

THREE QUESTIONS

AS TO

THE BIBLE.

ANNUAL SERMON BEFORE THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CON-
VENTION, AT WACO, TEXAS, MAY 9, 1883.

BY JOHN A. BROADUS, D. D.

**LIBRARY OF
WILLIAM H. WHITSITT**

1883

PHILADELPHIA :
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
1420 CHESTNUT STREET.

6974.

**SOUTHERN BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1883, by the
AMERICAN BAPTIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

CONTENTS.

CHURCH CHRISTIANITY AND BIBLE CHRISTIANITY	5
HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CONFLICTS AS TO THE BIBLE.....	6
THE THREE QUESTIONS STATED.....	12
THE FIRST QUESTION. What writings are properly included in the Christian Scriptures?.....	12
Canon of the Old Testament.....	13
Canon of the New Testament.....	17
THE SECOND QUESTION. To what extent are we to regard the Bible as Inspired?.....	23
Attempts to Show that the Bible Contains Errors.....	26
The Bible and Profane History.	34
The Bible and Physical Science.....	38
Ethics of the Bible.....	50
Two Important Cautions.....	53
THE THIRD QUESTION. How ought the Inspired writings to be treated by us?.....	58

³
40333

220.1

B78t

Copy 21

Ascertain the Real Text.....	58
Procure the Best Possible Translations.....	60
We ought Personally to Study the Bible.....	62
We ought to Teach Bible truth to Others.....	63
We ought to act out the Bible in our Individual Lives.	64
GOD BRINGS GOOD OUT OF DISCUSSIONS ON THE BIBLE.....	67

THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE.

“And that from a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.”—2 Timothy iii. 15.

CHURCH CHRISTIANITY AND BIBLE CHRISTIANITY.

TH**ERE** are two forms of Christianity—
Church Christianity and Bible Christianity. In Mexico, Brazil, Italy, Church Christianity has had an opportunity to show the best it can do for a people; and in each of those countries we are making efforts—limited at present, but earnest—to substitute what we conceive to be Bible Christianity. Wherever men care for Bible Christianity and are free, there is sure to be much controversy about the Bible. This should be welcomed as a token of interest. Controversy is much better than indifference, or dull, unthinking

6 *THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE.*

acquiescence in received opinions. Human life at present is in almost every direction a choice of evils; and as a choice of evils, it is better that men should even quarrel over the Bible than that they should neglect it.

HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CONFLICTS AS TO THE BIBLE.

The centre of conflict as to the Bible frequently changes. In some ages, controversy has gathered around the doctrinal contents of the Bible; in others, around its moral, and in others, its ecclesiastical teachings. But again and again, the conflict has pertained to the Bible itself—its origin, nature, and authority. A century and a half ago, the English Deists admitted the existence of God, but denied that the Bible is a revelation from him. When this movement had spent its force in England, it passed over to the Continent, to return in new forms of opposition to the Bible; first from France and afterwards from Germany. The French infidelity of a

century ago, whose chief representative was Voltaire, derided and vilified the Bible. This French infidelity spread widely in Great Britain, and very widely in America, where it was fostered by the writings of Tom Paine. It is difficult now to realize how extensive and powerful was the influence of infidelity in America at the beginning of the present century. People often say that there is more skepticism in this country to-day than ever before. But they are utterly mistaken. It was far more widely diffused at the beginning of the century, and the opposition to it was then far less active and vigorous.

About fifty years ago, German infidelity began to spread in England and America, attacking the Bible partly by philosophy, and partly by philological and historical criticism. And it is this, in one form or another, which we have to encounter to-day. The apparent novelty of these assaults upon the Bible is scarcely ever more than apparent. Materi-

alism has changed some of its language, but nothing of its ideas. Agnosticism is only a learned-looking name for a very old notion, a notion always acceptable to some minds, namely, that we know nothing about a God or a future life—with the implied addition, in many cases, that we care nothing. In like manner, the rationalistic criticism, through philology and history, has taken many shapes, and attacked at many points, but always exhibits the same spirit and aims. Forty years ago, the life of Christ became the subject of immense controversy, beginning with a learned German work, translated by the greatest of recent English novelists, who died with no hope of any but an earthly immortality, and who has unconsciously tinged all her beautiful writings with the gloom of infidelity. This controversy has produced a series of works which have only made the life of Christ more widely familiar and more vividly real than ever before. A few years

later, there began a still more furious assault upon the Acts, some of the Epistles, and the Fourth Gospel; but this too has mainly passed away, leaving the Christian world better informed as to the first and second centuries, and the teachings of the New Testament. And now we are witnessing fierce critical attacks upon the Old Testament, in the interest of evolutionary theories of history, and general hostility to the supernatural. Involved in all these attacks upon the Bible history, as well as in the older controversies about doctrine and morals, is a denial of the full inspiration of Scripture. This denial, long made elsewhere, has of late begun to be made by a good many men in Great Britain and America who still hold Christian convictions, and strive to lead a Christian life, and some of whom deserve high respect for their sincerity and devoutness. It has long been evident that such conflicts as to the origin and authority of the Bible must sooner

or later spread over our country. Twenty-three years ago, I myself predicted, in a public discourse, that within twenty-five years there would be sharp controversies all over the country in regard to Inspiration; and there are doubtless others present who foresaw it as clearly.

Baptists have a special interest in these current inquiries respecting the Bible. Some of our fellow-Christians of other persuasions rely more or less on the authority of "the Church", in addition to that of the Bible; and there are those among them who regard the Church as having authority on historical grounds, apart from the Bible. But we look to the Bible alone as authority for religious truth and institutions; and when the divine authority of Scripture is impugned, we are deeply concerned. I do not present this as a reason for accepting any particular view concerning the origin and inspiration of Scripture, but as showing the vital importance of

these inquiries, and the necessity of insisting with the greatest emphasis upon the maintenance of right views in this direction.

