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PIERSON'S PAPERS FOR THINKING PEOPLE.

PAPERS FOR THINKING PEOPLE.

BY

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"THE HEART OF THE GOSPEL,"

"EVANGELISTIC WORK IN PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE,"

"ANSWERED PRAYER," &c., &c.

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PIERSON'S PAPERS FOR THINKING PEOPLE.

No. 1.

The Fool's Creed : Credulity of Incredulity.

THE devil's snare for unwary feet is the fear of being made a dupe. To some faith means credulity—a believer is an ostrich plunging his head into some bush and fancying there is no risk because he can see none. But if some have been duped by believing too much, are not others duped by believing too little? Are not the incredulous sometimes credulous?

An Eastern fable tells of a dervish who was told by a sage that in the bed of a certain stream lay the long-sought "philosopher's stone" that would turn everything to gold. He picked up pebble after pebble, but, finding them worthless, got into the habit of casting them back into the stream; so that when he had actually picked up the treasure he was seeking, he flung that away like the rest, and could never find it again.

Easily to discard a belief is perilous: we may

reject, with much that is worthless, the pearl of great price. Only the flippant fool hastily denies a truth because others hold it. Mr. P. T. Barnum said: "I have during my life seen a good many people humbugged, and have been humbugged myself; but I have noticed that, on the whole, more persons are fooled by believing in nothing than by believing too much." Napoleon said to some of his officers who were freely expressing sceptical opinions: "It seems to me that you make amends for not believing the Bible by believing everything else."

To speak of a sceptic as credulous, or an infidel as believing too much, may sound paradoxical; but the paradox represents a fact. He who doubts, disbelieves, denies, has nevertheless a creed; only it is contrary to what other men believe. Goethe, in *Faust*, makes Mephistopheles describe himself as the "spirit of negation," or general denial. But all denial implies and involves the acceptance of the opposite of that which is denied. While the infidel is demolishing a doctrine—or a creed, which is simply a doctrinal system—he is framing another doctrine, and, in fact, system of doctrine, exactly contrary. The destructive process implies a constructive one, however unconscious and involuntary.

The object of this tract is to call the attention of thinking, reasoning people to this necessary alternative of denial. Faith is scouted as opposed to reason, but infidelity is still more unreasoning and unreasonable. What if one must be more credulous to be a doubter than to be a believer?

In the days of Socrates, Athens was full of false philosophers, known as Sophists—mere rhetoricians who taught young men to use the arts and tricks of rhetoric and logic, so as to plead a cause successfully, speak with equal plausibility on either side of a question, and even make the worse appear the

better reason. The Sophists are not dead. If every plausible statement and argument could be stripped of its rhetorical disguises and traced to its logical conclusion, its absurdity and fallacy would become apparent.

Familiarity with the lives and writings of sceptics and infidels shows that in trying to disbelieve and disprove the Christian religion they fall into the opposite error of embracing opinions harder to hold than those they reject. In running from the credulity of faith they fall into the worse credulity of no faith; in other words, the *credulity of incredulity*.

All *honest* doubt is entitled to respect. Wherever evidence is lacking, it is right to doubt until proof is supplied. No man is called to shut the eyes of his reason and believe blindly. Whitefield used to tell of a collier who was asked what he believed. "What the Church believes," was the answer. "Well, what does the Church believe?" "What I believe." "And what, pray, do you both believe?" "Why, *we both believe the same thing!*" Such faith as that deserves ridicule: its only ground is the authority of "the Church," which is fallible, because composed of fallible men.

But we must beware of intellectual dishonesty. Nothing marks a true man more than a candid mind, that waits for evidence before believing, but welcomes proof and the truth which it establishes, as soon as proper evidence is furnished—a candid mind that turns from no truth because it holds in its hand a scourge of small cords, and that hugs fast no error in doctrine or evil in practice because it affords a pretext for self-indulgence. If the candid sceptic has got into "Doubting Castle," he will not long stay there when the key is found by which he may unlock the doors and escape, nor will he flee from the light when his Bastile of unbelief has been destroyed.

I. How credulous must they be who *deny to the universe a Creator!*

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” That is the fool’s creed. But is it not a very hard creed to believe? All religious faith, however simple and primitive, is based on the belief in the existence of God: without that there is nothing on which any other belief can rest; the granite bed-rock of all faith is gone.

No fables or myths of the ancients are so incredible, said Francis Bacon, as that this universal frame is without mind;

“For every house is builded by some one;
But He that built all things is God.”

We find about us a material world. We must account for it. Only two theories are possible: the eternity of matter and the eternity of a creator. The atheist holds that matter is eternal, and so needed no maker. But matter is itself a compound, and no compound is eternal. He is driven therefore to assert the eternity of the *elements* of which matter is composed. But some way is needed to account for the combination and composition of those atoms into forms so marvelous for variety and beauty. With Darwin’s disciples “evolution is proposed in place of creation,” and “spontaneous generation,” “natural selection” and “survival of the fittest” in place of the divine origin of life, intelligent design and creative purpose.

Which opinion does it require the more credulity to accept? The Christian believer looks at this universal house, and says, It argues not only a builder, but an architect. Power put it together and wisdom planned it. It bears throughout marks of design and purpose. The materials of the structure are carefully chosen, curiously combined, skilfully adapted and adjusted. This universe is thought crystalized, and

thought implies a thinker ; it is design materialized, and design implies a designer.

But, says the atheist, "We have no need of God. Matter always was. The house built itself. The atoms have power of self-generation, self-determination and self-regulation. What is called 'design' is simply nature working according to the law of accommodation, adaptation to environment!" As Christlieb says, "This is beginning without a beginning." Dead matter is "endowed with all the promise and potency of life." The crystal, the marvel of the mineral world, and the cell, the miracle of the vegetable and animal world, are made to have all the essential attributes of God. Chance is the creator. While an intelligent, personal God is denied, that which lacks both intelligence and personality is invested with all the qualities of deity. Matter, Force, Law, Chance, or something else that has no name, is elevated to the throne of the universe.

It is an axiom that nothing can be imparted to a work that is not first in the workman, or to a product that is not in the producer. Every effect implies not only a cause, but a cause adequate to produce the effect. Design and purpose are stamped on every part of this universal frame ; but design and purpose are the products and proofs of intelligence ; how, then, can the producing cause be without intelligence? There is the whole argument in a nutshell, and it has never yet been satisfactorily met and answered.

A few familiar examples of design in the great world of nature may be given.

From the animal kingdom we select the *camel*. This animal seems to have been the first used in the service of man, and to have been made for service where not even the ass, which alone compares with it for patient endurance of fatigue and privation, could

be of use. In arid plains, in dreary deserts, where only stunted, acrid and bitter herbs grow, and where water is found only in rare cases, there the camel may march heavily loaded, and for days and weeks survive without food or water. He is, to the natives of these wilds, the one indispensable possession, and is called, poetically, "the ship of the desert."

No more complete instance of design with relation to human wants can be found in the whole realm of nature. No part of the camel's structure, from the bony framework of his awkward skeleton to the external hair of his coat, could be left out without essential defect or could be changed with improvement, or, indeed, without injury to the creature's general adaptability to man's need. Nay, his seeming defects or deformities are also absolutely necessary to his well-being and his intended service.

Even the hump and the callosities, which at first seem positive disfigurements, become beauties when intelligent design is their artistic interpreter. There are seven callosities upon which the pressure of the body's weight and the load on the back must be thrown when the animal kneels and rises up. Born as the camel is for the desert, these callosities keep the skin from cracking and becoming irritated and sore, when the parts which they thus protect rest heavily upon the coarse and burning sands. Some have accounted for these huge corns by the usage to which the beast is subjected; but the flaw in this philosophy is found in the fact that these callosities have been observed on the *newly-born camel*. However developed afterward, they exist from the first.

Again, the strong, nipper-like upper incisor teeth are exactly fitted to crop desert pasturage, cutting through the tough plants and dry shrubs that are found here and there on those wild wastes. The nostrils are so constructed that when the stifling

sandstorm sweeps over the desert, the camel can effectually close them and exclude the suffocating dust. The elastic cushions that line the spreading feet with pads help him to "float" rather than step, moving easily and noiselessly, as if shod with rubber sandals; and whether the path lies over sand or rock or paved stones, no sound of the footfall of those spongy feet is heard.

Again, the structure of the stomach is a marvel of design. It not only enables him to digest the coarsest vegetable tissues, but it makes them agreeable to his taste, so that he prefers, to the finest and most delicate pasture, plants which the horse would not touch; and should even this hard fare be lacking, the hump secretes a store of gelatinous fat, which, taken up and absorbed by the digestive system, sustains the beast until an oasis is reached. As he carries his own supply of provisions for an emergency, so he has his own reservoir of water. A cavity peculiar to the camel, and which has been inaccurately called a "fifth stomach," is not only used as a receptacle of remasticated food, but contains a system or series of cells fitted to contain water, and most curiously provided with a reticulated apparatus for closing the cells while the dry food is in the water-bag. From this false stomach, which thus holds water as well as undigested food, Captain Lyon saw water drawn out of the belly of a dead camel, sufficient to quench the thirst of an almost perishing caravan.

Again, the very build of the Arabian camel shows that he was meant for burden and not for draught. The deep chest and strong fore legs enable him to carry easily the heavy load placed on them, but the narrow loins and the long, ungainly hind legs do not supply the energy and force necessary for the strain of dragging heavy wagons or weights. There is in the hind legs an additional joint, by which he is enabled

to kneel down and assume the exact posture suitable for receiving burdens on his back, and readily rising with them when the caravan marches.

Such are a few of the many marks of "destiny" in this "ship of the desert." Who so adapted this beast of burden for the exact life he is to lead, and impressed this stamp of design on the camel's new-born foal? Admit an intelligent Creator, and the problem presents no difficulty; but deny a Creator, and to all this curious maze we have no clew. Accident must be left to account for a perfection of adaptation that is one of Nature's miracles. Chance will not answer as a solution. As Rufus Choate said, this is "like dropping the Greek alphabet and expecting to pick up the Iliad."

But we are told that animals are themselves intelligent, and can adapt themselves to their "environment." We do not stop to discuss this unsatisfactory philosophy, that leaves unexplained the original mystery of all—how the *first* camel came to form himself for such a destiny, and whence came, in a beast, a discrimination and invention so marvellous. But we meet the objector on his own ground, and point to another instance of design where no intelligence, animal or human, can have had any room for play.

We all know that there is a physical "law" that bodies dilate and expand under the action of heat, and contract under the influence of cold. This law is so uniform and invariable that the *only known exception is that of water*. If this liquid be heated to the boiling point, it will expand; if then it be allowed to cool, it will steadily contract in bulk until it attains the temperature of 40° Fahr., at which point it attains its maximum density. Now, if the temperature continues to diminish, instead of contracting, the water now begins *steadily to dilate*, until it attains the freezing-point, 32° Fahr., and if it be cooled below

this point without freezing, by avoiding agitation it will still continue to expand.* So marked is this dilating tendency of freezing water that it will often burst the strongest vessel.

Here is a singular and marked exception to an otherwise uniform law. The importance of the exception appears if we reflect upon what would be the disastrous result should the uniformity of this law still obtain. The ice of lakes and rivers, instead of floating on their surface, would sink to the bottom : every successive layer that formed would sink, and all bodies of water would be turned into a frozen mass, which no summer would be long enough, and no sun hot enough, to melt. All the life in the streams would be destroyed and navigation would become impossible.

No intelligence in the water, certainly, can account for this exception to the rule. For once, at least, natural selection, survival of the fittest, adaptation to environment, are wholly unequal to the task of solving the problem. There is no reason why water should not continue to contract beyond 40° , and thus form ice, which would be denser and heavier than the water—absolutely *no reason except that the Creator so designed it*, and, seeing that such a result would entail calamity, invaded the uniformity of his law and ordained this exception, that below a certain temperature the contraction should be displaced by expansion ; and so the ice sheets our streams with crystal, and, being lighter than water, floats upon it, protecting it from the extreme influence of winter's rigorous rule, and guarding both vegetable and animal life beneath.

But *man* is to be accounted for. He has something in common with matter and something in common with mind. The Bible teaches that God made him

* Dr. Golding Bird.

out of the same material as the earth on which he treads—a Bible statement which science has waited nearly six thousand years to be able to verify ; and that into his material body God breathed something higher—a life principle like his own—and so man became a living soul. That seems a rational way of accounting for man.

But the infidel, fearing to be credulous, casts away this doctrine of man's origin. Man is a developed monkey. But the monkey must be accounted for ; well, he came from—a codfish, and the codfish from the oyster ; and the oyster ? Ah, that came from the original germ, *protoplasm* ! And protoplasm ? That was spontanconsly generated ! It came from—itself ! And now it is all plain. The chain has been traced, link by link, to the last, and, though that link has no staple or fastening anywhere, it matters not. Somehow the chain is hung somewhere. We have opened the Japanese egg and found another ; within that another and another ; and when we reach the last we account for it *by its being inside the other* ! It is an evolution ! but how came all this to be evolved unless something was first involved ? Those eggs cannot be taken out of the larger unless first put into it. Granting the evolution, who or what determined that out of that original germ of protoplasm there should develop an oyster, a fish, a monkey, a man ? and who decreed which of all these should prove the off-spring of that original germ ?

This is a novel way of solving a difficulty. We account for one mystery by another just before it ; and all is finally solved and settled by a difficulty that is the greatest of all. Alexander cut the Gordian knot that he had not the skill, patience, or strength to untie. The sceptic, impatient at the mysteries of a universe without a Creator, thinks he has solved one difficulty by creating another, or else, with one sharp blow of

denial, cuts the knot which his philosophy never could untie.

The modern watchword of sceptical science is "development." Everything "develops." But what is development? In the sense of physical science it is the change from the germinal or embryo state to that of maturity, growth, increase. It must be confessed that at times the process of development seems to incorporate somewhat that is not in the germ. But passing that by, how shall we account for the germ, the first germ, and especially for the qualities, capacities, of the germ that make such development possible? Careful examination shows the rudimentary oak in the acorn and the eaglet in the egg. Here, before development begins, the product of development is substantially, essentially, present. We have traced an effect to its cause, but the cause is itself an effect. We still need a *first* cause—a final cause—a Creator.

Evolution may be a pretty name for a poetic theory, but there are some hard nuts it does not crack. There are great gaps in creation which it cannot span or bridge, such as the *beginning* of life, of consciousness, of intelligence, of voluntary action and of conscience or moral obligation. Evolution is, by the advocates of the theory themselves, admitted to be at best only a working basis, a mere hypothesis, and, if capable of proof, yet unproven. It is possible that he who throws away the Christian doctrine of man's direct creation by almighty power may hastily accept a theory encumbered with even more mystery and difficulty.

