JOURNAL OF

THE TRANSACTIONS

OF

The Victoria Institute

OR

Philosophical Society of Great Britain

VOL. LXXVIII

1946

LONDON:

PUBLISHED BY
THE INSTITUTE, 12, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, WESTMINSTER, S.W.1

867TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

HELD AT 12, QUEEN ANNE'S GATE, LONDON, S.W.1, AT 6 P.M. ON MONDAY, MAY 6TH, 1946.

THE REV. PRINCIPAL P. W. EVANS, D.D., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed.

The CHAIRMAN then called on F. F. Bruce, Esq., M.A., to read his paper entitled " What Do We Mean by Inspiration ? "

The following elections have been made : David A. Penny, Esq., Associate ; Peter Barraclough, Esq., B.A., Associate ; William White Balloch, Esq., Fellow ; Leslie W. Moscrop, Esq., Fellow.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BIBLICAL INSPIRATION ?

By F. F. BRUCE, M.A.

LET me make two preliminary observations : first, that this paper is an attempt to *state* what is meant by the Christian doctrine of the inspiration of Holy Scripture, not to *prove* that inspiration ; and secondly, that the attempt is made by one who is not a trained theologian, and therefore falls short of that degree of system and precision which may be regarded as desirable.

The inspiration of Scripture is that operation of the Holy Spirit as a result of which words spoken or written by men are also the Word of God. The Greek adjective *theopneustos*, used of " every scripture " in 2 Tim. iii, 16 (whether predicatively, as in Authorised Version and Revised Version marg., or attributively, as in Revised Version) means literally " God-breathed " ; and the breath of God is a regular Biblical idiom denoting the Holy Spirit. Our task is therefore to examine the work of the Spirit in communicating the divine revelation to men by means of the Biblical record.

The Nicene Creed describes the Holy Spirit as the One " who spake by the prophets." This description is in accordance with the language of both the Old Testament and New Testament.

In the Old Testament men prophesied when the Spirit of the Lord came upon them in power (*cf.* 1 Sam. x, 6, 10; xix, 20, 23; 1 Kings xxii, 24 = 2 Chron. xviii, 23; 2 Chron. xv, 1; xx, 14; xxiv, 20). "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me," said David, "and his word was upon my tongue" (2 Sam. xxiii, 2).* Ezekiel (xi, 5; xxxvii, 1) claims to have prophesied under the control of the same Spirit. In the historical retrospect of Neh. ix, the Levites say of the Israelites in the time of Moses, "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them" (ver. 20), and of those in later days, "Thou . . . . testifiedst against them by thy Spirit through thy prophets" (ver. 30). Zechariah similarly speaks of the nation's refusal to "hear the law, and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets" (vii, 12).†

So, too, our Lord describes David as having spoken "in the Holy Spirit" (Mark xii, 36; *cf.* Matt. xxii, 43); Peter speaks of words "which the Holy Ghost spoke before by the mouth of David" (Acts i, 16); Paul says to the Roman Jews, "Well spoke the Holy Ghost through‡ Isaiah the prophet unto your fathers" (Acts xxviii, 25); and the writer to the Hebrews introduces a quotation from Ps. xcv with the words, "as the Holy Spirit says" (iii, 7), and one from Jeremiah with the words, "And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us" (x, 15), while he teaches that the Holy Spirit "signified" spiritual truths through the details of the Mosaic tabernacle, that "parable of the time now present" (ix, 8 f.). The whole New Testament attitude to the operation of the Spirit in the prophets is summed up in two passages in the Petrine epistles, one of which asserts that the witness of "the Spirit of Christ" in the prophets was concerned with "the sufferings of the Christ and the glories that should follow" (1 Pet. i, 11), and the other that "no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spoke from God, being carried along by the Holy Ghost" (2 Pet. i, 21).

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* An interesting method of control is indicated in 1 Chron. xxviii, 12, 19, where David is said to have received by the Spirit the pattern of the Temple: "All this have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of the Lord."

† Note how regularly throughout the Pentateuch divine authority is claimed for the Law, *e.g.*, in the recurring phrase, "the Lord said unto Moses." Similar authority is claimed by the prophets in such formulæ as "Thus saith the Lord."

