

J. MacGregor

Nature of the
Divine Inspiration of Scripture

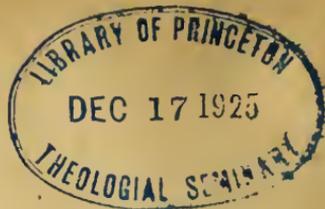
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ART. I.—*Nature of the Divine Inspiration of Scripture.*

[The following Notes are to some extent an expansion of a paper read by me to a clerical club. Members of the club expressed a desire and expectation that the paper should be laid before the public. One reason of this desire was that the notes, as submitted to the club, were so aphoristic in form that members desired to see them in print for leisurely consideration. There is nothing in the original notes which the club discussion has induced me to alter in substance. But I now reproduce the paper in the light of that discussion, which means with very important advantages beyond what I had enjoyed in solitary study.]

THE preparation of this paper was originally occasioned by a suggestion to the effect that those who dogmatise copiously about inspiration do not, as a class, know very well what they are dogmatising about. Not a few good and true men are at this hour persuaded that the dogma of plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture is incompetent in the present state of knowledge and comprehension in our Evangelical Churches.

Under the form of discussion the paper is occupied mainly with definition rather than demonstration. In relation to the subject as regarded by intelligent advocates of a veritable divine inspiration of Scripture all through, my notes are

intended mainly for the purpose of clearing away obscurities which at this time are working mischief, as all darkness is the advancing shadow of death.

The distinction between revelation and inspiration, though continually asserted by one class of theologians, is continually ignored, or rejected as unreal and illusory, by another class. Yet the distinction is founded in the nature of things. Revelation is that through which rational beings come into possession of information; while inspiration is that through which they come to communicate that information—no matter how obtained. Thus, in relation to a scripture or book, the record of a revelation:—while the revelation question is, What is the source of the information? the inspiration question is, Who is the author of the book, or scripture, or record?

So Shakespeare, the “all-round” man, after describing “the poet’s eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,” as receiving some revelation when it glances “from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven,” goes on to describe an ulterior process, in which “the poet’s pen” records what his eye has seen, so as to “give to airy nothings a local habitation and a name.”

It is not necessary here to speak of the revelation as supernatural. Of the information recorded in Scripture a large part may, by the human authors of Scripture, have been obtained from sources within reach of men in the natural use of their faculty of knowledge. For instance, the non-scriptural records appealed to in the Old Testament Scriptures, and the testimonies referred to in the preface of Luke’s Gospel, may have been simply human records of matters patent to every human eye looking on the events of the history of God’s kingdom. But the supposition that Luke obtained information from other men, who from the beginning had been eye-witnesses of the Word, does not imply that Luke was not the human author of the third Gospel, nor that what is said in that history is not said by him. The supposition that Moses and other Old Testament writers made use of previously existing documents, or unwritten traditions, does not imply that certain scriptures have not Moses and other Old Testament prophets or scribes for their authors. Froude’s *History of England* is not the less Froude’s because he makes copious use of materials which had existed long before his time.

It thus appears that the question regarding the source of information recorded in a book is distinct from the question regarding the authorship of the record. And the inspiration question has reference only to the authorship of the record, while the revelation question has reference only to the source of information recorded. On the one hand, though the source of information should be simply human, the authorship of the record, the inspiration of the book, may be divine; *e.g.*, while the genealogies so frequently appearing in Scripture may have originally been prepared simply by men in the ordinary course of political administration, yet the authorship of the Scripture *quâ* recording them may be properly divine and miraculous, God choosing to place in a record which is distinctively divine materials obtainable through simply human inquiry. On the other hand, a record may be simply human in its authorship though the source of the information recorded should be truly divine and miraculous. For instance, the great facts of distinctively supernatural revelation are, let us suppose, correctly recorded in the systems of Augustine and Calvin, or in the creeds and confessions of Evangelical Churches; yet the records, in the shape of those utterances of individuals and of Churches, are, in the view of Evangelical Christians, simply human.

The divine inspiration of Scripture means, that of the Record in our hands the author is God, in such a sense that the Bible is properly God's Word,—that what the Scripture says is said by Him. To say this is specifically distinct from saying that the revelation comes from Him directly or remotely. For, as we have seen, the source of the material recorded may be different from the authorship of the record. Hence, in relation to the authorship of the record, it does not suffice to speak of presentation, somehow, of truth or view *to* the human mind, so that this mind is able to apprehend it. After that apprehension—which may be effected through the poet's eye, or the prophet's, or the historian's, or the dogmatist's—there may come in a specifically different thing, the committing of the same *to writing*, putting the vision on paper. That is what we have now to think about in relation to the record of revelation as distinguished from the revelation recorded.