My brethren, American Christians have entered upon a serious conflict in regard to the Bible. We need not fear as to the ultimate result. We are confident it will be to promote the knowledge of God's word and its practical influence over men. From the skepticism of to-day, as so often before, there will assuredly be, sooner or later, a healthy reaction. We have seen by our hasty glance—what is well known to students of Christian history—that this skepticism is in its essentials by no means a new thing, not a peculiarity of this “age of progress”, but only one of those many movements of hostility to the Bible which have successively swelled up and subsided. Now, as heretofore, it is only a question of time. But meanwhile much depends on clear views of what we are about, right methods of seeking and maintaining truth,

12 *THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE.*

and kindly feelings toward those whom we regard as in honest error. Here, as always, we need to be found "speaking truth in love."

THE THREE QUESTIONS STATED.

A sermon on the Bible evidently undertakes a very large subject. In any such case, the preacher must either select some single aspect or department of the subject on which he can speak with adequate fullness, or he must draw outlines, indicate methods, urge the proper spirit. I attempt the latter course, and propose to consider three questions in regard to the Bible: What writings are properly included in the Holy Scriptures of Christians? To what extent are we to regard these sacred writings as inspired? How ought the inspired writings to be treated by us?

THE FIRST QUESTION.

What writings are properly included in the Christian Scriptures?

When Paul spoke to Timothy of "the Holy

Scriptures", he of course meant only the Old Testament. Christians now include under the same designation the New Testament also. This first inquiry of ours relates then to what is commonly called the Canon of Scripture.

CANON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

(1) In regard to the Old Testament, some efforts have recently been made to weaken the argument which has long satisfied the Christian world, but I cannot think they have at all succeeded. The argument itself can be easily stated. It will be admitted by those against whom we are now arguing, that the New Testament furnishes a generally correct historical report of things taught by our Lord and his disciples. Now we repeatedly find Jesus and the apostles speaking of the Scripture or the Scriptures as possessing divine authority. They use those terms in a technical sense, precisely as we do, meaning some recognized body of writings. And we are able to show from Josephus and the Talmud,

14 *THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE.*

and from learned Christian writers of the earliest centuries who made this subject a special study, that the Jews of our Lord's time understood the Scripture or the Scriptures to mean precisely our books of the Hebrew Old Testament. Observe the argument. We do not pin our faith to the Jews, and hold this collection of books to be from God because they thought so; but we learn from the Jewish usage that Jesus and the disciples must have meant precisely this collection of books when *they* spoke of the Scripture or the Scriptures as from God.

The attempt has been made to weaken this simple and satisfactory argument in two ways. (a) A passage of the Talmud shows that some time in the latter part of the first Christian century, there was a discussion in the Sanhedrin as to whether three or four of the received books ought really to be considered as sacred. Some spoke against Ecclesiastes and the Song of Solomon, and one or two

other books, as in their judgment of hurtful tendency, and not properly to be regarded as sacred. Hence it is argued that the Canon in the time of our Lord was not really settled. We answer that the exception proves the rule. This very narrative shows that in the general estimation the question *was* settled. Certain Rabbis objected to a few of the books—just as Luther once spoke slightly of the Epistle of James, because it did not state things to suit him in regard to justification, and as Adam Clarke condemned the Song of Solomon; but this opposition of the Rabbis did not finally prevail, nor leave any practical result; and it does not at all weaken the evidence as to what Jesus and the apostles must have meant by the Scriptures. (b) It is urged again that the apostles habitually read the Old Testament in the Greek version which we call the Septuagint, as is shown by their frequently quoting from that version where it verbally differs from the Hebrew; and that in

16 *THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE.*

Alexandria, where this Septuagint translation had been made, certain other Jewish books appear to have been also regarded by the Jews as sacred, since in process of time they came to be so regarded by some Alexandrian and other Christians, constituting what we now call the Apocryphal books of the Old Testament. We answer that unquestionably these books were not held to be sacred in Palestine; and it is the Palestinian usage which must settle what our Lord and the apostles meant by the term Scripture. Moreover, people seem to think of the Septuagint as bound up in one volume, like our modern copies. Because the apostles read a roll containing the Pentateuch or Isaiah in the Alexandrian Greek translation, it does not follow that they regarded as sacred those other Jewish books which are supposed to have been so regarded by the Jews of Alexandria, and which they would have found only in entirely separate rolls. I cannot enter into the details of the

matter; but, after careful examination, I think this second attempt to weaken our familiar argument is quite a failure. There are other lines of inquiry as to the divine origin of the Old Testament books; but for those who accept the New Testament accounts as correct, and recognize the authority of Jesus and his apostles, the well-known argument remains unimpaired and conclusive. Professor Wellhausen vehemently exclaims that no supposed authority from the New Testament must be brought to bear upon these inquiries as to Old Testament books; but one who really believes in Christ surely cannot think so.

CANON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

(2) As to the Canon of the New Testament, no compendious statement is possible, and I can only indicate certain points of interest.

(*a*) We must carefully distinguish between authoritative decisions of what is called "the early Church", and the testimony and judgment of the early Christians. Romanists con-

stantly tell us that we have to rely entirely on the authority of the early Church to determine what books constitute the New Testament. And as they have to rest the Church's own authority on New Testament teaching, they thus present a complete case of reasoning in a circle. I recently heard an eminent dignitary of an honored Protestant body express himself in a public discourse in this wise: "If I am asked to give authority for Infant Baptism, I will answer that it is precisely the same as for the Canon of the New Testament, namely, the authority of the early Church." Now for our part, we cannot recognize any such authority; and as regards the question of Canon, we are here at one with the great mass of American Christians. We find plenty of *churches* in the first three centuries, but see no indication that there existed an organized aggregate, such as is commonly called the early Church. What then? Why, we must distinguish between such supposed authoritative

decisions, and the testimony recorded for us by early Christians, together with their judgment upon additional unrecorded testimony, concerning the apostolical origin of the New Testament books. There ought to be some treatise discussing the Canon of the New Testament strictly from this point of view. We have the standard and admirable work of Canon Westcott (*Canon of the New Testament*, fifth edition), and his more popular volume called *The Bible in the Church*; also the more recent and learned work of the Presbyterian Professor Charteris (*Canonicity*), and his volume of popular lectures on the New Testament, which has just appeared; but there is room for others.