‡ The use of this preposition (Greek *dia*) here and elsewhere in this sense is significant.

Thus the revelation of God, given in Law, Psalms and Prophets alike, is said to have been communicated by those who spoke under the control of the Spirit of God. This revelation found its culmination in Him who possessed the Spirit in permanent fulness : " God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son " (Heb. i, 1 f.). Inspiration, in this sense, is a *means* of revelation. Not the only means, for God spoke also in mighty acts—in the Exodus from Egypt, in the deliverance from Babylon, and supremely in the redemptive work of Christ. Yet the significance of these revelatory acts required to be made plain by men divinely inspired for the purpose.

Our Lord promised on the eve of His betrayal that the same Spirit who spoke by the prophets should be present with His own disciples, in order (among other things) to bring to their remembrance all that He Himself had told them, to guide them into all the truth (including much that they were not ready to receive while their Master was with them in bodily presence), and to show them things to come (John xiv, 26 ; xvi, 13). This is the source of the unique authority investing the teaching of the apostles, because of which the Church placed the apostolic writings of the New Testament alongside the prophetic writings of the Old Testament.

But inspiration may be viewed as a quality of the *record* of revelation, as well as a means of the revelation itself. Thus Paul, as we noted, ascribes *theopneustia* to the writings themselves. Just as man became a living soul when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen. ii, 7), so the effect of the God-breathed character of the Scriptures is that they are living, and not only living but life-giving. The Spirit not only spoke in ancient days to and through the prophets and apostles, but still speaks to us to-day through the written record of that revelation, saying, " Hear, and your soul shall live." Thus in the Bible we hear not only what the Spirit said to the Churches of the first century, but what He is still saying to those of the twentieth.

For this reason the Church has acknowledged the supreme authority of the Bible as " God's Word written," as the deposit of the message of salvation, as " the only rule of faith and

obedience," teaching " what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man."

It is commonly supposed that, provided we recognise the authority of Scripture in the realm of religion and morals, we need not trouble if it proves to err in other respects, such as matters of history. Since, however, the God of the Bible has revealed Himself in history, we may well expect the record of His revelation to be historically trustworthy, and in point of fact we have good reason to accept it as such, quite apart from questions of inspiration.* We must, of course, be as sure as possible of the faithful transmission and translation of the original text, and thus Biblical philology and criticism have a necessary and important place in the study of the Scriptures.

The inspiration of the Bible does not imply that all the actions recorded in it have the divine approval, or that all the words reported have the divine authority. We are not obliged to defend Jacob's deception of his father or Elijah's calling down fire from heaven, or to accept as the utterances of the Most High the arguments of Job's friends or Deborah's commendation of Jael. These deeds and words are not part of God's revelation, but they are part of the context in which the revelation was given, and they are recorded for our admonition. Great harm has been caused by isolating parts of the Bible from the whole. The Old Testament is to be read and understood in the light of the New Testament; the earlier stages in the revelation appear in their proper perspective when seen in the context of the completed revelation in Christ.

One important aspect of inspiration lies in the *selection* of the events and sayings recorded. In an earlier discussion† we noticed the part played by such an " inspiration of selection " in the Gospels, and it can be traced everywhere in Scripture.

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* Thus Professor W. F. Albright says of the Old Testament: " Our documentary sources for the history of Israel from the late thirteenth to the early fourth century B.C. [*i.e.*, from Moses to the Chronicler] are, in general, remarkably reliable " (*From the Stone Age to Christianity*, 1940, p. 208); and again, " There can be no doubt that archæology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition " (*Archæology and the Religion of Israel*, 1941, p. 176). Similarly, with regard to the New Testament, we have Sir F. G. Kenyon's statement, " Both the *authenticity* and the *general integrity* of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established " (*The Bible and Archæology*, 1940, p. 289). These are non-theological assessments, based on external evidence.

† *Journal of Transactions of the Victoria Institute*, lxxv (1943), pp. 13, 18.

This is why the Biblical history records events in quite different proportions from those we expect to find in secular historians; the selection is made with regard to the particular purpose of unfolding the story of redemption.

