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*ON THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.*

1. It has lately been asked what answer do we Catholics give to the allegation urged against us by men of the day, to the effect that we demand of our converts an assent to views and interpretations of Scripture which modern science and historical research have utterly discredited.

As this alleged obligation is confidently maintained against us, and with an array of instances in support of it, I think it should be either denied or defended; and the best mode perhaps of doing whether the one or the other, will be, instead of merely dealing with the particular instances adduced in proof, to state what we really do hold as regards Holy Scripture, and what a Catholic is bound to believe. This I propose now to do, and in doing it, I beg it to be understood that my statements are simply my own, and involve no responsibility of any one besides myself.

2. A recent work of M. Renan's is one of those publications which have suggested or occasioned this adverse criticism upon our intellectual position. That author's abandonment of Catholicism seems, according to a late article in a journal of high reputation, in no small measure to have come about by his study of the Biblical text, especially that of the Old Testament. 'He explains,' says the article, 'that the Roman Catholic Church admits no compromise on questions of Biblical criticism and history' . . . though 'the Book of Judith is an historical impossibility. Hence the undoubted fact that the Roman Catholic Church . . . insists on its members believing . . . a great deal more in pure criticism and pure history than the strictest Protestants exact from their pupils or flocks.' Should, then, a doubt-

ing Anglican contemplate becoming Catholic by way of attaining intellectual peace, 'if his doubts turn on history and criticism, he will find the little finger of the Catholic Church thicker than the loins of Protestantism.'

3. The serious question, then, which this article calls on us to consider, is whether it is 'an undoubted fact,' as therein stated, that the Catholic Church does 'insist' on her children's acceptance of certain Scripture informations on matters of fact in defiance of criticism and history. And my first duty on setting out is to determine the meaning of that vague word 'insists,' which I shall use in the only sense in which a Catholic can consent to use it.

I allow, then, that the Church, certainly, does 'insist,' when she speaks dogmatically, nay or rather she more than insists, she obliges; she obliges us to an internal assent to that which she proposes to us. So far I admit, or rather maintain. And I admit that she obliges us in a most forcible and effective manner, that is, by the penalty of forfeiting communion with her, if we refuse our internal assent to her word. We cannot be real Catholics, if we do not from our heart accept the matters which she puts forward as divine and true. This is plain.

4. Next, to what does the Church oblige us? and what is her warrant for doing so? I answer, The matters which she can oblige us to accept with an internal assent are the matters contained in that Revelation of Truth, written or unwritten, which came to the world from our Lord and His Apostles; and this claim on our faith in her decisions as to the matter of that Revelation rests on her being the divinely appointed representative of the Apostles and the expounder of their words; so that whatever she categorically delivers about their formal acts or their writings or their teaching, is an Apostolic deliverance. I repeat, the only sense in which the Church 'insists' on any statement, Biblical or other, the only reason of her so insisting, is that that statement is part of the original Revelation, and therefore must be unconditionally accepted,—else, that Revelation is not, as a revelation, accepted at all.

The question then which I have to answer is, *What*, in matter of fact, has the Church (or the Pope), as the representative of God, said about Scripture, which, as being Apostolic, unerring Truth, is obligatory on our faith, that is, is *de fide*?

5. Many truths may be predicated about Scripture and its contents which are not obligatory on our faith, viz., such as are private conclusions from premisses, or are the *dicta* of theologians. Such as about the author of the Book of Job, or the dates of St. Paul's Epistles. These are not obligatory upon us, because they are not the subjects of *ex cathedrâ* utterances of the Church. Opinions of this sort may be true or not true, and lie open for acceptance or rejection, since no divine utterance has ever been granted to us about them, or

is likely to be granted. We are not bound to believe what St. Jerome said or inferred about Scripture ; nor what St. Augustine, or St. Thomas, or Cardinal Caietan or Fr. Perrone has said ; but what the Church has enunciated, what the Councils, what the Pope, has determined. We are not bound to accept with an absolute faith what is not a dogma, or the equivalent of dogma (*vide infra*, section 17), what is not *de fide* ; such judgments, however high their authority, we may without loss of communion doubt, we may refuse to accept. This is what we must especially bear in mind, when we handle such objections as M. Renan's. We must not confuse what is indisputable as well as true, with what may indeed be true, yet is disputable.

