

The American Presbyterian.

New Series, Vol. VI, No. 27

15 July 69

Genesee Evangelist, No. 1207.

Strictly in Advance \$2.50. Otherwise \$3.
Postage 20cts. to be paid where delivered.

PHILADELPHIA, THURSDAY, JULY 8, 1869.

Home & Foreign Miss. \$2.00.
Address:—1334 Chestnut Street.

American Presbyterian.

THURSDAY, JULY 8, 1869.

—The corner-stone of the new edifice of the Central church (N. L.), corner of Franklin and Thompson streets, Rev. J. Y. Mitchell, pastor, will be laid to-day, at 5 o'clock, P. M.

—The Managers of the Midnight Mission have, in the past eighteen months, had over 700 individuals under their charge. They are asking for aid.

—Princeton has conferred some of its highest honors upon men of our body: LL.D. upon Rev. Wm. Adams, D. D., and Henry B. Smith, D. D., and D. D. upon Rev. John Crowell of Odessa, Delaware. The University of New York conferred a D. D. upon Rev. Wm. Aikman, and Williams' College a similar degree upon Rev. John W. Bailey of Illinois.

—The Directors of the Philadelphia Library Co., are inclined to pause before accepting the Ridgway bequest. At a recent meeting, Judge Hare expressed his belief that it would be mainly consumed in erecting the library building, which, with taxes and increased cost of keeping it up, might make it not so desirable a legacy after all. Judge Cadwalader spoke earnestly in favor of accepting it. A joint committee of six directors and six stockholders was raised to take the matter into consideration, and report to a meeting of the stockholders to be held in October.

—The diminution of our public debt since the incoming of the new administration, to the amount of thirty-six millions and more, is gratifying indeed, in a merely financial and economical point of view; but the Christian citizen rejoices at the proof it gives of the fidelity of our Government to the simple principles of morality which it professed, and the consequent healthful influence certain to be diffused through the business life of our country. National repudiation, open or implied, would have unhinged all the business relations of society and have thrown a veil thicker than Jewish prejudice over not only the Eighth Commandment, but the whole moral law. We beg the prayers of our readers that the Government may be sustained in its determination honestly to administer the affairs of the country; a purpose which will require all the courage and the wisdom of great generals and accomplished statesmen.

WHY RE-UNITE.

Among the many causes which are bringing the two branches of the church together, none is more potent than a deepening sense of the great work laid upon the evangelical churches of America at this time. Right or wrong, the interest in theological questions which once profoundly agitated the church, and consequently, the interest in liberty of theological opinion, are passing away. Christ's people are asking, now, not so much what they shall think and believe of Him, as what they shall do for Him. The great, universal, massive truths of Redemption, on which we are all agreed, are now in such need of earnest advocacy and extension, that Christian people, especially in America, feel called upon to forget their differences, and to rally for great practical achievements in their behalf.

The old familiar work of Home Missions and of City Evangelization and Church Erection is pressing upon us as heavily as ever before. Some of the problems it presents are as far from solution as ever. We are but scratching on the outer shell of the home heathenism of our cities. Worldly enterprise, with its trans-continental railroads, its inter-oceanic canals and its Atlantic cables is enthroning Mammon higher than ever upon the hearts of men. Teutonic, Scandinavian, Celtic and Anglo-Saxon immigration is rolling upon us at the rate of six to ten thousand a week. One-seventh part of our population are Romanists, and the commercial metropolis of the nation is virtually a part of the Pope's dominions, and the Empire State is laid under contribution, and taxes are wrung from unwilling Protestants to the amount of millions, for the support of Papal schools and Papal charities, and for the building of costly Romish cathedrals. The flood of intemperance must, a second time, be arrested. The day of sacred rest must be guarded from universal license. The four millions of freedmen, victims of the enforced ignorance of divine and human knowledge, and of the brutalizing influences, of slavery must be raised and fitted for citizenship in the heavenly and the earthly country. Infidelity must be met in its new and attractive form of scientific materialism. The battle rages around the person, the miracles,

the cross and the sepulchre of Jesus. Why do we linger over the nicer distinctions within the Calvinistic system? The battle-ground of to-day is not here; the wave of strife has swept towards the citadel, and yet some are in ecstasies of blind terror about the smaller outposts! Do not play the martyr for your poor little theories; while the foundations are in danger of being destroyed.

And while we grapple with questions which have become more or less familiar, in which there are few new elements save of size and relative position, we need only turn to our Pacific coast to witness the rise of an entirely new and portentous phenomenon, baffling the foresight of the most sagacious philanthropists. The stream of Chinese and Japanese immigration seems to have fairly set in, and if we have been bewildered with difficulties arising from the rapid influx of a nominally Christian population, what is to be done when the greatest of heathen nations, crowded with one third of the whole human race, is threatening to pour out its people upon our Western shores?