There are at least seven great questions which, so far, this theory has failed to answer, every one of which the Bible account of creation satisfactorily and consistently solves. These seven inquiries are as follows:—

1. How shall we account for the *origin of all created*

things? The owl comes from the egg and the egg from the owl, but where did the first egg or the first owl come from? Who or what mysterious creative force or agency started this grand series of causes and effects? Grant a primeval germ of protoplasm; whence came the protoplasm? If electricity first vitalized dead, gelatinous matter, whence came the dead matter and whence the vital, vitalizing current?

2. How shall we account for the *fact of life*? It cannot be the product of organization, for it is found to precede and to guide organization.

3. How shall we account for *conscious life*? If the vegetable was developed into the animal, how came the new factors of intelligence, consciousness, will, into the economy of nature? There is manifestly a leap, a vast stride, from the highest forms of vegetable life to the lowest form of animal.

4. How shall we account for *intellect*, for memory, imagination, reason, understanding? Materialism may make thought but a product of brain-cells, but by what law those brain-cells produce such a marvellous "secretion" is still left a mystery. Between the shrinking of a sensitive plant or the closing of the mouth of a carnivorous plant, and the process by which a poem is evolved or an oration is conceived or a vision of beauty is formed, there is simply the distance of infinity. To account for this difference by "development" is like the attempt to bridge the distance from the earth to Sirius by a mathematical line which is not an entity, but only an idea or a conception of extension in one direction.

5. How shall we account for *moral obligation*, that sense of the soul keener and more wonderful than even vision? Kant confessed that two things overwhelmed him with awe: one, the star-sown "deeps of space"; the other, the unfathomable "gulf between

right and wrong." Whence came conscience, that inward monitor that judges of all moral questions and compels man to consider? And how comes it that animals seem to have no moral sense apart from the memory of a whipping for some like offence previously committed?

6. Whence comes the *capacity of education* observable only in man? Animals like the horse or dog may be trained to a certain point, but no further; but where the education of the animal stops, there only begins the education of man, the possibilities of whose mental and moral development have never been reached nor even imagined. Dr. Richards' famous "oyster boy" for years lived a life as dull and unintelligent as a bivalve, but was successfully trained to a high type of manhood. Now, if man came from the oyster, how and where did the oyster take on such new and grand possibilities?

7. How shall we account for *rational speech*—not the mere faculty of communication which all animals appear in some measure to possess—but the power to use language with force, elegance, eloquence? Hobbes expressed the great difference between man and animals by two words—*rationale et orationale*"—reason and speech.

These are not the only difficulties which beset the development theory. Nature abhors hybrids, and all mongrel mixtures speedily run out. The very fertility, in offspring, of the animal race and the human race argues against the supposition that accounts for sundry varieties by combinations of existing species, and for species by combinations and crossings of existing genera, etc. Moreover, this theory of development contradicts facts. Wide observation shows that what is left to itself, instead of increasing, decreases; instead of developing, degenerates. Certain wild plants under cultivation develop varieties, but left

alone the varieties disappear, and revert to the original wild species. The *Brassica* plant by careful cutting develops cauliflower, cabbage, cresses, etc., but left to itself, instead of multiplying still further varieties, the existing varieties soon cease to be.

Infidels are credulous enough to believe that man came from the lowest order of animal or even vegetable life, and gradually ascended to his present high dignity by that mysterious staircase of "development," although, as has been said, "there is a thousand times as much evidence that the monkey is a degenerate man as there is that man is a regenerate monkey, developed and improved." Hugh Miller said of the evolution of man from the ape, "It takes a good deal of believing to believe *that!*" Coleridge said of the theory of the simian origin of the race, "Look at that head of Clive by Chantrey! Are that forehead, that nose, those temples and that chin akin to the monkey tribe? No, no! To a man of sensibility no argument could disprove the bestial theory so convincingly as a quiet contemplation of that fine bust." After seeking to look at truth with clear and unprejudiced mind and through clear and colourless media, we feel that our own bodies are the overwhelming proof of divine intelligence, our own minds, of divine personality, and our own experience and observation, of divine providence.

II. Then there is the *word of God*. What shall we do with the Bible? If that be the Word of God, salvation hangs on faith. But how can it be the mere work and word of man? It claims to bear on its face the seal and signature of God in prophecy, and hence holds every man responsible for rejecting its truths, because if he will he can read there the handwriting of God.

What is this *seal of prophecy* that so strongly marks the Bible as the word of God? We pass by all other

predictions and take those only that centre in Christ. Three hundred and thirty-three separate prophecies meet in Jesus of Nazareth, and in him alone. They foretell his family line, his birth, its place, its date; they outline his life, character, career, sufferings, death, burial, resurrection; nay, they descend to details so minute as the number of the pieces of money for which he was basely sold, the mode of his death, the disposition of his garments, the circumstances of his sepulture. And, what is most amazing, all these predictions were undeniably in the hands of the Jews hundreds of years before Christ was born.

Admit what the Bible itself suggests as the explanation, that "holy men spake, moved by the Holy Spirit of God," and there is no difficulty. Deny that, and there is no other key to unlock the mystery. This phenomenon is absolutely without a parallel. Here is a book in which over three hundred converging rays meet in one perfect portrait of a man who did not appear on earth till at least three hundred years after the last prophet had laid down his pen. Yet, in not one feature, however minute, does the portrait fail to predict the person! It cannot be said that the prophecy was written after the events, nor is it disputed that the events perfectly fulfill the prophecy. But the infidel must get rid somehow of the Bible. He is very much afraid of being too credulous. And so Bolingbroke comes to his aid. He found the death of Christ distinctly and minutely foretold by Isaiah.* So he conjectured that Jesus, being familiar with the prophecy, by a series of preconcerted measures *actually planned and brought on his own crucifixion*, in exact accordance with the predictions, that he might give his disciples the triumph of the appeal to prophecy!

* Chap. 53.

Oh the credulity of incredulity! We must become mere unthinking sponges to absorb such nonsense as that! It upsets all the fixed laws of human nature. There must be some consistency between a man and his work. A book full of such lofty moral ideas and ideals could not be the work of liars and knaves. A man full of such lofty ideas, and himself presenting such a perfect ideal, could not give himself to such villainous schemes. All supposition of intentional imposture, either in the writers of the Bible or the person of Christ, must be set aside as an untenable theory. That requires entirely too much credulity!

And this is but one argument, but one division of one argument, by which the Bible is proved to be the inspired word of God. There are many careless and unguarded—not to say false—statements as to the “*scientific inaccuracy*” of the word of God. It is said that “if there be a God, and the Bible is his book, it is inconceivable that the book should betray ignorance and blundering on the part of its divine Author.” Quite so: that is reasonable. But what if it can be shown that not one such blotch of blundering ignorance is found in this ancient book, and that, though composed or compiled in ages so remote that science was but in its infancy, not one of the absurdities that mar all other ancient books can here be found; and that, on the other hand, there is a wisely-chosen phraseology in the Bible that, without revealing scientific truth in advance, actually proves in accord with it as the ages unfold and reveal it?

Not even fulfilled prediction is more wonderful than the divine knowledge of this material universe found in these pages. When Moses uses the word “*expanse*,” inaccurately rendered “*firmament*,” instead of giving currency to the old absurdity that the stars were set in a *firm-ament*, or fixed concave that revolved about the earth, he used the best word the Hebrew

tongue contained to express astronomical truth not known for thousands of years after. "Job" is supposed to be the oldest poem extant, yet its terms are perfectly in accord with the latest discoveries in light and refraction, meteorology and gravitation! Jeremiah, centuries before Galileo turned the first crude telescope to the skies, declared the host of stars countless, and compared them to the sands on the seashore.* Moses gave the same order of creation as modern geology, and the same order of the animal creation as modern zoology—fish, reptile, bird, mammal, man—two thousand years before these sciences began to dawn. In 1806 the French Institute set up eighty theories as hostile to the Bible, not one of which eighty theories stands to-day.

Ancient science was unworthy the name. It was a crystallization of glittering nonsense, at which now we only smile, wondering how such notions could ever have been believed by the most ignorant, much less taught by the educated. Not one of those absurdities is found in the book of God. Take, for example, the current conceptions of science found imbedded in the Hindu Shasters. These sacred books account for a partial eclipse of the sun by the wrath of a demon who grips him with his teeth, but finds him too hot and soon lets go; and for a total eclipse of the moon by the successful seizing and swallowing of this cooler orb. The reappearance of the moon is likewise explained by the cutting of the demon's body in two and the release of the undigested morsel. The Hindu theory of the universe is equally ludicrous: "Millions upon millions of ages ago this world came to be. It was made a flat, triangular plain with high hills and mountains and great waters; it exists in seven stories; and the whole is held up on the heads

* Jer. 33 : 22.

of elephants with their tails turned out; their feet rest on a big tortoise, and the tortoise on a snake, coiled up; and when these elephants shake themselves the earth quakes," etc.

The teaching of modern science upsets the Hindu system not only of science, but of theology, for both rest on the same divine Vedas. No intelligent Brahman can hold a true science of the universe and at the same time believe the Vedic hymns inspired. But many an educated Hindu turns to the Christian Bible and finds nothing irreconcilable with all he has learned in the schools. What makes the difference between two ancient books, one of which he must discard, the other of which he cordially receives as scientifically accurate? Who guarded the Bible from the errors universally received during the centuries in which its writers lived? Admit a divine mind as superintending this structure, and we can well understand why only select material was built into it. Make it the work of man only, and it must remain an inscrutable mystery that, from this alone, of all the ancient books, such errors were excluded.

III. "What think ye of *Christ*?" He is another great stumbling-block to the sceptic. It is hard to get rid of him as confessedly the first and foremost of all religious teachers, who despised the tricks of the sophist, disdained the arts of the rhetorician and discarded even the doubts and theories of the philosopher. He spoke with authority and certainty. He was too wise to be a fool, too good to be an impostor, too honest to be a knave. Admit that he was the God-man, and all is clear. Deny his divinity, and he is an unlocked mystery.

But the sceptic's greatest perplexity is what to do with his *miracles*. To admit a miracle is fatal to infidelity, for a miracle implies a power higher than nature that may even reverse her ordinary move-

ments, as a human hand may turn back the hands of a clock. Yet to deny all miracles compels us to believe not only that Christ was either a deceiver or a dupe, but that all those who saw and witnessed his mighty works were either mistaken or dishonest.

The great central miracle of Christianity is the resurrection of Christ. Until that can be broken down the Christian faith has a firm basis. The infidel must get rid of that, and three theories have been invented: the "*fraud*," the "*trance*," and the "*dream*," theories. Some boldly say it was a downright fraud: the apostles stole and hid the dead body, and then humbugged the world. Others say that Christ rose from a trance or asphyxia—that he was not really dead, but only swooned, and by the care of friends was resuscitated. And still others account for the resurrection as the waking dream of fanatical followers, who mistook fancy for fact: Christ rose only in the imagination of his disciples, and they testified what they honestly believed.

But who cannot see that any one of these suppositions demands a greater stretch of credulity than the actual miracle? No-faith is here harder than faith. Even Rousseau long ago had to confess, "If the miracles did not take place, then the existence of evidence so varied and unbroken in favour of their having taken place is more astounding than the alleged miracles themselves."

There is, however, a still worse difficulty which the infidel confronts. Christ is *himself the miracle* of the ages. Born in poverty and reared in obscurity; bred in the home of an ignorant tradesman and in the most contemptible village of an insignificant Roman province; with no advantages of mental training or intercourse with books or conversation with the wise and learned,—this young man, who died at thirty-three, has revolutionized history. No works he is

claimed to have wrought are as wonderful as the words he is known to have spoken. He gave men a new system of ethics ; he gave life a new principle about which to crystallize. He taught a religion that is a constant assault on avarice, appetite and ambition, that pays no court to the rich and great and seeks no patronage from the powerful and the influential. Its first law is self-surrender, and its last result is self-oblivion. And yet that religion has gone on for eighteen centuries conquering and to conquer, and numbers more intelligent, upright, conscientious disciples than all other forms of faith combined. If the Christian is credulous who accepts Christ as God, what of his credulity who sees in him only a man?

IV. There are other mysteries that demand an interpretation : such an one is the mystery of *prayer*.

Prayer is a word for communion between a human soul and the unseen God. It is confidently affirmed by thousands of credible witnesses that they have tested the promises to the prayerful, and that in countless cases they have received answers to supplication, which involved results beyond their own power or that of human mediation to secure.

Now, here is a most serious issue with scepticism. Let this be admitted as a fact, and other most important concessions logically follow. The reality of God's existence is demonstrated ; so is the reality of an unseen world ; so is the reality of contact between the soul and God. Miracles it is vain to oppose, for here is a perpetual miracle. How to dispose of prayer is found as difficult as it was with Hume to dispose of a "Christian life," which he confessed was the one thing which his deistical philosophy could not explain. To admit prayer to the realm of fact, and not confine it to the dreamland of fancy, is to give up the whole issue: to deny prayer is to impeach

the whole host of witnesses and to violate all the laws of evidence.

Naturalism has a ready solution: it concedes the value of prayer, but only in the way of self-conquest and self-culture. The faith of the believer is held to be another instance of credulity, a harmless delusion. He pulls himself forward or upward, and persuades himself he is divinely uplifted and upborne. He sets before himself an idea, and ideal, and struggles to attain it. He believes God gives him a strength that is entirely due to his "moral athletics." He is "exercising himself" unto godliness.

That looks plausible, and is no doubt true as far as it goes, but it is at best only a half truth. There is a whole hemisphere of truth not seen from such a point of view. What shall we do with answers to prayer, wrought *outside of the suppliant himself*? Moral and spiritual culture and athletics may account for moral and spiritual muscle and sinew, but they cannot account for signal interpositions of some outside power, for sundry wants supplied at critical times, for marked deliverances wrought, and unmistakable coincidences between a request and a response, where such distance intervenes as precludes all personal agency of the suppliant, and where no lapse of time intervenes to allow of such application of means to ends. The man who believes that God hears prayer may be thought credulous, but what word shall we invent for his credulity who believes that, for six thousand years, men and women of the highest intellectual and moral standing have steadfastly maintained that they have lifted themselves by pulling on their boot-straps and propelled themselves by blowing upon the sails of their own boat?

