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The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF FIRST CORINTHIANS.

I COR. XII. 4-6.

"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of ministrations, and the same Lord. And there are diversities of workings, but the same God, who worketh all things in all" (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

"*Gifts*" emanate from the Holy Spirit, and are vouchsafed to individuals for the furtherance of the well-being of the Church, and the development of the spiritual life.—*Ellicott*. They are the creative powers which God communicates to believers when their new activity expands under the influence of the life of Christ.—*Godet*. The word is only found in St. Paul's Epistles (except 1 Pet. iv. 10), where it occurs sixteen times. In all cases it denotes "a gift emanating from the Holy Ghost, or the free grace of God."—*Ellicott*.

"*The same Spirit*."—That the reference is to the blessed Person of the Holy Ghost, and, in the verses following, to the Son and to the Father, cannot possibly be denied by any consistent interpreter.—*Ellicott*.

"*Ministrations*," "charges or ministries," *i.e.* eternal offices, not like the former, inward aptitudes. Some may be related to the whole Church, like the apostolate, or the office of evangelist; others to a particular community, as the numerous branches of the diaconate.—*Godet*.

The "*workings*" are due to the exercise both of the gifts and the offices. They signify the effects produced either in the world of body or of mind, as often as the gift or office comes into action. Thus in a believer the Holy Spirit has developed the *gift* of preaching. Recognising this gift, the Church has committed to him the preacher's *office*, with a view to the service of Christ. Its *working* or *operation* will be the good discourse delivered by him, and the edification thereby affected in the hearts of his hearers.—*Godet*.

The three words—"gifts," "ministrations," "workings"—denote the gifts regarded from three distinct points of view. As they are supernatural conditions of the human spirit, they are immediate graces of the Spirit of God. As their exercise gives rise to various forms of service in the Church, they have respect to the Head of the Church, and in this relation to the Lord Jesus they are ministrations. As they are *effectual* to do this service, their source is in God. This is the threefold relation to the Church, which God the Father, the

Lord Christ, and the Holy Spirit are elsewhere represented as maintaining. It is in accord with the intrinsic relations of the Divine Persons to one another (Eph. iv. 4; 1 Pet. i. 2).—*Edwards*.

CRITICAL NOTE.

The word *διαίρεσις* (only found in this place of the New Testament) may mean either distributions (*divisiones*, Vulgate), *i.e.* one to one person, and one to another; or, more derivatively, differences (*distinctiones*, Beza), with reference to the difference of the gifts themselves. Owing to the use of the verb, the former meaning is to be preferred.

I have not much doubt that the Apostle uses the word in both meanings. A distribution of gifts involves diversity of gifts.—*Edwards*.

METHODS OF TREATMENT.

I.

THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT.

By the Rev. F. W. Robertson.

The Spirit's operation is either on individuals or on the Church as a whole.

1. *Spiritual gifts on Individuals*.—These gifts are of two kinds, natural and supernatural. Among natural gifts are teaching, healing, the power of government. The doctrine of the Apostle is that these natural, personal endowments are transformed and renovated by the Spirit of a new life in such a way as to become almost new powers, or, as he calls them, gifts of the Spirit. Of supernatural gifts, we find two pre-eminent,—the gift of tongues and of prophecy. The gift of tongues was not the mere faculty of speaking foreign languages, but rather that elevation of aspiration and feeling arising from contact with the Spirit of God, which rendered ordinary forms of speech inadequate. Prophecy was not simply prediction, but the power of stating truth distinctly and forcibly. It was less ecstatic than that of tongues.

These gifts did not ensure infallibility, or prevent disorder and vanity. Therefore Paul established laws of control. The spirits of the prophets must be subject to the prophets. Moreover, the supernatural were not necessarily the most useful gifts. "Five words with the understanding" fulfilled the royal law of love better than "ten thousand words in an unknown tongue."

2. *The Spiritual Unity of the Church*.—"The same Spirit." (1) All real unity is manifold. Sorrow is the same feeling throughout the human race, but one bursts forth into violent lamentations, while another "holds his peace." By one and the

same law lead sinks in water, wood floats on the surface. (2) All living unity is spiritual, not formal; not sameness, but manifoldness. The Apostle illustrates by the members of the body. (3) None but a spiritual unity can preserve the rights both of the individual and the Church. As there is one universe in which each separate star differs from another in glory, so shall there be one Church of God in which a single Spirit prevades each separate soul.

II.

RELIGION v. SCIENCE.

By the late Bishop of Manchester.

“There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;” and the disputes between religion and science arise when the teacher of the one leaves his own gift and sphere of operation for that of the other. There is no article (as Sir James Paget says) of any of the Christian creeds which can be the subject of direct scientific inquiry. On the other hand, the spirit of scientific inquiry, working along its own lines, has rendered distinguished services to the cause of true religion. (1) It is the prevalence of the scientific temper that, more than anything else, has redeemed religion from superstitious corruptions, affecting both faith and practice. (2) The philosopher has taught the religious inquirer the proper frame of mind in which every inquiry must be pursued—namely, not in order to fortify a foregone conclusion, but simply to discover truth. (3) The philosopher has often shown more faith than the theologian in the conviction embodied in the maxim, “*Magna est veritas, et praevalabit.*” He teaches us to believe in the power of truth to maintain itself by its own proper evidence, without extrinsic aid or unnatural alliances.

THOUGHTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

Diversities of Gifts: the same Spirit.

“EVERY man would like to reproduce himself,” was one of Dr. Duncan’s acute sayings, “and so turn God’s beautiful variety into a hideous uniformity.” There was no man whom it would have been harder to reproduce than John Duncan.—*A. Moody Stuart.*

SOME years ago I was with my boy walking the streets of New York. I was pastor of a church at that time in the city. As we came by it, he said, “Is this your church, papa?” And I said, “Yes.” When we walked along out toward the square, he pointed to another church, and he said, “Whose church is that?” “Dr. Hastings’ church.” “Whose church is that?” “Mr. Frothingham’s church.” “Where is God’s church, papa?” That question has stayed with me ever since.—*Lyman Abbott.*

WHO evangelised our ancestors, the Gothic tribes of Northern Europe? It was Ulfilas, an *Arian* bishop. Who established the first missions throughout Central Asia? It was the followers of the once detested Nestorius. Who conveyed the first germs of Christian faith to India and China? It was Francis Xavier, the representative of the Society of Jesuits. Who Christianised Greenland? It was the simple-minded Moravians. Here is diversity of creed enough, and yet the same Spirit wrought with them all.—*Dean Stanley.*

OII, to be like my Lord! Yet must I be
Mine own self too,
And to the nature He bestowed on me
Be frankly true.

The olive fruits not as the clustering vine;
Nor may we get
Scent of the rose or lily from woodbine,
Or violet.

Walter C. Smith.

THERE is a different colour of beauty in different stones that are all of them precious. One man may be burnishing to the sparkle of the diamond, while another is deepening to the glow of the ruby. For this reason there are such different temperaments in Christian character, and varying circumstances in Christian life, that the foundation of the wall of the city may be garnished with all manner of precious stones. . . . It is very beautiful to see how the God, who has bound His world into a grand harmony by its very diversity, has arranged for this same end in His Church by giving the members their different faculties of work—how the pure light that comes from the sun breaks into its separate lines when it touches the palace-house of Christ with its varied cornices and turrets, till every colour lies in tranquil beauty beside its fellow.”—*John Ker.*

UNITY of design amidst variety of form is so conspicuous in the works of Nature that the rudest minds perceive it. Less obvious, but not less real or less prevalent, is a unity of design alongside a variety of function. The same bones in different animals are converted into paddles, wings, legs, and arms. It is indeed wonderful to think that the feeble and sprawling paddles of a newt, the ungainly flippers of a seal, and the long leathery wings of a bat, have all the same elements, bone for bone, with that human hand which is the supple instrument of man’s contrivance, and is alive, even to the finger-tips, with the power of expressing his intellect and his will.—*The Duke of Argyll; The Reign of Law.*

I HAVE heard Mr. Moody relate that when on the service of the Christian Commission, he put his usual question once to an old planter whom he met, “Are you a Christian?” But the planter was deaf, and Mr. Moody was soon shouting the question in his ear, but still ineffectually. Turning to

the negro who had accompanied the old man, he inquired, "Is your master a Christian?" "No, sah, he's a Prisbyterian." Much disconcerted, Mr. Moody sought still to turn the conversation to profit, so, addressing the negro, he said, "Are you a Christian?" "Yes, sah, I'se a Mefodis."—*E. Eggleston; Scribner's Monthly.*

THE propensity to compare is frequently indulged in foolish and injurious ways. It cuts us to the heart when we hear excellent ministers decried, because they are not like certain others. You cannot logically institute comparisons where they do not hold. Rugged Cephas has his place and order, and he is neither better nor worse, higher nor lower in value, than polished Apollos. No one inquires which is the more useful—a needle or a pin, a spade or a hoe, a waggon or a plough; they are designed for different ends,

and answer them well; but they could not exchange places without serious detriment to their usefulness. It is true that A. excels in argumentative power; let him argue, then, for he was made on purpose to convince men's reasons; but because B.'s style is more expository do not despise him, for he was sent not to reason, but to teach. If all the members of the mystical body had the same office and gift, what a wretched malformation it would be; it would hardly be so good as that, for it would not be a formation at all. If all ears, mouths, hands, and feet were turned into eyes, who would hear, eat, grasp, or move? A church with a Luther in every pulpit would be all fist; and with a Calvin to fill every pastorate, she would be all skull. Blessed be God for one Robert Hall; but let the man be whipped who tries in his own person to make a second. Rowland Hill is admirable for once, but it is quite as well that the mould was broken.—*C. H. Spurgeon.*

The Early Christian Writers.

BY THE REV. E. ELMER HARDING, M.A., LICHFIELD.

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