

## ART. II.—THE RULE OF FAITH.

## PART III. INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

IN the preceding section the questions have been, What books constitute the volume of Holy Scripture? and, What has been, and is, the office of the Church in the formation of the Canon? External and internal testimony combined lead to the conclusion that the Protestant churches have good reason for differing from the Church of Rome in their decisions on these points. The question now before us is, On what ground do we assign to the books thus ascertained a supreme authority in matters of faith and practice? To the Christian the books received in the first instance on the tradition of the Church commend themselves by the light which they impart, as the sun is seen by his own beams; but a further question remains, What is the measure of the intensity of that light? The witness of the Holy Spirit in the volume seals the witness of the Church; but *to what extent* was the Holy Spirit an agent in its composition?—this is the point which now demands consideration. And the answer has been already briefly given. The supreme authority of Holy Scripture rests on the presumption that its authors, when they wrote, did so under a special influence of the Holy Spirit, which differs not merely in degree, but in kind, from His ordinary influences; to which special influence the Church has given the name of “*inspiration.*”

The plenary<sup>1</sup> inspiration of Scripture is rather assumed than anywhere directly affirmed in our formularies; probably because at the time no controversy on the point had been raised, at least between the great contending divisions of Christendom. If there ever was a general consent of the Church catholic on any question, it exists on this. East and west, from the earliest to later times, concurred in assigning to Scripture a pre-eminence, which consisted in its being, as no other collection of writings is, the Word of God. The foreign Protestant Confessions (more explicit on this point than our own) take up the sacred tradition; and the Church of Rome itself is in substantial agreement with them. She has, as we think on insufficient grounds, added to the number of canonical books; she has, in our opinion, improperly made tradition a co-ordinate authority with Scripture; but the books which she does receive with us she with us assigns to the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is, next to our common acceptance of the doctrines contained in the three creeds, one of the links that

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<sup>1</sup> This descriptive epithet is on many grounds to be preferred to “*verbal.*”

connect us with that Church, and makes a reconciliation at any rate within the range of possibility. From this it will be seen that it is the province of dogmatic theology not so much to *prove* the Inspiration of Holy Scripture—for no Christian church, as a church, least of all our own, doubts the fact—as to define and explain what is meant by it, and to attempt to meet objections which parties or individuals in the Church may urge against the received doctrine on the subject.

And first let the meaning of the term “inspiration,” as applied to Scripture, be fixed; fixed for the purposes of this discussion. The etymology conveys simply the notion of “in-breathing,” or the communication of divine influence; for what special purpose is determined by the nature of the result. Thus Bezaleel is said to have been inspired for the work of the tabernacle (Exod. xxxi. 3); Moses was inspired to give the Law, David to compose Psalms, the Prophets to admonish and to predict, the Apostles to preach and lay the foundations of the Church. In one of our collects we pray ourselves for the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The expression, therefore, “inspiration of Holy Scripture,” admits of a variety of meaning: it may, *e.g.*, be understood as simply affirming that a peculiar religious geniality pervades the book; or, in a more definite sense, that the authors of these books did indeed enjoy the privilege of a special divine assistance as men, but not particularly so as writers; and that this is enough to account for the position of pre-eminence which the Church assigns to Holy Scripture.

No definition of the word, when used in reference to *Holy Scripture*, is adequate which puts aside, or ignores, its application to the actual composition of the books. The Apostles were all inspired, but were they all inspired to *write*? If not, what was the nature and the extent of the divine influence which prompted, or superintended, those of them who did write, in the particular act of *writing*? Was it something, if not beyond yet distinct from, their general endowment of inspiration; or was their writing such and such books the natural efflorescence of the latter? As we may say, Milton was a great genius, and, therefore, naturally threw off the “Paradise Lost.” Was there, in short, a commission to write as well as to preach? The hinge of the controversy really turns on the answers to these questions.

No little difficulty has been introduced into the subject by the indiscriminate use of the terms “revelation” and “inspiration.” A revelation must, of course, have been inbreathed, or inspired, into the recipient thereof; but it is better to apply the term to all divine communications which stopped short of being committed to writing, and to appropriate the term “inspiration” to this latter special act. The distinction is founded on fact.

