothing effectual.

"We have a more sure word of prophecy."

This is the assertion, respecting the Old Testament, of the apostle Peter, who is here giving precedence to the Old Testament, as a guide, in comparison with all that he saw in the holy mount.

But these will serve for a specimen of the ways in which the inspiration of the Bible is continually taken for granted, or asserted, by the various writers. And yet some say that we set up claims for the Bible which it does not make for itself. If the attentive reader will examine any Epistle, for example, or one of the Gospels, he will be surprised to find how often the divine inspiration of the Scriptures is brought to view.

PRETERNATURAL POWER OF THE BIBLE.

The picture galleries of the old world are full of Scripture scenes. The works of the great masters are scriptural subjects. Those fishermen, those humble "reporters and note takers," as they are called, those careless, unaided evangelists, and the writer of the Acts, have touched the genius of Raphael and Rubens. One of the greatest evidences of power is to awaken great conceptions in other minds. None have done so much for the fine arts as the writers of the Bible. One cannot believe that they were "unaided stenographers," without risking his literary reputation.

The books which the Bible has caused to be written are evidences of its being supernaturally inspired.

The *Paradise Lost* and *Pilgrim's Progress* could not have been written but for the Bible. The literature of the Scriptures, — the books which have been written to illustrate its language and history, as well as its doctrines, is of astonishing extent. In the library of a Theological Seminary containing, perhaps, fifteen thousand volumes, as one looks round on the array of learning and talent and remembers that the Bible gave existence to the greater part of it, he is impressed with the thought that such a book is wholly different from any which men wrote, or could have written, from their own suggestion. We understand the secret of its prolific power by reading such passages as these: —

"The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

"And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord."

"After the death of Moses, the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua."

"When the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge."

“The Lord revealed himself to Samuel.”

“The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind.”

“David, the son of Jesse, said, The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was on my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me.”

“Well spake the Holy Ghost by the mouth of Esaias.”

“The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel.”

“The word of the Lord came unto Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah.”

“God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.”

Remembering that the New Testament records the fulfilment of prophecies, in which the truth of God is involved, we perceive that such a record could not be permitted to be made carelessly, and without divine superintendence. Therefore Christ said to the writers, “The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, shall be in you,” and “will guide you into all truth.” “He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” Surely, then, we must write upon our Bible the words of John in the Revelation: “*These are the true sayings of God.*”

An argument for the inspiration of the Bible may be founded on the actual place which the Scriptures have obtained. For eighteen hundred years, at least, they have been the only guide of generations to heaven. All which they have known of God, and truth, and duty, and future retribution, and the way to be saved, they have derived from the Bible. So it will be till the end of time. May we not confidently say that a book which God foresaw, to say the least, would thus affect the destinies of millions, would not have been permitted to reach the place which it has obtained, unless it had his sanction, and was substantially that which men take it to be—The Word of God? Some one asked Joanna Baillie and Dr. Lushington, when

they were together, "Do you believe in special providence?" "Yes," said one of them, "on great occasions." — Even they could have found such an 'occasion' for divine interposition, in the history of the Bible.

THE ENGLISH BIBLE.

Our present English version of the Bible was made by order of King James of England, and was completed in 1611. Forty-seven of the best scholars and divines were employed. They were divided into six companies, varying from seven to ten men in each. The eighth rule prescribed by the king was, that every man of each company should take the same chapter, or chapters, and having translated them, "all to meet together, to confer what they have done, and agree for their part what shall stand." The result was, that every part of the Bible was considered, first, by each of the translators in the company to which that portion was assigned; then, by that company revising the work of each of their number; then, by every one of the six companies, each company revising the doings of all the rest; and finally, by a committee of revision, consisting of the chief persons of all the companies. There being six companies, each composed of from seven to ten men, it follows that each part of their work was examined at least fourteen times, many parts fifteen, and some seventeen times. These men were eminently good, as well as thoroughly versed in Hebrew and Greek;¹ and we have, in the English tongue, a version of the Holy Scriptures which comes as near to the mind of the Holy Spirit as can be expected in

¹ See an interesting and valuable little work, "*The Translators Revived*," by Rev. A. W. McLure, D. D. New York: Charles Scribner. Also, "*The Mine Explored: A Help to the Reading of the Bible*." American Sunday School Union.

a translation. When we think of the past influence of the Bible on those who use the English tongue, — while some even venture to predict that this is to prevail greatly over other tongues, we cannot doubt that, as the Bible is the gift of God, he would have specially directed the translation of it into a language which was to bear his messages to such a portion of the human family. Its influence on the language itself is wonderful.

