

Is the Bible Infallible?

—For the TORCH OF REASON.

The position taken by the Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott in his recent pulpit essays on certain books and sayings of the bible and especially the story of Jonah and the whale in which he claims that it is not the recital of a real happening, but rather a satire conceived in the spirit of oriental imagination and told to convey a moral lesson, the same as parables are told in the New Testament, has not only stirred up quite a controversy in his own church and denomination, but in all other orthodox denominations with which it has come in contact. One of the greatest of the orthodox denominations in the world is the methodist, and one of the most influential men in that denomination is the Rev. Dr. James M. Buckley, editor of the New York Christian Advocate, the leading organ of the methodist church, so Dr Abbott having made the initial motion in his recent essays at a meeting of methodist clergyman February 15, Dr. Buckley rose to give it a hearty welcome and second, but the business of the meeting on this occasion was to listen to an address from the Rev. Dr. Curtis president of the Drew Theological Seminary, and his subject was, "How christian men may satisfy themselves that the bible is a direct revelation from God." At the conclusion of the reading of this essay, Dr. Buckley offered some comments, and after giving a left handed compliment to Dr. Curtis, he said, "I am not altogether satisfied with what my learned brother has said; his topic was, 'How christian men may satisfy themselves that the bible is a direct revelation from God.' He has perhaps answered that question satisfactorily to some, but he has not touched upon the all important question that is now agitating the entire christian world "to wit." How may the outsiders, the un-christian men the unbelieving people, be assured that the bible is infallible and a direct revelation from God. That is the question we want answered. He then went on to state that he did not believe the English version of the bible to be infallible. "It contains errors" says he "and I do not believe that there are four men present who would give an unconditional indorsement to the English version, if there are, and they are looking for the fifth, they may count me out." It is said that if Dr. Buckley had jumped into this preacher's meeting with a revolver in one hand and a bowie knife in the other, he could not have created more excitement than he did with this verbal explosion. Nearly every minister present was instantly on his feet shouting "heresy." They bade Dr. Buckley retract his words, but instead of doing that he, demanded a vote on the question as

to whether the inerrancy of the King James translation was swallowed by all present or not. One old brother, Dr. Shaffer shook his finger in Dr. Buckley's face and suggested that if he doubted the infallibility of the bible, he had better get out of the church.

Dr. Charles H. Eaton holds that the denial of the infallibility of the bible is nothing new even in Methodism. He says that there are few clergymen who believe in the absolute inerrancy of the scriptures and that the heretic of today is not the man who takes Dr. Buckley's position, but the man who opposes it; he was, nevertheless, opposed to the proposition of Dr. Buckley to submit the question to a vote so that finally, when the vote was called, there was but one man to respond and say that he swallowed the bible from Genesis to Revelation—the original Hebrew, Greek, King James' translation, and all. The result of the meeting will undoubtedly give Dr. Abbott a new bomb, and he is already urging his views in regard to the book of Ecclesiastes, which are also likely to get up a spirited controversy in all orthodox churches. It does not seem possible that intelligent men believe all that is recorded in the old testament. All of these ministers ought to know that these books ascribed to Moses were not written until hundreds of years after his death, and were in course of procedure for several hundred years, being the works of many authors.

JOEL M. BERRY.

Says the Agnostic Journal.

A correspondent, writing to a contemporary, draws up the following impeachment of those brothers in Christ, the anglican bishops:

1810. Not a single Bishop voted to abolish capital punishment for stealing articles of the value of five shillings. Seven Bishops helped to reject it.

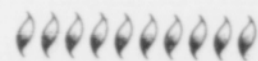
1821. 25 Bishops helped to keep the Roman Catholics out of Parliament.

1831. 21 Bishops voted against the Reform Bill, and the next year 12 voted in favour of it and 15 against.

1834. 22 voted to keep their fellow christians (dissenters) out of the Universities.

1858. 24 voted against church rates abolition.

And time after time and again and again on these and like questions ultimately settled in favor of christian equality, the Bishops helped to keep back and frustrate national religion by their votes and speeches in the House of Lords; whilst, when, as in 1883, a cruelty to animals bill was in the House of Lords, and was lost by only 13 votes, not one of the Bishops either voted or spoke on the subject. To take questions of lives of men, women, and children during the last thirty years, 8,000,000 of toilers have been killed and injured—during the whole of that period not one bishop has voted in favor of the toiler against the great capitalist interest.



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