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The Plenary Inspiration
of the
Holy Scriptures

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THE PLENARY INSPIRATION
OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

A PAPER

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BY THE

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PAPER.

The Convocation of Canterbury at its recent meeting thanked "the revisers of the authorized version of the Old Testament for the unwearied labor and singular diligence which they have expended during many years in completing the weighty task entrusted to them." Their unwearied labor and singular diligence were emphasized by the statement of Archdeacon Harrison, that the "revision, as completed in eighty-five sessions, occupied seven hundred and ninety-two days, and that on each of these days the company generally sat for six hours." At the same meeting of Convocation the Bishop of Winchester declared that "great thanks were due to the Americans for their assistance," and we are reminded as we gather on this hill that to the learned revisers in the Old World there were added learned revisers from the New, and that, in our own modern Bible-house, the same "unwearied labor and singular diligence" were expended which won the thanks of Convocation for the toilers in the venerable Jerusalem chamber. We know, too, that to the toil of the two years devoted to the sessions there must be added the toil in the closet and the cloister during the remainder of the fourteen years devoted to ascertaining the "pure and native significance of the Word." And then to the labor on the Old there must be added the labor on the New Testament.

I am to speak to you to-day of the Plenary Inspiration of the Bible; and I cannot but regard these colossal labors, and the intense interest felt in them by the people who speak the language of the revision, as testifying, however unconsciously, to the prevalence of a very high doctrine of inspiration. Is it not true that this work of fourteen years was entered on without any expectation that it would

affect the substance of the Bible—its moral or spiritual teaching? Is it not true that upon every word of the original about which there is question there have been expended “unwearied labor and singular diligence,” whether that word speaks of doctrines or history of some buried town or some forgotten link in a remote genealogy? Then what labor and diligence to give “the pure and native significance of the word.” No definite argument from these premises is intended, but an advocate for the plenary inspiration of Scripture, amid prevalent and popular theories of partial inspiration, may welcome the moral support which seems to be given by this unconscious testimony of English-speaking Christians.

It is not meant by plenary inspiration that the whole Bible was communicated by *revelation* to the writers. Part was revealed; the whole was inspired. If it be necessary to venture on a definition of inspiration, may not this suffice: Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost of things discovered by them and of things revealed to them; and they spake nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else than what the Holy Ghost moved them to speak? The first clause defines inspiration; the second clause, plenary inspiration. The result of plenary inspiration is that the Bible is throughout the word of men (for *men* spake), and yet throughout the word of God.

This, to-day, is a conference *within* the household of faith; not a contest with the world for the faith. It is a colloquy among brethren, agreed upon the great fundamentals of the faith. This argument need not traverse these fundamentals; they may be taken for granted. The Nicene creed will be selected as the common ground on which we stand. One reason for the selection is obvious: It contains the clause “who spake by the prophets.” Confine the word “prophets” to its narrow meaning, and we all believe, at the least, that the Holy Ghost spake by the prophets. The second reason for the selection, as will appear in the

sequel, is its articulate statement of the doctrine of the Divine-human person of our Blessed Lord.

It is very important to determine the proper method to be pursued in this argument, and in doing so to remember that inspiration belongs to the realm of the supernatural. That it does belong to the realm of the supernatural, will be conceded by the advocates of partial and of plenary inspiration alike. The first evidence for which we ask in attestation of a supernatural fact is testimony; and having first listened to testimony, we turn next to the internal evidence, and ask whether the phenomena harmonize with the declarations of the witnesses. But the vicious method often pursued in this argument is to begin with the phenomena, construct a theory which gives illusive promise of harmony with them, and then give the witnesses a tardy and imperfect hearing. In the second place, since inspiration belongs to the realm of the supernatural, we cannot expect to give a logical solution of all its phenomena, to show their logical coherence. "All abstract analysis of inspiration is impossible," says Canon Westcott; "the nature of its operation transcends the power of our thought." And in the third place, we must not expect to find any adequate illustration of inspiration in the natural world. We must not forget that a miracle is, "on one side of it, not a fact of this world, but of the invisible world, the Divine interposition in it being a supernatural and mysterious act." Imperfect and misleading are the comparisons of the inspired writer to the pen or penman, lute or lyre, messenger or ambassador. We must compare things supernatural with supernatural; and searching the realm of the supernatural for an illustration of the Divine-human Book, our eyes may rest adoringly on the Divine-human Person to whom the Book does homage. "There is a growing disposition" says a Bampton lecturer, "to accept the union of the Divine and human natures in the person of Christ as the model for our belief upon His written Word." I shall endeavor to