What we now say of the record, in the sense of supernatural intimation of God's mind by God, may be applicable to other

modes of intimation of God's mind by God. For instance, the symbolism of the Tabernacle and Temple may have resulted, not simply from Divine communication of ideas to men, but from Divine determination of every detail of the symbolism; so that Israel, in looking at the ordinary service of worship, may have been consciously receiving directly the mind of God from God, as truly as when listening to His articulate utterance of the Ten Words at Sinai. Again, when prophets spoke articulate words, it is conceivable that their spoken utterance should be so completely determined by the informing power of God as to make the utterances to be properly His word.

What we thus suggest is that the Bible, the record of revelation, is properly an *oracular book*. And when we speak of the Bible as an oracular book, we represent the feeling of the whole Christian world in relation to the Bible. This suggestion of theologians is anticipated by the experience of Christians. It is a matter of Christian experience that the Bible is an oracular book. Christendom reposes upon the belief that the utterances of this book are properly oracles of God; and this has been so from the beginning of Christian Church-history. It has been imagined by some that the dogma of divine inspiration of Scripture, as distinguished from divine revelation recorded in Scripture, is of recent origin, dating, say, from the time of Clericus or Spinoza, two hundred years ago; that at this recent period it came into being as a mere makeshift for evasion of difficulties occasioned by the discovery, then made for the first time, of "mistakes" in the Scripture record. But this imagination is a hallucination regarding the relative course of Christian thought, and feeling, and life.

The sort of "mistakes" alleged by Spinoza, and employed by Clericus for subversion of the received doctrine of inspiration, had been alleged by another famous Jew far back in the Middle Ages. The same sort of alleged mistakes had, for the same purpose, been adduced by Theodore of Mopsuestia in the primitive "Age of the Councils." And the received doctrine of inspiration, as meaning that the Bible is a properly oracular book, so far from having been invented as a makeshift for meeting the difficulties occasioned to faith by the speculations even of Theodore, is demonstrably as old as the Christian

religion. In the primitive age of that religion, the very *ratio decidendi* in relation to the canonical authority of this and that book, was that this and that book are properly of divine inspiration. And all down from the first century to our nineteenth century the feeling and belief of Christendom have reposed on the supposition, not simply that the Christian religion is of divine revelation, but that the Bible is a divine record of that revelation.

It is quite conceivable that a primitive divine revelation should have been left to be recorded by simply human inspiration or authorship. It is of great importance to remember that the character and history of the Christian Church, and the records contained in our Scriptures, though these should be regarded as simply human in their authorship, cannot be reasonably accounted for except upon the supposition of an original divine revelation, involving a miraculous intervention of God in history for the redemption of lost men. From the external apologetic point of view this is so important that Christian apologists are naturally impatient or doubtful in relation to a view received from within the heart of the Christian system. But the view received from within the heart of the Christian system is that upon which the apologists themselves, so far as they are Christian, live, and which has all along lain at the root of Christian life in God. And that view is that the record of revelation is divine.

It is conceivable that the record should be so connected with the revelation that the one has genetically sprung from the other by a sort of physical necessity; so that the revelation being given, the record in its distinctive character follows as matter of course. It is conceivable, in other words, that the revelation should be energetic to such an extent as to determine the very terms of the record. This however does not follow from the received doctrine of inspiration. Consistently with that doctrine the revelation and the record are not so connected by a bond of physical necessity; God having given the revelation direct from Himself might conceivably have left the record to be originated by simply human authorship.

Rash views of the meaning of divine inspiration are often implied when they are not expressed. It has of late been frequently represented as one problem left over to the theology

of our time, how to deliver the Church from a doctrine of *mechanical* inspiration; and it has been too easily assumed that "dictation" would involve mechanism of inspiration, incompatible with the rational nature of man, and therefore not to be supposed without impiety as having been perpetrated by Him who is the Creator of man's nature. Dictation does not necessarily imply violence to man's nature as rational. I am dictating at this moment without violence to the rational nature of the scribe. There was no violence to the nature of Moses as rational when he received the Ten Words as written by God's finger on the tables of stone. There was no violence done to the rational nature of Balaam when he was constrained to bless where he would have preferred to ban. Those who assume as matter of course that "dictation" must necessarily imply a violence to man's nature as rational thus appear to be mistaken in their assumption.