These are some of the amazing considerations which ought to draw and which are drawing American Christians together, and which have had their weight in breaking down the separating walls of distrust between the two branches of our church.

At least one of the Presbyteries which has taken action on the subject, shows its estimate of the practical meaning of the Re-union, in the following Resolution:

"Resolved, That we have heard, with profound satisfaction and great joy of the contemplated movement to raise a fund of several millions of dollars, for educational and denominational purposes, as an appropriate celebration of the Re-union of the Presbyterian Church, and we hereby express our earnest desire that the General Assembly at its adjourned meeting at Pittsburgh take such measures to favor the effort as shall enlist all the members of our congregations to make it successful; so that our branch of the Church fall not to do its full share in this grand work of Christian benevolence, in which the Presbytery of Ontario is hereby pledged not to be delinquent."

INSPIRATION: DEFINITION AND LIMITS.

By inspiration, we mean a mysterious, miraculous influence exerted upon the minds of a specific and limited class of men, and producing three kinds of effects: (1) a knowledge of truth which they could not obtain by the regular operations of the faculties, and (2) a power of selection among truths or facts already known, or accessible by ordinary means, according to the purposes of the inspiring Agent. (3) With both of these gifts, a third is associated, before our idea of inspiration is complete, namely that of making an infallibly correct record of the truths thus gained or selected. Any and all attempts at a psychological explanation of the mode of this influence must be given up, just as unhesitatingly as an attempt to explain the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes. All classifying of this influence with other natural and more or less known operations of the mind, must, we think, be eschewed, as quite overlooking its purely miraculous quality, and its place, as a specific element, in the economy of Redemption. Only by accommodation and analogy can it be compared with what men, outside of theological circles, call "inspiration." That power of insight and grasp of truth and gift of utterance which are the mysterious prerogatives of genius, are, indeed, often spoken of in connection with the writers of the Bible; by some, as if they were all that could be claimed for them; by others, as if they furnished at least a satisfactory illustration of the mode of the divine influence; by others still, as one class of divine influences, not so elevated, but still essentially the same as those enjoyed by the sacred writers. We dismiss each and all of these theories of men solicitous to put a wholly supernatural fact in a natural and rational garb. The inspiration of these writers is a fact utterly sui generis, no more to be accounted for, on rational grounds, than were the forty years' wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness, or than any one of the divine facts through which the plan of salvation was brought into human history and attested to men.

We dismiss, too, the question, to what extent these writers were merely machines; what amount of volition they exercised in forming definite verbal conceptions of what they knew in general by inspiration; and how far they were permitted to follow their natural bent in the matter of style and logical form. If we grant that, as a result of the mysterious co-working of the divine and human in the Scriptures, an infallibly true book has been secured, we need not contend about the relative proportion of these two elements in the problem. If we deny a dictation of every separate word and argument, but at the

same time hold that words and arguments convey the exact truth, just as much as if they had been dictated, we are on orthodox ground, without being bound to any mechanical theory. We do not intend to repudiate what is called "plenary inspiration," but we deny that it is needed in its mechanical form to make out the case. Indeed, the plenary, or mechanical theory cannot go with us whole, a step beyond the original text of the record. If it was the very words that were dictated, the charm is broken whenever you translate them; whereas, on the other view, a faithful translation is, to all intents and purposes, the inspired volume.

Now we hold explicitly that all Scripture is given by inspiration; that the Inspiring Agent is everywhere, in every page and proposition, in every sentence and word. That which is given as matter of record, is an infallibly true record. Sometimes it is a record of things good and true, sometimes of things evil and false, but as a record it is, in each case, equally true. Sometimes it is a prophecy, a disclosure, a command, a warning; in each and all these it is supreme—divine. Whatever, according to all fair, common-sense rules of interpretation, the inspired writers felt themselves charged to convey, that the Holy Spirit speaks to us. Error in the passage of the truth from the Spirit, through their minds and pens to us, cannot be admitted in any shape, form or degree, without vitiating the very idea of inspiration as the sole, infallible source of truth and authority, and thus destroying the value of the Scriptures. Nothing is gained to the world by Revelation, if men may go through the Bible, each one choosing what abounds with his own judgment, and rejecting all the rest. A Revelation could be made available by such a process, only on the supposition that man was already in full sympathy with God; and, in that case, there would be virtually no need of a revelation at all.

