

Not All Inspired.

BY JOEL M. BERRY.

In the "Weekly Witness" I noticed an editorial headed, "Not All Inspired". Some one signing himself M. B. writes to the editor:

"I have been taught from my earliest childhood that the bible is the word of God, but our minister, who claims to be a great bible student, told us in one of his sermons that the bible is not all inspired. He told us how many authors it took to write all the books of the bible. He said they were not all men, as part of it was written by women, and finally he said that the devil was the author of part of it. What will be the effect of such preaching in a community that is already strongly tinctured with skepticism?"

The editor of the "Witness" takes this for his starting point and says if this preacher is merely trying to exploit himself by proclaiming his superior knowledge, the effect upon his congregation will be very bad, and that upon his own character will be ruinous. But, he says, if the preacher is honestly trying to lead his hearers out into clearer light and larger conceptions of the bible, he is doing a good work, even though he may not be altogether wise in expressing himself.

Now what we can't comprehend is this: If this minister is doing a very bad, ruinous work in one instance by telling the people that the bible is not all inspired, how is it that he is doing a very good work by telling them the same thing in the other case?

Oh, no, Mr. Editor, that will never do. You must go it whole hog or none. The bible is either all inspired or not at all.

But the editor goes on to say that it is true enough the bible is not all inspired in the sense usually attached to that word. He says there are words in it which were spoken by foolish men, by bad men, and by even the devil himself, and that one of its most remarkable chapters is a proclamation by a heathen king (Nebuchadnezzar). It cannot be even said that the holy men who are set before us as teachers and examples always spoke words of infallible truth.

He then cites several instances, and asks if the prophet Jonah was inspired when God asked him if he did well to be angry and he replied that he did; if the prophet Jeremiah was inspired when he said, "Ah, Lord God, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people"; if the patriarch Abraham was inspired when he denied his wife, saying she was his sister; if the apostle Peter was inspired when with oaths and curses he denied his Lord?

Now the question is, when this editor knows these things to be true, why don't he, like a man,

come out and deny the inspiration theory in toto? Oh, no, that would ruin his pocketbook and his reputation as an editor, so you see he would not dare to do it.

No doubt it would hurt him in the estimation of a few creed-bound, ignorant, superstitious bible-believers, but in the estimation of all honest, truthful, intelligent people he would be doing just what is right.

What kind of a bible would that be with part inspired and part, as he says, written by bad and foolish men, and even by the devil? Who would be the judge, in that case, of what part is inspired?

The truth, as it appears to me, is this: The inspiration theory, like the fire and brimstone endless punishment doctrine, is fast falling into disrepute. There are hundreds of passages in the bible too obnoxious and obscene to even lay to the devil, let alone calling them inspired by God. Good bible believers are ashamed of them, and they must work some plan to smooth them over. The best they can do is to claim that part of the bible is inspired and part of it is not. A nice mixed up mess for any one to pin his faith to!

Just think of the many changes that have been made in the bible by way of new versions and revisions. In the early church, gospels and epistles were not only manufactured, but were dropped or changed to suit the demands of the occasion. But the truly faithful are compelled to believe it all inspired, even though they do not know what the word inspiration means.

In explaining the bible the principal business of the preacher or priest is to show to his deluded flock that the words do not mean what they say. They have two meanings, the literal and the hidden, which is the real meaning. A nice inspired word of God that would be, with a hidden meaning that none but the preacher or priest could understand!

But as has been justly remarked, there are plenty of people in the world who pass for having good sense, that, when it comes to matters of religious belief, don't know, never did know and never will know the difference between elusion and delusion.

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