(b) It is not strange that special training and extensive study are required, in order to decide some of the questions connected with the Canon of the New Testament. The same thing is true in other departments of practical life. A man who buys these rich Texas lands

must bear in mind that the titles run back into the time when Texas was an independent republic, and beyond that into the days of the Mexican and the old Spanish dominion. Wherever there is a dispute as to these land-titles, no man can safely decide the questions which arise, without special training for such investigations, and extensive study of the matters involved. Do people refuse to buy land because they cannot judge of the titles for themselves, but must rely on real-estate lawyers? Nay, a man will employ the best lawyers accessible, will ask them to state the gist of the matter in plain language; but, as to all the nicer questions which arise, he has to rely on their judgment. If one refuses to seek such specialist help, he and his family may, as a penalty, some day lose their home. So when I am sick, I have to rely on a physician who may possibly misunderstand the case, and on a druggist who may possibly send me poison instead of medicine. If I

insist on caring for myself without their aid, I may lose my life, as a penalty. If then, as to property, health, and life, we have to lean on the aid of specialists, why complain that the same thing is true in determining the apostolic origin of this or that book of the New Testament? We can see for ourselves that these books are wonderfully adapted to human nature, exactly describing our spiritual condition, and suited to supply our spiritual needs. As to external evidence, our specialist scholars might, like the lawyer, give us the gist of the matter; but we have to rely on them for the details and the nicer questions. Brief treatises ought to be written, presenting the substance of this matter in popular form. But do not all begin at once, brethren, to write such books; for no man can do justice to the subject without years of special study.

(c) I ought to mention that some interesting progress has recently been made in this department. Vigorous assaults in England on the

Canon of the New Testament have led to renewed investigation, by Bishop Lightfoot and others (as Sanday, Westcott), and by the eminent American scholar, Ezra Abbot (on the Fourth Gospel), which have cleared up some matters not previously understood. In regard to the Gospels, a valuable testimony has been recently recovered in the earliest Harmony of the Gospels, the famous Diatessaron of Tatian. There has been found an Armenian translation of a Syrian commentary on this long-lost work, which shows that it was made of our Four Gospels and no others; so that this is added to the numerous evidences we possessed before. And the researches of Westcott and Hort account for the peculiar wording of some of Justin Martyr's numerous and important quotations from the Gospels, by showing that he employed what is called the "Western" form of text. I have mentioned these technical details merely to illustrate the gratifying fact that here, as in various other departments,

the progress of Biblical scholarship is but strengthening the evidence for the Bible, as well as helping us to understand its meaning. Let us turn now to

THE SECOND QUESTION.

To what extent are we to regard the Bible as inspired?

It is agreed by all those with whom we are concerned in this argument that in these writings God speaks to us. They find us, enter into us, help us in character and life, as no other writings do. They claim to speak for God; and confirm the claim in many ways. God spoke of old time unto the fathers in the prophets, and finally spoke in his Son (Heb. i. 1).

It is also agreed that God here speaks *through men*. This has never been formally questioned, but has been to many minds obscured. The sacred writings are truly and thoroughly human. Here is human observa-

24 *THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE.*

tion, recollection, and reflection. Here are three different human languages,—Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek,—the last curiously tinged in its idiom by the others; and words borrowed from at least three other languages,—Egyptian, Persian, Latin. Here are the peculiarities of individual writers, as strongly marked in thought and style as anywhere else in literature, and requiring consideration in all careful interpretation. I repeat, the Scripture writings are thoroughly human. This is not saying that they are only human. The Saviour of whom they treat is thoroughly human, and at the same time thoroughly divine; and so we think it is as to the writings themselves. Our century has brought more clearly to view the humanity of Jesus and the humanness of Scripture; but that need not lessen our faith in the divinity of both. The Word made flesh now comes to men's homes and hearts in more vivid and winning reality than in former ages; and so the humanness of the sacred

writings makes them "come home to men's business and bosoms."

So then, in these human writings, God speaks to us. Paul declared in his earliest Epistle (1 Thess. ii. 13), "When ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God." Jesus declared that Moses wrote of him (John v. 46), that David spoke in the Holy Spirit concerning the Messiah (Mark xii. 36), and so in many cases. And Jesus promised to his apostles that the Holy Spirit should bring all his teachings to their remembrance, and guide them into all the truth (John xiv. 26; xvi. 13).

It being agreed, then, that these Scripture speakers and writers speak to us for God, that he speaks to us in them, must we not suppose, must we not take for granted, unless the contrary appear, that they have said just what God wished them to say, that whatever they

have really said is really true? There will of course be occasional difficulty, through corruption of text, in determining just what words they employed; there is necessarily danger of misunderstanding their meaning, through our ignorance and prejudice. But whatever these inspired writers meant to say, or whatever we learn from subsequent revelation that God meant to say through their words, though not by themselves fully understood, *that* we hold to be true, thoroughly true, not only in substance but in statement—unless the contrary can be shown.*

ATTEMPTS TO SHOW THAT THE BIBLE CONTAINS ERRORS.

But numerous attempts have been made to show the contrary; and these, so far as they

* I do not think it necessary to insist on any particular theory as to the nature and *modus operandi* of inspiration, and am not sure that it is wise to formulate any theory on that subject. The essential point is the *fact* that the Scriptures are fully inspired, and speak truly throughout. Here, as in the case of the Incarnation, it is not wise for those who agree in accepting the complete and sublime fact, to array themselves against each other regarding theories as to the nature and mode of the fact.

seem specially important, and so far as we have time, must now be considered.