However, it is a business of prime importance, which ever theory of inspiration we choose, to learn in what degree we have secured a perfect copy of the original. We may not hold the inspiring Agent accountable for errors that have crept into manuscripts. There was no pledge on the part of Deity in giving us His word; to preserve an absolutely perfect copy of the original record through all time. This would have required a constant succession of miracles, an inspiration of copyists, as well as original writers; a suspension of the laws of decay, as to the material of the manuscripts, and the like. While Divine Providence, in a wonderful manner, has guarded the substantial purity of these precious documents; their condition shows that He has wrought no such miracles as those. The original work of the authors; these copies of the Epistles which Paul authenticated with a concluding sentence in his own handwriting, have not been handed down to us. The versions and copies of these writings which we possess, dating from the second century and onward, although sufficiently ancient, accurate and well attested, are not, by any means, free from errors, as their various readings show. And while not one in a hundred of these various readings is of any practical importance, not one doctrine of religion being changed; nor one precept taken away, nor one important fact altered by the whole of them taken together, yet it is well to take ground distinctly, that only as we approximate exactly to the original text, can we hold the Inspiring Agent responsible for the work. If, for instance, sound criticism rejects the passage in 1 John v. 7, as we believe it does, we may remove it from the text without touching the question of inspiration at all. It was not in the manuscript as it came from the Apostle's hand, and we do not want it in our copies. It is no part of the Holy Spirit's work. The judging, critical faculties of man are designed, in providence, to be used in tracing the exact verbal form, and in maintaining the verbal purity, of the divine communications, as well as in unfolding their meaning.

Nor was inspiration such an endowment that it preserved the writers, at all other times, from error or infirmity. Balaam and even Balaam's ass might be under such influence as to utter infallible truth, and immediately afterwards relapse into a condition with which the word of God has no concern. Peter was blamed to the face by Paul, yet he was inspired to write part of the New Testament. So much of the activity of these men as was actually employed in forming the inspired record—so much, and no more,—is covered by the specific influence of the Inspiring Agent; the argument is not affected by their conduct as fallible men, at other times.

The same is to be said of the characters introduced, and of the language quoted, in the historical parts of the Bible. The wrong and criminal acts of these characters are put upon record simply as matter of history and for admonition; the

Inspiring Agent is responsible for none of these acts, but solely for the correctness with which they have been recorded. Wicked speeches, false statements, and unconscious errors, are merely put on record as facts, not as examples to be imitated. No one thinks of ascribing to the Inspiring Agent such a declaration as, "There is no God." By His instruction it was written down as a matter of record, as the utterance of "the fool." We have frequently, in studying the historical difficulties of Stephen's speech, (Acts vii.) asked ourselves, whether inspiration should be held accountable for them? The question may be put thus: Was Stephen inspired to make the speech; or was it only Luke who was inspired to put the speech on record, exactly as it was delivered? Whatever be the answer, the true theory of inspiration will be fully satisfied on the latter supposition, and why should we require more? In Paley's Evidences there is quite an argument upon the historical difficulties in the speech of Gamaliel, Acts v. 34-37. The author is anxious to remove these difficulties, and speaks of the discrepancy between Gamaliel and Josephus as if it was actually between Josephus and Luke. The fact is, all we can rightfully demand of Luke, as an inspired penman, is the faithful reporting of what Gamaliel said. He is no more responsible for the correctness of the statements than the reporter of the courts is for the truthfulness of the witnesses' testimony, which he takes down.

The inspiring agent again, must not be held responsible for the literal truth of current forms of speech, in which the appearance of things is described; as "the sun rises" or "sets." If language scientifically correct had been used in place of these current phrases, it would have confused readers, whose ideas were so totally different. Poetical expressions, such as the pillars of heaven, pillars of the earth, &c., must be judged exactly as we would judge similar expressions in our own literature. Still more important is it to observe, in the case of such books as Job and the Ecclesiastes, that there is an argument with a right and a wrong side, carried through the entire book, and that passages cannot be cited indiscriminately from either Job or Ecclesiastes, as having a divine warrant. Job's friends insisted that God dealt out temporal good and evil according to the present deserts of men; a doctrine which Job rightly combated. We are, of course, not authorized to cite the language of Job's friends as inspired. The discussion was put upon record by direction of the inspiring Agent, but what part of the discussion we are to regard as inspired, is one of those questions which divine wisdom has left for the training of the judgment of His people. The sad, desponding, unbelieving expressions in Ecclesiastes require to be estimated not by themselves; for then they would necessarily be rejected as untrue; but they must be weighed in connection with the book as a whole; as bringing out more forcibly the leading truth; "the conclusion of the whole matter."

