

ment which, prior to and apart from His appearing, was already extant for men. On the other hand (as in ver. 24), the *word, which they have heard from the beginning*, is certainly that which they have heard as the commandment of Christ from the beginning of their acquaintance with the gospel. John looks upon this commandment of brotherly love as the real principal content of the whole gospel message—so far, at least, as it is a practical message. This natural law of brotherly love, he says, is that which ye have heard as the commandment of Christ since the beginning of your acquaintance with the gospel; this and nothing else. Ye know, therefore, of yourselves what I mean, when I speak of the “commandment of Christ.”

According to this, the commandment of brotherly love has been given to men at large from the beginning of the human race, and in a certain measure they have also been conscious of it. It is an essential feature of the characteristic Christian frame of mind, that the Christian is conscious of the will of his Saviour as a will that does not at all impose new demands that were not already of themselves involved in the nature of the human race. They are rather purely and universally human demands, which the Saviour addresses to us; but they are none the less on that account

demands which He first actually makes. He first brings them into man's full, clear consciousness, and puts them in such a way that man becomes aware of their inevitable obligatoriness for him. Thus the Saviour first, so far as we are concerned, draws forth the half-buried primal, divine commandment into the full daylight of our consciousness. What we as men really are becomes manifest to us, first of all, in and through Him. The Christian is only man; but he is man as only the Christian knows him. The Christian must, therefore, with the most unconditional consent of his inmost nature, decide with respect to the Lord, that He only demands that which a man worthy of himself must absolutely demand of himself. Upon this, also, rests to some extent the Christian's assurance of the coming, perfect universality of faith in Christ. Because the Saviour brings nothing else than what belongs essentially to man as such, He must be able to find acceptance with all men; and because no other than He can perfectly communicate what belongs to the true nature of man, all must ultimately come to Him, in order to obtain it from Him. The Christian, however, should be all the more heedful that nothing is mixed up with Christianity, that is not in itself necessarily human, and that Christianity is not robbed of this its truly divine universalism by ordinances of man.

## The Dispensation of the Spirit.

BY THE REV. JOHN PORTEOUS, M.A., B.D.

IF there were saints of the Old Testament, they must have been sanctified, and that by the Spirit. Wherein, then, consists the pre-eminence of the New Testament Dispensation as regards the outpouring of the Spirit? (Matt. iii. 11; John vii. 39, xvi. 7).

The answer is: On the basis of the new Dispensation there is vastly wider scope for the action of the Spirit than there could be on the basis of the old.

1. The tacit assumption of the Law was that a man might sanctify himself. Experience was to show the fallacy of this. The Holy Spirit was not promised, though He would not be withheld from those who realized their helplessness and sought Divine aid (Ps. li. 11; cxliii. 10). On the other hand, the gospel, starting with the proclamation of human helplessness, had, as its very design, the outpouring of the Spirit. Thus the operations of the Spirit under the New Testament greatly exceed anything known before. Ours is the missionary epoch.

2. The Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John xiv. 17). In His action on the soul, He keeps pace with the

revelation of truth (so cf. 1 Pet. i. 23, and John iii. 5). His work is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us (John xvi. 13-15). In so far, then, as the revelation of truth is narrowed (as, e.g., under the Old Testament), the action of the Spirit is narrowed. The less distinctly and completely the things of Christ are within human cognition (as, e.g., before Christ came), the less full can be the work of the Spirit. There is a Christian “full assurance,” “peace,” “joy,” “hope,” “love,” “fellowship,” “character,” which can be produced only on the basis of Christian facts and principles. The production of these constitutes the special outpouring of the Spirit in Christian times.

## For the Study of the Bible.

### II.

THE CHRISTIAN WOMEN'S EDUCATION UNION.

THIS Society has made remarkable progress in Scotland since its establishment eight years ago, under the presidency first of the Countess of Aberdeen, and latterly of Lady Victoria Campbell. Its main object is to promote among educated women, especially among those who have recently left