The *spiritual transformations* wrought in answer to prayer are unaccountable upon any human philosophy. No man can testify to his own birth, but

millions can testify to their own *new* birth. They remember it. They have seen the old life immediately changed for the new; old passions displaced by new affections. Nothing is so radical and unalterable as the *disposition*: it is what disposes us to evil or good; it is what determines even the desire and choice. How, then, can a man change his own disposition? What shall *dispose* him to a new order of life? We can understand how a worker in metal can change the form of a vessel, but to change the *nature of the metal* no philosopher's stone has yet been found adequate. Yet we have seen hundreds of men immediately changed, not only as to the *mode* of their life, but as to the *nature* of their life. We have seen them wrought upon by some silent power, and instantly renouncing sin and choosing holiness—nay, at once loving what they before hated, relishing what they before repelled, and rejoicing in that which just before they had found only vexation and disgust. The Bible accounts for such results by a *divine conversion*. It affirms that God makes the man anew—changes his heart, so that he has a new disposition, desire, love, will. Such an explanation *explains*. It accounts for all the facts. Scientifically speaking, it is a satisfactory solution; *no other is*; and the question recurs, Who is the credulous fool and dupe? He who accepts the only satisfactory hypothesis, or he who rejects that for some other which leaves the bulk of the facts without an adequate philosophy?

In many other respects the credulity of the incredulous might be illustrated. To deny the reality of the unseen world and accept a blank materialism as our philosophy, requires a very implicit faith in—an absurdity. Why, the biggest and best part of man is the unseen and invisible. Who ever saw a thought, a feeling, a desire, a choice? Which is the

more real, the word we hear or the idea that gives birth to the word? Which is the more actual and factual, the hand that carves a statue or paints a picture, or the unseen mind that sees that painting or statue before a brush is dipped in colour or the chisel touches the marble? Which is the more to be believed in, the eye that looks at you, or the soul that looks through that crystal window and speaks love's silent language to your soul?

How credulous must he be who flees from the Christian doctrine of the immaterial soul and the immortal life as incredible, to adopt the creed of the materialist!

“I believe in wheat and rice,
Not in virtue and in vice ;
In a stated cause of crimes,
In Macaulay and *The Times*.
Hydrogen inflames ambition ;
Nitrogen controls volition ;
What is good or great in men
May be found in oxygen,
And the body, not the soul,
Governs the unfettered whole.”

To make this creed complete, we should add a few lines :

We *are* only what we *eat*,
Solid, liquid, sour or sweet,
Whether one is bad or good
Ultimately hangs on food.
Who can keep from being vile
When his stomach's full of bile ?
Ethics means a bill of fare,
Exercise and good fresh air.
Silly folks are taken in,
Frightened, by the ghost called sin.
Conscience, Duty, Right are names
Made for pious dupes and dames.
Fools may teach morality,
Dream of immortality ;
Let us live, for die we must
Then there's nothing left but dust.

It is an admitted, recognized canon of science and philosophy, that if a hypothesis will account for all the facts, we need look no further for the law that governs them; the supposition becomes a certainty. In this way Kepler three centuries ago applied in turn eighteen different hypotheses or suppositions to the motions of Mars before he found one that fitted the facts. It was like applying so many different keys to open a locked door. But when at last he assumed, by way of experiment, that the orbit of a planet is an ellipse, with the sun at one of the foci, that key unlocked the mystery which had baffled astronomers ever since the days of Adam. That became the first of Kepler's three great laws of planetary motion, and has never since been doubted. When a key perfectly fits a lock, why look for another?

It is strange that scientists and philosophers violate their own canon when they sit in judgment on the great truths of the Christian religion. There is certainly a great mystery to be solved. The universe is a great mystery; so is the Bible; so is Christ. There is one hypothesis that perfectly accounts for all the facts, and there is only one: it is the theory which the Bible itself presents, that there is an eternal, self-existent, intelligent, personal God—that he created the universe, inspired the Bible, and himself became man in Jesus Christ. Take that key, and these three mysteries are all unlocked. Refuse that key, and all other explanations are insufficient: they make the mystery only the greater. The explanations themselves demand explanation. Instead of enlightening the darkness, they make it only deeper.

We conclude with one word of caution. As Dr. C. F. Deems said to the students at Northfield, "Believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts." Never make the fatal mistake of doubting your beliefs and

believing your doubts. Much if not all scepticism has its root in sin. Men "hold down the truth in unrighteousness," and do "not like to retain God in their knowledge." The great truths of the Bible are fought because they expose sin and threaten it with punishment, Men first make shipwreck of conscience, and then make shipwreck of faith. A belief is to be well examined before it is discarded; a doubt is to be well scrutinized before it is encouraged. He who seeks honestly to be *godlike* will find little to stumble over in the godlike teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. But he who would live a sinful and selfish life may well desire to believe that there is no God, no life beyond and no judgment to come. The heart makes the theology.



PIERSON'S PAPERS FOR THINKING PEOPLE.

No. 2.

The Ethics of the Dance.

A LETTER AND ITS ANSWER.

“**D**EAR PASTOR,—I am a professed believer, I have been brought up to think dancing right. I nevertheless feel that it is wrong; that it conforms me to the world. If I indulge in it, it is somehow against my conscience; and I have an instinctive feeling that there is some reason why many of the best people condemn it, and why many who advocate it are not active and spiritual Christians. I wish you could tell me that it is not wrong; but, if compelled to condemn it, will you not be frank with me, and give me your honest judgment and your reasons for it? I feel as though God were moving me, as never before, to a higher, holier life, and I do not wish to grieve the Spirit by resistance.”

Yours very truly,

A. K. S.

REPLY.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIEND,—I am often, as a Pastor, asked to give an opinion or judgment upon such a matter as the right and wrong of dancing ; and a part of the hesitation which I feel in replying directly to such a question arises simply from a fraternal affection for the questioner. I sympathize so deeply with the spiritual struggles of my people, and feel so desirous not to put a stumbling-block in the way, especially of a young disciple, by the appearance of a censorious or pharisaic spirit, or an unreasonable and uncharitable judgment, that I sometimes drift to the other extreme ; and, while trying to avoid arbitrary assumption of lordship over the conscience, seem perhaps to take sides with inclination or temptation, against the conscience and the Spirit who quickens the conscience.

Let me now, with absolute candour, answer the question thus addressed to me.

I. First of all, *the fact that you have doubt or misgiving about a matter is presumption against it.* A true Christian life aims high—aims at a lofty standard of holiness and usefulness. A disciple should not serve God by halves, but altogether, giving the whole mind and heart to the new life. Now the higher you set your mark for holiness and usefulness, the more sensitive will be your conscience, without being morbid. And, as surely as you lend yourself to a matter of doubtful propriety, to the slightest evasion of truth or duty, to the least concession to the world, the flesh, and the devil, to the least compromise with sinful or carnal desires, to the least deviation from absolute Christian rectitude,—so surely, if your aim be high, will the Spirit of God arouse your faithful conscience to give you alarm and pain ; and the more sensitive your conscience is,

provided you obey it, the more rapid and sure will be your growth in positive holiness.

Years ago, this became so plain to me, that like President Edwards, I fully resolved with God's help, "never again to do that of which I doubt the propriety, unless I equally doubt the propriety or expediency of *not* doing it." In other words, when I find my Saviour weighed over against a questionable indulgence, I propose in every case to give, not *myself*, but *Him*, the advantage of my doubt. This rule may cost us a thousand self-denials, but they will prove sweeter than the most coveted indulgencies of the flesh.

They who sacrifice *spirituality* to even a doubtful indulgence will certainly sacrifice, also, freedom of access to God in prayer, the inward sense of divine approval, the sealing witness of the Spirit, growth in grace, large usefulness in winning souls, and everything else most precious to a spiritual believer. And what ought it not to be easy to resign or to renounce for the sake of *walking with God*?

Now, dancing is one of those forms of amusement or indulgence which is at least of *doubtful* propriety; and so the presumption is against it. He that doubteth is condemned if he dance, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

But can I hope to throw any positive light upon the question of the right and wrong of dancing?

II. To my mind it is entirely clear that, as practised in our modern fashionable circles, the dance *is essentially and inherently harmful* to the whole spiritual life. All the reasons for such a view it may not be right to give in the open pages of a letter or tract; for some of them touch upon matters which the laws of propriety forbid us to treat, except with extreme delicacy. If, however, you wish candidly to study the whole question in all its moral bearings, I

commend you to the brave little book by Dr. Wilkinson, on "The Dance of Modern Society," or to that intrepid paper read by Dr. Addison at the Church Congress, on Christianity and Popular Amusements.

1. *The Bible furnishes no ground for the approval or sanction of the dance.* Wherever it refers to dancing with approval, it is the *religious dance*, which was simply festive leaping or tripping, like that of Miriam and her maidens, or, David before the Ark, expressive simply of holy joy, and performed by men or by women, but not by both together. I can find no such dances in the Bible, in which men and women were promiscuously mingled. When these are referred to they are denounced, or ranked with other idolatrous and licentious heathen practices.

When in Ecclesiastes we read of "a time to dance," it is not meant that there is a time when it is proper to dance; but a time when people *do* dance; and so Solomon adds, there is a time to hate, a time of war, and a time of peace.

2. *The origin and history of the dance*, as a social amusement, may give us some light on the spiritual questions involved. It can be traced back to heathen festivals of the most indecent and revolting type. In Athens were 50,000 priestesses of Venus, who in her worship danced somewhat as ballet-girls do at the lowest Parisian theatres, making it a part of their religion to sacrifice modesty and chastity; and such dancing, derived from Pagan worship, was that of the infamous daughter of Herodias, who, in this manner, *pleased* the wicked Herod. This is the ancient dance, stripped of all polite disguises.

3. *The modern round dance* is to me specially abhorrent. For one I will not put myself where I am compelled even to *look* upon it. I am too well acquainted with both its origin and its history to countenance it; and after watching for twenty-five

years its effects upon modern society, I have set my face forever against it, as an iniquity and a snare. True, it did not have its root in Pagan idolatry, but it did have its origin in worse than Pagan laxity of morals; and the fact that pure-minded persons may possibly engage in it with entire innocence of wrong feelings or intent, proves nothing as to its real character, or influence on society generally.

I am addressing this letter, under circumstances of unusual solemnity, to you as one member of a large body of intelligent and sensible men and women, who have passed with me through a literal baptism of fire and of the Holy Ghost.* To you, especially, I am endeared, as few pastors are to their people; and we have all lived long enough in a bad world to appreciate the necessity and value of plainness of speech, particularly at certain times.

Now let me ask you, if you had a family of children, how long would you tolerate in your house a man who, perhaps, immediately upon introduction to your daughter, should lay hands upon her person with the familiarity and the freedom of the modern waltz? I am really astonished that there can be any doubt upon this point with sound-minded, sensible, reflecting persons. The modern dance simply *licenses, or makes lawful, what, outside of the customs of the dance, is regarded improper, immoral, insulting.* Society wisely regulates the ordinary social gatherings of men and women in the parlour, even when they are well acquainted, by certain wholesome barriers of restraint. A man who, especially at first acquaintance, should violate these restrictions, as he may do in the waltz with impunity, would be kicked out of doors as a scoundrel!

* Referring to the burning of the Fort St. Presbyterian Church of Detroit, March 25, 1876, and to the great revival that followed.

But the devil has invented, in the round dances, a polite and popular method of making such gross familiarities allowable, under the sanction of fashionable custom. Hence their attraction to the people of the world ; hence their ensnaring influence to the disciple ; and the better the class of men and women that countenance the devil's device, the more conspicuous his triumph !

Perhaps you will say to me, " Evil be to him who evil thinks," or you may reply in more sacred words : " To the pure all things are pure " ! Let us beware how we use the Scripture to justify evil. Our great Adversary can cite Scripture to his purpose, and quoted the Bible even when he tempted our Lord. No, not even to the *pure* can *impure* things be pure. If a so-called gentleman should invade the sanctities of my parlour, by addressing such familiarities to one of my daughters, I should not be accused of an impure imagination for denouncing him as a villain ; and how or why a so-called " amusement " should sanction what, under other circumstances, would be manifestly ensnaring and corrupting, it is impossible for me to understand.

The round dance of modern times had its origin in the viciously immoral atmosphere of the lowest saloons of France and Germany. At first it came timidly into the light of the day, as if ashamed to face society in the broad light ; but as soon as it got, at fashionable watering-places, the sanction of custom, it became as bold as though it had not had its birth down in the vilest slums of vice.

4. There is almost nothing which the Word of God, from Eden onward, has *so jealously guarded* from the touch or breath of contamination as that hallowed thing which is called "*virtue.*" Our blessed Lord makes it a sign and symbol of the mystical union between himself and the Church, his bride.

In the Sermon on the Mount, He forbade that we should tarnish its holy purity, even by an unhallowed *look*; and has taught us not to harbour an impure thought, lest by a foul *breath* we should defile or even dim its wondrous whiteness and brightness. So far as this shrine of virtue is guarded, every other sacred interest is proportionately protected; whenever this is invaded, every other interest is endangered.

Now, as with the slow and solemn emphasis of a man who knows not whether he shall ever deliver any other utterance for his Lord upon this subject,—my deliberate charge against the modern dance is this,—I speak it with a truthful tongue; I write it with careful pen, as something to be graven as with the point of a diamond: that *the modern dance trifles with, and often desecrates, this holy mystery of virtue*,—that it leads men and women to think more lightly of those wholesome and holy restraints with which God, and even a worldly society in its sober moods, surrounds this sacred shrine, so that we may approach it or invade its sanctity only by disregarding the courts and the curtains which enclose this Holy of Holies.

And because I believe this, with a deep and unalterable conviction, I cannot put dancing among the harmless amusements of society. I believe it is not right, but wrong, inherently and essentially, in spirit and tendency—wrong, hurtful to social morality; especially hurtful to *spirituality*.

5. Of course the *measure* of its sinfulness and hurtfulness will be largely graduated by the degree of intelligence and clearness of vision with which its true character is seen and felt; but the fact that so many good people do, with no intent of wrong, or, if you please, without consciousness of harm to themselves, both countenance and practice it, *does*

not affect or change the real character of the dance or its actual influence on society ; and I am convinced that *it is the master snare* of Satan to betray some into positive sin, and even disciples into inconsistency and alienation from God, as well as a wretched conformity to this world. Such has at least been the practical effect of the dance of modern society. Thus far nothing has been said about the *square dances*. But they are all inspired by one spirit. The square dance cannot practically be kept by itself. Let it be admitted into the parlour ; and it is not long before the waltz begins, by its side, or more likely crowds it out. As Dr. Addison says, "put the old modest dance on the floor of the ball-room to-day, and, as surely as the loosened rock of the precipice falls into the chasm below, will it fall into the arms and be pressed against the bosom of the 'German.'"