If we ask *how* the Holy Spirit so controlled those prophets and scribes as to give their writings this unique quality, we must answer in the words of Heb. i, 1, "in many parts and in many ways" (*polumerôs kai polutropôs*). Two different kinds of control, for example, were required to pen Isa. xxxvi and Isa. liii. The former chapter is a narrative of historical events recorded by an eye-witness; the latter scales the highest heights of revelation. There is nothing mechanical about divine inspiration. Nor is it to be confused with dictation. The Koran (it is claimed) was dictated from heaven; not so the Bible. Dictation leaves no room for the writer's individuality of thought and diction, but this individuality gets the fullest scope in the Bible.

> "He who chose the writers of the Holy Scriptures, many men scattered over many ages, used them each in his surroundings and in his character, yet so as to harmonize them all in the Book which, while many, is one. He used them with the sovereign skill of Deity. And that skilful use meant that He used their whole being, which He had made, and their whole circumstances, which He had ordered. . . . . *He* can take a human personality, made in His own image, pregnant, formative, causative, in all its living thought, sensibility, and will, and can throw it freely upon its task of thinking and expression—and behold, the product will be His; His matter, His thought, His exposition, His Word, 'living and abiding for ever.'"*

The Biblical writers were not secretaries or penmen; they were authors in the full sense of the word, yet authors under the overruling guidance of God the Holy Spirit, the *auctor primarius*. No adequate parallel can be found to the phenomenon of Biblical inspiration, unless those theologians are right who find an analogy to it in the hypostatic union of the divine and human in our Lord Jesus Christ.

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* H. C. G. Moule, *The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Expositor's Bible), pp. 7 f.

Can we properly speak of the *verbal* inspiration of Scripture ? The expression seems unexceptionable, if we do not understand it in the sense of dictation or any other mechanical process. One so little suspect of obscurantism as Professor Robertson Smith could aver that " the inspired writers were so led by the Spirit that they perfectly understood, and *perfectly recorded*, every word which God spoke to their hearts."* If we think of inspiration as a quality of the prophetic message, that message was conveyed in words ; if we think of it as a quality of the Biblical record, that record is couched in words ; in either case we have inspiration associated with words—that is to say, literally, verbal inspiration. Commenting on Paul's description of the apostolic doctrine as " words . . . . which the Holy Spirit teaches " (1 Cor. ii. 13), Bishop Lightfoot says :

> " Indeed the notion of verbal inspiration in a certain sense is involved in the very conception of an inspiration at all, because words are at once the instruments of carrying on and the means of expressing ideas, so that the words must both lead and follow the thought."†

Certainly the minute attention paid by scholars to the verbal and grammatical details of Biblical language betokens a belief in verbal inspiration of some sort. It has been noticed, for instance, that the avoidance of Greek *hiereus* in the New Testament as a title of a Christian minister has in the light of later Church history a significance beyond what first-century writers might have been expected to see. And the quite remarkable care with which tenses are employed in the Greek New Testament is but one example of what may well be regarded as divine guidance, not only in the choice of words, but even in the choice of parts and forms of words.

A further phase of the Spirit's work in connection with the Scriptures is noted in that clause of the *Westminster Confession of Faith* which insists that notwithstanding the many external

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* *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* (1st ed., 1881), Lecture I, p. 9. (*Italics mine.*)

† *Notes on Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 180. He goes on to say, however : " But the passage gives no countenance to the popular doctrine of verbal inspiration, whether right or wrong." By " the popular doctrine of verbal inspiration " he probably meant something approaching dictation.

and internal evidences of their excellency, yet " our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible* truth, and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts." This *testimonium internum* is the one valid proof of inspiration, proceeding as it does from the same Spirit under whose guidance the revelation was originally recorded. " The things of the Spirit of God are spiritually discerned "; and one of the gifts of the Spirit is " discerning of spirits." The Spirit's inward witness is exercised not only in the individual believer (thus justifying the Protestant insistence on the right of private judgment), but also in the Church, as was outstandingly exemplified in the recognition of the New Testament Canon. We in our day can appreciate the gulf separating the New Testament books from other early Christian literature, but the early Church seems to have been guided by a wisdom higher than its own in this matter. What a mercy, for example, that the *Shepherd* of Hermas was finally excluded from the Canon. It nearly got in !