INSPIRATION AND ORTHODOXY.

We shall not continue to believe in the deity of Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, nor in the system of truth associated with a belief in their deity, unless we believe in the divine and plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. A belief in the doctrine of the Trinity is generally accompanied with an acknowledgment of the Bible as wholly inspired; and the rejection of the plenary inspiration of the Bible is generally followed by a disbelief of the Trinity. Just before the walls of Jerusalem were carried by the Roman arms, it is said that a voice was heard in the Holy of Holies, saying, "Let us go hence." Begin to invade the defences which a belief in the inspiration of the Scriptures throws around the Bible, and the Father, Son, and Spirit will, in effect, say, Let us go hence. We may search for them with all candor and supposed willingness to believe, but we shall not find them there.

There are, in some minds, honest doubts respecting the genuineness of particular books, or portions of books. But this, and all the questions which may divide good men, are different from recognizing no inspired revelation, or from rejecting the Bible as being the word of God.

There is no certain foothold for faith the moment that we abandon a belief in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. Unless we admit that, in composing the Bible, the writers were specially aided, guided, superintended by God, so that

the Scriptures are the word of the Lord, and of supreme authority, of essential accuracy, — unless we have a tribunal before which reason must bow implicitly, and, judging by the ordinary proofs that a thing is revealed, receive the revelation without cavil, — we are at once without any safe guide to faith or practice; we may believe any thing or nothing, as our depraved and deceitful hearts may choose. If a certain illustration does not happen to suit our taste, — “The writer was an uninspired man, and followed the suggestions of his own fancy.” Does an argument press us too closely, — “Great allowance must be made for Oriental exaggeration.” Is a certain truth inconsistent with our wishes, — “Our reason is as competent as that of Matthew or Peter.” Is an assertion of Christ too solemn, too fearful, — “Mark may have taken notes inaccurately, or lost some of them, or copied them wrong.” Where are we, then? What a wild, dark, howling ocean is around us! no sun, no star; the chart — who knows if it be all true? The very place upon it where my all is at stake, may be utterly erroneous; and as for the needle, it never had plenary magnetism; and if it had, the compass has been tampered with by so many ignorant hands that it cannot traverse. Here we are on the sea of time, driving out upon the ocean of eternity; and where we shall arrive God only knows. Has God sent me out upon this tremendous voyage, laden with that for which a world might not be given in exchange, and endless consequences depending on my safe arrival, and yet has he provided me with nothing but my poor reason, which never went on such a voyage before? We have been accustomed to believe in the benevolence of God to his creatures; but what do I need more than a perfect, unerring revelation of his will? And see! the ocean is white with sails, all of them tossed, and not comforted. O, send us a chart whose delineations shall be authentic, a compass whose needle shall, by its true magnetic

power, be like the voice of God to my ship, "This is the way; walk ye therein."

Blessed be God, we, who believe in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, have a fulfilment of this prayer. We have such "a sure word of prophecy." No "inaccuracies," "imperfections," "ignorance," "fallibility," of the writers detract in the least from the belief that this Bible is, in its truths and its essential expressions, deserving of the same reverence and submission as though it were written on the throne of God with his own hand, and had been visibly delivered, as the tables of stone were delivered in the presence of more than six hundred thousand witnesses.

THE DIVINE CURSE AGAINST DEISM AND FORGERY.

The "Revelation" by the apostle John was written last of the inspired books, and extends, in its predictions and directions, to the end of time. The impression which it makes upon us is, that it is the close of divine revelations. Now, it is noticeable that, at the close of this last book, there should be written these words: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from these things, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." This looks like a flaming sword turning every way to keep the inspired book from wilful additions and mutilation; and by implication it asserts that revelation is closed.

To this it is replied, that the book of Revelation was as distinct a thing, in its composition, from the rest of the Bible, as Luke's Gospel is from the five books of Moses. If this Reve-

lation happened, in after years, to be bound up with other writings, as men collect "Sermons on the Death of Webster," for example, and bind them in one volume, how absurd to suppose that the last paragraph in the last sermon of that volume could, in any way, have reference to the whole volume!

But some think that there was a providential design in causing the Book of Revelation to be written last, and in so directing affairs that it should stand as the last book of the Bible. Therefore they say, that the caution and threatening at the close of this book virtually apply to the whole Bible.