6. It would be a personal grief to me, and a sad perversion of what has thus been written, if it should be construed as a personal reflection upon those whose opinions or practices differ from my own. This fear has often restrained me, when asked my opinion, from giving free utterance to my views. But I am so deeply convinced that such conformity to the world is absolutely preventing transformation into the likeness of God, that I can no longer be silent. The very fact, that many of the most spiritually minded of Christ's disciples view the matter here set forth as hostile to spiritual growth and welfare, is enough to condemn it, at least, as the practice of disciples. Were I made aware that any practice of mine were regarded, by the spiritually minded, as inconsistent with my devotion to Christ, or hurtful to my Christian influence, I would instantly abandon it ; and it is a fact of grave weight that if, out of the Church of Christ of all ages, you should gather those who have lived most habitually in the pavilion of the

Divine Presence, *their verdict against the dance of society would be almost, if not quite, unanimous.* In this common consenting voice of the most advanced disciples, I believe, next to the inspired Word, we are to hear the *voice of God*; for conclusions, to which the study of the Scriptures, habitual prayer, and self-denying holiness, have led God's best saints, may well cause us who have not reached such heights to *hesitate*, at least, before we disregard them in our practice. And now, having myself carefully uttered these deep convictions, the responsibility is transferred to you, Seek not to evade or avoid it. Upon your separation from the world unto God depends the degree of your endowment with the Spirit of holiness and of power. God uses in His temple and at His altar no *unsanctified vessel*; whether it be of gold or silver, of wood or of earth, it must be *set apart unto the Master's use*. In proportion as your hand and heart and tongue are *purged* from the world's uses, its frivolities, impurities, lusts, and solemnly sanctified by separation for the holy service of the sanctuary, *will He, can He, make them His implements and instruments in the redemption of a lost world.*

Your affectionate pastor,

ARTHUR T. PIERSON.

"The waltz was born December 20th, 1787—first seen in a Vienna Theatre; the progeny of a licentious stage and its consort, the ballet. This amorous gyratory hugging was, for a time, thought to be too shockingly indecent to be tolerated anywhere else. It found its way into houses of doubtful repute, and more slowly into German society. Even Paris, for a time, resisted its licentious libertinism, and not till the present century did it get sanction of Paris; then, of course, it became fashion everywhere, for Paris sets fashion's clock in all lands. It was said of the abandon of French women, that before the waltz, they danced with their *soles*; afterward with their '*souls*,' and the latter got as soiled and worn out as the other."



PIERSON'S PAPERS FOR THINKING PEOPLE.

No. 3.

The Word of God Tried and Proved.

THE Bible has in all ages been at once the focal point of the affection of believers and the central point of the attack of unbelievers. To believers it is the Golden Mile-stone, erected in the Forum of the ages, toward which all roads lead, and from which all paths radiate ; but, to the enemies of God and Christ and of the precious Gospel of our Lord Jesus, the Bible is the central point of attack, because it is the very central part of the fortress of our faith—all else but pertains to the surrounding, circumvallating outworks which may be taken without the destruction of the Christian religion itself ; but to undermine the Bible is to strike our faith at its centre, and therefore, as the conflicts of the ages grow hot and desperate, the attack becomes more and more determined upon the Word of God. It seems to me that, in these days especially, we behold the enemy—and, I regret to say, some who by their profession as disciples might be expected to be its friends—massing, directly or indirectly, their entire forces against the Word of God. And there are two

things to which attention will herein be mainly called. In the first place, the claim *indicated* for the Bible; and in the second place this claim *vindicated* for the Bible. The claim indicated is, in the first place, that it is the Word of God, *par excellence*, in a unique and original sense, the Word of God; and secondly, that it is the Revelation of the Gospel; and thirdly, that it is the book of a Person—the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, as to the vindication, I shall undertake to show that, tried by three tests, mainly, it vindicates the august claim. In the first place, the test of *Time*; in the second place, the test of *Truth*; and in the third place, the test of *Trial* or *Life*.

In the first place, let us look at the august claim which the Bible sets up for itself. It is pre-eminently and in a sense solely the Word of God. What is a word? A word is simply the incarnation of thought in human language. Every word, therefore, suggests to us two things, an idea or conception, and a vehicle or expression. The Bible is the Word of God in this double sense; there is the conception of God, back of it, and there is the expression of that conception in it. And these two things are inseparably connected. You cannot dissociate conception from expression. We think in language. Our ideas are vague until they take in the mind linguistic forms. Verbal embodiments are associated with speech; before the word is on the tongue it is in thought, and language has marvellous power in connexion with thought. It gives its definiteness, distinctness—it gives even its colouring; therefore Wordsworth very profoundly said, as a philosopher as well as a poet, that "language is the incarnation of thought."

We know there is no little controversy waging in these days (there has been, in fact, all through the ages) as to how far inspiration may be affirmed of the Bible; whether the conceptions of the Bible are

inspired and its language human, or whether the inspiration extends to the language even, the very forms of speech used, and to the very words used—and I wish flatly to put down my foot upon this platform, that I could accept no inspiration that does not reach the words of the Bible.

Burke said: "Every word in a sentence is one of the feet upon which that sentence moves; to shorten one of those words, or change its place in the sentence, or alter one of those words, may be to change the entire direction which the sentence takes in its onward movement." You cannot change the language of Scripture without interfering with the substance of Scripture, so closely and so immediately and so inseparably is the language in which the conceptions of God are embodied or incarnated, linked with, and associated with, the conceptions themselves—and I do not see how anyone who examines the Bible can have any doubt reasonably remaining as to the teaching of the Bible on this subject. Let me give you what I think you are all familiar with, two very prominent instances of these hints, in the Word of God, at what may be properly called, in a true sense, verbal inspiration, though that is a very much abused term, in the conception which people form of it when they hear it. By verbal inspiration I simply mean the inspiration of the language in which divine conceptions are expressed. It is not necessarily implied that in every case the substance or idea conveyed is approved of God. For example, when the Bible records that the serpent said unto the woman, "Ye shall not surely die," the record is inspired, but the sentiment is very far from being inspired. We do not mean by verbal inspiration any such nonsense as that every sentiment expressed accords with God's mind, as I suppose any person of sound sense would at once perceive; but simply that when God puts in

the Bible any one of his conceptions for the human mind to apprehend, the language is so guarded that the conception shall be adequately and accurately expressed according to the divine mind.

Now, it is a curious fact that, in the tenth chapter of John, thirty-fourth verse, the argument for the inspiration of Holy Scripture depends, as you will remember, not only upon the thought but upon the very *word* of Scripture. The quotation is from the eighty-second Psalm, "I said, ye are gods," and our Saviour, referring to this, and quoting it, says "If he called them gods unto whom the Word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken) say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world 'Thou blasphemest,' because I said, I am the Son of God?" Now, the pertinent point in this quotation is this, that the entire argument of our blessed Saviour turns upon the inviolability of the *word* employed—the Scripture cannot be broken even so far as to exchange in it or subtract from it a word. Take another singularly unique instance of testimony of the same kind. Paul says to the Galatians, quoting from the Book of Genesis the promise to Abraham and others like him, where Christ is referred to as the Messianic Seed—"He saith not of *seeds*, as of many, but as of one, 'of thy *seed*,' which is Christ;" and there the argument turns not simply upon the word which cannot be changed, but upon the *number* of the word, that cannot be altered from singular to plural. It seems to me that with these two instances before us we need no other testimony. We can see that God designs to impress the peculiar signature and seal of his approbation upon the very words in which divine ideas are clothed and divine conceptions expressed. The Bible sets up the august claim to being the Word of God, inspired, and infallibly inspired. Now, there is

danger in certain concessions of inspiration. It is one of the resorts of modern scepticism and infidelity (lying often within the bounds of the nominal Church of God) to concede that the Bible is inspired, but to insist that every other book is inspired also. Milton's "Paradise Lost" is inspired. Well, all I can say is, if it is inspired, there is a great deal of error in it that must be inspired too! It is said that Newton's "Philosophy" is inspired, that Bacon's "Novum Organum" is inspired, that Edison was inspired to produce modern inventions pertaining to electricity. Well, this is the inspiration of genius. There is a sense in which we may believe that all poetry, and all philosophy, and all oratory, and all discovery and invention are inspired, but it is the inspiration of genius, and the concession fails just here, that this inspiration is not infallible. There may be much truth and there may be much error, and they are hopelessly mixed, if man is to be the judge of what is truth and what is error. We must have in the Word of God not only an inspired book, in this broad sense of inspiration, but an inspired book in the narrower sense of inspiration—an inspiration which constitutes this Book an infallible guide in faith and in duty.

We all feel the necessity for some court to which final appeal may be made, and to which we may carry up from lower tribunals all doubtful cases for absolute and final adjudication. The time used to be when men depended upon sun dials for their knowledge of the time of day; watches were invented, then chronometers by which watches might be regulated; but when you want to regulate your chronometers you must read God's clock of the ages; you must erect your transit instrument, and then watch when the sun crosses the meridian, for during six thousand years the sun has never failed to come

to his meridian point by the thousandth part of a second of time, day after day. And just so, wherever even conscience utters an uncertain sound, or gives a doubtful verdict; wherever the common sense of mankind, or the *communis consensus Christianorum*, the consensus of Christian disciples—which may be by no means infallible—varies, we correct our human watches by God's unchangeable clock dial, for somehow we find that nothing beneath the stars runs exactly right. The Bible is God's final Court of Appeal. We come to it to correct the variation of our human compasses and determine precisely the line of direction in all things that pertain both to doctrine and practice.

And then the Word of God sets up an august claim to being the one and only revelation of the Gospel. That is because, for our salvation, we absolutely need a revelation. We should have known nothing about salvation but for the Bible. These are old thoughts—I pretend to bring forward nothing new to you, though I hope to be able to set some old thoughts before you in some new lights; and the reader must notice that we should infer from nature no such thing as a possible salvation. There is nothing so inexorably unforgiving as nature. If, by accident, I fall from a precipice, or by design jump from a precipice, in either case I am dashed to pieces. If I handle edge tools, I am just as sure to be cut by carelessness as by design. There is the wound, and even if that wound is healed by time, and cured, there is the scar. If you should search in the natural world alone you might look over the universe and never find one suggestion or hint of forgiveness. Nature never saves; she has no salvation. Obedience to her laws is the only hope of prosperity or wellbeing, no repentance will undo the wrong or cancel the damage, and you must look to

God alone for a scheme of salvation, and only through the Word of God. It is a matter of pure *revelation*; it is not in the universe otherwise; you cannot otherwise discover it for yourself, you cannot infer it by any process of argument; it must be simply a revelation, something brought out of darkness, and from behind the veil of obscurity, and revealed. Now, if you want to apprehend and appreciate the value of the Bible as the positive revelation of salvation, and the only revelation of salvation, I pray you to take perhaps the foremost of all the systems of heathenism, and just for a moment compare it with the Bible. Take, for instance, Buddhism. Now, there are three great postulates of Buddhism—incarnation first; second, transmigration; third, annihilation. Buddha found this world in a hopeless condition of entanglement, men down in the horrible pit and the miry clay of their own sensuality and selfishness and depravity, rotting in their own vices, warring against each other and warring against themselves, and there was no deliverer. When they died they only passed from one form of existence to another; it was a transmigration from one animal form to another, perhaps a higher, perhaps a lower, and there was no escape from these thirty-three thousand transmigrations, sphere upon sphere, condition of existence upon condition of existence, world upon world, in the great system of planetary spheres, in which souls might carry on after death another existence in another form, returning from time to time in the spiral round of their existence to this same planetary system. And now the question was, How shall man be redeemed from this horrible condition, and saved from this terrible destiny? Buddha professed to have found some method of deliverance—the extinction of all desire, physical, mental, moral, spiritual—a life of con-

templation, meditation, suppression of all passion, of all lusts, of all aspirations, of all ambitions—that was the hope of Nirvana, which is virtually annihilation—if it is not annihilation of being it is annihilation of personality, as a drop loses its individuality when it drops into the sea. Now, compare this scheme of salvation, of escape from endless transmigrations in personal annihilation or the annihilation of personality—just compare that scheme of salvation with God's scheme of salvation in Christ: Justification through the atoning Blood, Regeneration by a transforming and enlightening spirit, Sanctification by the power of the Word of God and Blood of Christ and the influence of the Holy Ghost conjointly, and so deliverance at last—from the penalty of sin first, and the power of sin second, and the presence of sin third, the preparation of man for the eternal life of blessedness and fellowship with God, by the re-creation of man in the image of God and the elimination of all sinful propensities and passions, and the final union of a redeemed soul with a redeemed body. None of the religions of earth have ever invented such a scheme of salvation, or even suggested the possibility of such a scheme, and one of the most remarkable things about it is that it saves God as well as man; it saves God either from indifference to sin, and so complicity with it, on the one hand, or from condoning offences, and so impeaching His own attributes, on the other. Mercy and Truth meet together, Righteousness and Peace kiss each other; there is harmony in the attributes of God, and there can be reconciliation between God and man, without either man's losing his respect for God, or God's losing the perfection and symmetry of His own character.