The Holy Spirit is also the supreme Interpreter of the Scriptures, doing for us to-day as we read them what Christ did for the disciples on the road to Emmaus when He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Thus we receive the fulfilment of our Lord's promises about the Spirit : " He shall testify of me " (John xv, 26) ; " He shall glorify me ; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you " (xvi, 14).

From many points of view the Scriptures show a manifold variety, but they present an impressive unity when considered in the light of the purpose for which they were given, to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ. This unity we believe to be the result of their inspiration, and it is to be appreciated by the illumination of that same Spirit who controlled the writers in their recording of the revelation and guided the Church in its discerning of what was so inspired. To quote Robertson Smith again :

> " If I am asked why I receive Scripture as the Word of God and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer

* Exception has often been taken to the word " infallible " used thus ; but I take it that " infallibility " is the Latin equivalent of Greek *asphaleia* used by Luke in the Prologue to his Gospel (i, 4). The whole Bible assures us of the *asphaleia* of those things which Christians most surely believe.

with all the fathers of the Protestant Church, ' Because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God, because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us, in Him, His will for our salvation.' And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul."*

Discussion.

The Chairman (Dr. Evans) said: In expressing thanks to the reader of the paper, he agreed with Mr. Bruce in the place given to the Holy Spirit in considering the doctrine of Inspiration. The Spirit was not only *auctor primarius* but (in Dr. Abraham Kuyper's phrase) *auctor perpetuus*, continually speaking to the believing reader. Dr. Evans welcomed Mr. Bruce's interpretation of " infallibility " as being merely the equivalent of ἀσφάλεια in Luke i, 4. That gave the notion of stability, assurance, and according to Moulton and Milligan was in the papyri a law term for proof or security.

Dr. Evans thought the term " Verbal Inspiration " one which had now served its purpose and could well be disused. Its ambiguity was unfortunate; qualifications and interpretations were always needed when it was used, and whilst theology might claim to use its terms in a special technical sense, as did the lawyer and the scientist, we had to remember our evangelistic purpose. We should remove stumbling-blocks out of the way of the people. The term only referred to the original writings, to which we have only indirect access to-day, though sufficient for our needs. The term was useless for defence against a treatment of Scripture we should regard as very drastic; Robertson Smith could use language consistent with Verbal Inspiration; what then was its value to the evangelical? To argue that because Inspiration employed words its product must be verbal might be met by suggesting that

* *Answer to the Form of Libel before the Free Presbytery of Aberdeen* (1878), p. 21.

Inspiration necessarily employs men ; we do not therefore speak of the product as " human." A phrase so misleading, so far from self-explanatory, so unnecessary, was better discarded and he hoped that this would be done. He concluded by quoting the words of two Deans : " Always estimate men according as they estimate this book " (Dean Alford) ; " Nothing can strengthen our belief in Inspiration so much as to observe how the whole history of thought only helps us to *understand* St. Paul and St. John better, never to pass beyond their teaching " (Dean Inge).

Air Commodore WISEMAN thanked Mr. Bruce for his very able paper and said that it was stimulating in these days to listen to a person of his ability and breadth of view stating reasons why inspiration must, in the rightly understood sense, be verbal ; yet at the same time making it clear that the theory of mechanical dictation is in no way bound up with Scriptural views of Revelation or Inspiration.

Mr. Bruce has referred to the wording of the Westminster Confession on this subject. That great authority on the history of the Confession and the doctrine of Revelation and Inspiration—Dr. Warfield of Princeton—has made it plain that those responsible for the wording of the Westminster Confession did not introduce this idea of " dictation," but that the theory was formulated subsequent to the writing of the Confession. Dr. Warfield writes (*The Westminster Assembly and Its Work*, Oxford University Press p. 262) : " The Reformers striving for very life had little time or heart to do more than to insist on the sole divine authority of Scripture, and the facts involved in and underlying that authority. The Systematists of the seventeenth century, intrenching a position already won, sought to give to these facts an indeflectable foundation in a special theory of the mode of inspiration, the theory of dictation. The Reformers though using language comformable to, or even suggestive of the theory of dictation, do not formally present that theory, as do the Systematists of the seventeenth century, as the fixed ground work of their doctrine of Scripture. They were concerned rather with the facts which the seventeenth century writers put this theory forward to explain and safeguard ; and