(1) It is said by some that as the sacred writings are human, they cannot be free from error, since everything human is mixed with error. This would be a valid argument in general, but there is a most notable exception in the Word made flesh. We all agree that he is thoroughly human, and yet hold that he is free from error. Now that does not prove that the same thing is true in the case of Scripture, but it proves that such a thing may be true, that the Scriptures do not, because human, necessarily contain error; for as there is one exception, there may be another. And remember that the two cases are not merely similar, but closely related. The divine-human Saviour is the central theme of what we may call the divine-human writings. Remember too that as in our Lord there were the sinless infirmities of humanity, so in the Scriptures there may be obscurities and other

natural infirmities of human language, without its necessarily following that there is any error in the idea intended to be conveyed.

(2) Some urge that there are certain expressions in the Bible which disclaim full inspiration. Some of these, though often explained, have been set forth in several recent publications without the least hint that any explanation has been offered or is possible. For example, in 1 Cor. vii, the apostle says (verses 12, 25), "To the rest say I, not the Lord." "Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my judgment," etc. But who can question that in the Acts and Epistles "the Lord" often and in fact usually denotes the Lord Jesus? Take that as the meaning here. "Unto the married I give charge, yea, not I, but the Lord," etc. (verse 10). Upon the general question of marriage and divorce the Lord, in his personal ministry, gave express instructions, as we also find recorded in the Gospels; but upon certain ques-

tion which had arisen in Corinth, there was no commandment given by the Lord Jesus, and so on those questions the apostle presents his judgment. Thus understood, the apostle implies that the Saviour's own teachings deserve peculiar respect, just as when he says, "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts xx. 35.) But he does not at all say that he himself is not speaking by inspiration here, quite as much as elsewhere. His language in 1 Cor. vii, might indeed be understood in that way; but it is altogether possible, and in fact is far more probable, when we consider his usage elsewhere, that his meaning is what I have indicated.

Again. "I thank God that I baptized none of you save Crispus and Gaius . . . And I baptized also the household of Stephanus: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other" (1 Corinthians i. 14-16). Here it is

argued that the apostle's writings cannot be free from error, since he acknowledges that he does not certainly remember as to a particular matter. But his very care in here saying that he does not certainly remember would give us all the greater confidence in the statements he makes without hesitation. And must a man remember everything and know everything, in order that the particular things which he states may be true? Does inspiration demand omniscience? Our Lord himself said (Mark xiii. 32), "Of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." He himself—I suppose it means in his human nature—did not know the day or the hour. Will any Christian infer that things which he did know and has stated are mixed with error? Then the same principle applies to what Paul has said.

Others object that the inspired writers do not expressly tell us that their statements are

in all details correct. But to suppose their doing so is highly unnatural. It is to confound our age of criticism and sophistication with an earlier time of simplicity and creation. In declaring that they speak for God, the inspired writers necessarily imply that what they say is true; and sometimes they incidentally assert that such is the case. Anything beyond this would not have been natural, and ought not to be looked for.

(3) It was once a favorite mode of arguing error in the Bible to urge that different parts of it contradict each other. But many supposed contradictions have been fully explained. Observe that in such cases a hypothetical explanation is sufficient wherever the hypothesis is clearly possible, and still more if it be in itself quite probable. We do not need to prove that this particular explanation is correct, nor to set aside others in its favor. The objector claims that the Scripture statements involved cannot both be true, because

32 *THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE.*

mutually contradictory. We reply that the supposed contradiction may be explained in a certain reasonable way, and in fact might be explained in several other possible ways. Therefore it is of no force in showing that the Scripture accounts must contain some error. The so-called discrepancies in the Gospels were, forty years ago, the stock in trade of some great German scholars, as against the credibility of the narratives. These profound students had often no knowledge of practical life, and trial by jury did not then exist in Germany. Every intelligent American knows that when several different accounts are given of a long series of transactions, we expect them to differ as to details, and otherwise would reject them all as the product of collusion. Provided there be substantial agreement in the different accounts, discrepancies as to detail will but strengthen their credibility; and this even when it is not manifest how some of the minor discrepancies are to be

explained. Recent German scholars—partly perhaps because trial by jury has been introduced in their country—have ceased objecting to the discrepancies of the Gospels, and are instead greatly exercised to account for their agreement. Many of the apparent contradictions, particularly in the Old Testament, would doubtless be explained if we had a more correct text, or ampler information as to the circumstances. Thus some of the contradictory numbers in Kings and Chronicles have long been very naturally accounted for by supposing that the numbers have been altered in the process of transcription—a thing much more likely to happen with numbers than with other words. We may expect more satisfactory explanations of various points as the years go on. Even to-day I know of no discrepancies in the Bible which impair its credibility. In regard to this as well as other difficulties about Biblical statements, we must never forget that all our knowledge of things

34 *THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE.*

is imperfect, that upon every subject there are difficulties we cannot explain, and questions which no man has been able to answer. To say that we will not believe the sacred writings, with all their solemn claims to our reverential acceptance, unless every slightest difficulty can be cleared up, and every captious objection completely answered, is to deal most unfairly with our own minds, and to disregard the vital conditions of human knowledge and human life.

THE BIBLE AND PROFANE HISTORY.

(4) In like manner it is urged that Scripture statements often contradict profane history. Now there is nothing more remarkable in modern research than the frequency with which it clears up apparent contradictions between secular history and the Bible. The vast excavations, and the wonderful study of the earliest literature of Egypt and Mesopotamia, which have marked our times, have

explained many a point of Scripture history which had seemed to involve serious difficulty, have shown that many a favorite objection to the Bible had grown out of our ignorance. Some interesting examples are given in popular form by Rawlinson, in his little volume, called *Historical Evidences*. Even the familiar Greek and Roman literature has by renewed study yielded valuable results. When my own Biblical studies began, the most difficult portion of New Testament history was the account of Paul's voyage and shipwreck. It contained numerous points in serious conflict with all that we knew of ancient navigation, and the geography of the Eastern Mediterranean. But an English layman, James Smith, became interested in the matter, and spent years in studying the questions of geography and navigation which it involved. His work on the voyage and shipwreck of Paul shows that on many of these questions scholars had been in error. By bringing out

the real facts he has not only explained all the difficulties of the narrative, but has shown it to correspond throughout in the most remarkable manner with all that we know from the other sources. Thus a Scripture narrative which, thirty years ago, we knew not what to make of, can now be triumphantly appealed to as showing the minute accuracy of the sacred writer.