Then, again, let us all notice that this Bible which sets up this august claim to being the Word of

God, and the only Revelation of the Gospel of Salvation, is the Book of a Person. "In the volume of the BOOK it is written of ME." There is only one Book and there is only one Person—the Book of God and the Person Jesus Christ—and this Bible is pre-eminently the Book of a Person. If you turn to the New Testament you have the historic portion of it centralizing about Jesus Christ, a four-fold Gospel. Not four Gospels, but one Gospel. We frequently say, and very incorrectly, the Gospel of Matthew, or Matthew's Gospel, Mark's Gospel, Luke's Gospel, John's Gospel. The Bible never speaks in that way. It is, "The Gospel *according to* Matthew," "The Gospel according to Mark," "The Gospel according to Luke," "The Gospel according to John"; one Gospel in a fourfold aspect, like the mystic creature in Ezekiel's vision, a creature having four heads, these heads facing in different directions, but one creature. Here is the fourfold Gospel, the fourfold face of the cherubic creature of Ezekiel's vision. In Matthew it is the face of the lion of the Tribe of Judah; in Mark it is the face of the sacrificial ox or calf; in Luke it is the face of a man; in John it is the face of the eagle, soaring far above the level of humanity into the clear empyrean regions of the upper air, and looking directly in the sun's own face. It is a fourfold Gospel, or if you please let us change the figure for a moment. I remember in one of the scientific galleries of the old world to have seen a fourfold combination of mirrors, so accurately and skilfully adjusted that when you stood upon the stool that was set in the midst of them, you saw the image of yourself not simply reflected in the mirrors, but projected from the mirrors and between them. So it is here, a fourfold mirror of Jesus Christ. You see not simply a reflection of Christ in Matthew and Mark, and in Luke and in John, but the fourfold

combination of the mirrors projects His image like a living personality before your eyes. Here is the Christ, the historic Christ, in the narrative of the Gospels, and marvellous is the image thus projected. Have you ever noticed that men, when they give themselves to the delineation of biography, always deal in encomium? It is scarcely possible to avoid it. When men begin to depict and record character, they indicate their enthusiastic admiration of heroism; but when these evangelists sit down to the task of describing the living Word of God, there is not a single word of encomium; in their portrait of the living Word of God, I repeat, there is not a single word of encomium. They give the bald, naked facts without comment. There is no breaking out into enthusiasm over the matchless personality that they depict, but, themselves guided by a higher Hand, they give us the portrait without any admixture of human colouring.

But most of all, and most remarkable of all, when we look back into the Old Testament, we find this same Being, so marvellously depicted in the historic Gospels, is already pourtrayed in prediction. Now, I refer to this old argument because I am satisfied that even brethren of the ministry are not making half enough of the marvellous proof of Christ's divinity, which is embraced in the prophetic Scriptures, and which really covers both the Person of Christ and the inspiration of the Word of God. Allow me very faintly and rapidly to sketch the outline of this argument. I will not speak at all of other prophetic predictions in the Old Testament. There are about six hundred and sixty-six distinct prophecies within the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament; there are three hundred and thirty-three of them that centre about our Lord Jesus Christ. From remotest ages, from the time of the first promise in Genesis

that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, these promises, growing from that germ, expanding and ramifying like the branches of a tree, until they reach the tiniest and remotest twig of prophetic predictions, all centralize in one Person, our Lord Jesus Christ. And as history comes along and touches one of these prophetic predictions after another, and sets it aflame, the prophetic plant becomes a burning bush, and we take the shoes from off our feet, for the place we stand on is holy ground. This argument is impregnable and it has never been successfully assailed, simply because it cannot be successfully assailed. Men have attacked the Bible from almost every other point of view, but they have not dared to attack the Bible on the score of prophecy. The most that they could say as to that, was what Voltaire and Porphyry and a few others have said, that these prophecies were so accurate and wonderful that they could not have been written until after the events had occurred. I cannot stop to speak at length of that "argument" or show its utter absurdity as to the Person of Jesus Christ. Malachi wrote about four centuries before Christ. There was then a cessation of the prophetic spirit, and we have no prophet between Malachi and Matthew. There could be no reaching across these four centuries, or any connection or collusion between the prophetic writers of the Old and historic narrators of the New Testament; and God allowed this cessation in order that there might be no possibility of any doubter saying, in future ages, that the historic records of the New guided the prophetic writers of the Old in the delineation of the Person of Jesus Christ. Now, set it down in your minds and memories that there is this large gap, this wide gap of four centuries, and then remember that in the Old Testament, in three hundred and thirty-three distinct particulars, the

Person of Jesus Christ, His character, career, even to the minutest details, is wonderfully and accurately set forth ; and now tell me how can it be possible that these Old Testament writers should not be inspired, and how can it be possible that He, whom they graphically portrayed at least four centuries before he was born, should be other than the august personage which he claimed to be ? I wonder how many, even of my most intelligent readers, have really mastered this argument from prophecy. I remember, when I was myself a doubter, that the study of the prophetic Scriptures in a candid spirit effectually and finally removed the last vestige of my doubts, and I have never had any since with regard to the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture or the Divinity of Jesus Christ. When I wrote my little book, which some readers may possibly have seen, called "Many Infallible Proofs," it was simply an endeavour to delineate for others the path by which I had found my way out of that dark forest of sceptical opinion.

Now look, just for a moment—some of the younger readers here, at least, it may interest to follow me in a train of thought they have not hitherto taken. You know how difficult it is to produce an accurate and shrewd guess of future events, the moment you enter into detail. We may possibly give a good general conjecture when it is not required of us to be definite, but the moment we add particulars we get from the region of simple into that of compound probabilities. Now, Bible predictions start from a simple germinal foundation, the Seed of the woman bruising the serpent's head. Beginning there, they ramify, as I have said, branching in every direction more and more minutely. He is to come, for instance, of the seed of Seth, then of the seed of Abraham. Then of Abraham's two sons, of the seed of Isaac ; of Isaac's two sons, of the seed of Jacob ;

of Jacob's twelve sons — there you have twelve branches, and one must be taken as the branch of the Messianic Line—he is to be of the line of Judah, and then, by-and-by, of the line of David. Now, each ramification multiplies many-fold the impossibility of chance fulfilment of these predictions, and yet not only is the line of the Messianic ancestry accurately depicted, but even the place of birth, Bethlehem in Judea, to distinguish from any other Bethlehem. Even the time of birth is foretold. In the ninth chapter of Daniel it is said to be seventy weeks, or in the Hebrew seventy heptades, or “periods of seven,” “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and rebuild Jerusalem unto the coming of the Messiah.” And when you remember that the going forth of that commandment was about 457 B.C., if you will add the thirty-three years of public ministry, you have exactly 490! Not only so, but even minor details, more elaborate details than these are indicated. As, for instance, the number of pieces of silver which were to be given in His betrayal, the person that was to betray him, and the manner of His betraying—even His dying cry on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” And if you will study carefully the twenty-second Psalm you will find—what is not revealed in the English translation, but which is clearly seen in the Hebrew—it is a psalm of sobs, broken up into fragmentary sentences—“My God, My God . . . forsaken me? Far from helping me . . . words of my roaring!” You will find it all set down there, —a dying person, just about entering the unseen world, breath failing, —the physical energies exhausted, voice scarcely adequate to the pronunciation of a single word—it is gasp after gasp. That twenty-second psalm is a psalm full of gasps. It represents some sufferer pierced in hands and feet,

naked, exposed to the view of the people, his muscles subject to the severest tension (as they were in crucifixion), his bones protruding as it were from the skin, in an agony of suffering tortured with awful thirst, surrounded by wild men insatiate for his blood!—it gives you all these various particulars in that vicarious agony. Not only so, but there are even paradoxes with regard to our Lord that never were explained until He came on earth to suffer and die. I cannot stop to speak of them, but you will find instances of them in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah,—more than ten are remarkably given there. He was to be despised and rejected, yet a Saviour; He was to die, and yet He was to live; He was to be taken from prison and from judgment, as a condemned malefactor, and yet justify transgressors; He was to be without natural offspring, and yet was to see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, having a numerous seed. Before Christ came all these mysterious sayings were dark enigmas, never understood, but when He appeared, and His life and death unrolled before men, it was like Champollion, standing before the obelisks of Egypt and translating the inscriptions that had stood unread and undeciphered for thousands of years.

This Bible of God is a marvellous book. It vindicates its august claim to be the Word of God, the Revelation of the only way of salvation, and the biography of the marvellous Person, the Person of the ages, the Lord Jesus Christ,—and as I connect the first part, with the second part of my theme, let me say that the vindication of this Bible is found on the very surface of it, by anyone who will look. You need not go and read botany, geology, mineralogy, or kindred sciences to find confirmation of this Word of God. Here is the document, and here is the seal and signature of God affixed to the

document, it is the seal and signature of prophetic prediction historically fulfilled, and the little child, the man of little brains and common education, can read in both its Testaments, can compare the prophecies of the Old with the historic portraits of the New, and can see that outline, that sketch that is begun in Genesis, to which delineation after delineation is added by the pencils of the prophets, taking on flesh-tints and colouring when the Evangelists add to the prophetic portrait what they had known and seen and handled of the Word of Life.

Now, with regard to the *vindication* of this august claim set up for the Word of God. In the first place, as I have indicated, it is tried by the test of *Time*.

Time is itself a grand test of all institutions and of all literature. You remember that this Bible is the oldest book existing in our day, and that it is almost the only book that comes down to us from distant ages that is unmutilated. What means the disappearance of almost all ancient literature and the sole survival of this as the most ancient of all books? Remember also that there was every reason why the Bible should not have survived, for it encountered from the beginning the resolute and desperate antagonism of the human race. The Bible is the only book on theology or morals that does not cater to mankind. It assaults man at every point,—it rebukes sin, it rebukes selfishness, it rebukes worldliness, it has no affiliations this side of Heaven. It resembles the snows that descend on the mountain tops; only as they melt and pour their streams down the mountain side, the water never comes to us in absolute purity,—you can only find that on the mountain tops themselves, in the newly fallen snow. The Word of God belongs to the mountain tops, and all else on this human level bears the marks of man, and belongs to the earthly level. The Word of God

is the only thing that comes down from the mountain tops without taking up the filth and the defilement of earth. But, as I was going to say, the wonderful thing about the Bible is, that, meeting as it does with the antagonism of man at every point, it has survived! This is the book toward which the rage of man has been pointed. This is the book which monarchs have associated all the force of their armies and all the power of their edicts, to burn and bury and annihilate, and yet here it is, not a book lost, not a sentence irretrievably gone, it is all here. And not only so, but if you should take every copy of the Bible out of the earth to-night by some strange miracle, if it were possible to destroy every Old Testament, and every New Testament, and every fragmentary portion of the Word of God, every verse of this Bible could be collected from current literature. It is interwoven through the literature of the ages. When this question was raised, long, long ago, of taking the Bible out of human society, Dalrymple—you know he had a fancy for such researches—undertook to find out how much of the Bible could be found in the literature of the first four centuries, and after a few months' search he found every verse, except seven, and he said he believed a little further search would disclose the seven. To-day one-half the literature of the civilised and enlightened nations revolves about the Word of God and two-thirds of it never could have existed in its present form, if it had not been for the Word of God. The apologetic literature that crystallizes about the Word of God is very large, but the literature that attacks the Word of God is still larger, and viewed from the broad foundation of common-sense and reason the assaults on the Bible are as great a vindication of its divine origin as the documents defending it. Men do not worry themselves beating down a man of straw ;

it is the substantial value of the Word of God, it is its imperishable excellence, that makes it an object to assault it and undermine the confidence of people in it; but after all these centuries of strife, after all these milleniums of opposition, the Bible has more adherents to-day in the world than it ever had, and more devoted and earnest believers that would go to the stake for the sake of it, than it ever had in any past generation!

Again, the Bible has been tried by the test of *Truth*. I think one of the most remarkable things about the Bible is this consistency with all truth; and I would like to meet the scientists—so-called—with regard to their affirmations that the Bible is hopelessly in antagonism with modern science. The glory of this book is its truthfulness as to God and men and nature. Now, if there is one test which, being applied to the Word of God, might be supposed presumably to be a test that could not be successfully applied, it is the scientific. And here I want to say, without pretending to being a scientist, that after having, for thirty years, studied the Word of God on the one hand, and natural science on the other hand, I challenge any one man to bring a single established fact of modern science against which the Bible hopelessly militates! Now, let us remember that this Bible is the oldest book, hence it might reasonably be supposed that the errors which obtained in ancient days would certainly have found their way into it, as they found their way into every other book. What was known about all these sciences when Moses began to write? Supposing, according to one discovery of "higher criticism," the Bible did originate in later times, and not in the times ascribed to it, even then these sciences were not understood. How is it that not an error has crept into this Bible? Now, let me stop to define. I do

not say there is no language adapted to popular apprehension which comes into the Bible, that there is no popular language that finds its way there ; but we have the same thing in modern conversation. I sat down with a gentleman of high scientific attainments, who said that he went up the Alps to see the sun rise. The sun did not rise, the horizon went down ; the sun never arose and never set, the earth simply revolved on its axis. Well now, if we use in common talk, what is incorrect scientifically, but is justified by popular usage, may not the Bible do the same thing ? We speak of dew as being distilled in the far-off depths of heaven, whereas we know that dew is nothing but atmosphere giving up vapour, depositing moisture at the touch of a cooler surface, as the ice-pitcher in the dining-room condenses and collects the vapour from the air ; the pitcher is making dew, that is all, and it is not coming from very far off, either. These are simple instances of popular language, and find their way into the Bible as a matter of course ; but they do not contradict science—they have nothing to do with science. The Bible is not a scientific book, its object is not to depict scientific truth, and therefore we cannot expect to find it teaching science ; nevertheless, God is the Author of it, as He is the Author of all truth, and therefore I willingly concede that it is inconceivable that God should fill the Bible with scientific lies, because its object is not the teaching of scientific truth. It claims to be the Word of God. There is but one way that we may form in our own mind in which it can be true scientifically, and yet not anticipate scientific discovery. If there be terms which can be selected from human speech that are so elastic and flexible as that without disclosing scientific facts in advance, they may accommodate themselves to scientific facts when discovered, it would seem that

that is the best thing that could be done by the writers of the Bible in the matter of expression touching science. It is the very thing that has been done. You open at the first chapter of Genesis, and what do you find in the very first chapter? You find the word firmament. Now, the ancients believed that the concave above us was a solid concave of metal, and that the stars were fixed in that concave, and that it revolved in diurnal rotation around the earth. That word "firmament" finds its way into the Bible, because it was the closest word to express, in the minds of the translators, the Hebrew word "rakiya," but the Hebrew word means simply "*expanse*;" had Moses been Ormsby McKnight Mitchell, or one of your grandest astronomers in the British Empire, like Rosse or Herschell, he could not have chosen a word that would more accurately express the exact fact, then unknown to men, that there is simply an *expanse* of space between the stars and the earth.

