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THOUGHTS ON INSPIRATION.

BY THE REV. J. M. CRAMP, D. D.
Acadia College, Nova Scotia.

In offering a few remarks on this subject, I wish it to be understood that the reader is supposed to be a believer in the divine origin of Christianity. It is no part of my present design to discuss the question of Christian evidences. I shall take it for granted that the credibility of the New Testament history is acknowledged; that the historians are admitted to be honest, correct, and faithful; in a word, that the truthfulness of their record cannot be impeached, and that if we refuse to believe them we must renounce all confidence in human testimony. These points being conceded, it will necessarily follow that Christianity is of God. The truth of the testimony involves the divine character of the system; for if the miracles recorded by the historians actually took place, the revelation in support of which they were wrought is the gift of heaven.

We find, on examining these books, that our Lord and His apostles uniformly refer to the sacred Scriptures, and quote them as the word of God. These references are to the Old Testament. On the Saviour's authority, therefore, we are bound to receive that part of the volume, and reverently to consult it on all the subjects of which it treats. Are we equally bound to receive the writings now called the New Testament, and to regard them with the same reverence? This is a question of the deepest interest.

The Saviour, we are informed, promised His disciples, before His death, that they should receive the Holy Spirit; that He would "bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had said unto them;" that He would explain to them the whole system of truth relating to Himself ("He shall receive of mine and shall show it unto you;") and that He would "show them things to come." John xiv. 26; xvi. 13, 14. We should expect, in the fulfilment of these promises, that Christians would be furnished with an accurate account of the Redeemer's personal instructions, and a statement of truths and principles necessary to be held, and of services to be performed, under the new dispensation. We should further expect that the writings in which these would be comprised would contain predictions of future events, accrediting the authors as prophets of God.

Now, in the books composing the New Testament we have the accomplishment of these expectations. The life and teachings of the Saviour are compendiously set before us by four writers. The system of Christian truth is clearly stated. Moral duties and positive institutions are explained and powerfully enforced. The approaching corruptions of Christianity, to issue in a lamentable "departure from the faith"—and its ultimate triumph, involving the downfall of all opposers, are foretold—and the partial fulfilment of the predictions has confirmed faith and encouraged hope. Is not this God's book? Do not its contents testify to its origin? Is it not precisely the book that was wanted, in order that, as the first witnesses were removed by death, the loss of their oral testimony might be supplied by the written page, and it might be said of each, "he being dead yet speaketh?"

Many books were written, purporting to be productions of apostles or apostolic men. They were all subjected to rigid examination. The genuine were received and the spurious were rejected. Thus the collection gradually grew up into the New Testament. When the volume was completed, it was found to comprise the history, the truths, and the prophecies which the Saviour had promised.

But the promises were given to those who were actually disciples at the time. A large portion of the volume was written by a man who did not become a Christian till some years after the Lord's ascension. This was a special case, and provision was made for it. We have the narrative of his conversion and of his subsequent life, affording striking at-

testation to the truth and divine origin of Christianity. Here is a new and independent witness. That man must be believed. His services and sufferings entitle him to unlimited credence. Whoever may impose on his fellow-creatures, Paul the apostle will not be the man. And what does he say? He expressly states that he received his theology from Jesus Christ himself. "The Gospel which was preached of me is not after man: for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. i. 11, 12.) Throughout his writings he appeals to this fact, and claims for himself, as well as for the other apostles, that submission which inspired men and they only have a right to require. He confirms the claim by the miracles which God wrought by him. "Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." (2 Cor. xii. 12.)

Thus stands the argument. The New Testament historians were worthy of belief. They testified of what they had seen, and known, and heard, or had gathered from those who "from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word." Among other things they inform us that the Lord Jesus made certain promises to His disciples, which were to be fulfilled after His death. We have the fulfilment in the books of the New Testament; they contain the history, the truths, and the prophecies which Jesus had promised. These books, therefore, were written under the direction of the Holy Spirit, or, in other words, their authors were inspired. As to the nature, degree, and method of inspiration, we need not curiously inquire. It might, for ought we know, be different at different times, and in relation to different subjects. But it is dangerous to dogmatise. It is enough to have the assurance that the authors of the New Testament, as well as those of the Old, wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Although, however, it is dangerous to dogmatise on this subject, since extreme views commonly plunge their advocates in error; there are some considerations and inquiries which demand serious attention. They chiefly regard the manner and extent of inspiration.