Revelations may have been imparted to a person who was not commissioned to reduce them to writing, that task being deputed to another; or the same person might receive the revelation at one time, and long afterwards be directed to place it on record. Of some of the writers of the New Testament—*e.g.*, St. Mark and St. Luke—it is not recorded that they received any revelations; yet we believe them to have been inspired to write the books which bear their names. The divine teaching with which St. Paul was favoured he himself calls revelation (*ἀποκάλυψις*), not inspiration (Gal. i. 12). Of revelation, miracles and prophecy were the proper credentials; but in the case of an inspired *writer* they were not necessarily attached to the function. It may, indeed, be a question whether the theory that revelation belongs especially to the Logos, and inspiration to the Holy Ghost, has Scriptural foundation;<sup>1</sup> but that the terms may fitly be appropriated to different operations of the same divine Agent hardly admits of doubt. Inspiration thus understood may be defined to be a special influence of the Holy Spirit, whereby the *writers* of Scripture were, in the act of writing, supernaturally preserved from error, and enabled to transmit, in its integrity, the original revelation as they had received it, either themselves directly from above, or mediately through others. We call it a *special* assistance of the Holy Spirit to distinguish it from that which all Christians enjoy, or ordinary illuminating grace: between the highest degree of this and the gift of inspiration there exists a specific difference, nor could the former, by natural growth, ever have passed into the latter. We confine it to the writers (or compilers) of Scripture to distinguish it from the spiritual gifts with which men of God, who had received no commission to write, may have been endowed; who, in one sense, were inspired, but were not the chosen agents of the Holy Spirit in the particular function of writing.

An *a priori* mode of arguing, that what seems to us necessary to the efficiency of Scripture must therefore belong to it, cannot, certainly, be universally commended; but there are some cases, and this is one of them, in which the probabilities are so strong that it has real weight. If the volume, and not merely the subject-matter, of Scripture is to be our Rule of Faith, how can we conceive it capable of discharging this function if a special superintendence was not vouchsafed to the writers *as writers*? It does not seem enough to admit that, if the Creator vouchsafed to reveal to man the wondrous scheme of redemption, He must also be supposed as providing for its being somehow committed to writing, for otherwise the benefit would be confined to the hearers of the first recipient and his oral

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<sup>1</sup> See Lee's "Inspiration of Holy Scripture," Lect. iii.

teaching: this is true, but the case seems to demand more—viz., that the record thus within the scope of divine Providence should itself be so watched over and controlled by a special agency of heaven as to preclude the possibility of error, or essential error—too probable when we consider the wide field of human infirmity—on the part of the human instrument; the letter, as well as the contents of the volume, must in a real sense admit of being called the Word of God.—We may approach the same conclusion by another path. Regarding the New Testament simply as a trustworthy history, let us examine what it tells us respecting the prerogatives of the Apostles as witnesses for Christ and founders of the Church. We read, then, that to these chosen witnesses a special guidance of the Holy Spirit was promised, not only to remind them of what Jesus had taught, but to supply what was wanting in their knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven (John xiv. 13). They were assured that when summoned to give an account of their doctrine before public authorities they needed not to be anxious about the result, for the Holy Ghost should speak in and through them (Matt. x. 20). The risen Saviour symbolically conferred on them the Holy Ghost for a special function connected with their office (John xx. 22, 23). These promises, we are assured, were fulfilled. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit, under visible symbols, descended upon them, and thenceforth they appear in quite a new character. They speak boldly, as conscious of a divine commission; represent themselves, in their official regulations, as acting under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts xv. 28; 1 Cor. vii. 40); and lay claim to a spiritual wisdom which is not of man, but was revealed to them by God, and which they clothe in words “not of man’s teaching, but what the Holy Ghost teacheth” (Gal. i. 12; 1 Cor. ii. 10-13). If these claims are not groundless, we must believe that the Apostles, in their public teaching and their official acts, enjoyed a divine assistance which no other Christians have enjoyed, prerogatives to which no teachers of a subsequent age can make pretension. With their *oral* teaching, at any rate, the plenary inspiration of the Holy Spirit must be connected.