their thinking concerning Scripture appears, indeed, to be rooted in a theory of *concursus* or *synergism* rather than one of *dictation* Observing this, over eager controversialists may be possibly misled into supposing that the Reformers were no more strenuous as to the facts involved—the facts as to the plenary or verbal inspiration or infallibility or inerrancy of the Scripture—than as to the theory of the mode of inspiration that would best safeguard these facts. It is a prodigious historical blunder so to suppose. . . . Yet one can at least conceive how such a blunder can be made especially by men who are accustomed to assert that it is only on a theory of verbal dictation that detailed divine authority and inerrancy can be defended for the Scriptures. For us to understand the origin of their error, gross as it is, it is only necessary to suppose that they imagine the doctrines of verbal inspiration and inerrancy to be corollaries of the theory of dictation, instead of the theory of dictation to be, as it was historically an attempt to supply for these necessary doctrines a firm and impregnable basis."

A comparison of Scripture with other ancient literature is, in this respect, illuminating. For instance, consider the first page of the Bible. I suggest that any person who questions to actual fact of Revelation should compare it with all the accounts of creation whether Sumerian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Phœnician, Greek, Chinese or Roman which have come down to us. I submit that such a comparison will at once reveal the difference between revelation and human guesswork or research.

The second comparison with eternal literature I would make is the difference between the four gospels and the excluded or apocryphal gospels. Those acquainted with the excluded gospels cannot but be impressed with the essential difference between them and the fourfold life of our Lord as we have it in the new Testament.

Written Communications.

Mr. L. D. Ford wrote : The prophet Jeremiah (Ch. 1, 9) gives a five-word definition of Inspiration (only two terms in the Heb.), when he tells us what Jehovah said to him at the beginning of his ministry—Behold I have put MY WORDS IN THY MOUTH.

Note, this is more than " my message " in thy mouth, which would only identify God with the general tenor of his remarks. Peculiarly the prophet goes on to tell us of the *modus operandi* (Ch. 36, 18), which was that he pronounced the words to Baruch who wrote them with ink in the book. (And also notice that it was not upon clay tablets or pottery though both were in use at that day.)

The process then appears to have been thus: The words are God's. The speaker of them was a man. The writer of them is immaterial, and can be a mere amanuensis, as Baruch and at a later date Tertius (Rom. 16,12).

Jeremiah goes further and discloses the phenomenon of the archetype of Scripture being cast upon the fire by an unbelieving monarch and entirely consumed (Ch. 36). This constituted a challenge to the God Whose words the roll contained, and threatened to reduce the sum total of revelation. The sequel was however that the words were re-dictated by the prophet (surely more than human unaided powers of recollection were needed for this task) and re-written by Baruch; and lest there should be suspicion that by this early mischance the volume of Divine revelation has suffered some inadvertent diminution through omission in the re-writing, the prophet says " and there were added besides unto them many like words " (Ch. xxxvi, 32). Rather than the *depositum* of inspiration suffering any loss by this attack upon new writing it is rather augmented thereby, in the event.

This sequence of events seems to indicate that the giving of Scripture was a matter that flowed solely from the Will of God: that God claims ownership of the very words used: that once it has proceeded from God to man it is as imperishable as its Author and is maintained by Divine providence though committed to slight custodianship (a roll and a persecuted prophet) both capable of destruction.

Many questions no doubt are raised by each of these three postulates but space forbids dealing with them here.

Mr. Bruce's article impresses one as being refreshingly free from present day " letting down " tendencies.

The Rev. C. T. Cook wrote: I should like to thank Mr. F. F. Bruce for a most instructive contribution to a subject of supreme importance. I am glad that he has drawn our attention to the fact that the inspiration of the sacred writers was a unique endowment, and that no adequate parallel can be found to the phenomenon. Some preachers are apt to confuse inspiration with the poetical and artistic genius, that of Shakespeare and Milton, for example. But could any of these writers have prefaced their utterances, as Isaiah or Jeremiah did, with a "Thus saith the Lord"? Some years ago a distinguished layman argued that passages from Christian classics, such as the writings of Augustine, Samuel Rutherford, and John Bunyan, might be given a place in the Canon of the New Testament. But it is worthy of notice that none of these men ever considered that anything they wrote was an addition to divine revelation; they would have been shocked at the suggestion. Bunyon would never have placed his "dreams" on a level with Paul's Epistles.