But the assumption, mistaken or not, is really irrelevant. For the received doctrine of inspiration does not professedly involve mechanism in the process of divine communication through man. It may appear to require some hardihood to maintain this; for able men are now-a-days frequently found assuming as mere matter of course that the received doctrine does involve supersession of human personality and individuality. Some of those able men have taken pains to prove, from the utterances of "old dogmatists," that it is the express intention of the received doctrine of inspiration to exclude human personality and individuality, *i.e.* reality of manhood, from the authorship of Scripture. But to contradict those able men does not necessarily imply hardihood of assertion; all that it necessarily implies is knowledge of plain historical fact and of elementary logic. For the assumption of those able men is mistaken, and their attempted proof a demonstrable failure.

There has not been much published in the way of attempted proof of the assertion that the "old dogmatists," in contending for divinity of authorship of Scripture, mean to exclude humanity of authorship. And what has been published in this way, so far as known to me, is worse than inconclusive—is perverse or wrong-headed. In this relation the well-known utterances about the inspired writers being "flutes"

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of God, or "pens" of God, are quite irrelevant. For a "pen" of God may be a human pen: a man whose personality and individuality are not destroyed in order that God may speak through an unmanned organism, but employed for the expression of God's mind through man. Hence, merely to show that the "old dogmatists" regard man as having been employed by God, is to be far from showing that, in the estimation of those "old dogmatists," the man was destroyed when God employed him, or became a mere machine when he was made the instrument—"flute," or "pen,"—of divine inspiration.

The "old dogmatists" certainly did not mean that the man was unmanned who became the organ of inspiration truly divine. That they did mean this is maintained, *e.g.* by Rothe, in his work *Zur Dogmatik*. But Rothe, like an honest man, produces his proofs from the utterances of the old dogmatists themselves; and even from his proofs, the utterances printed for demonstration of his view of their meaning, it is clear that his view of their meaning is mistaken. A skilled reader of Rothe's footnotes will see that the "old dogmatists" whom he quotes, so far from making it essential to their doctrine that the man through whom God speaks shall *pro tanto* be unmanned, really held that God employed man for the purpose of expressing His mind through man, and therefore that man was not destroyed—or unmanned—when God spoke His mind through men.

Those who maintain the traditional doctrine which has been stigmatised as mechanical are in the habit of saying that all Scripture is the word of God, *and* that all Scripture is the word of man. That way of speaking makes perfectly clear the fact that in their estimation the divine inspiration affirmed by their doctrine implies no mechanism in the process. This again shows that it is really dishonest, on the part of an opponent of their doctrine, to speak as if mechanism had been a *confessed* result of the inspiration it affirms. And that dishonesty is perpetrated by every intelligent theologian who gives as the *status quæstionis* between him and the "old dogmatists," whether mechanical inspiration is to be affirmed of Holy Scripture?

But, some may say, it is *impossible* that Scripture should at once be the word of God and the word of man: if God have

really employed the penmen, so that the words of Scripture are His, then the men must have in His hands become, not human pens, but non-human pens: in a word, the process *must* have been mechanical if the Scripture have God for its author, in your sense. Here we have a perilous advance, downhill. He who simply says, The word *is* not God's in your sense, of being spoken or written by God, may mean only to deny the reality here of the distinction between revelation and inspiration,—*i.e.* to deny the reality of that inspiration which makes God to be properly author of Scripture. But to say that it is *impossible* for God to employ men as human pens, to make them instruments in writing a word truly His, yet so that the word is truly theirs,—this is in effect to set bounds to the Omnipotence of God, while setting no bounds to the presumption of men.

There is a sort of possession which cannot have place when the man is left free to the exercise of his proper individuality. Such possession seems appropriate to inspiration by heathen deities. Though at least one heretical sect of Christians are justly supposed to have maintained such possession as involved in inspiration by the true God and Saviour, Pythonic inspiration is a thing distinctively heathenish in conception. The possession ascribed to demons in the New Testament, and the experience ascribed there to poor tormented demoniacs, are things distinct in their nature from the *afflatus*, and consequent supersession of manhood, involved in the heathenish view of inspiration:—thus far, that what the latter describes as the normal and proper result of divine inspiration, the former ascribes to an abnormal condition, in which man is possessed by a malignant demon who is not God, but God's enemy and man's. Still, the Pythonic inspiration of heathenism coincides with the demoniacal possession of Scripture thus far, that in both cases alike there is set forth a possession which causes "depotentiality," repression of individuality, putting manhood into abeyance.