But then, of the eight writers of the New Testament, five belong to the company of these accredited messengers, and surely we cannot suppose that when they took in hand to write for the benefit of the Church, they would be left destitute of special spiritual aid; that they would be supernaturally preserved from error when preaching to the comparatively few and revert to fallibility when writing for all ages? Indeed, the promise of Christ that He would be with his Apostles for ever (Matt. xxviii. 20) implies such a divine superintendence over their writings; for since they were not in their own persons to remain always

upon earth, and since as *Apostles* they have no successors, it can only be in their writings that they survive; which they do. St. Matthew, St. John, St. Peter, still, in the Scriptures, authoritatively declare the doctrine of Christ, refute error, remit and retain sins, order the affairs of the Church, preside in all Christian assemblies; in short, exercise all their Apostolic functions. If, therefore, the Holy Ghost was not the Prompter of their writings in the same sense in which He was the Prompter of their oral teaching, it is not easy to see how the promise of Christ has been fulfilled.

This, however, it will be said, applies only to the Apostles in the strict sense of the word; but a considerable portion of the New Testament (*e.g.*, the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke and the Acts of the Apostles) was not written by Apostles, and therefore does not come to us with the same authority as the rest of the volume. But let it be considered, in the first place, that the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit were not confined to Apostles; and therefore there is no antecedent improbability against the supposition that St. Luke and St. Mark, equally with St. Matthew, may have been endowed with the gift of inspiration. And, in the next place, let us ask what it was that rendered the *Apostles* specially qualified for the discharge of their office? Not natural endowments of mind, or acquired learning, but the fact that they alone had lived for years in closest intercourse with Jesus of Nazareth; that their eyes had seen, their hands handled, the Word of Life, as had been vouchsafed to no other disciples (1 John i. 1); and so that they, beyond all other men, were fitted to transmit the living portraiture which we have in the Gospels. Emphatically they were "witnesses" of Christ. But this advantage was possessed only in a secondary degree by the Apostolic men in question. If they were not actual witnesses of the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. iii. 16) they consorted habitually with those who had been, received from their lips the very words and actions of Christ, and possessed opportunities, which none of their successors could possess, of testing the accuracy of current traditions and correcting their own impressions by constant reference to those who had seen the Saviour in the flesh. If they were not actual founders of the Church they were the friends and companions of those who were. Next, then, to the Apostles themselves, none, surely, were so fitted to be entrusted with the Divine gift as persons thus circumstanced. If, then, they were commissioned to write, as we believe they were, there seems no reason why we should assign to their writings a position inferior to that of the others; and we receive, without hesitation, the testimony of the Church that the Gospels of St. Mark and St. Luke, the Acts of the Apostles, and, we may add, the Epistle to the Hebrews, are inspired compositions in the same

sense in which those of St. Paul are. It is to be observed that the special relation in which these apostolic men stood to the Apostles, as constant friends and companions, draws the line between them and other apostolic men such as Polycarp, who may have seen and heard Apostles, but were not in habitual attendance upon them. Nor, when we examine the compositions themselves, does the internal testimony refuse to lend its aid. Were any marked discrepancy visible, either in doctrine or style, between these books and those of the Apostles, there might be reason, if not for a summary decision against their claims, yet for perplexity and doubt. But what may be called the *style* and *manner* of inspiration are as clearly stamped on these writings as on any others contained in the volume. There is the same absence of mere human emotion, the same dignity and authority of address, the same freedom from puerile details and legendary fables, the same *abstinence* of taste in the selection of materials, the same noble simplicity of language. If we may judge from the spurious productions of the first two centuries, these characteristics are most difficult of imitation. With the single exception of the first Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, nothing, even in the age immediately succeeding that of the Apostles, approaches, in these points, the books in question. Writings so peculiar, the compositions of men not remarkable for genius or learning, carry their own impress of authority; the Christian instinct discerns in them, as writings, the co-operation of the Holy Spirit, and without an effort assigns them to the same category with those of St. John or St. Paul.—Yet again, we may found an argument on the manner in which the New Testament speaks of the “Word of God” as contained in the Old. It is to be observed, then, that our Lord, in referring to the Old Testament, constantly describes it as “the Scriptures” (τὰς γραφάς, Mark xii. 24). The well-known collection of canonical writings received by the Jews, “Moses and the Prophets,” in our Lord’s view, means not the matter of which they treat, but “the volume of the book” itself (Heb. x. 7); the written, and not merely the contained, Word of God. The idea is a definite, not a nebulous, one. “Search,” says Christ, “the writings” (τὰς γραφάς, John v. 39); “the writing” (ἡ γραφή, *Ibid.* x. 35) “cannot be broken,” or nullified. And in a capital passage St. Paul declares that each particular writing (πᾶσα γραφή) of the collection with which Timothy had been acquainted from his childhood was inspired of God, the quality being attached not merely to the authors in their *persons*, but to the authors in their *writings*.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Whether θεόπνευστος in this passage is to be taken as an epithet, or as the predicate of γραφή, *sub judice lis est*. The present writer inclines to the former; but whichever way we take it matters little to the argument.

