

this word was not restricted to the foretelling of future events, in such a manner as evinced an emanation from the Omniscient; but it comprehended a faculty of communicating divine knowledge, by public speaking, with remarkable attractions of fervid eloquence: in fact, it was *preaching*. But the matter thus declared was not necessarily and in all cases the result of inspiration or any divine influence. Even in the hands of the wise and holy, it was not infallible; but was exposed to the intrusions of error in judgment and imperfection in representation. Therefore the apostle Paul gave precepts for the regulation, control, and correction of this "gift for the edifying of the church."\* In the words preceding our text, he enjoins a respectful and reverential treatment of all those means of instruction; while yet, in the text itself, he directs to a faithful examination of them, by bringing them to the standard of truth, and then firmly to retain whatever sentiments had endured this searching scrutiny. The standard of truth, in religious matters, lies in the unchangeable perfections of God, and the revelation which he has made of himself: and, in matters of science respecting the sensible world, it is to be elicited by observation, experiment, and induction. The obligations, then, to which we are here remitted, are comprehensiveness and diligence in our inquiries, openness to conviction, right estimation of evidence, and a steadfast adherence to its results.†

\* 1 Cor. xiv. A similar precept is in 1 John iv. 1.

† "— See; here St. Paul determines that no position should be admitted, till, before the community which hears it, it has been examined and found to be sound. This duty of examination does not belong to teachers only; but" [implies that] "they must openly propound their sentiments, in order that they may be subjected to every man's examining. Thus, by the authority of this passage, the exercise of judgment upon doctrines is not reserved to Christian teachers, but is given to the learners: so that it is altogether a different thing among Christians, to what obtains