



The Work of the Holy Spirit

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All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—2 Tim, iii. 16, 17.

Among the divine works of art produced by the Holy Spirit, the Sacred Scripture stands first. It may seem incredible that the printed pages of a book should excel His spiritual work in human hearts, yet we assign to the Sacred Scripture the most conspicuous place without hesitation.

Objectors can never have considered what this holy Book is, or any other book, writing, or language is, or what the putting down of a world of thought in a collection of Sacred Scripture means. We deny that a book, especially such as the Sacred Scripture, opposes a world of divine thought, the current of life, and spiritual experience. A book is not merely paper printed in ink, but is like a portrait—a collection of lines and features in which we see the likeness of a person. Standing near, we see not the person, but spots and lines of paint; but at the right distance these disappear and we see the likeness of a person. Even now it does not speak to us, for it is the face of a stranger; we may be able to judge the man's character, yet he fails to interest us. But let his child look, and instantly the image which left us cold appeals to him with warmth

and life, which were invisible to us because our hearts lacked the essentials. What appeals to the child is not in the picture, but in his memory and imagination; the cooperation of the features in the painting and the father's image in his heart makes the likeness speak.

This comparison will explain the mysterious effect of the Scripture. Guido de Bres spoke of it in his debates with the Baptists; " That which we call Holy Scripture is not paper with black impressions, but that which addresses our spirits by means of those impressions." Those letters are but tokens of recognition; those words are only the clicks of the telegraph-key signaling thoughts to our spirits along the lines of our visual and auditory nerves. And the thoughts so signaled are not isolated and incoherent, but parts of a complete system that is directly antagonistic to man's thoughts, yet enters their sphere.

Reading the Scripture brings to our minds the sphere of divine thoughts so far as needful for us as sinners, in order to glorify God, love our neighbor, and save the soul. This is not a mere collection of beautiful and glittering ideas, but the reflection of the divine life. In God life and thought are united: there can be no life without thought, no thought not the product of life. Not so with us. Falsehood entered us, i.e., we can sever thought from life. Or rather, they are always severed, unless we have voluntarily established the former unity. Hence our cold abstractions; our speaking without doing; our words without power; our thoughts without working; our books that, like plants cut off from their roots, wither before they can blossom, much less bear fruit.

The difference between divine and human life gives Scripture its uniqueness and precludes antagonism between its letter and its spirit, such as a false exegesis of 2 Cor. iii. 6 might suggest. If the Word of God were dominated by the falsehood that has crept into our hearts, and in the midst of our misery continues to place word and life in opposition as well as separation, then we would take refuge in the standpoint of our dissenting brethren, with their exaltation of the life above the Word. But we need not do so, for the opposition and separation are not in the Scripture. For this reason it is the Holy Scripture; for it was not lost

in the unholy tearing asunder of thought and life, and is therefore distinct from writings in which yawns the gulf between the words and the reality of life. What other writings lack is in this Book; perfect agreement between the life reflected in the divine thought and the thoughts which the

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