As might have been expected, these modern historical researches, in clearing up many difficulties, have brought forward some new ones, which it will require time and further advance of knowledge to explain. Thus the early Babylonian (Accadian) literature which has been recently recovered, presents accounts of the Creation and the Deluge which curiously resemble those given in Genesis. A conflict has at once arisen. Some objectors to the Bible assume that Genesis has borrowed from these Babylonian accounts, and some defenders assume that these accounts were borrowed

from Genesis. Of course the only other supposition is that they were both derived from some other source or sources, and that may turn out to have been the fact. It is now commonly held by conservative scholars that the inspired author of Genesis drew some of his materials from traditional matter handed down from the patriarchs, just as Matthew must have taken his genealogy from family records. In all such cases, the statements given to us are stamped with the authority of inspiration. If the Babylonian narratives in question should prove to be older than Genesis, it will then be a natural supposition that both were drawn from patriarchal tradition, in the one case corrected, in the other corrupted. But further light as to the subject will doubtless be obtained hereafter, and believers in the Bible can wait without apprehension.

The historical skepticism of recent times, which began with the celebrated Niebuhr, has led to extremely valuable researches in every

department of history. It was inevitable that its ideas and methods should be applied to sacred as well as to secular history. And in both departments it was inevitable that, like every other strong and fruitful tendency of human thought, this skeptical method of historical inquiry should be carried to great extremes. Already I note various indications of reaction in regard to secular history, and am persuaded that many persons present will live to see the time when the highest historical authorities will recognize as true after all a variety of points in ancient secular history which for some time past have been contemptuously rejected. And I am confident this will be the case in regard to skeptical criticism of sacred history.

THE BIBLE AND PHYSICAL SCIENCE.

(5) The objection now oftenest urged against the truth of the Bible is that many of its statements are contradicted by modern physi-

cal science. We ought therefore to consider this point at greater length than the others.

(a) We must distinguish between scientific facts or established principles, and the mere speculations of some scientific men. It is curious to see men who have been trained in the exact methods appropriate to physical science, tacitly claiming for their speculative theories about questions not properly physical the same authority which we all gladly concede to their properly scientific facts and principles. It was so, for instance, in Mr. Tyndall's celebrated Belfast Address, some statements of which he was afterwards manly enough to admit were merely speculation and not science. So great is now the deserved prestige of physical science, in consequence of its rapid progress and its immensely valuable practical applications, that many superficial thinkers are ready to bow down and worship whenever a so-called scientist expresses himself on any subject whatsoever. True men of

science do not wish to be treated in this fashion.

(b) If the Bible must be reconciled with physical science, then with *what* science? With the science of the Bible times? With the science of five hundred years ago, or one hundred years ago? With the science of to-day, or that of five hundred years to come, when men will look back upon many of our present scientific theories as mere child's play? We smile now at some attempts of the past to harmonize the Bible with ideas then entertained. With what science, I repeat, must the Bible be reconciled before its varied and potent evidences can be allowed to command our credence?

(c) The supposed conflict between physical science and the Bible is confined to a few persons on both sides. Dr. Draper shows that the Church of Rome, in past ages, persecuted some men of science, and infers that such is the natural tendency of Christianity in

all forms and at all times. He intimates that the Church of Rome is the best representative of Christianity in this respect. Doubtless it is the best for the purposes of Dr. Draper's argument. A Chinese pamphlet against the missionaries, which I have in an English translation, asserts that the missionaries are guilty of gross immorality. He proves it by Chinese histories, which state that Jesuit missionaries of two or three centuries ago committed certain specified immoral acts. He adds (in substance): "The missionaries will tell you there is a great difference between the Protestants and the Catholics. But don't believe them; they are all exactly alike." Now Dr. Draper would have thought the Chinese pamphleteer a poor logician; but how much better was his logic? The great mass of intelligent Christians at the present day are not at all unfriendly to physical science, and many of them delight greatly in its beneficent and inspiring achievements. In like manner,

the great mass of scientific men at the present time are not unfriendly to the Bible. Upon such a point I do not wish you to rely upon my own assertion. Few ministers can be thoroughly well informed as to the immense expanse of physical science—though I think Dr. John Hall was right in replying to Tyndall that ministers are apt to know quite as much about physical science as scientific men generally know about the Bible, and so, in any question of the relations between the two, are quite as well prepared to judge wisely. But I will give the statements of others. The honored Professor of Physics in what is doubtless the foremost Southern University (F. H. Smith, University of Virginia), said to me not long ago that he thought many eminent men of science in Europe and America were doing wrong in not more frequently expressing their known Christian convictions at a time when so many misleading statements are made about antagonism between science and

the Bible. One of the most distinguished men of science in America, one of the few who have attained the highest of all scientific distinctions, that of Corresponding Member of the French Institute, Academy of Science, is a member of the same church with myself at Louisville (Dr. J. Lawrence Smith), and has frequently told me of leading men of science on the Continent as well as in England, who are pronounced and decided Christians.