I do not say that God may not conceivably have put manhood into abeyance through a divine possession in full keeping with God's nature and man's. That there may be ecstasy of this sort it would be extreme presumption to deny dogmatically. But the ecstasy of the saint or prophet is not only of a

species distinct from the non-human condition implied in properly demoniacal possession, but is as different from that possession as heaven is from hell.

We are thus led back to the proposition that God has employed men for the utterance of His mind through a word which is properly God's. Is it *possible* for God to possess and employ man so that the manhood is not destroyed?

And in relation to this proposition we say that real possession may conceivably assume one of three modes or forms. In one, the possession amounts only to that sort of interest, perhaps enthusiastic interest, in the matter revealed, which leaves the man's own personality and individuality not only distinct but *sole*, so that the utterance is his own and only his own; as when Dante sings of hell and heaven, or Luther teaches justification by faith, or Bunyan preaches "Grace abounding to the chief of sinners." At another extreme, represented by heathen oracles, the possession may be like that of the demoniacs, in which the human instrument, perhaps writhing and wrestling against the power possessing, is overcome, neutralised, submerged; so that the utterance is not properly the man's own, but only an utterance through him instrumentally, as if Lucan's witches had spoken through the dead corpses of Pharsalia. But there is a third form of possession at least conceivable—a form specifically distinct both, on the one hand, from that simply Pythonic inspiration through which only "the god" speaks, and, on the other hand, from that simply human inspiration through which only the man speaks. And we say, to deny the possibility of a really divine possession of this third sort,—such in effect that the resulting utterance is at once God's and man's,—is to err by presumption.

Christians are well acquainted with a case in which the utterance is and must be at once completely human and truly divine. I refer to the case of the person and the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. We may without irreverence speak of even Christ's person as representing distinctively utterance: because utterance, *Λόγος*, The Word, is a proper name of Him as the second person of the Godhead. But we now refer especially to the divine-human constitution of His person as Immanuel. Through that constitution of His person He is at once com-

ϑ/ pletely (τελεῖως) human and truly (ἀληθῶς) divine. I wish to detain attention to this case of a Word which combines the
 ϑ/ τελεῖως (completely) with the ἀληθῶς (truly).

In view of that case, can Christians deny the possibility of a word which is at once completely human and truly divine? The words which Christ spoke in the days of His flesh, were they not completely human? And if in the case of Christ we have not only a divine-human person, but divine-human words, then how can Christians deny the possibility of a divine-human word when the word in question happens to be the written word?

We come back to the statement that to deny the possibility of God's speaking through man without destroying man's individuality is to set bounds to the omnipotence of God. As has already been intimated, the difficulty here consists in our inability to see that man can be really employed by God, or wielded as God's instrument without being destroyed. More generally, we cannot comprehend how God in all history can be the first cause without destroying the substantive reality of second causes. But the difficulty here does not warrant us in alleging impossibility. According to the Christian doctrine of Providence, God, in a way incomprehensible to us, really is the first cause, doing according to His will in all events of creature-history, and yet by the same providence orders events to fall out according to the nature of second causes. According to the evangelical doctrine of salvation, it is God who, sovereignly, worketh in saints both the willing and the doing; while yet saints work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. To make such antinomies involve impossibility with God is to betray incaution, if not irreverence and presumption.

In this relation inquirers and dogmatisers are often seen under the power of a fatal prepossession, which makes it practically impossible for them so much as fairly to entertain the suggestion, that a word whose inspiration is completely human may at the same time be a word whose inspiration is truly divine. We know that in many cases this fatal prepossession is only one aspect of a view, of naturalism *versus* supernaturalism, which carries men, professing to be devout students of Scripture, into more or less complete rejection even of supernatural (divine)

revelation. But as we now have to do with the record, not with the revelation recorded, I shall deal, through sample, with the fatal prepossession only as blinding men beforehand in relation to the subject of divine authorship of Scripture.