6. I must make one concession to him. In certain cases there may be a duty of silence, when there is no obligation of belief. Here no question of faith comes in. We will suppose that a novel opinion about Scripture or its contents is well grounded, and a received opinion open to doubt, in a case in which the Church has hitherto decided nothing, so that a new question needs a new answer : here, to profess the new opinion may be abstractedly permissible, but is not always permissible in practice. The novelty may be so startling as to require a full certainty that it is true ; it may be so strange as to raise the question whether it will not unsettle ill-educated minds, that is, though the statement is not an offence against faith, still it may be an offence against charity. It need not be heretical, yet at a particular time or place it may be so contrary to the prevalent opinion in the Catholic body, as in Galileo's case, that zeal for the supremacy of the Divine Word, deference to existing authorities, charity towards the weak and ignorant, and distrust of self, should keep a man from being impetuous or careless in circulating what nevertheless he holds to be true, and what, if indeed asked about, he cannot deny. The household of God has claims upon our tenderness in such matters, which criticism and history have not.

7. For myself, I have no call or wish at all to write in behalf of such persons as think it a love of truth to have no 'love of the brethren.' I am indeed desirous of investigating for its own sake the limit of free thought consistently with the claims upon us of Holy Scripture ; still my especial interest in the inquiry is from my desire to assist those religious sons of the Church who are engaged in biblical criticism and its attendant studies, and have a conscientious fear of transgressing the rule of faith ; men who wish to ascertain how far their religion puts them under obligations and restrictions in their reasonings and inferences on such subjects, what conclusions may and what may not be held without interfering with that internal assent which they are bound to give, if they would be Catholics, to the written Word of God. I do but contemplate the inward peace of religious Catholics in their own persons. Of course those who begin without belief in the religious aspect of the universe, are not

likely to be brought to such belief by studying it merely on its secular side.

8. Now then, the main question before us being what it is that a Catholic is free to hold about Scripture in general, or about its separate portions or its statements, without compromising his firm inward assent to the dogmas of the Church, that is, to the *de fide* enunciations of Pope and Councils, we have first of all to inquire how many and what those dogmas are.

I answer that there are two such dogmas; one relates to the authority of Scripture, the other to its interpretation. As to the authority of Scripture, we hold it to be, in all matters of faith and morals, divinely inspired throughout; as to its interpretation, we hold that the Church is, in faith and morals, the one infallible expounder of that inspired text.

I begin with the question of its inspiration.

9. The books which constitute the canon of Scripture, or the Canonical books, are enumerated by the Tridentine Council, as we find them in the first page of our Catholic Bibles, and are in that Ecumenical Council's decree spoken of by implication as the work of inspired men. The Vatican Council speaks more distinctly, saying that the entire books with all their parts, are divinely inspired, and adding an anathema upon impugners of this its definition.

There is another dogmatic phrase used by the Councils of Florence and Trent to denote the inspiration of Scripture, viz., '*Deus unus et idem* utriusque Testamenti Auctor.' Since this left room for holding that by the word '*Testamentum*' was meant '*Dispensation*,' as it seems to have meant in former Councils from the date of Irenæus, and as St. Paul uses the word, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, the Vatican Council has expressly defined that the concrete *libri* themselves of the Old and New Testament '*Deum habent Auctorem*.'

10. There is a further question, which is still left in some ambiguity, the meaning of the word '*Auctor*.' '*Auctor*' is not identical with the English word '*Author*.' Allowing that there are instances to be found in classical Latin in which '*auctores*' may be translated '*authors*,' instances in which it even seems to mean '*writers*,' it more naturally means '*authorities*.' Its proper sense is '*originator*,' '*inventor*,' '*founder*,' '*primary cause*;' (thus St. Paul speaks of our Lord as '*Auctor salutis*,' '*Auctor fidei*;' ) on the other hand, that it was the inspired penmen who were the '*writers*' of their works seems asserted by St. John and St. Luke and, I may say, in every paragraph of St. Paul's Epistles. In St. John we read '*This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and has written these things*,' and St. Luke says '*I have thought it good to write to thee*' &c. However, if any one prefers to construe '*auctor*' as '*author*,' or writer, let it be so—only, then there will be two writers of the Scriptures, the divine and the human.