At the end of certain private grounds which terminate in an angle where two roads meet, we find the following conspicuous notice: "All persons trespassing upon these grounds will be dealt with according to law." The grounds of this owner are known to extend an eighth of a mile; but they are divided into orchard, pasture, and fields for tillage. Stone walls separate them.

Certain men are overheard, near the orchard, debating whether the notice at the end of the farm is designed to protect the whole of the premises, or merely the pasture land at the angle where the farm ends. Stone walls, it is argued, separate the piece in which the notice stands, from the other portions. Besides, they distinctly remember that the owner came into possession of these several portions of his estate at times considerably distant from each other. One says that he is sure of this; for he has examined the registry of deeds on this very point. Had the owner enclosed the whole property at one and the same time with one wall, they argue that there could be no question how much the warning was intended to protect; but they conclude that if trespassers poach on the hill, or take any thing in the fields, they are beyond the limits which the cautionary sign-board was meant to cover, notwithstanding all the premises belong to one man.

That fearful curse against those who tamper with the book to which it is appended, occurring at the very close of Scripture, raises one of those questions which no arguments can determine, but which every one is disposed to answer according to the amount of faith which he may have in the Bible as an inspired book. Some regard it as a literary accident, that those words stand where they do. Others cannot resist the belief that, virtually, they reach back to the first chapter of Genesis, and that providence intended that they should be a sort of curfew, or a burglar's alarm bell, for the whole Bible. They who wilfully derogate from the Bible, they who knowingly add their inventions to it, are alike the objects of this fearful anathema. — We must not impugn another's motives in his opinions with regard to the Bible. While we may deprecate their influence, we must make allowance to each other for differences of education and association; and we shall do well to bear in mind the words of Jesus himself on this very point: "If any man hear my words and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, it shall judge him in the last day."

It is apparent that the Bible was made for faith. While it is so arranged as to regard our doubts and difficulties, nowhere do we find it suspicious or jealous of artifice and cunning in its readers; but, with consciousness of honesty and truth, it speaks as to those who wish to be informed and instructed.

“WORD OF GOD;”—TWO FOLD APPLICATION OF THE NAME.

There is a happy coincidence, and it is eminently suggestive, in the two great meanings, in the Scriptures, of the term, “The Word of God.”

It belongs by prior right to Him who is before all things, and by whom all things consist; who, "in the beginning, was the Word," and who, in the New Testament, is represented to us as acting with the prerogatives of Deity, in such ways that we may well inquire what is left to the Supreme God, if this Word himself be not God. All things being "made by him and for him," "upholding all things by the word of his power," "Lord of all," the final Judge of men, he may be said to be the acting Deity as to our world; and being, as he surely is, the exponent of the Godhead, its revealer, its great manifestation, he is appropriately called "The Word,"—for the reason, perhaps, that a *word* is the exponent of the secret thought, the enunciation of the will, the executive act of the reason.

We also apply the term, *word of God*, to the things which holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, and which were committed to writing. One of the most unworthy efforts of modern insidious jealousy of the Bible is, to destroy its commonly received title, "the word of God." If Jesus Christ sanctioned the Old Testament as a divine guide, it is as much "the word of God" as certain ten paragraphs inscribed on two tablets are "the law of God." Peter says, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." This is a plain reference to Holy Scripture. He does not mean, of course, that every religious teacher shall imitate the voices and modes of utterance by which God spake, but conform his teachings to the things uttered; and these things are as properly called "the word of God" as a certain book is called "Speeches." Would "oracles" be more agreeable to those who wish to disfranchise the Bible of its old name? But this is nearly synonymous with "word of God." To the Jews, Paul says, "were committed *the oracles of God*;" they "received the *lively oracles*, to give unto us," evidently in a written form. "The first principles of *the oracles of God*,"

are spoken of, intimating some systematized, codified records; and we are told to speak according to them. If the Scriptures be not worthy to be called "the word of God," let it be proved; but if they are, the exception which is taken by some to the name, is whimsical; an exaggerated idea of the "corruptions of Scripture," so called, infests the imagination; and the best cure is, to let the word of Christ dwell in us so richly that we shall cease to dwell unduly on the literary imperfections which, after all, cannot mar its original purity.