It appears, then, that by our Lord and the Apostles the inspiration of the Old Testament belongs to the writing; we may say to the writing as distinguished from the author. And the argument is—If the records of the earlier and merely preparatory dispensation are thus honoured, can we suppose that those of the later and more perfect one would come under another category? It is true that Christianity is described as a system “not of the letter, but of the Spirit” (2 Cor. iii. 6), but this refers to the *nature* of the dispensation, by no means to the quality of written documents which belong to it. In proportion to the superiority of the revelations it contains, we should expect, to say the least, that the outward vehicle of these revelations would be the subject of as careful a divine control as the outward vehicle of its predecessor, to which, as we have seen, no slight importance is attributed by Christ and the Apostles. And if we be asked to point out any passage affirming of the New Testament Canon what St. Paul affirms of the Old, we reply that none such could be expected until this latter Canon was complete; but that of a most important portion of it, St. Paul’s Epistles, we actually have such an attestation, in the words of St. Peter, “Even as our beloved brother Paul hath *written* to you in all his epistles . . . which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also *the other scriptures* (τὰς λοιπὰς γραφὰς), unto their own destruction” (2 Peter iii. 16).<sup>1</sup>

In considering, then, the question of the inspiration of Scripture, the actual writing can never be put in the background; and, as previously suggested, the subject will gain in clearness by our appropriating the term to the particular act of literary composition. With a true instinct, the Church deems all such statements as that “the men were inspired, the books are the result of that inspiration” (Dean Alford, “Commentary,” vol. i. c. i. s. 6), not indeed erroneous, but inadequate to express the facts of the case.

Before we pass on to consider more particularly the nature of the superintendence which the Holy Spirit exercised over the inspired writers in their act of writing, it may be noted that though every Canonical book was held to be inspired, the converse does not follow that every inspired book necessarily found

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<sup>1</sup> Another passage has been cited in this connection—viz., Rom. xvi. 26, “by the Scriptures of the Prophets made known” (διὰ τε γραφῶν προφητικῶν), as if the Apostle were alluding to a collection of writings by New Testament prophets (Gaussen, *Theopn.* c. ii. s. 4). But it is more probable that it is the Old Testament volume of prophecy that is intended; and that St. Paul means to intimate that a main part of his teaching consisted in proving from this volume that Jesus was the Christ; as indeed we know was his usual practice. (See Acts xvii. 1–3.)

a place in the Canon. It is probable that, at least, one epistle of St. Paul—we must suppose an inspired composition—disappeared soon after it was written (1 Cor. v. 9);<sup>1</sup> and there may have been others. If so, we see that the principle of *selection* prevailed even amongst inspired books, and that the formation of the Canon was a special work of divine Providence, preserving certain books and permitting others to be lost. But we may be sure that any lost writings of the Apostles, if such there be, would, if discovered, add nothing essential to what we already possess; that our existing Scriptures are *sufficient* in all respects to make us wise unto salvation. From the preceding observations, too, it seems to follow that though the question of the authorship of a book is not, as regards its canonicity, a fundamental one (otherwise that of the Epistle to the Hebrews would not have been left in doubt), it is not a matter of indifference as regards its inspiration; for the authorship involves the question of the *age* of the book. Now, as far as appears, the inspiration to write (to confine our attention to the New Testament) was confined to the Apostolic age; if, for example, the Epistle to the Hebrews had been a work of the second century, the evidence for its *inspiration* would, notwithstanding the excellence of the book, be defective, and it could not form a part of the Canon. It was, therefore, important not merely to prove that the *contents* of a book were in accordance with the oral teaching of the Apostles, still fresh in the minds of their converts, but to ascertain with all due care the name of the author, and, where this was impossible, at least to attempt to fix the age of the book:

And now to examine a little more closely the nature and extent of inspiration as thus defined. It is obvious that the nature of the operation of the Holy Spirit on the mind of a writer is a matter quite beyond our ken: the result is all that is cognizable by, or concerns, us. The result, then, in the case of the inspired writings, is such a combination of divine with human agency as renders them at once divine and human.