As a sample suitable for my present purpose, I will take the well-known way of reasoning, in many cases, from the record regarding the superscription on the cross. Of the four recorded superscriptions no two coincide exactly in words. Therefore, it has been reasoned, the old doctrine of divine inspiration cannot be true; God cannot have said, in all the four cases, "This was the superscription." In some cases this reasoning is founded on the supposition that, as the superscriptions so vary in the records, in at least three of the records there must be a "mistake" or "inaccuracy." So far the reasoning is disposed of by the fact that no one of the records professes to give *the words* of the superscription, in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin; and also by the fact that it is the manner of Scripture, even when assuming the form of *verbatim* reporting, to be careless about literal reproduction of the words of an utterance—*c.g.*, any lecturer on the Gospels is aware that, in the *ex facie verbatim* reports of the words of the Lord Jesus, the thing given is, often at least, only the substance of His utterance. Thus, in the reports of His exposition of the parable of the Sower one record has "the word," another "the word of God," and another "the word of the kingdom." This fact shows that where there is a variation in words, even in reports ostensibly *verbatim*, there is not necessarily any "mistake" or "inaccuracy," but only a conformity to the well-known manner of Scripture,—a manner which, because well known, itself provides against misconception. If I know beforehand that, even when in form reporting *verbatim*, the record must not be regarded as of course giving the exact terms of the original utterance, then I need feel no uneasiness when confronted with the variations of the recorded superscriptions on the cross: I need only say to myself, all four agree as to *the thing* superscribed, while every one gives it in his own words; as well may happen when four perfectly honest men give a perfectly true account of one utterance.¹

¹ But does not the variation in the words of the superscription show that the inspiration is not verbal? A clever question, captious and misleading.

So far we have had to do with the credibility of the record rather than with the divinity of its authorship. The substantial credibility is not affected in the estimation of brethren reasoning as above. But though it should not be so to their feeling, it apparently is so in strict logic, so that their reasoning may often be found as part of the stock-in-trade of vulgar infidelity. I therefore deprecate the apparent facility, if not eagerness, with which good Christian men are found harping on supposed "mistakes" or "inaccuracies" in the record of revelation. Even among Christian men there is sometimes observable what might almost be described as a *mania* for such "inaccuracies." Indeed, this must almost inevitably be the result when men are passionately bent upon a theory of inspiration which excludes the proper divinity of the record. And the stupidity—as I will venture to call it—of imagining that there must, of course, be inaccuracy in the records of the superscription on the cross, because the recorded words of the superscription are in no two of the four cases the same, may serve to warn prudent men against the cry of "mistake" or "inaccuracy" on account of ostensible verbal discrepancy. There is much of warning, as well as of consolation, in the utterance, "Forgive them; they know not what they do." As of men's treatment of the Incarnate Word of God, so it may be of good men's treatment of His written word. Let them, at least, *make sure* that they know what they are doing, when they lend themselves to parading "mistakes" and "inaccuracies."

But some, owning the fact that the variation in the words of the superscription on the cross does not imply mistake or inaccuracy on the part of the human authors of the Gospels,

Does any one think that *Pilate* was divinely inspired? The question here is, whether four distinct *descriptions* of the superscription, which, *ex facie*, are given by four men, may not have (through them) been given by one God? In other words, may He not *employ* four men, *i.e.* make use of their fourfold idiosyncrasies, to convey His one meaning with a fourfold colouring? But why more than one colouring? Because God chooses to speak through more than one man. The fourfoldness of the colouring, with agreement in substance, is what might have been expected from real employment of men as "pens of God." It serves a secondary purpose in showing that the men are independent witnesses. And as their testimonies reveal no real discrepancy, it is fully consistent with the suggestion that they all alike, in producing their respective records, are instruments of God in producing His fourfold record.

are of opinion that the variation shows that, in the strict sense of the "old dogmatists," the authorship of the fourfold record cannot be divine. They may admit that God had to do with the preparation of the record, as He has to do with the determination of men's utterances in the ordinary course of providence, or in the course of His gracious work of regeneration and sanctification, so that the records are indirectly divine, as the best words of uninspired saints are indirectly divine; *i.e.* so that we really get from them what they have received from the Lord. But the present question is, whether through them we really get *from Him* what they have received from Him. And here some Christian brethren say in effect: "No, it is impossible, for the record is fourfold, even in terms, while God is one. If God had really, in the sense now in question, been the author of the records, they would not have been fourfold, but one, even in terms." Here I am endeavouring to give exactly what passes through the mind of the brethren referred to. And I say that it betrays the blinding influence of that fatal prepossession of which I have spoken. The brethren are prepossessed with the opinion that it is *impossible* for God to speak through men without overriding and placing in abeyance individuality, personality, manhood.