In regard to "verbal inspiration," I note that Mr. Bruce says: "The expression seems unexceptionable, *if we do not understand it in the sense of dictation or any other mechanical process.*" That is a rather important *if*. Many scholars and others of unquestionable orthodoxy hesitate to employ the phrase, for the reason that all too often it has been understood in the sense which Mr. Bruce rightly deprecates. I recall an occasion when the late Dr. D. M. M'Intyre declined to use the expression, preferring to employ a circumlocution to express his meaning. It is, of course, perfectly true, as Bishop Westcott declared, that "Thoughts are wedded to words as necessarily as soul to body;" and it is hardly logical to maintain, as some do, that while the Holy Spirit inspired the Apostles' thoughts and ideas, He gave them no assistance in the choice of words wherewith to express those ideas. It does not follow, however, that because the words are God-breathed, the inspired writers could not depart from absolute literality in their record of our Lord's utterances. We have only to compare different versions of our Lord's statements in the four Gospels to perceive that sometimes there are wide differences in the terminology, though the meaning is preserved. May we not say, therefore, that the guidance of the

Holy Spirit has ensured that the phraseology is adequate to express the truth, without, in every case, reproducing the exact words ? Moreover, was it not a function of the Holy Spirit not only to bring to the Apostles' remembrance all the things that Christ had taught them, but also to be the *interpreter* of His words and deeds ?

I have long felt that " verbal inspiration," in the crude and popular sense of mechanical dictation, represents a much lower view of inspiration than that held by our speaker this afternoon and by our honoured chairman. I have seen this idea of inspiration explained in a manner which suggested that the mental faculties of the inspired writers more or less ceased to function. This surely is to degrade the Scriptures almost to a level with the automatic writing which is a feature of Spiritism. I am grateful, therefore, to Mr. Bruce for his insistence that the Holy Spirit employed each writer's individuality to the full—not his voice only, nor his pen only, but his training and habits of thought, his vocabulary, and his literary style, in which is revealed the nature and quality of his education, and even whether he wrote good Greek or bad Greek.

Lt.-Col. L. M. DAVIES wrote : I agree with much that Mr. Bruce says, and particularly with his insistence, regarding Heb. i, 1, that Bible Inspiration was of several quite distinct kinds, according to circumstances ; but I do not share his antipathy to the idea of what he calls " mechanical " Inspiration or " dictation."

We can, of course, be sure that much of the Bible was not mechanically Inspired. There are, indeed, some passages (a very few) which were not Inspired at all (cf. 1 Cor. vii, 6–10, and 2 Corr. viii, 8, where Inspired and uninspired portions are clearly differentiated). And where human witnesses speak as such (cf. Is., xliii, 10–12 ; Luke xxiv, 48 ; John xv. 27 ; 1 John i, 1), it is clear that their personal qualities must affect their observations and their methods of expressing the same. Good memory and good faith are what we rightly expect of Inspiration here ; and we rejoice to see how Luke, as a medically trained practitioner, and Matthew as a legally trained revenue official, note and speak as we should expect such witnesses to do. It enhances our confidence that the Gospels are not pious forgeries,

when we see such guarantees of genuineness woven into their structure.

But I hold that there are cases where the personal factor does not come in. Thus when dealing with the remote past, or distant future, personal testimony is out of the question, and Inspiration must be of a more absolute kind. Details of the Creation story some antedating man himself, must be either sheer fiction or verbally Revealed. And the same applies to many of the prophecies regarding the still unseen future: they must also be either sheer fiction or verbally Revealed. Indeed, we are definitely shown this. For Daniel failed to understand the words he was told to record, and was informed that they were "sealed" till the time of the end (xii, 8–9); in other words, that their understanding was reserved, for those who should live in the days concerned (cf. 1 Peter i, 10–12. Prof. Robertson Smith was obviously wrong in saying that "the inspired writers perfectly understood . . . every word which God spoke to their hearts." Understanding of their message was anything but invariable).