Our Redeemer and our Bible, then, are connected together by a term which illustrates and enhances the character of each, by the mutual reflection of their attributes and object; the Bible, with its blending of divine and human characteristics, symbolizing Him that was from the beginning—the Word of life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; and in like manner, the Word made flesh is an impressive illustration, in one important respect, of that other word, the Bible. For of Him the prophet says, "He shall grow up as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground; he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty in him that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men." Now, the natural heart of man is sometimes offended because such a book as the Bible professes to be, should have so much that is human about it; come into existence, in its various parts, so incidentally, and almost accidentally; be, for some time, in many portions of it, doubtfully received; and afterwards be disputed as to its claims; and at last be subjected to such accidents of translation, and all the vicissitudes of its long history, that (as it was said of the Messiah, "His visage was marred more than any man's, and his form more than the sons of men,") the "*hundred thousand'd various readings*" which, Gilbert Wakefield says, are connected with its several passages, seem to many a

sufficient reason for rejecting it as a divine book ; and men say to it, as they did among the crowning scenes of redemption to Him who was the Word of God, " Save thyself ! " — imputing injury and the seeming absence of divine interposition to imposture.

But the afflictions of the Bible and their results are, like the scenes of Calvary, among the chief evidences of a divine original. Notwithstanding the " hundred thousand various readings," the received meaning of the Bible has been substantially the same from age to age. As the distinct existence of the Jews is a standing confirmation of the truth of Scripture, so the integrity of the word of God, surviving the persecutions, wars, fires, floods, of so many ages, the carelessness and fraud of men, is a standing argument in favor of its divine origin. If God has thus interposed to preserve a book amid such perils, and while it has been the object of human and infernal malice, of mistaken zeal, and the betraying kiss, it is not too much to believe that He interposed in its composition. The various alterations and the partial injuries which it has received, are strong proofs of the protecting care which has watched over it. We are told, we will suppose, that the most perfect steamer which ever floated is now on her way to us from some port in the East Indies. She arrives at one of our docks ; but, as men examine her, some say, " Is this a perfect ship ? Her chimneys are white with dried salt spray ; some of the rigging has been spliced ; some of the spars are strained ; some of the copper is started ; barnacles are on her hull." The reply is, She has come across the ocean. It would not be the identical ship of which we were told, if the sea had not thus marked her.

Does any one say, The Bible has signs of injury upon it ? We answer, It has come to us across the ocean of time ; it has been around the globe ; its " hundred thousand emenda-

tions," trivial or bad, show that the hands of generations have been upon it. Every form of peril has assailed it in ages of darkness and violence; it has been hated, cursed, chained, banished, burned; floods of ungodly men have compassed it about; friends have proposed to leave out one part, enemies have torn out another. But here it is, on its way to the end of time, with its "hundred thousand various readings," uncorrupted in every one of its essential truths. Discoveries in science and history have sometimes cast shadows upon it; astronomy, geology, hieroglyphics, exhumed cities, have made its friends anxious for its credibility; but in every instance, thus far, the shadows have passed away, and left it "forever settled in the heavens." God, who made the sciences, chose, in writing the Bible, to describe natural things according to their universal appearance, not as they literally are. Hence, the Bible will always be true to nature and science, so long as the sun and moon endure. Wonderful book! "God is in the midst of thee; thou shalt not be moved; God shall help thee, and that right early." Thou art that river which is to make the nations glad, till the ocean of eternity drinks up thy stream, and all thy revelations give place to the full vision of God.

Suppose that some time, as you returned to your house, a friend should meet you, and say, The chamber is full of light; I am afraid to go in. You approach, and the impression made upon you is, How dreadful is this place! this is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. Every morning and evening, if not many times a day, you would stand at the door of that chamber, and commune with God. But now, God is in that chamber, though in a different form of manifestation. Where is your Bible? God is in that book, as he is in no other revelation. Perhaps your Bible is outwardly poor, time-worn, and, like Jesus when on earth, has

no form, nor comeliness. Go to that Bible, and open it; a man will seem to be telling some narrative; the Psalmist will be complaining to his harp, or sounding its prophetic strings; but to your conscience, to your heart, if you are still, and listen, a voice will come, like the breathings of the wind,—the voice of the Spirit that breathed inspiration or controlling influence around its every thought,—reminding you of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment, of the love of God, of forgiveness through Christ, of fleeting time, of death, of heaven. The name of a departed parent, brother, sister, companion, child, friend, in it, links it, for you, with heaven. As you come nearer and nearer to the close of life, you will find that its value rises in your esteem and affection. “Bring me the book,” said Sir Walter Scott, on his dying bed. “What book, sir?” said his son-in-law, Mr. Lockhart. “There is only one book, sir!” said that dying man, who, more than any other modern writer, has filled the world with his fame.