Try to suppose, for argument's sake, that God, speaking through man, *employs* him, *and so* does not destroy him. *Then what have we to expect* as the result? *We have to expect*, setting apart possibilities of error which exist in fallen men when God is not preventing, that four witnesses, all speaking perfect truth, shall speak the perfect truth in four different ways, if only those four ways be what would naturally result from their varied characters, idiosyncrasies, individualities. This, I say, is what we have to expect, on the supposition that God really *employs* men as the organs of His utterance; so that, for instance, if it be natural for four men to give four distinct reports of the superscription on the cross, distinct in terms, though the same in substance, then that same variety of form in four God-inspired accounts ought not to startle us, as incompatible with divinity of inspiration; but ought rather to be regarded by us as in the line of what might have been expected when the inspired record comes through four men.

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." Gene-

rally, as it has pleased God to give the record through men, we of course expect that the word shall be human in form. And as it has pleased Him to give it through this, and that, and that other man, we ought of course to expect that in form it shall exhibit the idiosyncrasies—apart from sin—of the individual men through whom it comes. If they be pens of God, they are human pens. And, it is to be presumed, He has selected this and that man, not with a view to suppress individualities, but precisely because the individuality, in the case of this and that man chosen for the purpose, is precisely fitted, through operative manifestation of it, to be the organ of expressing what God means to say.

I may add that the understood purpose of God, to employ individualities freely and fully manifested, would well accord with the manifest manner of the inspired writers, in giving free and full expression to their individualities. They write as if they had no consciousness of Divine inspiration. And it is conceivable that, in the detailed articulation of their labour as scribes of God, they have no consciousness of Divine inspiration. But without the consciousness of that inspiration, they may have had full *confidence* in its presence and power; as when the martyrs of the first age were confident that there would “be given to them” what they should say, and thus felt no need of anxious preparation of speeches, but simply gave spontaneous utterance to what occurred to them when the testing time came on. So the manifest freeness, spontaneousness, *abandon*, of inspired writers, so far from militating against the supposition of the divine inspiration of their utterances, may rather fall to be regarded as resulting from their perfect confidence in the presence and power of the inspiration.

So far by way of definition. And this, very nearly, is the end of the journey which I had proposed to myself on this occasion. But my paper would be unwarrantably fragmentary if I did not make some remarks on the question, What then? What is the use of your definition? What are we to think of the view of inspiration thus defined? My answer is, It is the only view that will work, that will satisfy the existing conditions, supposing Christianity to be a new creation, and the Bible to be in some real sense a trustworthy record of a

Divine revelation. But in justification of this answer, I make a few very elliptical notes in conclusion.

(1.) To all appearance the revelation bids us regard the *record* as divine, the Book as properly oracular, the Bible as God's word in the sense of being a Scripture of which God is author. I will not now go into detailed evidence. I state as clear to my apprehension, after full inquiry, that the proper divinity of the authorship of Scripture is really declared in the revelation which the Scriptures record. Of this I have no doubt. And I do not think that any man will have any doubt of it who goes through the process of carefully and candidly considering the teachings of revelation regarding the record.

(2.) Scripture as a whole has certain *marks* of divinity of authorship. The marks may not be visible in this or that portion of Scripture, and may thus fall out of view of those whose career of inquiry is one of disintegration without reintegration. But if they be in the Bible as a whole, then the divinity without the marks will be believed in, and so the marks themselves may come to be seen and felt, in those portions,—*e.g.* The Song of Songs, and Ecclesiastes, and Esther—in which the marks do not appear at first sight. Now, that the Scripture as a whole has those marks can, I think, be shown not only from its pretensions but from its achievements. In particular, it claims to be, and it has proved itself to be, (1) a word of *faith*, and (2) a word of *life*; in a sense and measure which imply nothing less than divinity of authorship. I could give very copious illustrations here. But I will only propose to brethren the exercise of considering, Has not the Bible caused men to *believe* in God, and to *live* by faith, in a sense and measure altogether unexampled on the part of books of simply human inspiration? The question at first sight will seem precarious. But I am certain that the longer you think of it, gathering in your experiences and readings, the more you shall feel disposed to say, This Book is shown to be divine by being distinctively creative; it alone, of all books, deserves the description, "The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and hearing, shall live."