The older theory of plenary inspiration, which makes the sacred writers to have been merely amanuenses, or passive organs, of the Holy Spirit<sup>2</sup>—the theory which in modern times has received the name of mechanical—has not been able to

<sup>1</sup> After all that has been written on this subject it is difficult to understand the Apostle otherwise than as having addressed a third epistle to the Corinthians, which is no longer extant. It may, indeed, be maintained that no such lost book *could* have been inspired; and then "canonicity" and "inspiration" will be coextensive terms.

<sup>2</sup> Omnia et singula verba, quæ in sacro codice leguntur, a Spiritu S. Prophetis et Apostolis inspirata, et in *calamum dictata sunt*. Hollaz de S.S., 217.



maintain its ground. In all acts of creative power it is only the first entrance of the divine agency into the world that is properly independent of natural causation ; afterwards the two co-operate and can no longer be distinguished. Thus, in the work of regeneration, the first quickening of the soul is an act of grace in which the subject has no share ; but in the subsequent stages man co-operates with God, and by a mixed agency, divine and human, the work of sanctification is carried on. By analogy we should suppose that while the primary communication of the inspiring Spirit would be independent of the human instrument, the subsequent process of exposition would be conducted in conjunction with, and by means of, the natural faculties. This conclusion is confirmed by the confessed differences of style which the inspired volume exhibits. The writings of the several authors are strongly marked by the peculiar colouring which the abilities, education, or natural temperament of each were calculated to impart: an epistle of St. Paul could never be mistaken for one of St. John, and St. Peter, in his manner, resembles neither of those apostles. Each has his own peculiar (shall we say favourite ?) topics, and expresses himself in his own way. The very compositions themselves seem to have been the offspring of circumstances, and do not exhibit on the part of their human authors any preconceived plan. We must suppose, then, that the sacred writers, when under the influence of inspiration, were under no constraint in the exercise of their faculties, but wrote as men to men—that the result, therefore, as it is the Word of God, is also, in a very real sense, the word of man. The Person of the Redeemer presents an analogy: He was truly God and truly man ; his manhood was no docetic phantasm, but a reality (1 John i. 1): but the mode of union is a problem which Christian speculation can hardly be said to have as yet solved.

On the other hand, we must believe that the preternatural influence was so exercised as to exclude the contingency of human error or inadvertence, at least where the latter might be of serious moment. The Holy Ghost made use of natural, or acquired, faculties, but effectually guarded the *result* from adulteration. Less than this would render the whole doctrine of inspiration nugatory. Be it remembered that it is not with the occult deposition in the writers' minds that we are concerned, but that the stream should issue from its source uncontaminated: it is the *written* Word of God that is to be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Ps. cix. 105). Therefore, we must hold that the language used, as well as the thoughts embodied, was the subject of the Holy Spirit's guardianship: the writers may not have been "pens," or "amanuenses," of the Holy Spirit, but their mode of expression, and even words, must have been sub-

ject to His control. We argue this not merely from the statements of Scripture (1 Cor. ii. 13): not merely from instances in which the argument turns upon the use of a word (Gal. iii. 16); but from the nature of the case. The thought, or sentiment, of another is nothing to us until it is expressed in words; it is they that give it form and permanency. If, therefore, inspiration had extended merely to the thoughts of the writers, while in the expression of those thoughts they were left to themselves, what guarantee should we have that improper or erroneous expressions had not been used as the medium of communication? It must be borne in mind that in this case, to a considerable extent, a *theological language* had to be created as the vehicle of Christian ideas.<sup>1</sup> Missionaries tell us that one great difficulty in preaching to the heathen, or translating the Scriptures, arises from the lack of terms in the native languages to express the ideas peculiar to Christianity—*e.g.*, faith, holiness, humility, even the idea of God: it takes a long course of training before the native mind can be brought to attach the Christian meaning to such words. Now, in the case of our New Testament writers themselves, such a language was already, in some measure, formed for them in the Old Testament Scriptures in which they had been nurtured; and a great advantage it was to them in preaching the Gospel to their fellow-countrymen, who had enjoyed a similar advantage. But they were to preach also to the heathen, and they were to write to the heathen in their native Greek; and to frame all at once, in what was to them a foreign, if not an unknown, tongue, a vehicle perfectly adapted to convey the varied and mysterious revelations which they had received, seems a task beyond human power, unless aided by a special superintendence from above.