show in the sequel that this growing disposition is abundantly justified. I now only suggest the illustration that it may win from you a patient hearing and perhaps an acceptance of my argument for the Divine-human character of the Bible. Why should we not accept the Book as truly Divine and perfectly human, when we have already bowed adoringly before the same supernatural union in the God-man? What demand on a rational faith is made by the first which has not been granted in the second? What analysis can solve the mysteries of either union? And if the first step in the argument for the mystery of the Incarnation is the testimony of that Word, written, "that we might believe that Jesus is the Son of God," then the testimony of the Living Church, interpreting that Word,—should we not, as we stand before the mystic Book, withhold our guesses, our individual theories, and listen reverently to the testimony given by the Book itself—given by the Church of God interpreting the Book?

I. If we turn first to the human element, it surely is not necessary to-day to argue for its existence. The tendency in a past age was to assert the Divine element to the disparagement of the human. The tendency to-day is to assert the human element and retire the Divine element from portions, large or small, of the sacred volume. It is superfluous to expend argument upon that which on every side is admitted and asserted; but the space which might have been given to argument must be devoted to a caution against an erroneous inference frequently drawn from the admission of a human element in the Bible. "If human, therefore fallible;" that is the erroneous inference; that is the unwarranted assumption; that the postulate which underlies and vitiates whole essays and volumes on this theme. If human, then you must expect mistakes—down-right errors—such as man's human compositions. Is this not to beg the very question at issue? Whether the *men*

who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost were not, though men, guarded from error by the All-seeing Spirit; whether the Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is not distinguished by infallibility, though given through men, from other scriptures of men—is not that the question? The Great Being whose “nature and whose name is Love,” that He might reveal Himself to men, took on Him the winning form of our own brotherhood; and the Man spake without error, as He lived without sin. Our loving Father would make known His will to men and record his dealings in the past for the admonition of the present and the future. He speaks through men, employs all the cadences of human speech, that He might win all human hearts. Is not this the question—whether He did not preserve the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, while writing, from error? Is it not to beg the very question at issue to assume “if human, then fallible;” that if you hear the accents of human speech, you must expect the mistakes of human fallibility?

The disproof of this inference from the human element will come naturally and incidentally in the proof of the Divine element in the Bible. Now, only let the caution be given against assuming that the admission of the human element is the admission of error. For example: A human feature of the Book is its progressive teaching. There is a growth more or less continuous from Genesis to Revelation. To the earlier ages the language of revelation is the simple language of St. Paul: “I have fed you with milk, not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it.” Now, is this immaturity an imperfection? Are the earlier revelations fallible because, though crescent, they shine not yet with full-orbed light? So it has been urged. So God’s gracious adaptation of His instruction to the childhood of His people and the conditions of our humanity has been perverted.

But surely youth is perfect as youth, though its perfection is not the perfection of manhood. Surely an incomplete revelation is not misleading and fallible when it speaks all that its hearers can bear, and when it testifies all along to its own incompleteness by some such words as these: "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." Besides, we are told of the God-man, He "advanced in wisdom." The advance is a human feature. Did it imply any fallibility in Him? Why, then, should advance in wisdom imply any fallibility in the Divine-human Book? And so we may say in its "advance in wisdom," the Book is human, yet not fallible.

Again, a human feature of the Book is that in testifying to facts, natural or supernatural, it aids our faith by observing the usual character of human testimony. "The usual character of human testimony," says Paley, "is substantial truth under circumstantial variety. This is what the daily experience of courts of justice teaches." Now, it would seem that it is necessary that the Word of God should have this usual character of human testimony so as to win human faith. Circumstantial identity in the four gospels, for instance, would be regarded as sure proof of collusion and conspiracy. You remember that Henry Rogers, in the "Eclipse of Faith," introduces a speculator attempting to establish a revelation on the basis of miracles. "He recorded the results by ten witnesses, and with such perfection of art that all the ingenuity of all the critics of succeeding ages could not detect a single variation other than in language. The records themselves and their contents were precisely the same. And what was the result? Why this identity of substance, and almost of manner, showed most evidently, said the critics, that there had been collusion between the several parties who had framed the revelation, and in the course of three or four generations it was universally rejected as totally unworthy of belief." And yet it is often alleged that this circumstantial variety is variation from