(3.) There has on the Church's part been an *intuitive sense* of the *divinity* of Scripture, not only in respect of contents but in respect of form. This intuitive sense of a divinity

inherent in the word is an effective *testimonium Spiritus Sancti*. And the argument from it, though capable of abuse, has a right use, the use I now am making, viz., to corroborate the arguments drawn from the testimony of the revelation, and from certain manifest characters of the record. Apart from all such more external evidences, there is a self-evidence in the voice, or word, which is an object of intuitive knowledge to him who knows the person, and which may even make one to know him to whom the person was previously unknown—as a traveller in Africa may at once divine the lion's roar, previously never heard by him. At least, a child will know a father's voice. And it is simply a fact that Christians have an immediate feeling or conviction of the divinity of Scripture. It is upon this, subjectively, that the faith of Christendom reposes. There is a properly *religious reverence* for Scripture, distinct in kind from the veneration we owe to the best works of simply human authorship, even when the contents of those works are recognised as originally derived from revelation of God. Hence, for instance, Wilberforce and Andrew Fuller speak of that religious reverence for Scripture as one of the fruits and evidences of vital godliness, and the absence of it as an evidence of ungodliness of heart. Indeed, we may go further, and affirm that the Bible, wherever it is read in communities, goes on making way for itself, gaining the ground on which it stands, winning credit to itself, not only as recording a one divine revelation, but as being a veritably divine record of that revelation, not only containing but being "the Word of God."

What, then, do you make of the "mistakes" or "inaccuracies" of Scripture? I am willing to assume the position of one who confessedly does not know what to make of them, where they are manifestly real. In our day, difficulties of this class are paraded and pressed, with manifest relish and gusto, as if some professing Christian teachers had really felt an interest in giving to their existence an emphasis even of exaggeration. And it appears to be assumed that their existence is a discovery of our new time, involving a necessity of departing from the old doctrine of inspiration. In fact, there is no new discovery here. The particular cases of alleged "mistake" or "inaccuracy" may vary; but the existence of cases of this class has been full before the mind of the Church for

many generations. Two hundred years ago, a collection of them, borrowed by Clericus from Spinoza, occasioned a flutter among theologians, and certain weak evasions, about "partial inspiration," etc., especially among weak-kneed evangelicals in Britain. More than a thousand years before that they had been dwelt upon, and pressed to an alien conclusion, by Theodore of Mopsuestia; so that some of his lucubrations, *e.g.* about the Pentateuch, look as if they had but yesterday reached us by telegraph from Tübingen or Leyden. But the Christian Church, in view of this class of phenomena, and of the conclusions to which she was invited on the ground of them, has not accepted the conclusion, nor allowed the phenomena to disturb her confidence in the proper divinity of the Scripture. And in my judgment the Church has been right and the alarmists have been wrong. The phenomena of this sort do not necessitate, and therefore do not warrant, abandonment of the belief that Scripture is the word of God, and consequently rejection of the relative evidence furnished by the testimony of revelation, the manifest characters of Scripture as a word of faith and of life, and the intuitive feeling or perception of its divinity on the part of devout men.

I think it right to put this class of difficulties into the background, on account of a very prevalent method of pushing them into the foreground, and practically ignoring the positive evidence appropriate here. You say to a friend, "You appear to me to exclude from your doctrine the proper divinity of the record." Instead of answering straight, he will say, "But what do you make of the inaccuracies of Scripture? You will perhaps say that they do not exist, or that their existence is owing to errors of transcription." In such a case I think the proper answer is, "No, I do not say *anything* about them. At this stage I think it best to say nothing about them. I will begin with saying, that the proper divinity of Scripture is shown by positive evidence, of revelation and of experience. And then, if you choose, I may say, as to the phenomena described as 'inaccuracies,' I am perplexed by them, and I do not know what to do with them, *excepting* that I ought to prevent them from shaking my belief founded on that positive evidence." And this I will have a good right to say. For, I maintain, the phenomena are not

such in their nature as to warrant by necessitating the abandonment of belief really founded on that positive evidence. This, I think, I could show by detailed examination of those alleged "inaccuracies," especially in respect of logical bearing on the question of inspiration. But then that would lead us away into tangled talk which would cause the positive evidence to disappear from the mind's view, and thus disqualify us for judgment in the case, leaving us under a vague impression, under whose power many are at this hour enslaved and blinded, that those alleged "inaccuracies" are a main source, if not the main source, of information regarding the nature of *theopneustia*.

EPILOGUE.

(The capital letters here, A, B, etc., represent only *views*, not *persons*.)