Well, I know it is said that Moses and geology are hopelessly at war! What does geology teach? As far as it teaches anything it teaches a wild watery waste, then the arising of the continents above the surface of the water, the appearance of the sun and moon in the heavens, after the moisture of the fog and the mist had been dispersed on the third creative day; then the growth of enormous vegetation, in its three forms of plant, herb and tree; then the creation of animals, from lower types up to man. Just exactly *that order* does Moses follow in the six creative days, and his is the only ancient book that touches on cosmogony that does not teach nonsense. If I take the old East Indian books what is the system of cosmogony I find there? I will give it to you, as nearly as I can:

"Ages upon ages ago this earth began to be. It was made in seven stories of flat triangular plains

resting upon the heads of elephants with their tails turned out! And the elephants were supported upon a great tortoise, and the tortoise rested upon the coil of a great snake, and the snake rested upon—nobody knows what!" That is Indian cosmogony. Compare it with Moses' sublime account of creation. Will you tell me who it was that so guided Moses that he should not use a single term anywhere in his account of the six days of the creation that should not be accordant with the discoveries of modern science? Comparative anatomy has shewn within the last two hundred years, that the order of creation was from a lower type to a higher. It began with the fish, the proportion of whose brain to the spinal cord (which is accepted as the standard) is two to one. Then came the reptiles, two and a-half to one; then the birds, three to one; then mammals, four to one, and then followed man with thirty-three to one as his ratio. Absolutely Moses' order! Who taught Moses comparative anatomy? Who can account for the mistakes that Moses—didn't make?

I have touched rapidly on a few of the different sciences, that you may see the marvellous elasticity of the phraseology of the Scriptures, how it anticipates science, like the acorn enfolding the germ of the mighty oak, yet to grow and be expanded in time. Here, for instance, is astronomy. Now, we read in Jeremiah that "the hosts of heaven cannot be numbered," even as "the sand upon the seashore cannot be measured." That might have been regarded simply as a poetic exaggeration, but it is a considerable exaggeration even for a poet, because, when Hipparchus made his estimate of the number of the stars, he counted and catalogued them, as it was done also by Ptolemy, and it was found that there were in the entire concave of Heaven about 3,130 that could be counted. Well, if Jeremiah understood the

simple principles of arithmetic, he could surely count 3,130? He could hardly intimate that they were as countless as the sands of the seashore? But when Galileo turned his telescope to Heaven, he found it to be no poetic imagination or exaggeration, for when that rude brazen tube was turned to the stars it began to be seen that they were countless,—but when Lord Rosse turned his great reflector to the skies, four hundred millions became visible and countable; and when Herschel began, from the foot of the dark continent, to explore, he found the Milky Way, that stretches its white banner across the firmament, comprised simply millions upon millions of stars, that stand like countless warriors in serried ranks, mustered so closely that only the light that flashes from their silver helmets reaches our eyes! Who taught Jeremiah astronomy? Who led him to use poetic phraseology that exactly accommodates the facts of modern science, though those facts were not discovered until thousands of years after? Still take another example, and this, from the mysteries of optics. Now, I suppose, amongst the last discoveries of science are the facts with regard to light. Let me repeat a few facts which are familiar. You take a rod, and suspend it in the air, and start it vibrating, and it will give forth sounds, going from the lowest to the highest, but when they become so rapid that the vibration can no longer be represented in sound, the vibration passes to colour, through the whole order of the colours of the spectrum, and when it can no longer be represented by colour, it becomes—**LIGHT!** So that light is really music. Did you ever think of it? And the reason we do not hear the music in the light is because our senses are not attuned to those high vibrations. The lowest we can hear in the scale is $16\frac{1}{3}$ vibrations to the second, and the highest we can hear is 38,000 to the second, and

when it gets beyond 38,000 we cannot discover it as sound vibration, but it reveals itself to us in colour, and then in light. Now, do not you see that light is a form of vibration, or motion, akin to music? Let us turn to the Holy Word; I could give you a dozen passages, but let us take two—"The morning stars sang together." It took a good deal of intrepidity on the part of our translators, to translate the Hebrew word "ranan," which means to vibrate like a musical chord, "sang," but it absolutely expresses the fact, and to the ear of God the morning stars are singing. "Thou makest the out-goings of the morning and evening to rejoice." It is the same Hebrew word, to give forth tremulous vibrations, like a musical instrument. "Thou makest the out-goings of the morning and evening to vibrate musically." Who taught the prophet and psalmist to use language which exactly accommodates itself to modern discoveries, made within the last thirty-five years, that light is like music, a form of vibrating motion? Compare also Psalm xix., where light and sound are strongly associated.

Take another instance of scientific accuracy. Solomon says in the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes: "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel be broken at the cistern." I suppose we all understand that life is a kind of quadruped, it goes on four legs. There is the brain, the respiratory system, the heart, and the nervous system. What did Solomon know about physiology? And yet look at the marvellous description. The "silver cord" is the spinal marrow that passes down the back, from it the double system of sensor and motor nerves radiate in every direction; loosen that, you die. Pass your dissecting saw horizontally through the cranium, turn over the top of the skull, it is a "golden bowl"

that holds the brain; shatter it, life departs. Open the chest, you find here the lungs, the "pitcher" close to the fountain of life, shaped like a pitcher, with a spout like a pitcher; it takes in the air, and it pours out the air; this is the "pitcher at the fountain." Now look closer, here is the heart, it draws up the blood through pipes of blue, it pulses forth the blood through pipes of crimson, exactly as the "wheel" at the ancient cistern used to draw up the water through one set of pipes and propel it through another! Who taught Solomon to use language which accommodates itself to Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, hundreds and hundreds of years before the circulation of the blood was thought of?

And so in every department of science you may go through this Word of God, and you will find no single well-established fact of science contradicted in this Holy Scripture anywhere. I know that infidels often try to make out that there is a good deal of antagonism between the Word of God and their "science." There is, and there ought to be! When they find anything that they think is a fact, and they think it bears against the Holy Scriptures, they ram it into their gun with a double charge of powder, and fire, and expect to see the defences of Christianity totter under the tremendous shock of their artillery! But lo, the walls stand, and there is not even a breach, not one stone fallen out, not even the mark of an impact. If you come to examine, you will find that instead of hurling some huge solid shot of hard fact against the walls of Christianity, they have been simply firing a paper wad of their own fanciful theory, which took fire from their own powder before it got out of the mouth of the gun! Let science become settled and established, let us pass from the domain of hypothesis to unquestioned and accredited fact,

and then bring these facts to compare with the Word of God, and there is no collision. Or, if there appear to be conflict, it is only like the failure of stereoscopic views to come together into one complete picture, when we look first into the eyepiece. We have only to wait until we get the common focal centre in which the visual rays may coincide, and the pictures will come into harmony. So all we have to do is just to wait and be patient until we get the eye on the proper focal centre, and all the facts and truths of science, and all the statements of the Word of God will harmonize absolutely and come into place.

Well, a word about the *ethical* truth of the Bible. I think it is quite remarkable that the Bible should not only teach ethical truths so sublime and magnificent, but that it should actually contain within the compass of its ethical teachings not a single grain of error. Find me within this entire Word of God one solitary immoral teaching—one solitary thing that justifies sin! I know some people say David caused those people that he conquered to be sawn asunder, to be scraped and torn to pieces by harrows, to be split asunder by axes, and burnt up in lime-kilns! Yes—if you do not know any more about it than that, he did. But suppose that that word “made them to pass under” only means what it meant in Roman days for people to pass under the yoke, why then he simply set them to work at lime-kilns, drawing harrows, cutting down trees and using saws; quite different, is it not? But it is astonishing to see how eager some people are to get a shot against the Bible. They do not stop to see if there is anything in their hand, but if it only appears to be something that can be hurled against the Word of God, away it goes! It reminds me of the strictures of one of the Boston papers, stating that the whole story of the quails in the wilderness was absolutely absurd, because

Moses represented them as falling on the earth several cubits high ; and an estimate was made by the editor as to how many each Hebrew would have for his breakfast, dinner, and supper, and how many he would have over to give to the heathen neighbours around about ! If I should tell you that, coming along some rural district, I saw a flock of quails three cubits high, you would not think I saw them *piled* three cubits high, but *flying* three cubits high, so that I could take a stick and knock them down easily. That is exactly what Moses meant, that they came within reaching distance so that they could be easily knocked down. He did not consider, I dare say, that the newspapers were ever going to be published, or gather such absurdity from the language he used. As I have said, the ethical truth of the Bible is marvellous,—no condoning of offences, no commending of iniquities,—the purest moral code ever found in the world, absolutely free from all adulteration. And then, when you come to its splendid conceptions, look at the spiritual truth,—think of God, Eternal, Omniscient, Omnipresent, Infinite, All-wise, just, good, merciful, true, a Spirit, and a Spiritual God. And then think of the fact that there are no half-truths in this Bible,—I think that is also most marvellous. I will give you one illustration if you will bear with me. Take the fifteenth chapter of Luke, it is a most instructive chapter, it contains three illustrations, three revelations as to the “lost, found.” It is a common thing for ministers of the Gospel and commentators to say that it contains *three* parables ; it contains only one. He “spake *this* parable unto them ;” it is in three forms of representation ; he does not pass to the second and third and say “another parable,” because it is one parable illustrating one great subject, and there are three divisions or representations. We recognize the trend

of the parable, it is how the lost is found. I simply want to call attention to the fact that no half-truths are presented in this chapter. The first part of this parable is the shepherd seeking the lost sheep and carrying it back on the shoulder ; it is not even led or driven home, but is borne home on the shoulder, the place of strength. In the second part the woman loses a piece of silver from her necklace, and sweeps the whole house until she finds it, but even when found it must be lifted up, and placed there upon the necklace among its fellows. Well, after you have got these two representations you might suppose that, in the matter of salvation, God does all and man has nothing to do ; he is simply the sheep, lost by wandering, to be found and brought back, or like the senseless coin on which the image and superscription of God was once placed, which, by contact with the world, and currency in a worldly society, has had that image and superscription defaced, if not effaced ; and which must be picked up by the Spirit of God, who with His lit candle searches for the lost soul among the rubbish of this world, and who reclaims it and puts it on the necklace of the Bride of Christ. Christ does not leave us with these half-truths, and perplex us by omissions, but, for the symmetry of truth, he gives us the third representation that completes the three-fold parable : A certain man had two sons. You notice the son did all the straying, and he does all the returning. He comes to himself, he repents, he resolves, he confesses, he takes the attitude of reconciliation, and he is met by the Father, but there is nothing done by the Father *except to run and meet him* when he has come home. So you have the grand truths of salvation presented, first from one hemisphere—God's side, and then from the other hemisphere—man's side. Well, I have always felt myself to be, as near as one might express it, a

Calvinist, but I do not think that Calvin possessed a monopoly of truth ; I do not think he was as infallible as the Bible is. Now, I think that Calvin offset the mischievous emphasis that had been placed upon the agency of man in salvation by taking his position on God, and he made the will of God the centre of his system, and taking his position on God the necessary effect was that man dwindled into insignificance. Let me illustrate. Suppose you are studying the solar system, and can take your flight through space. You take your stand upon the earth ; now, the earth fills the horizon, and the sun is merely the largest luminary in the Heavens, it is far off and small, and the earth close at hand is a great body. Now, will you take your place on the sun ? The sun fills the horizon, and you do not even see the earth ! The way to study the solar system is to get *midway between* the earth and the sun, and then you will get an idea of the proportions of the two. Arminius took his stand on man, man filled the horizon, and God appeared comparatively small. Calvin took his stand on God, and God so completely filled the horizon that man dwindled into insignificance, if he did not disappear altogether ! Now the difference between Divine and human teaching is this, that man takes one position from which to view truth, and so sees it only partially,—when God teaches truth He gives us both sides of the sphere. He puts half-truth to half-truth, and so when Christ taught about the soul He first took His stand on God, and man seemed to be nothing but simply a lost soul recovered by infinite mercy, brought back by infinite grace, into the fold, fastened again to the necklace of the Bride of Christ,—as stupid as a sheep that knows not when it wanders, as senseless as a coin that does not even know that it is lost or ever bore an image and superscription of an imperial character. But when Christ

has shewn us that half-truth, He wheels around and shews us the other half-truth,—if from the one side of salvation God does everything, from the other side, man does everything ; and it is only when you put the two together that you have the rounded sphere of truth, that links salvation both with the activity of God and the responsive activity of man. God elects a man to be a saved man, and man elects God to be his God and Saviour, and so the wonderful test of truth in the Bible is the ethical completeness of it, and the spiritual sublimity of it.

Now there is one other test that I wish to apply. I have spoken of the survival of the Bible as the fittest, and the only fit, to survive. I have spoken of the test of truth. I want to say one word, in conclusion, about the trial of practical *life*. Now, as to this crucial test of the Word of God and of every other system, let me simply call your attention to one verse that may be found in Paul's pastoral letter to Timothy : "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness : that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Here the five objects of the Word of God are indicated ; without amplifying upon them at all, let me refer to these five objects set down here, as reached by the Word of God.

First—Doctrine or Teaching—revealing truth that we never could have found out in any other possible way. Second—Reproof—meaning that the Word of God deals with the conscience, that is, it sends its dart into the moral sense, and arouses the whole man to see he is a sinner against God and man ; and then thirdly—the Word of God is for correction. The word means literally, setting upright. Man is fallen, the Word of God sets him upright and turns his feet into the way, restores him when erring. And the

fourth object is—"Instruction in Righteousness,"—more fully training the disciple for every good work. He has had truth revealed by the Bible that he could not otherwise have discovered; his conscience aroused, he has been set upright, corrected, restored; now he is to be taught in righteousness. It is the kind of teaching referred to by Christ when He said, "Go, disciple of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, *teaching* them to observe, etc."; there is the instruction that comes after the setting upright, it is the training in righteousness, it is training the man to be a veteran soldier in Christ. And fifthly and finally, it is the furnishing him in all good works for service in the Kingdom of God. That is the practical test of the Bible; wherever it has gone it has taught men what they did not know and could not have found out for themselves, it has pricked the conscience and reproved man of sin, it has aroused the will to holy resolve and set the man right before God, once more made an upright man of him, it has turned him out a skilled soldier and warrior, and it has furnished him as a workman for all good service.

Here is God's House-Beautiful. It is a Palace. You may enter by simple faith, and you may ascend to its topmost story by simple obedience. It is a grandly-furnished Palace. It has in it a refectory, with milk for babes, with bread and strong meat for those that can assimilate such food, and with honey sweet and delicious to the taste, and the Water of Life. He brings us to the banqueting-house, and His banner over us is Love. In this House-Beautiful is a lavatory, where is at once a laver and a mirror. You come up to it, and in the clear, still surface you discover, as in a mirror, your deformity and defilement, and in the same water in the laver, which, as a mirror, discloses your defilement, you may wash your

defilement away. In that same apartment there is a fountain of blood that is more efficient even than the laver of the Word, for while the laver of the Word sanctifies, it cannot justify. You may come to the fountain of Blood to be justified, and then, by the Blood and the Word and the Spirit, together, you shall be sanctified and perfected in holiness. In that same Palace-Beautiful there is a dormitory where the tired and worn and weary pilgrim lies down as in a chamber of peace and looks out through the window towards the sunrise and beholds the Delectable Mountains, and refreshes himself for the toils and strifes and conflicts of the coming day. In that same blessed Palace-Beautiful is God's gallery, where He has arranged before us portraits of prophets and saints, and martyrs, and apostles, and, above, the immaculate portrait of the Son of God. In that same Palace-Beautiful there is a conservatory where the very plants, and flowers, and fruits of the Celestial City may both be perceived and partaken of; and if by obedience you ascend the spiral staircase, you shall come last of all to the observatory, whose windows look out on celestial scenes themselves, and through the cloudless atmosphere you shall get a glimpse of the face of God.