How then has arisen the wide-spread persuasion of a conflict between science and Christianity? Some advocates of physical science, endowed with considerable abilities, a taking style, and a passion for notoriety, have in our age, as in others, seized upon certain supposed results of some perhaps immature science, and arrayed them against what they supposed to be the teachings of the Bible. You will at once understand their position if I say that they are the *sensation preachers* of the scientific world—though that, I grant, is

44 *THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE.*

giving them a pretty hard name. They are perpetually trying to strike and startle; and men as gifted as Huxley and Draper will naturally succeed in making a great sensation. Then certain well-meaning ministers at once think the ark is in danger; and in setting themselves to reply, they make the easy mistake of failing to distinguish between these dashing assailants and scientific men in general. Let us be careful, brethren, to observe this distinction. Let us never speak of science or scientific men as arrayed against the Bible, but only of some advocates of certain departments of science. Let us beware of saying anything which might even seem to indicate hostility to real science, physical or metaphysical, historical, linguistic, or social. Science has not only done much for the world otherwise, but has helped us in understanding the Bible. Philology has taught us how to handle the Bible languages. Astronomy has put a new meaning upon the simple phenom-

enal expressions of the Bible as to the heavenly bodies. Social science helps us in comprehending the national history of Israel. We believe it will be so hereafter. Science will enable the men of coming centuries to understand some things in the Bible better than is now possible. And as various departments of science become more matured, and the Bible better understood, we may well persuade ourselves that hereafter, as heretofore, they will fall into line as friends and supporters of the Bible; so that God's perfect word and his wonderful works will harmoniously declare his glory. At any rate, whatever be the result, truth shall have a hearty welcome—all real, ascertained truth. Let us in every direction seek truth, and do truth, relying on him who is the Truth and the Life, and we have everything to hope and nothing to fear.

(*d*) Those who concede errors in Scripture as to matters of fact, in order to remove con-

flict with some scientific opinions of our time, may tell us that they have great satisfaction in being at peace with science. But there are two drawbacks upon this peace. It is the peace of sheer submission, which, as many of us remember, is sometimes the best that people can do, and then may yield gratifying results; but which is not commonly regarded as desirable for its own sake. And it is only a partial and temporary peace. Other scientific men at once make still further demands, tending ever towards the complete abandonment of the supernatural. It is hard to enter upon this course and not continue to go forward. Grant that there are many difficulties about Scripture, many things which we cannot at present reconcile with current scientific opinion. But why remove them by accepting ideas which involve greater difficulty, and tend always to worse and worse? Pardon the rude illustration, which I have often thought of in these last years. Suppose a

man who has a severe toothache shall put a pistol to his head and blow out his brains. He will stop the toothache, no doubt.

The inevitable specialism of modern study creates in us all a tendency to be one-sided. The devotees of physical science, being exclusively occupied with the natural, and eagerly seeking everywhere for natural causation, are apt to regard with a certain dislike the very idea of the supernatural. They, and all who come powerfully under their influence, need to remember that this is one of their dangers. Many contentions of the modern critical school as to Bible history spring obviously from this dislike of the supernatural. Men study the general history of mankind, explaining everything by natural causes and effects. They then approach the Bible history, and undertake to explain it in the same way. This they call the "scientific method." It is doubtless the scientific method of studying secular history, but if it be supposed that the

Bible contains a supernatural element, then the only really scientific method of studying the Bible would be to take account of both the natural and the supernatural. But no. It is assumed that the history of Israel can be explained, like any other history, solely by natural causes. It is further assumed that all history is an evolution from lower to higher forms. Then, as the Bible history of Israel presents highly-developed institutions at an early period, and as the critic of course cannot concede their supernatural origin, it follows that the Bible history must be broken to pieces, shattered all into fragments, and from these a new history must be constructed in accordance with the naturalistic and evolutionary assumptions. If this is not a flagrant instance of begging the question, where will you find one? Of course some foothold is sought for the argument among the historical facts as they stand; but nothing has been found which in my judgment would at all

satisfy any mind which had not really prejudged the questions by the assumptions I have mentioned. And I cannot but think the same thing is true, though I say it with sincere respect for some eminent scholars, as to the arguments for the late date of Daniel, and of the latter part of Isaiah. The other arguments amount to very little. The decisive consideration with such minds is the unwillingness to admit that minute predictions were made so long beforehand, and were so exactly fulfilled. I would challenge such of these scholars as retain Christian convictions to carry the same principles and methods into the New Testament, and see how soon they must abandon the incarnation, the resurrection of Christ, the atonement, all that is most characteristic of Christianity. I challenge—nay, I do not challenge—I would conjure all devoutly Christian men who have adopted these views of Kuenen, Wellhausen, etc., to consider how utterly destructive would be

their effects upon the New Testament, and be led thereby to re-examine them in regard to the Old Testament.

ETHICS OF THE BIBLE.

(6) I must mention one other way in which some endeavor to show that the Bible contains error. They say it teaches ethical ideas condemned by their individual consciences or by the more enlightened tendencies of our age. Thirty years ago a University student came to my study, and in the course of conversation said he could not believe the Bible because it teaches the idea of substitution, one person suffering for the wrong-doing of others. I asked him if that is not seen in all the world around us, as when children suffer for the sins of their parents. He said, "Yes, but it ought not to be so." I asked whether it is not often by the suffering of patriot sires that their descendants enjoy liberty? And he went abruptly away. It is said that a Baptist

of New England, who was an earnest abolitionist fifty years ago, became satisfied that the New Testament sanctions slavery, and therefore abandoned his profession of Christianity and his faith in the Bible, and lived and died an unbeliever, while an honored leader in a great movement. Now I do not inquire whether he was right either in his premise or in his conclusion. I mean only to illustrate a tendency which shows itself about other questions still. When men's minds are deeply stirred as to some great moral and social change, those who find the Bible apparently unfavorable to their views are apt to turn passionately against the Bible. In such cases, we ought always to consider soberly and patiently whether we have really understood the Bible, and whether the views which it seems to condemn are really right. There is much need of such patient consideration in regard to questions now current.