Furthermore, we must hold that inspiration extends to *all parts* of the Bible (the history as well as the morality or the doctrine), and in an equal degree to all. For if some portions are inspired and others not, or in an inferior degree, while no oracle is at hand to discriminate between them, it is obvious that the whole becomes involved in doubt, and we stand not upon a rock, but upon shifting sand. The rule has been propounded;<sup>2</sup>—the more closely a book is connected with Christ, the higher the degree of its inspiration. But who is to decide the measure in which a book is connected with the Christian redemption? Judgments on this point are very likely to vary with the notions enter-

<sup>1</sup> It may be said this applies to the Apostles' oral as well as to their written teaching—that is, not to the latter exclusively. No doubt it does: but this does not seem to affect the argument.

<sup>2</sup> Twisten, "Vorlesungen," i. 388. Previously enunciated by Luther—"The true touchstone to try any book is to see whether it treats of Christ or not; if not, it is to be rejected, whether professing to be the work of

tained respecting the nature of that redemption, which we know to be various ; some making the essence of Christianity to consist in its pure and elevated morality, others seeing in it a remedial appointment from sin and death : to the former, the Sermon on the Mount would probably seem inspired in a far higher degree than St. Paul's epistles. In short, it would ultimately depend on each man's private judgment which was to be considered the more, and which the less, divine element in Scripture. But, it is urged, to transcribe the annals of the Jewish nation, or to write memoirs of Christ, was a task within the compass of human power, and needed no divine assistance. It is forgotten that Scripture contains but a *selection* of historical matter ; and what mere human power would have been adequate to the task of selection ? Out of the mass of the national records those portions were to be taken which had a special bearing on the scheme of redemption, as it advanced to maturity ; and ignorant as they were of the ultimate purposes of God (1 Peter i. 11), even prophets could not have fulfilled this task without divine prompting and superintendence ; even they wrote, or compiled, without fully knowing why this was to be omitted and that supplied. The same principle of selection pervades the New Testament. St. John tells us that he recorded only a portion of what Christ said and did (John xvi. 25) ; in their epistles the Apostles omit many things which it seems natural for them to have alluded to or enjoined, many details which uninspired writers would probably have enlarged upon ; what guided them in this choice and treatment of topics ? We perceive now the wisdom of these omissions, but we can hardly ascribe the procedure to human wisdom.

The statement, then, that the Bible is not, but contains, the Word of God, which is but another mode of stating this theory of partial inspiration, cannot be deemed a satisfactory one. The stream of inspiration meanders, it is admitted, through the sacred volume ; but of what advantage is that to us if we have no infallible guide to enable us to track its course ? If the volume, as a whole, presents itself to us as inspired, we have no need to enter upon an investigation so hazardous and so little likely to lead to useful results.

Had the term inspiration, when used in reference to *Holy Scripture*, been confined, as it should be, to the act of writing, some objections that have been taken to the doctrine in

St. Paul, or St. Peter, or not" (Preface to the Epistles of St. James and St. Jude). He, Luther, himself was to be the judge how far a book had relation to Christ ; and accordingly he expunged St. James from the Canon, and arranged the other books according to his own judgment. "The first rank," he says, "is to be assigned to the Gospel of St. John and his 1st Epistle, St. Paul's Epistles, and the 1st of St. Peter ;" the others, of course, occupying a subordinate position.