Mr. Barnes, in his Introduction to the Psalms, makes similar remarks in reference to some of the most difficult of those very difficult portions of Scripture—the Imprecatory Psalms. He says (Introd. Vol. I., p. xxix.) "Some of the expressions referred to, are a mere record of the feelings of others; of the gratification which they would feel in seeing vengeance inflicted on the guilty, even when revenge should be taken in the most barbarous and savage manner. In such a case, all that the inspired writer, or the Spirit of inspiration, is responsible for, is the fairness of the record; or that He has given an exact statement of the feelings which would be cherished and expressed by those who would inflict the vengeance; or who should experience gratification in seeing it." Referring to Psalm 137: 8, 9, he says: "In this there is nothing which necessarily implies that the author of the Psalms would approve of it, or that he would have done it himself. If the case is supposed even to indicate the common feelings of the Hebrew people, still it may be a mere record of that feeling as a matter of fact, and the Spirit of inspiration is responsible only for a fair account of the feelings which would actually exist."

The N. W. Presbyterian charges us with sneering at and deriding the other branch of the church in our article of two weeks ago on Re-union. In that article, we spoke of both branches of the church as, figuratively, dying to rise and form a new church in the Union. We proved the death of the Old School, by the fact perfectly patent through all the negotiations, that she had utterly abandoned her former haughty, uncompromising and persecuting attitude toward our body and our men, and had joined, with us in a mutual recognition of orthodoxy, as the basis of the plan of union sent down to the Presbyteries. All that

New School men had felt and seen, in former times, of contempt and suspicion in the attitude of this branch towards themselves, was surrendered and disowned in this action. Perhaps we should have said—not the Old School Church, but the Old Schoolism of the Old School Church is dead,—a distinction from which the N. W. Presbyterian is welcome to draw all the comfort it can. Certainly, we intended no offence to the immense governing mass of the other branch, who for six years have been steadily working for reunion upon an honorable basis, and have transformed so completely the character of their branch, that even the most positive New School men can welcome the prospect of union with them.

THE THIRD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WILLIAMSPORT.

This church was organized by a Committee of the Presbytery of Harrisburg on the 31st of May last. It is a colony from the 2d Church, Rev. Mr. Sterling's; and goes out with none but the kindest feelings, and with the full approbation and consent of both the pastor and people of the 2d Church, who have done all that they could to forward the enterprise. The beautiful chapel, for the accommodation of the 3d Church, has just been completed; and it was dedicated to the worship of Almighty God on Sabbath, July 4th. Rev. Wm. Sterling preached the sermon, closing his own church for the occasion. The house was well filled; and before the congregation retired, they wiped out the best amounting to over nine thousand dollars. Thus, through the liberality of Mr. Sterling's church, has this house been erected, and put into the hands of the new organization, entirely unembarrassed with debt. The chapel is a very neat brick building, in Gothic style, with slate roof. It has two graceful towers, in one of which hangs the old bell of the 2d church, presented by the Trustees of that church. The audience chamber will seat about 350 persons. It is carpeted and cushioned throughout, and has stained glass windows, and is lighted on the same plan as the 2d church, making the house at night as brilliant as the day. It has also a small gallery for the choir; and under the gallery, an infant school-room, which can be thrown into the audience chamber during the time of public worship. The entire cost, including the lot, is \$16,221 30.

Two excellent men, Mr. Hiram Mudge and Mr. Percy W. Bentley have been ordained as Elders; and their young pastor, Rev. William A. Dunning from Montrose Presbytery, enters upon his field of labor with most encouraging prospects of success.

The location of this new church is an excellent one: It is in the most beautiful part of the city, and in the midst of a rapidly increasing population. The chapel is erected on the rear end of the lot, on Maynard street,—leaving the main building, when the congregation grow large enough to require it, to front on West Third Street.

Thus, by the blessing of God, has this cherished enterprise been accomplished. We trust that before many years it will be one of our most vigorous, and active, and influential churches. S.

A CHANCE FOR THE ARITHMETIC MAN.—The Christian Instructor of this city can't make up its mind about the statistics of its own (U. P.) Church. In a recent item it steps across the IXth Commandment to charge us with "falsifying the records" in "stating that [the U. P.] Church has lost 5,000 during the year. The records show a gain of over 3,000."

The Instructor itself is our authority for our statement. We quote its very words in its report of its Assembly:—"number of members 65,624; increase by profession, 4,121; by certificate 3,998; decrease 5,059." We find that the statistical report makes this mean "deaths and removals 5,059," but we had no reason at the time to know that this was the meaning.

The Instructor itself is falsifying the records. It claims an increase of 3,066, ascribing the apparent discrepancy to "the carelessness of sessions in making up the record." The facts stand, however, and are text enough for any sermon we have preached on them,—that the net gain of the U. P. Church in a membership of over 65,000 is just twelve.

We suggest that if the Instructor continue its transpositions of matter and its substitution of obscure words for plain ones, that it change its name to *The Weekly Rebus*.

—Rev. R. H. Allen of Pine St. church received the degree of D. D. from Hanover, Ind. College, at its recent commencement.