Without further considering other assaults

which have been made upon the ethics of Scripture, I reluctantly mention that there are still some who dare to call the Bible an indecent book. I used to suppose that all this had been buried with poor Tom Paine. But of late years a man whose oratorical gifts ought to have been very useful in the world has dug up the dead body of Tom Paine-ism and carried it round the country on exhibition, with himself as showman and a dollar admission-fee; and he says again that the Bible is indecent. Did the old Presbyterian minister who was his father ever think it indecent? Did the loving mother who tried to train him for better things than he has come to, ever find anything in the Bible that seemed to her indecent? Is there a pure woman in all the land whose soul is sullied by any line of the Scriptures? But we are told that there are some passages of the Bible which no one would read in public. I answer, there are things which a mother sometimes must say to

her daughter that she would never say in public. The Bible deals with the most elemental and fundamental conditions of human life; and some of the very passages which superficial hostility or silly fastidiousness would condemn as indecent, present solemn warnings that ought to restrain men from ruinous forms of wickedness. Indecent! When an intelligent man dares to say that of the Bible, it is hard to prevent the pity he so greatly needs from being driven out by the contempt he so richly deserves.

TWO IMPORTANT CAUTIONS.

Before leaving this great subject of the extent of Inspiration, let us observe two things.

(*a*) Some of us are specially tempted to retain the old as such, and some to adopt the new as such. In our country and age, the tendency to conservatism is not so strong as that to whatever looks like progress. The passion for something new is all-absorbing.

The favorite books of the age are called *novels*—newly invented stories. One who takes “a new departure” in anything, particularly in regard to religion, commands so much superficial sympathy, so much transient notoriety! The Christian minister who comes out in opposition to the teachings of his denomination, becomes at once the darling of the daily press. For the daily press is ever on the look-out for something sensational; and there is some comfort in the fact that ministerial heresies and ministerial immoralities are rare enough, after all, to make a sensation. Many people do not seem to know the difference between notoriety and fame; and so some are tempted to adopt new views by the notion that it will make them famous. I will not suppose that any one present would be consciously influenced by so petty an ambition; but there is a really exalted feeling, of sympathy with progress, and love of inquiry, which powerfully affects us all, and ought to

affect us. Who does not delight in the very pursuit of new truth, and rejoice unspeakably when he attains it? Whose pulses do not thrill in sympathy with all the progress of our time? Who is not sometimes repelled by a blind and Bourbonic conservatism? But every strong tendency of human thought, especially when characteristic of an age, has its perils. And we greatly need now to remember that new ideas are not necessarily wholesome or true, that change is not necessarily improvement. Especially is it important that the old and the young should keep in mind their respective natural tendencies. Old men naturally incline to conservatism; young men to progress. The combination of these gives social movement and safety. Where the old rule completely, society stands still; if ever the young should rule exclusively, the car of society would soon fly the track in frightful disaster. Now in regard to some current questions concerning the Bible, I ob-

serve a certain tendency to array the old and the young against each other. This ought to be earnestly resisted. We need each other's assistance, yes, each other's correction. Allow me to say, as one who is growing old, and has all his life been brought in close connection with successive generations of fine young men, that every year I hold young men in deeper respect. I delight in observing their ardor and magnificent hopefulness, their undeveloped potencies and rapid unfolding. I see at times in their very faults and errors a promise of power for good, when years shall have tempered impulse and deepened reflection. Sometimes where they sharply assail or severely condemn each other, I regard both as admirable. My brethren, older and younger, in God's name let us strive after mutual appreciation, and after hearty co-working in the cause of truth and righteousness.

(b) If we assume that the inspiration of the Bible is only partial, where are we to stop?

Every man must then select *ad libitum* what portions of the Bible's teachings he will accept as true. It may be said that men often do this anyhow. But we answer, they do it as a result of human infirmity, and with earnest efforts to guard against the tendency. But if inspiration be regarded as only partial, it is every man's right and his duty to select for himself. And the tendency, for various reasons besides the one before intimated, is naturally, if not necessarily, downward. Some good men may take these views of inspiration, and yet maintain unshaken their general doctrinal opinions and Christian life, because of their early training, their previous devout experiences and fixed habits of thought and action; but how about others, who adopt their views at the beginning of life? The noble Dr. Arnold of Rugby taught a certain free handling of the Scriptures which does not seem to have affected his orthodox convictions or his healthily devout life. But look how

far his son-in-law, Dean Stanley went, and how farther still his son, Matthew Arnold, to whom the Bible is only beautiful literature, and God is only a vague something. In every case we must remember—the man may be noble and devout, worthy of respect and esteem—the opinions he teaches may be very hurtful to devoutness in others, and requiring earnest opposition.

THE THIRD QUESTION.

How ought the inspired writings to be treated by us?

Here there is of course everything to say, and I shall only mention some points which appear to demand special remark.

ASCERTAIN THE REAL TEXT.

1. We ought to be diligent in ascertaining the real text of Scripture. The highest views of Inspiration should lead to the greatest zeal for Text-criticism. Those who regard the sacred

writings as thoroughly inspired should be deeply solicitous to learn what the inspired men actually wrote. To stigmatize such studies as rationalistic, is grossly unfair and misleading. And let no one be alarmed as to the consequences of text-criticism. It has been often repeated that critical changes of text have not materially affected the evidence for a single doctrine of the New Testament. And even as to details, one who has large experience of such studies will observe with interest and growing pleasure that, after reluctantly abandoning some familiar and dearly-loved expression, he sooner or later comes to perceive that the true text is best. Though there will perhaps never cease to be doubt as to what is the real text of some passages, that need not disturb us; for we have always known that there was in some cases similar doubt as to the real translation. Here, as everywhere else, we must not too eagerly accept new views, nor too obstinately

reject them. Let text-criticism go forward, as to the New Testament and the Old Testament, with the good wishes of all who care for the Bible, and with the special and hearty support of all who believe the Bible to be inspired.

PROCURE THE BEST POSSIBLE TRANSLATIONS.