A. "You make an illegitimate distinction between human inspiration and divine inspiration." ANS. I do make a distinction, as when one distinguishes between Homeric and Æschylean authorship of a book. And I see that the word "inspiration" has so much come to mean "inspiration of God," that I should prefer in popular discourse to employ the word "inspiration" only when I mean (*theopneustia*) *divine* inspiration. But for some scientific purposes it may be convenient to speak of "inspiration" as equivalent to *authorship*. In such cases I would feel no difficulty in employing the expression, "human inspiration," in speaking, say, of the Westminster Catechism.

B. "I hold with you that the Bible is a properly oracular book; and that all Scripture is the Word of God, a proper ground of faith. But, while maintaining this as the proper ground of my Christian faith and life, I cannot shut my eyes to the fact of ostensible 'mistakes,' which I cannot account for consistently with the doctrine of divine inspiration." ANS. I am so far in your position. I see ostensible "mistakes" which I cannot account for. And, if you sincerely regard Scripture as a divine record, or the Bible as an oracular book, I suppose that you and I must at bottom be of one mind and one heart. Only I hope that you agree with me in holding the oracularness of Scripture as the fundamental fact of *religion* in this relation. You know that some, while professing to accept Scripture as an oracle, though presenting on the face of it

ostensible "mistakes," found upon those ostensible mistakes their doctrine of the authorship of Scripture, *so that* the Scripture comes to be not a proper ground of faith.

C. "You after all have not told us where is the inspiration, and what it is." ANS. I have told you, first, as to the where of inspiration, that it is in the *Scripture*; and, second, as to the what, that it consists in the Bible being *God's Word*. Very clever people may here be really "blinded by excess of light"—from earth. Simple people have always known what is meant by an oracular book, a word which is God's, a scripture whose meaning is God's mind expressed by God.

D. "My view is this:—The inspiration resides in the moral and spiritual ideas of Scripture, not in its intimations about physical fact." ANS. That is an old Jesuitical view, ventilated for the purpose of obliterating the distinction between a divine record and a human record. And it is thoroughly unscriptural. The Bible, when speaking or hinting about its own divinity of authorship, nowhere distinguishes between moral ideas and physical facts. Whatever it appears to claim for itself, in respect of divinity of authorship, it appears to claim for itself alike all through. Christ and His apostles, when referring to the Old Testament Scripture, never said, You may believe this scripture statement, *for* it does not refer to physical facts.

E. "But is there not a real distinction between spiritual ideas and physical facts?" ANS. Yes, the Jesuits knew that. But the distinction is not relevant here. For here the question is not about the importance of the thing spoken of, but about the truth, credibility, divinity of the Speaker. There are no Bible statements about physical fact that are even ostensibly untrue. The Bible statements about physical facts have never been the real occasion of infidelity. The real occasions have been the spiritual ideas of Scripture. So said Christ, "If I tell you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?"

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JAMES MACGREGOR.

ART. II.—*Strictures on the Article "Bible," in the recent edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica."*

GENERALISATION upon the basis of questionable or imperfect *data* is one of the most fertile sources of error in the fields of Science and Philosophy. The author of this article has caught this spirit of the age, and has carried it into the department of Biblical Criticism. The first manifestation of its influence is seen in the opening of the second paragraph:—"The pre-Christian age of the Biblical religion falls into a period of religious productivity, and a subsequent period of stagnation and merely conservative traditions." This generalisation, besides being entirely too sweeping, proceeds upon a false assumption regarding the relation between religion and revelation, making piety the basis and condition of revelation, and thus, in accordance with one of the rationalistic schools, assuming that the religious consciousness is the source of theology. So far is this representation from being in harmony with the fact, the reverse relation is the one taught in the Bible. Both under the Old Testament and the New, religion was originated and maintained by supernatural interpositions occurring at sundry times and in divers manners. The knowledge communicated was not the offspring of the religion, but the religion was the offspring of the knowledge. The order has ever been, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. It was just as true of Isaiah as it was of Balaam, that it was not by reading the record of his religious consciousness that he discovered the glories of the coming Messiah.

Nor was the Biblical religion left to depend upon one impulse which operated during a period of productivity, and then vanished away, leaving the Church to spiritual stagnation and conservative traditions. The diverse estates of action and stagnation have alternated throughout the history of the Church, divine communications always preceding religious revival. This fact forbids the generalisation with which Professor Smith has opened the discussion. The Biblical religion, so far as the Old Testament is concerned, cannot be classified under the two heads specified in this article. A glance at the history as given in the Bible itself is sufficient to justify this

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