It is very observable, that the individual peculiarities of the authors of the traacts and treatises composing the Bible have been fully preserved. They were inspired,—that is the *divine side* of the question; they wrote in their own style and way—that is the *human side*. The historian, the poet, the prophet, has each his own mode of writing, and those of the same class differ from one another, according to the difference of education, temperament, and outward circumstances. The historical books do not display the severe simplicity and naturalness of the Pentateuch, though they are characteristically antique and oriental. David composed spiritual odes—pathetic and sublime. Solomon collected moral precepts, distinguished for terseness and point. Jeremiah could not have written like Isaiah. Ezekiel differed from them both. Nahum and Habakkuk are grand specimens of the old poetry. Malachi was unlike all the rest. So of the New Testament. The *Hebrew* element appears much more, as might have been supposed, in Matthew than in Luke. Paul excels in logic and didactics. Peter is plain and practical. James is a stern reprover. John overflows with love. Every one retains his distinct peculiarity.

The human appears also in another form. In composing their histories the compilers availed themselves of existing materials. There are numerous instances of this, as is now very generally believed, in the Pentateuch, which embodies the substance of many an old document, thus opportunely snatched from oblivion. The writers of the Books of the Kings and Chronicles are avowedly indebted to the national archives. Luke informs us that he had "perfect understanding of all things," or, as Dr. Campbell more accurately translates it, "had exactly traced every thing from the first"—doubtless by diligent research.

Again:—We must not overlook the fact that the Bible is a record. It contains the word of God—but everything that it contains is not the word of God, in the strict sense of that phrase. God does not speak in every

case: He gives us an account of what was spoken. It was the Divine pleasure that many passages should be inserted which convey mistaken views and faulty expressions of feeling, reported to us "for our learning." (See Job iii. 8, 10; Psalm lxxxix. 47; Jer. xx. 14, 18.) The speeches of "Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite," are faithfully recorded; but no one dreams that their false theories and ill-tempered remarks, and unkind insinuations were inspired; and no wise preacher would take a text from them. The writer of the Book of Ecclesiastes sets down truthfully his sceptical reasonings and unbelieving doubts, the report of which may admonish and instruct us, while we rejoice that he came to a right conclusion at last. Even some of the Psalms seem to be rather ebullitions of Jewish patriotism, or the fierce spirit of the age, than utterances of saintly experience. (See Psalm lxxxiii. 9—17; cxxxvii. 7—9) Such things are retained in the holy book as specimens of the natural and the national. God's approbation must not be taken for granted. Deeds of cruelty and revenge are narrated by His prophets because they were actually perpetrated; but it is gross injustice to suppose that whatever was told was justified or commended.

There is another consideration which deserves notice. The sacred volume has been subjected to the same dangers as other books, and has suffered from them. This could not have been prevented but by a perpetual miracle, and it has not been characteristic of the Divine polity to work miracles except on great and befitting occasions. We need not be surprised, therefore, at finding here and there additions which have been evidently made by later writers or officious copyists. The numbers, in various parts of the Old Testament, especially in the Books of Chronicles, must have been tampered with. It is not credible that in the original copies, as they were left by the writers, it was stated that "fifty thousand and three-score and ten men" were smitten at Bethshemesh for looking into the ark (1 Sam. vi. 19); or that David "prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold and a thousand thousand talents of silver" (1 Chron. xxii. 14), equal in value, as some reckon, to upwards of nine hundred millions of pounds sterling—or that Jehoshaphat had a standing army of 1,160,000 men, "beside those whom the king put in the fenced cities throughout all Judah." (2 Chron. xvii. 14—19.) Either by some inexcusable blundering, or through the indulgence of a mischievous vanity, the numbers have been inflated. In some instances Josephus, the Jewish historian (himself much given to exaggeration) supplies the means of correction. He says that *seventy men*—leaving out the "fifty thousand"—were "struck with lightning" at Bethshemesh. He brings down David's offering to ten thousand talents of gold and a hundred thousand talents of silver. In other cases the restoration of the right reading is at present hopeless. We are required to believe, as the text now stands, that the population of Judah, in Jehoshaphat's time, amounted to 1700 persons per square mile, and that "five hundred thousand men" fell in a battle between Abijah and Jeroboam. (2 Chron. xiii. 17.) These must be mistakes. It is greatly to be regretted that we are unable to rectify them.