(2.) We ought to procure the best possible translations of Scripture, into foreign languages and into our own. Let me remind you that translation is an extremely difficult task. In fact, an absolutely exact translation from one language into another is impossible. No one sentence of any language can ever be rendered into any other with precisely the same body of meaning and the same atmosphere of suggestion. As the approximations must vary, there is room for much difference of opinion between the translators of successive ages, between the scholars who coöperate in producing any given translation, and be-

tween the widely varied classes of readers who are called upon to accept or reject. Every translation made by several persons must be at many points the result of compromise. And no translation can possibly be made which will not by some persons be received with great dislike, by some with vehement opposition. Scholars naturally wish the most exact attainable rendering, even at some sacrifice of vernacular style. Literary people want an elegant style, even at some sacrifice of exact rendering. Persons who have a passion for the antique cannot think any new translation so good as the old. And many devout people, especially those who are growing old, are unwilling to relinquish expressions which for them have become doubly sacred through devout associations. Let no man imagine, then, that any translation can ever win its way to acceptance, save through a storm of opposition and after years of conflict. When King James' Version appeared

in 1611, one who was regarded as the most eminent Hebrew scholar in England said: "It bred in me a sadness which will grieve me while I breathe; it is so ill done. Tell his Majesty that I had rather be rent in pieces with wild horses than any such translation, by my consent, should be urged on poor churches." And yet this was the translation which we all so greatly admire and love. It required fifty years, with all the influence of the King and of the Established Church, before that version entirely supplanted those previously in use. How much people do need to read history, if they would judge wisely of current movements!

WE OUGHT PERSONALLY TO STUDY THE BIBLE.

(3.) Let all study the originals who can possibly do so, but not the originals alone. Let all cultivated people use various translations, into English, and, if they can, into other languages, in order to break up the superficial familiarity

with our common version, which so often prevents us from inquiring into the real meaning. Let us delight in using the rich store of commentaries and works on Bible History which are now within reach of all. But especially let us study the Bible itself, and not merely works that talk about the Bible. I often fear that Sunday-school teachers and pupils are so engrossed with the abundant and valuable "lesson helps", that they do not personally study the lesson.

WE OUGHT TO TEACH BIBLE TRUTH TO OTHERS.

(4) Preachers ought not merely to give many expository discourses, which I am glad to see are becoming more popular in our country, but ought to give to all their topical discussions the largest possible infusion of Scripture thought, to make them chiefly the development and application of Scripture ideas. Sunday-school teachers, parents, older brothers and sisters, must try to know and teach the

Bible, "even as truth is in Jesus." Editors and other writers in religious periodicals, with their great and ever-growing power, while rightly seeking to produce *newspapers*, and alive to all the religious movements of the day, ought constantly and prayerfully to strive that the spirit of the Bible may pervade all their discussions, and its teachings really control all their religious thought.

WE OUGHT TO ACT OUT THE BIBLE IN OUR INDIVIDUAL
LIVES.

(5) We profess to be strictly Bible Christians. Let us show it during this Convention by avoiding all irreverent use of Bible language. To produce witty effects by such irreverence is a thing too cheap to be in any wise creditable, and is more hurtful than appears to be imagined by those who sometimes practice it in conventional discussions or in private conversation.

Let us show that we are Bible Christians

by manifesting the spirit of Missions. He who is the centre and heart of the Scriptures was himself a missionary from heaven to earth, and his last great command was a command to missionary work, wide as the nations of mankind, and in which he would be with them to the end of the world. Are we reminded that there is much to be done in our own country—a terrible amount of ignorance, irreligion, and vice? So it was among the Jews when Paul was not allowed to labor at home as he preferred, but commanded to go far away to the heathen. Are we reminded of the wide-spread, growing, and noisy infidelity at home? None the less, all the more, must we send the gospel to distant lands. Christianity must be growing at the circumference, or it cannot keep alive at the centre. Christianity is missionary or it is nothing. An immense increase of missionary activity would powerfully augment the faith of our own people in the word of God.

Let us show that we are Bible Christians by the exercise of brotherly love. It is still true, notwithstanding all sneering assertions to the contrary, that Christians love one another. You and I have often felt it as a potent and precious reality. But let brotherly love abound, and work its legitimate effects, and this will prove to ourselves and to others that in believing the Bible we have passed out of death into life.

My brethren, we ought to be what Paul called his Corinthian readers, living epistles, known and read of all men. You have perhaps seen an old manuscript of the New Testament, in which many a page was worn around and torn across, while the ink was faded and words, here and there, were almost illegible—an uninviting record to readers not deeply interested. And alas! something like this is the spectacle presented by many a character and life among us. Oh, may "the Spirit of the living God" retouch each faded

letter and make all the lines clear and bright, that the most heedless may not fail to read, and be convinced that God is with us, of a truth. Thus shall they be won to acquaint themselves with the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make them wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

**GOD BRINGS GOOD OUT OF DISCUSSIONS
ON THE BIBLE.**

My brethren, the greatest consolation of earthly life—it is true, we have many consolations amid life's conflicts and sorrows—but the greatest of them all, I think, is to see how often God brings good out of evil. And so out of these unbelieving or skeptical assaults upon the Bible comes renewed and more earnest study of the Bible. Within the last few years, in consequence of these critical theories as to the Old Testament, we have seen a greatly increased interest in Old Testament studies, including the original languages.

May our gracious God continue to overrule error, in other men or in us, to the advancement of his truth. May he help us and help all men, learned or unlearned, who in sincerity and earnestness, and in reliance upon the grace of his Spirit, are seeking to know the Holy Scriptures.

“All flesh is as grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of grass”—yea, and human speculations and theories are transient too—“but the word of the Lord abideth forever.” When all of us have long passed away and been forgotten, and all our life-work shall have been mingled, undistinguishably save to the divine eye, with the general movement of human affairs, still God’s word will abide. New controversies will gather around it, while the controversies of our day live only in history; new generations will contend for its truth and preciousness, and will know its power to make wise unto salvation. Oh, may our faith in it never be

THREE QUESTIONS AS TO THE BIBLE. 69

shaken, but strike deeper root amid storms. Oh, may this word be our strength in life, and our comfort in death, and then shine on as a light to the path of those who come after us. Amen, and Amen.