its plenary sense would have been seen to lose much of their force. Can we, it has been said, believe every part of the Bible to have been divinely guarded from error when we read Deborah's approval of the act of Jael (Judges v. 24), or Stephen's mistakes (whether they are mistakes or not is not now the question) in Acts vii. <sup>1</sup> For Deborah was a prophetess, and Stephen a man "full of faith and of the Holy Ghost" (Acts vi. 5); if any persons could be called inspired they surely were so. The answer is that neither Deborah nor Stephen were the authors of the books which respectively record their addresses. The author of the Book of Judges (whoever he may have been) was divinely commissioned to write the book, and in it to insert Deborah's song; and was guided to record it faithfully: his task was ended when he had done so. This implies no approval on his part, nor on the part of his Divine Prompter, of what Deborah uttered. Why may not her song have been recorded to show that even so eminent "a mother in Israel" was very far from being perfect? In like manner, St. Luke was commissioned to write the book of Acts, and in it to insert Stephen's speech: we may rely on the accuracy of the record, but this implies no endorsement on the part of the author, whether the *primarius* or the *secundarius*, of Stephen's mistakes, if he made any: they may have been recorded to prove that the holiest of men is not secure from lapses of memory. The same principle applies to many similar instances. We meet, for example, with sentiments in some of the Psalms which seem to jar on our feelings as Christians: the inspired collector (whoever he may have been, even if he had himself been a psalmist) may have been commissioned to place these psalms in it, as a warning that even the most exalted rapture of devotion is no safeguard against an admixture of human infirmity. The record of the failings of holy men of old, Abraham, Moses, Peter, &c., comes under the same law of explanation: the inspiration we now treat of belongs not to the men as such, still less to their failings, but to the author of the *writing*; who, not for our imitation but for our admonition, was commissioned to embalm them in an imperishable record. How much more perplexing would the case have been if any approval of such failings had proceeded from the writer's pen! <sup>2</sup>

Other objections commonly urged seem to deserve only a

<sup>1</sup> Alford, "Com.," i. c. i. s. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Connected with the theory of *degrees* of inspiration is that of different *kinds* of it, as they are supposed to have been variously needed by the writer—"suggestion," "direction," "elevation," &c. (see Bishop Daniel Wilson's "Lectures on the Evidences"). Such distinctions have little Scriptural foundation. The only one of any importance is that between the first impulse of the Holy Spirit to write—or, in other words, to take in hand a subject for the benefit of the Church—and His subsequent superintendence over the act of writing.

brief notice. Objections from alleged discrepancies in the narrative, which usually turn out to be omissions by one Evangelist of what is supplied by another,<sup>1</sup> or inversions in the order of events which are easily reduced into an harmonious whole;<sup>2</sup> objections from alleged inaccuracies in natural science, as that the sun rises in the east and sinks in the west, language which is in constant use among scientific men themselves, and which is the only one that could be used if the writers were to speak as men to men; objections from the various readings of manuscripts, which proceed on the gratuitous assumption that if God originally inspired a writing, He thereby pledged Himself never to allow the slightest variation of reading to slip into subsequent copies, no matter how insignificant the variation might be. Had the variations essentially affected the sense, this objection would have had greater force; but modern research has effectually shown that in no instance has the sense been thus affected. Objections from quotations in the New Testament purporting to be from the Hebrew or the LXX. version, but which differ from the original; which are merely instances of the Holy Spirit's modifying, enlarging, or paraphrasing His own previous statements. From an erroneous interpretation of a passage in 1 Cor. (vii. 10-25) it has been inferred that the Apostle himself in this instance, and as a writer, disclaims the prerogative of inspiration; whereas an attentive examination of his argument will prove that he asserts it. He had no express divine commandment to allege on the subject of virginity as he had on the indissolubility of the marriage tie (Gen. ii. 24); but he, notwithstanding, gives his own judgment, and this judgment, far from possessing only a human authority, he declares to be that of the spirit of God speaking through himself as the human instrument (verse 40).

E. A. LITTON.

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<sup>1</sup> The recorded discrepancies of the inscriptions on the Cross are quoted by Dean Alford ("Com." i. c. i. s. 6) as decisive in favour of his view; but are they "discrepancies" or *imperfect* notices?

Matthew—This is Jesus the King of the Jews.

Mark—The King of the Jews.

Luke—This is the King of the Jews.

John—Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews.

Let them be *combined* into one, and we have the full inscription:—This is Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews. It must never be forgotten that Scripture (and this remark applies particularly to the *four Gospels*) is to be considered as a *whole* (one work of the Holy Ghost), and not as a collection of independent authors, connected by no supernatural bond; one part therefore supplies what is wanting in another. The men, the *auctores secundarii*, possess only a *relative* interest for us.

<sup>2</sup> As in the ten "discrepancies" discovered by Lessing (or rather the author of the "Wolfenbüttel" fragments which Lessing published) in the accounts of the resurrection.