the truth, and marks the fallibility of the writer. The allegation seems to confound variety with contrariety. Paley says, not "substantial truth with circumstantial" contrariety, but "variety"—the varied stories of independent witnesses, each free from error, though from his standpoint giving but part of the truth. Now, it is freely granted that this human element of circumstantial variety is conspicuous in the Bible; but it by no means follows that the Bible, because in this respect human, is therefore fallible.*

The human element of the Bible! Let this caution be remembered, and then we may assert that the Book, which comes from the God of all the families of the earth, is intensely human—the most human of all books. From its pages we hear the laughter and the fretful cry of children; Ishmael mocking Isaac, and Isaac's mother avenging him on Ishmael and his mother; the young man rejoicing in his strength and the maiden in her bloom. There are wooings and weddings, feasts and funerals. There old age counts the "days of its years" as it goes down in sorrow to the grave, or wears with regal look the hoary "crown of glory." Now you pitch your tents with the patriarchs, amid the bleating of flocks and herds and the fragrance of fresh meadows; and the herdsman or the huntsman comes home hungry from the field or the chase; and now, amid the splendors of a colossal empire, you gaze upon the

*Objection is made to plenary inspiration on account of the variety in the accounts given of the superscription on the Cross. The objection supposes that plenary inspiration requires the report of the identical words used on any given occasion, whereas what plenary inspiration does mean is that the writer in reporting the occasion is inspired to use the identical words which he does use. In reporting the superscription, the four inspired Evangelists give "substantial truth under circumstantial variety." The substance is "King of the Jews," and that is reported by each Evangelist. Paley's rule applies to the report of words, whether *written* or *spoken*, and it is strange that the objectors do not see this.

palace where a Pharaoh rules in pride, or a Belshazzar feasts in pomp with a thousand lords, or a Nero frowns in world-wide power. There is the Prime Minister of the great empire, and the subtle diplomatist and captains and judges. There the merchant is seen toiling with his caravan across the desert, or in Tyre, "prince of traffickers," welcoming home ships from every port, and the products of every clime. Now armies march, and a Deborah rejoices in the spoil and victory; or a father cries, "O my son, my son, would God I had died for thee!" There the fisherman casts his net and the husbandman guides his plow; and there are bankers and lawyers, and physicians and prophets, and priests and preachers. There is every one of the many types of woman in home or history, from a Jezebel or Herodias to a Mary sitting at Jesus' feet. If you wander in the wilderness, if you go down to the sea in ships, you find fellow-wanderers and fellow-voyagers in the Bible. Wherever your home—in country, hamlet, town, or city—you will find your home in the Bible. Is your home amid torrid suns? it tells you of the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Is your home nestled beneath the mountain heights, clad in perpetual snow and vocal with torrents all night and all day long? you have in the Bible the snow of Lebanon and the "cold, flowing waters,"

"The torrent brooks of hallowed Israel
From craggy hollows pouring late and soon."

II. So true is it that the Bible is written for man, to man, through man; that the Bible is the word of man. Not the less true is it that the Bible is the Word of God. More is here affirmed than that the Bible "contains the word of God." The homilies which, to guard us against tradition, teach that the Bible, not tradition, contains the Word of God, affirm elsewhere the doctrine here affirmed—that "the Scripture is the Word of the Living God;" "the Holy Spirit is the author of the Books of Holy Scriptures."

1. On this subject we may first listen reverently to the testimony of our Blessed Lord Himself. There stood before Him the Old Testament as there stand before us to-day the Old Testament and the New. We know that the Scriptures of the Old Testament which He held in His sacred hands were in every essential respect the very same we read to-day. We know that the Jewish Church and the Jewish people generally regarded them as the word of God in every jot and tittle. We know that this doctrine, though implied in many a discussion, was never in the least discountenanced by the Lord Jesus. We know that He rebuked the Pharisees for teaching for doctrine the commandments of men, the traditions of the elders, and that He enthroned the Scriptures as the supreme and sole rule of doctrine; and we know that, besides, He gave the following testimony:

First, hear Him teach that the Old Testament, in one passage at least, is both the word of man and the Word of God. In St. Mark, 7, 10, these are his words: "MOSES said, honor thy father and thy mother; and whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death." In St. Matthew, 15, 4, the same words are ascribed to God: "GOD commanded, saying, honor thy father and mother; and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death." In the first quotation he says *Moses* said; in the second, *God* commanded, saying. Does He not teach that the same passage is the word of *man* and the Word of *God*? Nay, more than this—does He not, perhaps, teach that it was not only *man*, but the man Moses in particular, who spoke—Moses in all his individuality, "his personality not destroyed by the action of the *Divine Power*?" for there is the "Divine Power;" it is *God's* work, too—"God commanded saying."

In the second place, nine times does our Blessed Lord use the term "Scripture" in speaking to the Jews. He knew what they would understand by "Scripture." They would

understand that collection of writings which they regarded as the "oracles of God"—as the Word of God. He must have fortified their opinions by what He said of the Scriptures. They foretell, and they "must be fulfilled;" they speak, and their decision is final. On one occasion He first identified the Scripture with the Word of God, and then adds: "The Scripture cannot be broken."

In the third place, Our Blessed Lord distinctly calls the Old Testament the "Word of God." He calls it the Word of God on one occasion when quoting from "the Law." He calls it the Word of God on another occasion when quoting from "the Psalms"—another of the three great divisions of the Old Testament. He would of course be understood by those to whom He spoke as including the entire Old Testament as the Word of God. By that august name, grown so familiar to us, lawgiver and psalmist and prophet had, under divine instruction, hallowed in the thoughts of the people to whom God gave his oracles the slowly-growing volume of the elder Revelation. How frequent and how impressive the uncounted repetition of the name! Hear the psalmist say: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet." "I trust in 'thy Word.'" "I hope in Thy Word." "Thy Word is true from the beginning." And now He is come to whom that Word pointed. He speaks. He, the Truth; and He calls the Old Testament the Word of God. Mark the expression—the Word of God. It would seem that the force of the argument from this august name of the Sacred Volume has been overlooked. Must we not accept the expression in its natural sense until that sense be disproved? And must we not accept that sense which the Infallible Teacher intended as infallibly true? Could He be misled, and would He mislead others? If that elder volume were not the Word of God, would The Truth have sanctioned a misleading name?

Take the theory, for instance, which teaches that the Holy Ghost is not responsible for the words of Scripture,

but only for "the moral truths, the final purpose, the spiritual teaching"—a theory which, dealing with the supernatural, and needing the support of testimony, cannot adduce one testimony from the Scriptures in its behalf. Suppose, for a moment, that that theory is correct; would it then be accurate, truthful, to call the Scriptures "the *Word of God*?" On that theory the words are not only men's words—that, plenary inspiration grants, but *men's words only*—that, plenary inspiration denies. Would it be accurate, sincere, to speak of the volume as the *Word of God*? With that theory it would seem that the unerring lips might have spoken of the *doctrine of God*, the *truth of God*, but not the *Word of God*.

Brethren, we are wont to accord to the writer of the mere human volume the respect of believing that he means what he says and that he says what he means. To the phrase, oft and deliberately repeated, without one circumstance to caution us against its natural meaning, with many a circumstance to confirm that meaning, that meaning we feel bound to give. And when I find in the sacred volume the august name "Word of the Lord," "Word of God," oft and deliberately repeated—repeated not only by David and all the prophets, but by David's Lord, without one caution that it does not mean what is said, with many a circumstance confirming the meaning—I must accept the Old Testament as the *Word of God*.

We have still further testimony from Incarnate Deity, from what He said and what He did. He builds doctrines upon single words of the Old Testament as on an infallible foundation, and adds words which add significance to the act. Closing his public ministry with the affirmation of His two-fold nature, thus He proves His Deity: "David called Him Lord;" and adds, "David said *by* [or in] *the Holy Ghost*." Again, He argues from a single word in a Psalm, and adds, "the Scripture cannot be broken." He treats historic details and incidents of individual life just as

reverently as general truths and precepts, holding up the flood and the fire storm as Divine judgments for the past and warnings for the future; holding up the burial of the prophet Jonah beneath the surface of the great deep as a sign of His own burial beneath the surface of the earth. "He never in any single instance taught or said the least thing which implied that there was any book or any text contained in the Old Testament which was not the Word of God, and which had not Divine authority. He never said anything which implied that one part was the Word of God, in a lower sense, or that it had less authority than other parts."