When it is daybreak on the sea, the sailor no longer turns his eye to the friendly lighthouse. It has served its purpose for the night, it is eclipsed by the morning, and is withdrawn. “WE HAVE A MORE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY; WHERE-UNTO YE DO WELL THAT YE TAKE HEED, AS UNTO A LIGHT THAT SHINETH IN A DARK PLACE, UNTIL THE DAY DAWN, AND THE DAY-STAR ARISE IN YOUR HEARTS.”

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
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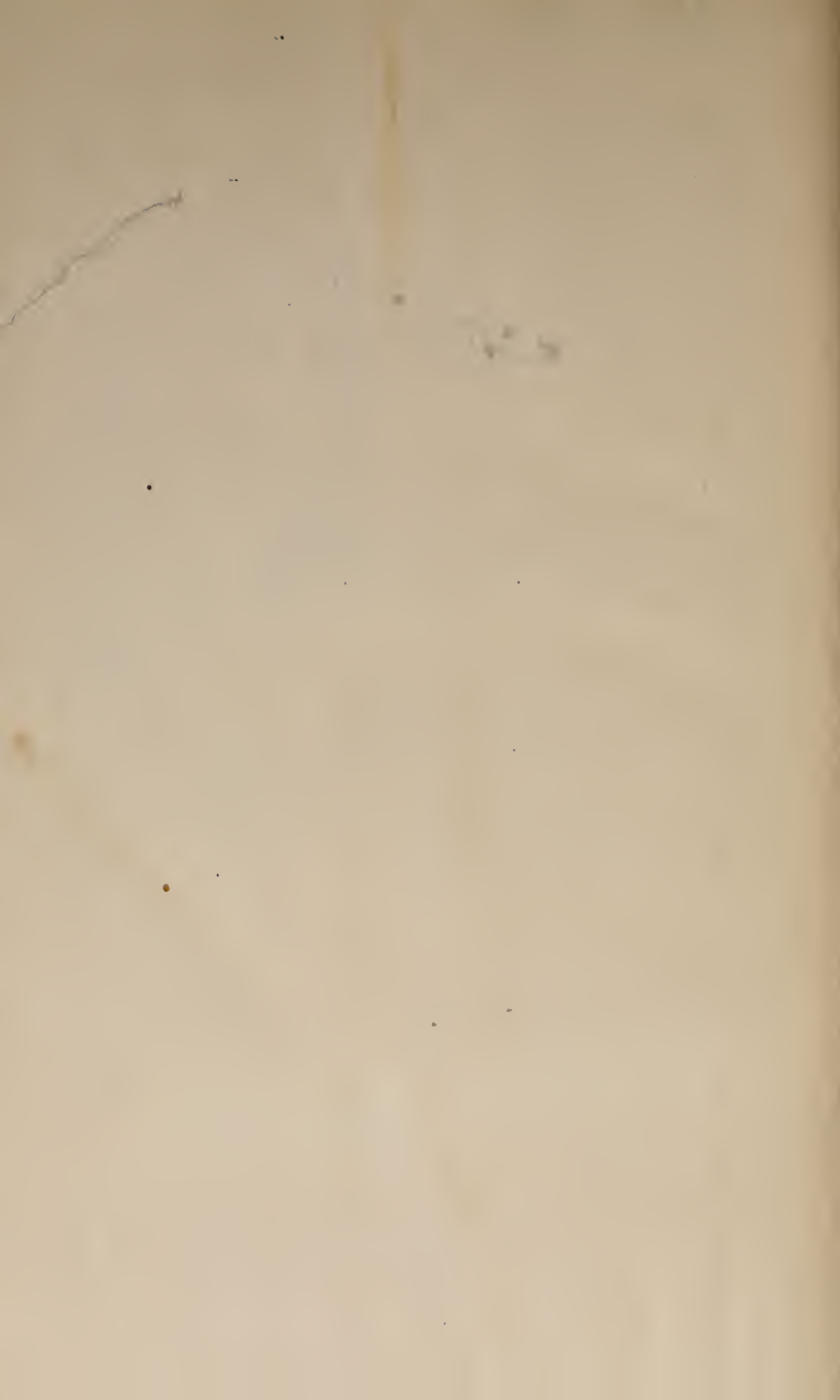
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