Nor should we forget, in this connection, our Lord's own emphatic claim to the fullest verbal ("mechanical" or "dictated") Inspiration, repeatedly declaring that the Words He used were not His own, but had been given to Him by the Father (John xii, 49; xiv, 24; xvii, 8, 14; etc.). Never did any other man. I believe, so constantly and completely speak by direct Inspiration as did the Holy One of God, during His Self-limiting incarnation.

Mr. R. MACGREGOR wrote: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Timothy iii, 16). "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter i, 21).

The Bible is a "God-inspired Record," and it contains accounts of men, good and bad, etc., just as a letter written by someone contains the record of good and bad deeds, the letter being written, by one person.

So God chose certain men and inspired them by the Holy Spirit to write and to proclaim certain statements and facts of God, and

also of men good and bad ; about the past, present and future—God here reveals Himself to man. All that was said under this inspiration was true ; scientifically and historically. The copies of the original, are so numerous, and no doubt God took care about them ; that except for some unimportant details, we have substantially the full Truth. Our Old Testament is practically the same as Our Lord used, and that the Jews have. The Lord Jesus, Who is the Truth, made no mistake. He spoke the words the Father gave Him.

" For I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me " (St. John xvii, 8). He was filled and led by the Holy Spirit. He took the Old Testament as being true—Noah and the flood—Jonah, Nineveh and the special fish—Sodom and Gomorrah, etc. But He denounced the man-made traditions of the Jews.

After His Resurrection ; in the walk to Emmaus, " beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself," and upbraided them for being slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken (St. Luke, 24–25–27).

In Genesis i we have the true facts of the Creation—no fact has disproved them. God the Creator is God the Inspirer of the Bible—Science contradicts its past theories and changes. Historically the Bible is true, the excavations also witnessing to its truth, and confounding the critics.

With regard to the New Testament Our Lord said " But the Comforter, which is The Holy Ghost Whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you " (St. John, xiv, 26) and " When He the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth, and He will show you things to come " (St. John, xvi, 13), and so we have the Gospels and the Epistles.

The inspiration of the Bible is further evidenced by its unity—during the about 1600 years it was written, through a variety of people.

One Holy Spirit working through them, and unfolding His message and purpose.

The Bible is now translated, whole or part, in 1,100 languages and dialects : and the Bible alone tells of God's love and the forgiveness of sins to fallen sinful mankind, through a crucified and risen Saviour : and in spite of great enmity through the ages, it goes on its way victoriously, to the Glory of God, and the salvation of man.

DR. BARCROFT ANDERSON wrote : I think Mr. Bruce has been misled by all the dictionaries, and by almost all the translations of the Greek Scriptures, in representing the word pneuma—πνευμα—in the Greek New Testament as capable of having the meaning " breath," or wind, a meaning it had in old heathen Greek writings.

Paul in 2 Timotby iii, 16, referring to the Temple Scriptures, states that : " every writing is God-spirited."

Jno., iii, 8, translated : " The Spirit, where He willeth, Spiriteth ; And the voice of Him thou hearest. But not canst thou know, whence He cometh, or whither He goeth. So is every one that is begotten out of the Spirit."

Samuel, iii, 4, is : And was calling Causer to Samuel, and he was saying : " Here am I," and he was running to Eli, and was saying unto him : " Here am I, for thou called me." Verse 10. And was coming Causer and He was standing Himself, and He was calling.

Now that was a case in which Samuel did not know whence Causer, being Spirit, came, or whither He went. The word mispronounced Jehovah (I.E.F.E.) unquestionably means " He is causing." Therefore I have rendered it Causer.

The Rev. A. W. PAYNE was grateful for the very valuable paper read by Mr. Bruce and rejoiced that the Victoria Institute took such an attitude with regard to Biblical Inspiration.

AUTHOR'S REPLY.

It is gratifying to have won so large a measure of agreement in dealing with a subject in which one so readily incurs the charge of obscurantism on the one hand or of heterodoxy on the other.