He who accepts the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament will hardly need argument to convince him of the plenary inspiration of the New; and we cannot, of course, expect the same sort of testimony from the living and true Witness to the New Testament—the Book of the future—as He gave to the Book of the past. But He gave significant promises to His apostles; and promise from Him is as sure as testimony. He sends them forth to teach all the nations. He promises that the Holy Spirit shall teach them, the teachers, and bring all things to their remembrance. He promises them, on some occasions at least, the plenary inspiration of the Holy Ghost. "Go ye, therefore," He said to the Apostles, "teaching them"—all the nations—"to observe whatsoever I have commanded." And teaching includes the written as well as the spoken word—the epistle of St. Peter as well as the sermon of St. Peter. "Ye were taught, whether by *word* or by *epistle* of ours," said the Apostle to the Thessalonians. Why should not this commission enfold the command to *write* as well as the command to *preach it*; to add the Scripture of the Apostles to the Scripture of the Prophets? To these teachers He makes the promise that they shall be taught by the Holy Ghost—taught what they had not yet known and reminded of what they had known. "He shall teach you all things,"

and "He shall bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." He would thus reveal new truth, and bring to the accurate remembrance of St. John, for instance, the long discourse at Capernaum or that in the upper chamber. Then, by a threefold promise, He assures them of plenary inspiration on at least certain occasions of their ministry. "When they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." I think we may understand these latter words as teaching that when the Apostles defended themselves before kings, governors, rulers, synagogues, their words would be their own words, and yet the words of the Spirit of God, just as in the Old Testament "Moses spake," and yet "God spake." In the address of St. Peter in the fourth chapter of Acts of course this promise was fulfilled; and it is said, "then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them;" and yet the speech is Peter's in thought, order, language, throughout.

Here, perhaps, the testimony of the Lord Jesus to the inspiration of the then unwritten volume ceases. His Apostles must teach. The Holy Spirit would teach them all things—bring all things to their remembrance; and He promises that on special occasions, surely terrifying in advance to these unlearned and ignorant men, when they would appear before rulers and kings, He gives them the reassuring promise that on these dread occasions it would be given them by the Holy Spirit what they should speak. May we not add to the testimony the following inferences? May we not regard the promise for this special occasion only the disclosure of what was true on all occasions? If plenary inspiration would be given them for the spoken word, would it not be given for the written and abiding word? If given to their speeches before these little assemblies, "would they be left to all the hazard of human fallibility when instructing by letter their converts in

Corinth or Colosse, when writing to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, or to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus and Bythynia? ”

2. I have adduced first the testimony of our Blessed Lord, parting it from the testimony given elsewhere in the New Testament. This has been done in deference to the opinion which gives His words the supremacy over those of His Apostles. It may be that there are some who do not give due reverence to the servants who yet “will reverence the Son.” To His testimony there will be now added the testimony of the writers of the New Testament.

In the first place here, too, are testimonies that the Old Testament is both the word of man and the Word of God. St. Paul applied to the Jews at Rome the language of prophesy: “Well spake the *Holy Ghost* by Esaias the Prophet;” while St. John, quoting the same passage, affirms “these things said *Esaias*.” Again, the Divine-human origin is brought out in St. Matthew’s words, “spoken by the Lord through the prophet.” Again, the general truth is affirmed, of which these are special illustrations: “*Holy men* spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” *Men* spake, yet moved by the Holy Ghost.

In the second place, Apostles and Evangelists follow the Master’s example in repeatedly calling the Old Testament “the Scripture”—“the Word of God”; and one of them declares of the Word of God that it is “living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword.”

In the third place, in this same Epistle to the Hebrews, a passage in each of the three divisions of the Old Testament is ascribed to the Holy Ghost: “The Holy Ghost this signifying,” in a passage from the Law; “The Holy Ghost also is a witness to us,” in a passage from the Prophets; “Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith,” in the words of the Psalmist.

In the fourth place, when St. Paul declares “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,” no interpretation, in

view of all the circumstances, seems to be allowable which does not make "Scripture" coextensive, at least, with the Old Testament, and "given by inspiration of God" coextensive with Scripture. When St. Peter adds, "Holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," he declares through whom the inspired Scripture came—through men; from whom it came—from the Holy Ghost; how it came—because men were moved, borne along by the Holy Ghost.