PIERSON'S PAPERS FOR THINKING PEOPLE.

No. 4.

The Two Great Laws of the Sermon.

I. THE GERMINAL LAW.

THE theme of this paper is not pulpit *elocution*, but pulpit *oratory*. This latter word is often inaccurately used. It properly represents the science and the art of attractive and effective speech; it implies the design to convince and persuade; and oratory includes mainly *four* elements—*invention*, *disposition*, *expression*, and *delivery*. Sacred oratory includes one other element unknown to the schools, viz., *unction*.

The space allotted allows only a rapid glance at two fundamental principles of pulpit oratory, which, for want of any better terms, we shall call the *germinal* and the *terminal laws*. The one represents the beginning; the other, the end of the ideal sermon. One pertains rather to analysis; the other, to synthesis: one is more subjective, the other more objective. But these principles are *fundamental*:

they lie at the basis of all supremely effective pulpit discourse. Perhaps it would be a finer figure to call them respectively the cornerstone and capstone in the sermonic structure.

I. *The germinal law.* A sermon differs from all other forms of public speech in this: *it is the unfolding of a Scripture germ.* A sermon is, in idea and ideal, the use of the Word of God, as it is found in the Bible, to save and sanctify souls, by an anointed tongue. It is the divine science of "thinking God's thoughts after God;" it is the divine art of mediating between God and man, as His mouthpiece; and is what Paul Veronese called painting,—“a gift from God.”

The *germ* of a true sermon is a “*Thus saith the Lord.*” All its authority and power hang upon the assertion and vindication of this Scriptural character. We cannot unfold or expand a Scriptural germ until we first *have the germ*, and then, like other germs, *bury it.* We must begin with the thorough and habitual search into the Scriptures, getting as near to the heart of the original as possible, “comparing spiritual things with spiritual,” until we get a clear and sure conception of the mind of God. Then must follow a process of spiritual, prayerful *meditation*, akin to the ruminating process with cattle. This corresponds to the burial of the seed, and germination results. The Word, born of God, is born again of us. It becomes flesh; it incarnates itself in our conviction, affection, sensibility, and thus prepares for that consummate incarnation of speech. The supreme test of a sermon is the development, in the preacher, of this Scripture germ, rooting itself in him, and sprouting and growing upward and outward, until it blooms into a sort of celestial speech.

Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon this fundamental law of the sermon. There must be

thorough *preparation*, and that preparation is, above all, scriptural and spiritual. "Expression is the result of impression," says Farrar. The depth and grasp of the impression will determine the fulness and power of the expression. Our peril is to learn to do our work easily. Facility and felicity in the merely literary processes, and fluency and beauty in utterance, are often mistaken for pulpit power. The homiletical faculty is substituted for a mind and heart and tongue infused, suffused, transfused with the very Spirit, who is the breath, the light, the life of the Word. The intellectual and human displaces the spiritual and divine.

Why is so much preaching powerless to save or sanctify? We answer: a stream rises to no higher level than its source. Preaching is spreading God's truth over the whole man, applying it to intellect, sensibilities, affections, conscience, will; and as the tree's expansion, above ground in branches, corresponds to its expansion below ground in roots; so we are prepared to *apply truth to others only so far as it has first been applied to ourselves*. God's Word must have the man behind it to reach the man before it: it must come forth, backed by a rich personal experience, if it is to be effective.

Contrast with this *germinal* principle, which demands that every sermon have its germ in the Word of God, and get its growth in prayerful meditation and the enriching soil of spiritual experience;—contrast with this the wretched travesties, miscalled sermons, whose connection with the Word of God is fictitious or factitious; which announce themselves in flashing, sensational advertisements; which robe themselves in tawdry rhetoric; which, for lack of specific gravity, abound in specific levity, and turn the place of prayer into a place of pulpit buffoonery, or, at best, of secular entertainment!

The true sermon has its divine *genesis*: it begins in God. The Spirit broods over the preacher; the chaos of confused and dim conceptions and perceptions is resolved into order. God says, "Let there be light," and there is light. Then comes separation between heavenly and earthly things, and celestial glories clearly appear, like stars in a cloudless firmament.

Preaching that begins in such a *genesis* ends in an *apocalypse* of Jesus Christ; a revelation of the things of God, which fits a man to speak with strange authority and power to the churches. Some Word of God, some thought of God, has taken root downward and borne fruit upward. It is no mere intellectual growth, branching out into analytical ramifications of exhaustive argument, and blossoming into the flowers of variegated rhetoric. Men instinctively feel that it is a more than human product. They are overawed. The man preaching is the mouthpiece of God; the sermon is a burning bush, radiant and glowing with the strange flame that impels reverent souls to remove the sandals of criticism. In presence of the scaphic Whitefield, the cold, calculating Franklin was warmed; and the philosophical, sceptical Hume, felt the icy bonds of his unbelief melting; but it was the supernatural element in those sermons that swayed men so mightily.

This germinal law implies also a *scriptural dialect*. To the sprouting grain, God "giveth a body, as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body." So, to the vital principle, which is the germinal principle of life in His own seed of truth, God, has given "*his own body*," for which human culture can never successfully substitute any other. Moreover, "there are bodies celestial and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one and the glory of the terrestrial is another." To join the *body* of

terrestrial eloquence to the *soul* of celestial truth, makes that truth of none effect. The divine soul will, and must, have its own body, and the glory must be celestial alone. Then there is not only harmony and unity, but men hear heaven's message in heaven's dialect, and give glory only unto God. The fashion of the dress fits the form it clothes; the Spirit of God takes a fitting incarnation in speech. The sermon shapes even its *utterance* on a divine model.

This is what Paul means, when he says: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (I Cor. ii. 13). He rightly conceived the Gospel as having a dialect of its own. The secret of effective preaching lies, first, in a vital spiritual *insight* into the truths of the Gospel, and then in the *use of a form of words* shaped by that spiritual insight. Unction begins in anointed eyes that see the truth with a divine clearness, and ends in an anointed tongue, a sacred chrism of fragrance and power upon the utterance.

Hence Paul not only confined his preaching to those *themes*, which find their root and germ in Christ crucified; but even these he would not preach with *wisdom of words*, lest the cross of Christ be made of none effect; lest the human rhetorician displace the divine ambassador.

This naturally vain and ambitious man, with his double culture in Hebrew and Greek schools, felt the power of a subtle temptation that has proved a fatal fruit of a forbidden tree to many a man of great powers. He would not veil the homely Gospel message behind the golden and silver tissues of ornate speech, dazzling by a show of wisdom and genius, connecting and corrupting the wisdom of God's teaching with human speculations, however sagacious;

nor would he robe spiritual truth in the scholastic gown of secular learning, as though he were presenting only a higher school of philosophy. He would have the fashion of his divine message suit and fit its divine form and feature, and not clothe it with a word-dress spotted by the flesh. And so this foremost preacher and evangelist became the mighty vehicle for the Truth of God in the dialect of God.

The heart that dictates these words throbs with profound conviction that in many a pulpit to-day this saving Gospel is of none effect, because robed in unsanctified rhetoric; the preacher speaks rather as a scholar, logician, philosopher, than as a herald and witness for Christ. The Gospel's simplicity is veiled: it is lifted above the level of the average man; and attention is diverted from the Word of God to the golden mouthed Chrysostom. Such preachers, like the Pharisees, *have* their reward: they call forth a cold intellectual assent, awaken an æsthetic pleasure, perhaps kindle a glow of sentimental enthusiasm; but they fail to pierce the heart with the arrow of God, grapple the conscience, move the will, or mould the life. The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God; but it pierces, not when worn, sheathed in scholarly culture, or swung in air to show the flashing diamonds with which learning decks its hilt, but when drawn from its scabbard, it is thrust naked into the quivering soul of the hearer. The Gospel demands its peculiar sacred dialect. The Spirit chooses His own channels through which to pour His flood of grace. Nettleton slowly repeated his text, "I thought on my ways and turned my feet to Thy testimonies;" and, before he began to speak, the Spirit's sword had thrust a vast audience through.

A famous Scotchman had so often noted the power of a Scripture dialect, that he declared that it is always some Word of God that smites the sinner, and

that the word of man only *feathers God's arrow*, helping to carry it straight to its mark. There was a preacher of the last century whose splendid pulpit orations eclipsed any others of his day. Not one conversion can now be traced to those sermons; while an unlettered evangelist, whose refined pastor thirty years ago counselled him to keep still, has moved two continents by holding up the cross.

We preachers need a revived faith in the converting power of God's Word, unsheathed in human apologies or apologetics. We are often drawn down by challenge of critical culture and scientific scepticism upon the plain, in the vain attempt to cope with human learning or fight these Syrian scientists and sceptics with their own weapons. But if we would keep on the hill of Calvary, and Tabor, and Olivet, lifting the cross so high that all might see Christ crucified and be drawn to Him who bare our sins, we might convince and convert those whom all our arguments and eloquence neither touch nor reach. Theremin rightly insists that "eloquence is a virtue." The true preacher is not a scholar, dialectician, rhetorician, but a witness, speaking of what he knows, testifying of what he has seen, having power to convince and persuade, because himself convinced and persuaded.

II. THE TERMINAL LAW.

II. The *Terminal Law*. By this is meant the *end* or terminus kept in view. A sermon is "*sermo*," a speech aimed at a definite end,—a result in the convictions, affections, resolutions of the hearer. The germinal law gives us the *starting point*; the terminal law, the *goal*, of sacred discourse.

There are *three* elements in pulpit oratory, either of which may be supreme and controlling: the *text*

the *subject* or theme, and the *object* or end aimed at. If the *text* rule, it becomes an *exposition or exegesis*; if the *subject*, it is an *essay or discourse*; only when the *object* to be attained is steadily kept in view and controls the disposition of its parts and the expression and delivery do we get, *properly*, a *sermon*. The first thing to be determined in framing the normal sermon is this: What spiritual result do I set out to secure? Having first chosen an *end* to be reached, then, what is the best *subject* to reach this object, and then what is the best *text* from which to develop this subject.

That other methods are employed with some success may be true. Many a man starts with a *subject* that he wishes to discuss; but the risk here is of accommodating the text to the theme rather than the theme to the text. In many such cases, the notion which governs the sermon is found first in the preacher's brain, not in the mind of God; and hence comes a use of Scripture, often so foreign to its original sense and purpose, that it sometimes degenerates into caricature. Others start with a *text*, which seems to them attractive or effective, and without any specific end in view, it is elaborated into an exposition. Here, again, there is a risk of undertaking to display ingenuity and originality in interpretation, instructing and interesting the hearer, without grappling with his conscience and will, as in the most energetic and effective oratory.

However successful either of these methods may seem to be, they violate a fundamental principle of the sermon; and, in fact, any measure of success which they represent will be found to be owing to the conscious or unconscious influence of a definite purpose which is *evolved in the process* of sermon-making and reacts upon the product, so that the discourse is remodelled after it has begun to be wrought.

Again we affirm, the normal method is to *begin with a definite result*, toward which all else is to move; then let choice of theme and of text be with reference to that result. Otherwise a sermon, however original as an essay or ingenious as an exposition, lacks *oratorical power*; as Whately said, the man "aims at nothing and hits it." The pulpit orator needs, of all others, a supremely engrossing purpose. Then Betterton's remark to the Lord Bishop of London will no longer be true: "Actors speak of things imaginary as though real; preachers, of things real, as though imaginary."

These are fundamental principles of pulpit-oratory, and if they could, by becoming governing laws, revolutionize modern preaching, an era of power, never known since the day of Pentecost, would come to the church.

The whole training of ministers, and the trend and drift of discussion, tend largely to a vicious standard of pulpit preparation and effectiveness. We are taught to cultivate a "high literary style," to aim at "eloquence." We are suspicious of such terminology as applied to preaching. The pulpit is not a place for literary display. Like the style of Atticus, the preacher's style, when "unadorned, is adorned the most;" like woman, sweeter without perfumery. Buffon said, "*Le style! C'est l'homme.*" We would go further: Style, in a true preacher, is God speaking through him: it is what he is, as a godly man, an anointed messenger, inspired to speak for God.

As to eloquence, it may be doubted whether, as Pascal suggests, preaching is a proper field for eloquence, save in that divine sense of speaking with the power of a supernatural conviction and persuasion.

All this cultivation of style, this aspiration toward eloquence, *tends to self-consciousness*. Instead of absorption in the truth, and passion for souls, we

become hypercritical. A slip of pen or tongue, an ungrammatical or unrhetorical blemish, annoys and disconcerts the ambassador of God ; while, on the other hand, a musical sentence, decorously wrought and sonorously uttered, a figure ingeniously elaborated, an original idea flashing its brilliance, pleases and awakens self-complacency. Both our annoyance and our satisfaction divert our mind from our divine vocation and grieve the Spirit of God. Our pride and our humiliation are alike unseemly, and, like a godless repentance, need to be repented of.

Much has been said on the *secret of unction*, that indescribable charm and power that invest the anointed preacher. And one thing is sure,—*unction and self-consciousness never go together*. He whom God fills, forgets himself, and whatever recalls him to himself from this self-unconsciousness, hinders the free flow of God's power through him ; recognizing himself as a power for God only when filled with God, he cultivates this holy engrossment, that he may have the divine endowment and enduement. A false standard of pulpit eloquence is absolutely fatal to this divine anointing.

The sense of the awful responsibility of preaching must, when truly awakened, lead to self-oblivion. "It is curious," said Prof. George Wilson, "the feeling of having an audience like clay in your hands to mould for a season as you please. It is a terribly responsible power." Responsible indeed ! "Probation" is the period of the soul's life, when as yet the final decision is not yet made either for God or against Him. To decide one way *is* salvation ; to decide the other way *is* damnation. Hence *probation may end, while you are preaching, and salvation or damnation may begin*. "Who is sufficient for these things?" While you are turning aside to indulge a flight of poetic fancy, elaborate a figure, indulge a pleasantry,

or create a diversion ; while you are giving way to Satan, who stands at every priest's right hand to resist him, you may lose your grip upon a soul almost persuaded ; your hand may let up its pressure just as the scale is turning for God !