There are also various readings of the text in both Testaments which ought to be admitted, and the translation altered accordingly. Such emendations, be it remembered, would not alter the Bible, but bring it back to the state in which the inspired writers transmitted its respective portions to posterity.

It must not be forgotten that the writers of the books of the Old Testament prepared their works for the ages in which they lived, and with special regard to the condition of society in those times, and the then existing state of knowledge. Had it been otherwise, their writings would have been unintelligible to the first readers, and modern sceptics would have proclaimed them forgeries.

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Sometimes they received direct revelations, and committed them to writing. At other times they exercised care in diligently inquiring and collecting facts from the best sources. They placed on record many transactions of which they

utterly disapproved, and they preserved songs and sayings with which they had no sympathy. It appeared to them fair and right to do so, and we may believe that in this they acted under divine guidance. We should have been thankful if these invaluable writings had come down to us unimpaired. As it is, there is full scope for the labours of judicious and impartial critics, which have already been productive of great benefit. The true text will soon be in course of safe restoration. Meanwhile, it is gratifying to be able to assure the unlearned reader that notwithstanding the injury which has resulted from the negligence or presumption of former ages, before the invention of printing, no important fact which was recorded in the Sacred Books has dropped out, and no truth has been lost. We should be glad to have every word as the authors left it. It is consolatory to know that we possess their thoughts.

(Concluded in our next.)

The Religious Newspaper.

I was spending a day not long since in a pleasant farm-house, which was fitted up with a taste and neatness not always found in such homes. The farmer sat down in the parlor, and conversed with ease and intelligence on various topics of interest in the religious and literary world—showing a perfect familiarity with what was doing in the great world outside the bounds of his little farm. He was a man of only common education, yet his information was far more extended than is customary in the people of his calling. The secret of his superiority became very apparent in the course of the conversation. He was frequently referring to some remark or paragraph in his religious newspaper which bore upon the subject upon which we were speaking—sometimes taking up a recent number, which was just at hand, and reading a few lines. One could not listen to him without obtaining valuable information and food for after thought.

An excellent religious newspaper was the educator that made this farmer so much superior to those whose lands lie upon either side of him, and who were content to jog on year after year, in the same dull round of monotonous duties, without a thought of any thing beyond them.

He had taken this paper many years, and, what was more important still, he read it every week thoroughly and carefully. Out of from much society, he had a little world of his own in the pleasant family sitting room, where he experienced the most delightful intellectual enjoyment.

What a blessing that religious newspaper was to him, and what a blessing such a paper is in every circle where it is introduced! You cannot do a greater kindness to any family than to send such a messenger of good things into its fold fifty-two times a year. I wonder that newspapers are not oftener presented as New-Year's gifts to our friends; for certainly there can be none which yield such large returns of profit and happiness for so small an outlay.—*Sunday-School Times.*

Floral Beliefs.

Sir Bernard Burke, in his "Vicissitudes of Families," gives us a touching instance of the tendency of flowers to linger upon the spots where they were once tenderly nurtured. "Being in search," he tells us, "of a pedigree with reference to the Findernes, once a great family seat in Derbyshire, I sought for their ancient hall. Not a stone remained to tell where it stood. I entered the church; not a single record of a Finderne was there! I accosted a villager, hoping to glean some stray traditions of the Findernes. 'Findernes!' he said; 'we have no Findernes here; but we have something that once belonged to them—we have Findernes flowers.' 'Show me them,' I replied, and the old man led me into a field which still retained faint traces of terrace and foundation. 'There,' said he, pointing to a bank of garden flowers grown wild, 'these are Findernes flowers, brought by Sir Geoffrey from the Holy Land, and do what we will, they will never die.'"

NATURE'S fair smile may render us resigned to everything but suspense.