In the fifth place, as to the inspiration of the New Testament, St. Peter in one passage speaks of certain of St. Paul's Epistles as "Scripture." Does he not by this act lift them to the same position of dignity and inspiration as "the other Scriptures?" If this is affirmed of some of the Epistles of St. Paul, why is it not true of the remainder of the volume?

In the sixth place, hear St. Paul affirm his plenary inspiration when speaking to the churches: "Which things, also, we speak, not in the *words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the *Holy Ghost* teaches." Does he not seem to be filling up and expounding the promise of Christ, "The Holy Ghost shall teach you?" To what extent? in what degree? we ask. St. Paul answers: "We speak in the *words* which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Again: "For this cause, also, thank we God without ceasing"—mark his fervent thankfulness—"because when ye received the *Word of God*, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which worketh effectually also in you." Are we to suppose that when at Thessalonica he *spoke* the Word of God, but now writing to Thessalonica he would have them suppose he was writing only the word of man?

III. We have listened to the Scripture; let us now listen to the Church interpreting the Scripture, for which she is "witness and keeper." In doing this, we but obey an

English canon of 1571, often imperfectly quoted: "They shall not teach anything from the pulpit to be religiously held and believed by the people but what is *agreeable* to the *doctrine of the Old and New Testament* and collected out of that very doctrine by the Catholic fathers and ancient bishops, and since the articles of religion are beyond doubt collected out of the Sacred Books of the Old and New Testaments and agree in all things with the heavenly doctrine contained in them," &c.

Now, having urged that plenary inspiration is "agreeable to the doctrine of the Old and New Testaments," the next step is to show very briefly that plenary inspiration is "collected out of that very doctrine by the Catholic fathers and ancient bishops." "Their ordinary style in quoting the Scriptures," says Lee, "was either to omit the writer's name, and say, 'Thus *spake the Holy Ghost*,'" or to supply the writer's name, thus, 'So spake the Spirit by Solomon,' by 'Isaiah,' by 'Paul;'⁹ hence the numerous epithets applied to every part of Scripture—the 'Scriptures of the Lord,' 'the Divine Scriptures,' 'Heavenly Letters,' 'Scripture given by inspiration of God.' 'Give diligent heed,' says St. Clement of Rome, 'to the true sayings of the Holy Ghost.'

The doctrine of inspiration was not defined, except incidentally, by Councils, because, with few exceptions, but one doctrine prevailed; but the words of the Nicene creed—"who spake by the prophets"—when we remember how comprehensive was then the term "prophet," and how high was then the doctrine of the Spirit's influence, may be regarded as an incidental assertion of plenary inspiration. "The Christian Fathers," declares Canon Westcott, "with one consent affirmed in the most complete manner the inspiration of the Scriptures, placing the writings of the New Testament on the same footing with those of the Old, as soon as it was possible that the Apostolic Records could rise with clear pre-eminence above the oral tradition of the Apostolic teachings."

Lee, in his work on inspiration, “ventures to think that an exact agreement exists between the doctrine of inspiration maintained in the present work and that which has been inculcated by the Church Catholic from the earliest times,” and “during the first fifteen centuries of the Church.” “The doctrine maintained in the present work” is “the Divine authority, the infallible certainty, and the entire truthfulness of every part of the Scriptures.” “The words of Scripture are no less Divine than the doctrines which they convey.”

“A great and noble doctrine,” Canon Westcott calls “this combination of the outward and the inward, God and man—the moving power and the living instrument.” Mark! he says “doctrine,” not theory—a doctrine taught by Scripture, and the Church interpreting Scripture. “It presupposes,” he adds, “that the same providential Power which gave the message, selected the messenger, and implies that the traits of individual character and the peculiarities of manner and purpose which are displayed in the composition and language of the sacred writings, are essential to the perfect exhibition of their meaning. It combines harmoniously the two terms in that relation of the finite to the Infinite which is involved in the very idea of revelation. It preserves absolute truth with perfect humanity, so that the nature of man is not neutralized if we may thus speak by the Divine agency; and the truth of God is not impaired, but exactly expressed in one of its several aspects by the individual mind. The letter becomes as perfect as the spirit; and it may well seem that the image of the incarnation is reflected in the Christian Scriptures, which, as I believe, exhibit the human and Divine in the highest form and in the most perfect union.”