I agree with Dr. Evans and Mr. Cook that one needs to be very careful in using the expression " Verbal Inspiration." I have only on this one occasion made public use of it feeling that before this

learned society there was less likelihood of being misunderstood than before the general public; and even so I judged it wise to safeguard myself by making my meaning perfectly plain. It is monstrous to make the expression a test of orthodoxy, as some do. (See further E. Brunner, *The Mediator*, Eng. tr., 1934, pp. 326 f.)

It is not the isolated vocables of Holy Scripture that have this quality of inspiration, but the words grouped in a meaningful order. Theology is not the only sphere in which we need nowadays to remind ourselves of the wise dictum of Thomas Hobbes: "Words are wise men's counters, they do but reckon by them; but they are the money of fools." It is the *value* represented by the counters, the *meaning* conveyed by the words, that matters. We may change the counters; we may put twentieth-century English words in place of first-century Greek words; what is important is that the *meaning* should be preserved, and if that is so, the inspiration remains unimpaired.

It is amazing at this late date to find how many Christians—and non-Christians too—imagine that the historic doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture implies verbal dictation. Even many who repudiate the dictation theory in theory hold it in practice. Yet it is, as Mr. Cook has rightly said, a lower view of inspiration and not (as its holders may think) a higher one. Air Commodore Wiseman has done us a service here by quoting Warfield's weighty words on the distinction between the *fact* of inspiration and the *theory* of dictation by which some have attempted to explain it. But if we take dictation literally, it is not merely a lower view of inspiration, but virtually rules out inspiration; dictation and inspiration being processes differing in kind. One can well conceive of ways in which such passages as the Creation narratives and prophecies of the future, mentioned by Col. Davies, might be the product of inspiration without having recourse to any "mechanical" theory. As for our Lord's teaching, His communion with the Father was so perfect as to take any thought of "mechanical" or "dictated" inspiration (if there is such a thing) particularly unnecessary in His case. In a unique and superlative sense, as Mr. Macgregor has pointed out, "He was filled and led by the Holy Spirit," so that all His words—and deeds—were in the highest degree divinely

inspired; the Spirit of the Son and the Spirit of the Father are one and the same Spirit; no wonder, then, that the Son's words were those which He had received from the Father.

But I think Col. Davies may be using the terms "mechanical" and "dictated" in a sense other than that which I attach to them. George Matheson wrote of his hymn *O Love that wilt not let me go:* "It was the quickest bit of work I ever did in my life. I had the impression rather of having it dictated to me by some inward voice than of working it out myself. I am quite sure that the whole work was completed in five minutes, and equally sure that it never received at my hands any retouching or correction" (quoted by A. Gammie, *Preachers I have heard*, 1945, p. 14). This was inspiration of a kind, though not of the special kind we have been considering; yet we may find in his experience an illuminating analogy. The words came to him *as if* they were dictated, but they were his own all the same—the words of George Matheson at the height of his genius. So the words of the Biblical writers are their own words, spoken or written by them when their spiritual power and insight were most alive and vigorous; yet, such was the control exercised over them by the Holy Spirit at the time that these words are authenticated by God as His Own. Our theories are all too inadequate to explain the miracle; but by the inward witness of that same Holy Spirit we can appreciate the fact that here God Himself is speaking to our souls.

Col. Davies, is of course, quite right in criticizing Robertson Smith's statement that the inspired writers "perfectly understood" all that God spoke to their hearts. Smith was being over-orthodox when he said that—perhaps by way of unconscious compensation for his Wellhausenism. His attempt to combine Reformed theology with radical criticism was a puzzle to the old and the new schools alike. "In pure theology he taught his hearers the doctrine of inspiration from the great divines as few had taught it before . . . He led men's minds back to the great Reformation doctrine of Scripture which bases its inspiration not on any external things such as its authorship or literary construction, but on the *testimonium Sancti Spiritus*, which criticism can never touch" (P. Carnegie Simpson *Life of Principal Rainy*, Vol. I, 1909, p. 334; see also T. M. Lindsay

" Professor W. Robertson Smith's Doctrine of Scripture," in *The Expositor*, Oct. 1894, pp. 241–264). Yet there was reason in Thomas Carlyle's famous outburst : " Have my countrymen's heads become turnips when they think that they can hold the premisses of German unbelief and draw the conclusions of Scottish Evangelical Orthodoxy ? "