

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

CHANGED HIS BELIEF.

Another prominent ecclesiastic seems to have suffered shipwreck of faith, being cast ashore on the dangerous rocks of modern criticism of the Bible. As announced in the dispatches Dr. Richard Smith, professor of Greek, Hebrew and Sanskrit at a Methodist college in West Virginia has resigned his chair on account of a change of religious views. The learned scholar is inclined to doubt the inspiration of certain portions of the Bible and where he grants inspiration at all, he believes the Scriptures are inspired in no other sense than the hymn book, for instance; Paul and other authors of the Bible were inspired men only as were Martin Luther or John Wesley in later times. This being, from a Methodist point of view, heresy, the professor resigned his position in that denomination.

It is perhaps only natural that among biblical scholars, who chiefly are concerned about the languages in which the sacred books were written, and who as a matter of fact pay principal attention to a critical study of the text and the variations in readings, etc., there should be a tendency to doubt as regards inspiration, just as there is a tendency to materialism and other forms of infidelity among a large class of students of the physical sciences. They are so absorbed in the phenomena of the perceptible universe that they have no eye for the spiritual forces on which they depend. With the noted Christiania professor who told his audience he had been studying anatomy for fifty years without being able to discover the slightest trace of a soul in the human body, they are inclined to think that what they cannot see does not exist. In the same way, critical scholars of the Bible are apt to find themselves tortured by doubts, because they encounter difficulties in reconciling the presence of a Divine element in a text that bears so many marks of human imperfections. As stated, this tendency to skepticism on an important point is easily accounted for; it is very plain that it is owing to the fact that the various divisions of the great churches of the world are all in error regarding the personality and the Spirit of the Supreme Being, as well as His relation to the children of men, and the revelations given. Were these points clear, the doctrine of inspiration would cause but little difficulty.

In one sense it is undoubtedly true that men like Martin Luther and John Wesley were inspired. As far as they were instruments in the hand of Providence to perform the work to which they were devoted, they were under the influence of the Divine Spirit. So were numerous others in different parts of the world, with all their feebleness of perception and other imperfections. But on that account is the conclusion inavoidable that Paul and other biblical authors possessed inspiration in no higher degree than these? Certainly not. Neither Luther nor Wesley claimed the authority with which Paul spoke

when announcing the will of the Lord.

Turning to the Bible, it is evident that both Old and New Testament authors claim that their writings are composed under the guidance of the Spirit. The Scriptures, therefore—and this applies equally to the records of the Lamanites on this continent and the revelations given to the Church in this age—are the utterance of the Divine will, expressing the ideas the Holy Spirit intended as near as this could be done in human language by the human instruments employed. The authors had the special gifts of thus reflecting the Divine will. This inspiration, however—in the language of a prominent theologian—admitted in the sacred writers of diligent and faithful research, of the expression of the same thought in different words; of such differences between the accounts as would be likely to arise from the different standpoints of each author; of quotations from inspired and uninspired documents; and of peculiarities of style arising from diversities of intellectual structure and from educational and other influences. These facts are all stated by the inspired authors themselves and do not appear to present any serious difficulties. But when an attempt is made to form a theory embodying these facts, obstacles will arise until the chief fact is admitted that inspiration and revelation are as much a part of the Christian religion in this age as in former dispensations. It is an evidence against the theology of the world that its most profound students stumble and fall over one of the fundamental truths of the Christian religion.

THE DEAD SHALL LIVE!

During the present century there have been many reforms in the preaching of so-called Christian doctrines, and to a considerable extent there has been a weeding out of fallacious ideas such as infant damnation, hopelessness after death, eternal subjection to punishment, etc. These changes have been a direct result of the preaching of the Gospel as restored in this dispensation, and a consequent grinding of the false dogmas by the progress of light and reason. The uninspired preachers—that is, so far as divine inspiration is concerned—still seek to blind the people by declaring as a part of Christianity that which is subversive of basal Christian principle, and are adding new fads and fallacies which they esteem to be suited to their whims or the carrying out of their purposes.

A typical illustration of professing Christians assailing a fundamental principle of Christianity is shown in the recent sermon of Dr. J. S. Thomson, the Unitarian who was requested to state the position of his sect on the resurrection. He took up the instance of Lazarus, claiming that he was not dead at the time the miracle was performed, but that "Christ by His

spiritual power arrested the process of dying." Says Mr. Thomson:

He was not yet dead. He was asleep in death; but the sleep was not yet so profound as to be an eternal separation of spirit and body. A cord, or cords, binding together mortal and immortal parts, had not yet been sundered. The spirit was slowly or gradually separating itself from the body. Christ summoned the departing spirit back to the earthly tabernacle before absolute death had taken place. Elisha, Peter and Paul restored to life those who had just died; and in the case of the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain, Christ also called them back to life before they had been interred. A resurrection of life into a purified body never took place.

As to what he says "never took place," the reverend gentleman evidently does not possess a knowledge of all that has occurred; for in that statement he denies a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, clearly and forcibly expressed in the Scriptures, and maintained by the facts and by reason. Job declared the principle that though worms should destroy his body, yet in his flesh he should see God (xix: 26, 27). Isaiah also teaches, "The dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." Christ Himself was the first to rise from the dead; after that "the graves were opened and many of the Saints which slept arose," and "women received their dead raised to life again." The body of the Lord lay in the tomb but a short time, and therefore "saw no corruption," which fact was commented upon as specially notable; but there is not the slightest foundation for a supposition that the Saints who "came out of the graves after the resurrection, and went into the holy city," all had died within the brief time that elapsed between the crucifixion and their resurrection, and therefore that their bodies had not known corruption.

The doctrine of a resurrection coming to every body, even though it be putrified, destroyed by worms, or consumed by fire, is a direct teaching of real Christianity. As the Apostle John declared, "all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth;" also the Apostle Paul: "In Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits." Jesus' body came from the tomb, was re-occupied by His spirit, and became a living tabernacle of flesh and bones. As "the first fruits" of the resurrection, His spirit and body were reunited after He had passed through the ordeal of death; all men follow as subsequent "fruits" in being restored to life, each in his own order, whether he be slain in the grave one or a hundred years, or more. Many of the Saints in the grave were included in those "fruits" immediately following the Savior's resurrection; these were not called back to life "before they were interred."

As to "absolute death," or "an eternal separation of spirit and body," there is no such thing in the process which ends mortal existence and is the occasion of consigning the body to the tomb. In this case death is the process of change by which man enters another sphere. The spirit and the body, or elements of tabernacle, are separated in effecting that change.