IV. Of course objections are urged against this doctrine of plenary inspiration—objections which there is no space to meet in detail. Some object that the impress of each

writer's personality upon his style is incompatible with the constraining and controlling movement of the Spirit—forgetful that the same difficulty emerges in philosophy and religion; forgetful that in passages, confessedly the utterance of God, introduced with the words “thus saith the Lord,” the passage in Isaiah bears the impress of Isaiah, and in Jeremiah, the impress of Jeremiah. Some object to the contents of the Book, and, for instance, have been asking from the fourth century until now, whether inspiration guided the Apostle to send for “the cloak he left at Troas”; forgetful that the passage has comforted other aged and imperfectly-clad prisoners; forgetful that, as Bishop Butler says, “it is evidently supposable beforehand that we should fall into infinite follies and mistakes in pretending to judge otherwise than from experience and analogy concerning revelation.” Others allege apparent discrepancies in the Bible—with itself, with history, and science; forgetful that, as the Bible, with a noble self-confidence, commits itself to some main outlines and many details of the history and life of all the great and some of the petty nations of antiquity, the marvel is that the apparent discrepancies are so few; forgetful that this marvel finds its rational solution only in accepting plenary inspiration; that as knowledge advances, the discrepancies diminish; thus suggesting that those which remain are due not to lack of truth in the Bible, but to lack of knowledge in ourselves.

Again, as to objections arising from internal improbabilities, we must remember the dicta of Bishop Butler: first, “real internal improbabilities, which *rise even to moral certainty*, are *overcome* by the most ordinary testimony; and, secondly, we scarce know what are improbabilities as to the matter we are here considering,” viz., revelation.

In the next place, objections of a most serious character environ the theory of partial inspiration—the inspiration of the substance of doctrine and not of language.

Though needing testimony in its behalf as a supernatural

fact, it is absolutely without testimony from the Word of God, without testimony from the Church of God, except from comparatively few and chiefly recent writers.

Again, affirming without proof an intermittent action of the Spirit, and giving us no guide except the light of the Christian consciousness to discover when the infallible Spirit speaks and when only fallible man, it may be said to have obviated apparent objections against the Book by a real destruction of its authoritative value.

Again, affirming a supernatural conveyance of spiritual truth through the writers, it is open to the same objection which it alleges against plenary inspiration—the difficulty of reconciling Divine control and human freedom.

And it will be found that the great mass of the objections made to the Divine-human Book are just such as were vainly made against the Divine-human Person of our Lord. The best solvent of the difficulties will be found in the decisions of the first four General Councils. The best illustration of the Book with its two-fold nature will be found in the God-man. Have not men questioned, now the true Divinity of the Book, and now the perfectness of its human character? Have they not endeavored, now to make partition of the Divine and human elements, and and now to confound them? And is there not great light shed upon the supernatural Book by this luminous statement of Hooker, with reference to the supernatural Person?—"There are but four things which concur to make complete the whole state of our Lord Jesus Christ: His Deity, His manhood, the conjunction of both, and the distinction of the one from the other, being joined in one. Four principal heresies there are which have in these things withstood the truth: Arians, by bending themselves against the Deity of Christ; Apollinarians, by maiming and misinterpreting that which belongeth to His human nature; Nestorians, by rending Christ asunder and dividing Him into two persons; the followers of Eutyches, by confounding in His Person those natures which they should

distinguish. Against these there have been four most famous General Councils: The Council of Nice, to define against Arians; against Apollinarians, the Council of Constantinople; the Council of Ephesus, against Nestorians; against Eutychians, the Chalcedon Council. In four words—*truly, perfectly, indivisibly, distinctly*—the first applied to His being God, and the second to His being man, the third to His being of both One, and the fourth to His still continuing in that one Both—we may fully, by way of abridgment, comprise whatsoever antiquity hath at large handled, either in declaration of Christian belief or in refutation of the aforesaid heresies. Within the compass of which four heads I may truly affirm that all heresies which touch but the Person of Jesus Christ, whether they have risen in these later days or in any age heretofore, may be with great facility brought to confine themselves.”