When a man gets such a conception of a sermon, how it lifts him above criticism ! What irreverent impertinence it becomes in the hearer to pull out his watch, when the half hour is up, as though a discourse, which is born of God and aimed at a definite and divine end, could arbitrarily be cut off at the expiration of thirty minutes, while the argument and appeal were yet incomplete. This bowing to a senseless clamor for short sermons is unworthy of a true preacher. *A crystal of truth*, like any other crystal, must be *cleft according to its seams*. A sermon that stops short of the end which absorbs the preacher is a failure.

The ambassador of God needs intrepidity, and in nothing perhaps more than in indifference to either compliment or censure. He must dare to set up God's unhewn altar that men may look only at the slain lamb. He who, like Ahaz, brings into God's courts the elaborate carved Dasmascene altar may hear the word of human approbation of his æsthetics, but the Shekinah will grow dim. Preaching is a divine vocation, and its power must be of God.

Brethren of the ministry, let us go into the darkness and commune with God and get his whispered message ; then what we have heard in the darkness, in the ear, in the closet, let us proclaim in the light, in the ears of many, from the housetops. Let us cultivate a divine self-oblivion. When you are cultivating style and eloquence, you may hear the shouts of a multitude praising the beauty of your bow and arrows and the skill with which you handle them ; but it is only when you lose yourself in God that you hear

the groans of the wounded, which are the supreme test of your skill as an archer, and which remind us of the shrieks of the mandrake when it is pulled up by the roots. Out of God's pavilion let us come to speak to men, and let even the shining face bear witness that the chrism of a celestial presence has left with us its divine and its indescribable charm!



PIERSON'S PAPERS FOR THINKING PEOPLE.

No. 5.

Why and How Shall I Give?

THE dignity and gravity of the subject of Christian giving may be seen from the space given to it in 2 Corinthians viii., ix. Two entire chapters in this epistle are devoted to this theme. Giving lies lowest and highest in the structure of Christian life: lowest, for the idea of stewardship toward God and fellowship with man is at the bottom: highest, for the richest fruit of godliness is unselfish benevolence.

The Levitical system of giving met all needs of church support and church work. The atonement money, Levitical tithes, temple tithes, and poor tithes, with the first things and free-will offerings, left no want unsupplied.

After the dispersion, the Jews and proselytes in foreign lands sent to Jerusalem annually the sacred money, or temple tribute, which was paid as a matter of patriotism and of piety. This usage may have suggested a contribution from the Gentile churches for the Mother Church at Jerusalem during the extreme destitution which came of the social revolution, persecution, an overstocked labour market, and famine.

At the first suggestion the matter was taken up eagerly at Corinth, but not being followed up by systematic effort, easily gave place to lukewarmness, if not opposition, and the efforts of disciples to hide behind complaints that Paul was too exacting in his demands, or was even seeking private advantage.

Confident that the heart of the Corinthian converts would react in favour of what was right, Paul sought to rekindle the spirit of alms-giving. This is the historic introduction to these two chapters.

It would be impossible to exaggerate the supreme value of this perfect plea for Christian giving; for in the course of this argument, every *principle* upon which giving is founded is distinctly stated, and every *motive* which could influence Christian giving is directly appealed to; hence, when this argument is thoroughly mastered, nothing remains to be added.

Examining and analyzing both chapters, we shall find fourteen grand divisions in the argument; half of them may represent principles, and the other half motives; though it will be often apparent that motives and principles run into each other.

For unity and brevity we shall disregard the order of the verses, and group the seven principles and the seven motives in their logical order.

I. PRINCIPLES OF GIVING.

1. The Basis of Acceptable Giving is Self-giving. (See verse 5.) "They first gave their own selves unto the Lord." Compare the fiftieth Psalm, where God teaches that the wicked who hate instruction and cast His words behind him cannot offer acceptable sacrifice. This principle is fundamental, but is constantly violated. When we set out to get money, it is often without regard to the way we get it, the source from which it comes, or the effect upon the giver. We go forward to collect money even for great

Christian enterprises without reference to faith in God, to His approval of our methods, or to the encouragement of self-righteousness in the wicked man who thinks his gifts atone for his neglect of God. Paul calls attention to Macedonian consecration as the triumph of the grace of God, and so he gives us the first great principle: the grace of God *given* becomes the grace of God *giving*.

2. The Condition of Acceptable Giving. (See 8th chapter, 12th verse.) This condition embraces two things:

a. It must be with a willing mind.

b. It must be in proportion to ability.

Here it will be seen that the principle suggests a motive; for we are asked only to give what the heart prompts and the ability justifies; hence, it is no exacting demand or yoke of bondage which God lays upon us.

3. The Law of Equality. (2 Cor. viii. 13—15.) This embraces four particulars:

a. Individuality; every man is to be a giver; not even the poorest is excepted.

b. There is to be equality by participation in burden bearing, and for the obvious reason that the burden which all bear ceases to be a burden. "Many shoulders make a light load."

c. There is to be equality, again, in mutual dependence. Those who are in need of help to-day may be helpers of the needy to-morrow. (See verse 14.) There is a strange law of circularity; the big wheel of Fortune keeps turning, and those who are at the top to-day are at the bottom by-and-by. Hence, he who refuses to be almoner when he has means to give, forfeits his claim on the gifts of others when the circumstances have been reversed.

d. This law of equality contemplates a kind of brotherhood of believers, in which there shall be

neither monopoly of wealth on the one hand, nor extreme destitution on the other. This is beautifully illustrated by the reference to the manna, in the fifteenth verse. (Compare Exodus xvi. 16—18.) No man in gathering the manna found that he had either more or less than the omer to which he was entitled.

4. The Law of Bounty. (2 Cor. ix. 5—8.) This means that when our gifts are contributed, it shall be without unwillingness, regret, or a disposition to recall what we have given. It includes five things:

a. It should be made up beforehand, or laid by in store. (Compare 1 Cor. xvi. 2.) Then our bounty is always ready against the appeal of need.

b. It should be a matter of principle, not of impulse or caprice.

c. It should be from habit; constant and systematic, and not simply occasional.

d. Giving should be the fruit of deliberate choice, not of hasty decision.

e. And, finally, it should be with cheerfulness, and never with reluctance.

In this way our gifts to the Lord will not be dependent for their regularity or sufficiency upon the state of the weather when the collection is taken, or the happy manner in which the cause may be presented, or the feelings which may actuate us at the time, or the amount of money we happen just then to have on hand; such principles as these would lift our entire system of giving out of the mire of its present wretched inadequacy.

Think of the certainty and satisfactoriness of such a system of giving in contrast with the uncertainty and precariousness of any other.

5. The Law of Quantity. How much shall I give? (2 Cor. ix. 6, 7.)

a. This will differ with every individual's measure of knowledge, ability and Christian growth.

b. It will be according to how large a harvest he both desires and expects to reap. We cannot but think that this sixth verse has a deeper thought than that which lies on the surface. There is some sowing which we are justified in doing sparingly, while there are other fields so wide and so important that only he will sow with sparing hand who is governed by selfish greed.

c. The amount we give will be apportioned to the extremity and urgency of the need which appeals to us, and it is right that it should.

6. The Law of Quality. The spirit with which we give is far more important in God's eyes than the amount we bestow. (2 Cor. ix. 7.)

a. Motive determines the quality of our gifts. The question is not, How much have I given? but, How much did I mean to give and wish to give? If I give a five-dollar gold piece, where I intended to give a twenty-five cent silver piece, I get credit with God only for twenty-five cents. If I give under constraint I get credit only for what I would have given with the constraint removed; hence,

b. My gifts must not be grudgingly bestowed;

c. Nor of necessity; that is, under compulsion;

d. But cheerfully as unto the Lord, as His servant and steward. Thus it will be seen that inward moral condition determines quality. There must be deliberate preference. Grief at parting with our possessions, constrained giving for the sake of respectability, reputation, social position, or the urgency and importunity of the appeal, vitiates the character of the gift. (See Deut. xv. 10.) To illustrate: If you give a hundred dollars because your neighbour has given the same, and you are too proud to seem behind him, you have given nothing; you have simply *bought* your own respectability. Again, if you give a hundred dollars to have your name appear in the

published list of generous donors, you have given nothing; you have *paid* so much for popular applause. Again, if you give simply to get rid of an importunate beggar you have given nothing: you have simply *bought off* a nuisance.

7. The Law of Faith in God. (See 2 Cor. ix. 8—11.) We are here taught that from first to last our giving is to be the result or outworking of our vital relation to God.

a. Faith that, in giving, I am simply heeding God's call; that the hand of the poor or needy stretched out to me is really God's hand.

b. Faith that my giving is really the work of His all-sufficient grace in me; that He is working in me to will and to do.

c. Faith that the supply of the means to give is of God; that of His own I am giving Him.

d. Faith that I shall suffer no serious lack for what I have bestowed in answer to His call. (See verse 10.) This fine figure will bear examination: our substance is here compared to seed which may either be sown for a harvest, or given to one who needs to make of it bread. If I, from the seed I reserve for the sowing, give to one who is in danger of starving, God knows how to make it up to me in my harvest. Money is therefore presented to us in two aspects: as seed of a harvest, as bread for human want; and we are warned against the subtle temptation of using it all as seed instead of giving it as bread.

e. Faith in the divine approval. (See verse 7.) God loves the cheerful giver. If, therefore, my giving is an act of faith, I am sure of God's approving smile.

f. Hence, last of all, the law of faith includes the confidence of an abundant recompense. What I give, cast as seed on the waters, I shall find, even though after many days.

II. MOTIVES TO GIVING.

1. The Imitation of a Beautiful Example. (2 Cor. viii. 1—5.) Paul was eye-witness of the zeal of the Macedonians. Out of their persecution came both joy in God and loss of wordly goods; yet this joy and loss united to produce a rich liberality, or, literally, singlemindedness, that looked away from their own estate to the greater need of their brethren.

John Howard says, "Our superfluities should give way to the comforts of the poor, our comforts to their necessities, and even our necessities to their extremities."

The beauty of this Macedonian liberality lay in three things:

a. It was out of deep poverty, not of abundance.

b. It was in proportion to their ability and even beyond it.

c. It was spontaneous, entreating, rather than being entreated; instead of yielding only before importunate appeal, they besought that they might have the privilege of giving, and so exhibit the true fellowship of all saints.

2. The Necessity of a Full Chorus of Graces. (Compare 2 Peter i. 5—8.) Grace is single in bestowment, but multiform in development and manifestation. We are like reservoirs in which a single stream empties, but out of which pour many streams at different heights.

Paul says (2 Cor. viii. 7): "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." The emphasis is on this grace of giving. It is the highest up, hence the stream must rise higher in the reservoir, in order to supply this grace, than the others he has mentioned; in other words, faith, utterance, knowledge, diligence,

love, all lie on a lower level than unselfish giving. In a sense, all imparted grace is in order to the imparting.

He who in anything lives to get, defeats God's order. The end of all getting is giving; and God has connected giving with growing.

3. The practical Test of the Reality and Vitality of Love. (2 Cor. viii. 8.) The grand question is whether love is a gush of sentiment or a law of life. Dr. Judson said, that his hand was shaken nearly off and his hair almost clipped from his head by those who would let missions die for want of aid. A great deal of impression and conviction wastes through sentimentalism. It is vain to sing, "Send Thy word and let it fly," unless we give something to make it fly.

a. Love is practically tested by self-sacrifice.

b. Its sacrifice, however, must be voluntary, not obligatory. Love knows no debt but love, and acts from privilege, not from cold duty.

4. The Image of Christliness. (2 Cor. viii. 9.) Here is put before us the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.

This motive includes two things :

a. The Law of Self-denial.

We are to consider what Christ gave up, and what He took up, and, taking up our cross, follow Him. He died for all, that we which live should not henceforth live unto ourselves; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

b. The Law of Gratitude.

Appreciating His self-denial for us, and His identification with the least of His suffering saints, our gratitude for what he had done for us, should impel us to similar sacrifice for the sake of other members of His mystical body.

5. The Good Name of the Brotherhood. (See 2 Cor. viii. 21—24.) The churches form one fraternity, bound by living links. Paul had undertaken, in behalf of Corinth, to pledge their aid in this emergency; hence, the good name of the church and of the apostle was involved. It was necessary that they should make a fitting contribution:

- a. To show their fellowship with their brethren.
- b. To justify the reasonable hope of the apostle.
- c. To fulfil the obligations which he had assumed as their representative.

6. The Contagion of a True Zeal. (2 Cor. iv. 2.) All good example insensibly influences others. Faith, courage, enthusiasm, generosity, are contagious; so is meanness. Every man is responsible for the evil that hides behind his own unfaithfulness. A whole congregation may wait for one man who refuses to do his duty, or may be inspired and stimulated by a pious, faithful, prayerful example.

7. The Glory of God. (2 Cor. ix. 11—15.) This is to be the crowning motive in everything. Paul shows, in the conclusion of his argument, that the exhibition of the grace of giving brings the highest honour to God.

This he exhibits under two principal aspects:

- a. The effect on the receiver.

His wants are supplied. He is led to give thanks unto God for the bounty received through other disciples, and to see the practical evidence that their professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ is a real partaking of the divine nature; for only grace could so soften the heart as to turn the selfish hoarder into an unselfish giver.

- b. The effect on the giver.

He becomes enriched in his own soul, fitted for higher service—the power to impart grace grows with the exercise of the imparting grace, and so the giver

is increased in the fruits of righteousness, and enriched in everything to all bountifulness.

c. Last of all, God is glorified in the realization of a community of love, which is "as the days of heaven on the earth." Givers and receivers become more closely bound in the bond of a tender and sympathetic affection; and those who have bestowed their alms upon other disciples, receive in return the legacy of their love and prayers.

It is suggested in the Speakers' Commentary, that the unspeakable gift, for which Paul gives thanks at the very end of this sublime discourse, is not our Lord Jesus Christ, but, as the context seems to justify, this heavenly community realized on earth, in which all the members of Christ's mystical body, though strangers to each other in the flesh, are one with each other by the spirit; and so this Christian grace of giving helps to bring forward that consummation of prophecy, God's unspeakable gift, namely, the restoration of the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man!