May we not truly affirm that all the errors “which touch” the Divine-human Book “are here set forth?” May we not affirm that the truth as to the Book is taught by these Councils? It is truly Divine, perfectly human; the Divine and human elements are indivisible and yet distinct. It may be as impossible to trace the interlacing lines of the Divine and human in the Book as these Councils found it to adjust the boundaries of the natures in the Person of our Lord. But it is as easy in the one case as the other to see and feel and declare “how human and yet how Divine.” The God-man had His Tabor heights where He shone in glory and held an easy sceptre over winds and waves, and life and death; but none the less did He sit weary by the well of Samaria; none the less was He rocked to sleep by the billows of Gennesaret. The Book has its Tabor heights and its Holy Temple, where Deity sits enthroned; and the temple shakes at His presence, and angels cry, Holy! Holy! Holy! and unholy man cries woe is me, for I am undone! but none the less it has “household words” for the families of men. And as the Lord Jesus was perfectly human, yet without sin, so the Book is perfectly human, yet without error.

V. I shall touch on only a few of the arguments for the plenary inspiration of the Bible from internal evidence arising from the harmony of its phenomena with the doctrine; and touching on these I shall close.

If the men spake only when moved and as moved by the Holy Ghost, we have explained to us the reticence, "the silences, of Scripture," hardly less wonderful than its utterances. We understand why the unlearned St. John selected from among the many things which Jesus said and did only those which he wrote, that we "might believe that Jesus is the Christ—the Son of God," and wrote these things with an elevation of style and a perfection of plan which could never be learned in any school. If they spake only as moved by the Holy Ghost, in fulfillment of a Divine plan, then we can understand that though they spake "at sundry times, in divers manners," in divers places, parted from one another by centuries and almost by continents, that yet their many writings speak with one heart and one soul. First one, then another, felt the prophetic fire, obeyed the Heavenly impulse, wrote of things in Heaven and earth—past, present, or to come—recorded at times under Heavenly guidance the fruit of human toil. The Omnipresent Spirit moved, now on Moses in the wilderness, now on Isaiah by Siloa's brook, now on Ezekiel by Chebar's stream, and now on Israel's sweet Psalmist, wandering in the wilderness or by the water-brooks, and as He moved they spake. The Eternal Spirit moved on holy men between whom almost as many centuries slowly rolled their years and changes as the centuries which part us from the last inspired penman, and still all along the colossal time-scale, as He moved they spake. There is something unique and sublime in this two-fold authorship of the Book of the Ages—the Divine Author, who inspires all from Genesis to Revelation; the human authors, so transitory. The Divine Author lives on, the human authors die all along the march of Revelation. The Divine Author is "from everlasting to everlasting;" Moses, Isaiah, St. John are "swept away as with a flood." The one Divine authorship secures for the Book its majestic,

sublime, Divine unity; the various human authorship secures for it a variety as great as the generations and the homes in which the authors lived, the stations they held, the men they were. It gives us—

“ Job’s pathetic plaint and wailing cry,
Or rapt Isaiah’s wild seraphic fire.”

It gives us history, biography, argument, appeal; the parable and the proverb; the sententious wisdom of the wisest of monarchs, and the tenderest of idyls—poetry, epic, dramatic, lyric, elegiac. And yet how majestic the unity. It speaks through many men of many climes and generations, but it speaks with “one heart and one soul.” We may say of both Testaments what St. John says of his Gospel: “These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through His name.” The first pages of the Bible promise Him; the last glorify Him; all along they point to Him. Men moved by the Holy Ghost foretell Him, and with strained eye strive to pierce the future—“searching what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify.” One cries, “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!” and still waiting, he is gathered to his fathers. But the Spirit still lives and moves on men. And another speaks, “I shall see Him, but not now; I shall behold Him, but not nigh.” And still the Prophets fall, and still the Spirit lives, and “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy,” and of Prophets looking into the future with strained eye and outstretched arms, until the Seed of the Woman came, and Simeon took Him up in his arms, and blessed God, saying, “Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.” And salvation through Christ is still the theme, until, in the closing pages of the Apocalypse, Christ has restored the lost Paradise and banished from it sin and death, and amid its trees and rivers built the Holy City, the Heavenly Jerusalem; and the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.

For our journey to that City, let Thy Word, O God, be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path.

Gaylord 

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