11. And now comes the important question, in what respect are the Canonical books inspired? It cannot be in every respect, unless we are bound *de fide* to believe that ‘terra in æternum stat,’ and that heaven is above us, and that there are no antipodes. And it seems unworthy of Divine Greatness, that the Almighty should in His revelation of Himself to us undertake mere secular duties, and assume the office of a narrator, as such, or an historian, or geographer, except so far as the secular matters bear directly upon the revealed truth. The Councils of Trent and the Vatican fulfil this anticipation; they tell us distinctly the object and the promise of Scripture inspiration. They specify ‘faith and moral conduct’ as the drift of that teaching which has the guarantee of inspiration. What we need and what is given us is not how to educate ourselves for this life; we have abundant natural gifts for human society, and for the advantages which it secures; but our great want is how to demean ourselves in thought and deed towards our Maker, and how to gain reliable information on this urgent necessity.

12. Accordingly four times does the Tridentine Council insist upon ‘faith and morality’ as the scope of inspired teaching. It declares that the ‘Gospel’ is ‘the Fount of all *saving truth* and all *instruction in morals*,’ that in the written books and in the unwritten traditions, the Holy Spirit dictating, this *truth* and *instruction* are contained. Then it speaks of the books and traditions, ‘relating whether to *faith* or to *morals*,’ and afterwards of ‘the confirmation of *dogmas* and establishment of *morals*.’ Lastly, it warns the Christian people, ‘in matters of *faith* and *morals*,’ against distorting Scripture into a sense of their own.

In like manner the Vatican Council pronounces that Supernatural Revelation consists ‘*in rebus divinis*,’ and is contained ‘in libris scriptis et sine scripto traditionibus;’ and it also speaks of ‘petulantia ingenia’ advancing wrong interpretations of Scripture ‘in rebus *fidei* et *morum* ad ædificationem *doctrinæ* Christianæ pertinentium.’

13. But while the Councils, as has been shown, lay down so emphatically the inspiration of Scripture in respect to ‘faith and morals,’ it is remarkable that they do not say a word directly as to its inspiration in matters of fact. Yet are we therefore to conclude that the record of facts in Scripture does not come under the guarantee of its inspiration? we are not so to conclude, and for this plain reason:—the sacred narrative, carried on through so many ages, what is it but the very matter for our faith and rule of our obedience? what but that narrative itself is the supernatural teaching, in order to which inspiration is given? What is the whole history, traced out in Scripture from Genesis to Esdras and thence on to the end of the Acts of the Apostles, but a manifestation of Divine Providence, on the one hand interpretative, on a large scale and with

analogical applications, of universal history, and on the other preparatory, typical and predictive, of the Evangelical Dispensation? Its pages breathe of providence and grace, of our Lord, and of His work and teaching, from beginning to end. It views facts in those relations in which neither ancients, such as the Greek and Latin classical historians, nor moderns, such as Niebuhr, Grote, Ewald, or Michelet, can view them. In this point of view it has God for its author, even though the finger of God traced no words but the Decalogue. Such is the claim of Bible history in its substantial fulness to be accepted *de fide* as true. In this point of view, Scripture is inspired, not only in faith and morals, but in all its parts which bear on faith, including matters of fact.

14. But what has been said leads to another serious question. It is easy to imagine a Code of Laws inspired, or a formal prophecy, or a Hymn, or a Creed, or a collection of Proverbs. Such works may be short, precise, and homogeneous; but inspiration on the one hand, and on the other a document, multiform and copious in its contents, as the Bible is, are at first sight incompatible ideas, and destructive of each other. How are we practically to combine the indubitable fact of a divine superintendence with the indubitable fact of a collection of such various writings?

15. Surely then if the revelations and lessons in Scripture are addressed to us personally and practically, the presence among us of a formal judge and standing expositor of its words, is imperative. It is antecedently unreasonable to suppose that a book so complex, so unsystematic, in parts so obscure, the outcome of so many minds, times, and places, should be given us from above without the safeguard of some authority; as if it could possibly, from the nature of the case, interpret itself. Its inspiration does but guarantee its truth, not its interpretation. How are private readers satisfactorily to distinguish what is didactic and what is historical, what is fact and what is vision, what is allegorical and what is literal, what is idiomatic and what is grammatical, what is enunciated formally and what occurs *obiter*, what is only of temporary and what is of lasting obligation? Such is our natural anticipation, and it is only too exactly justified in the events of the last three centuries, in the many countries where private judgment on the text of Scripture has prevailed. The gift of inspiration requires as its complement the gift of infallibility.

Where then is this gift lodged, which is so necessary for the due use of the written word of God? Thus we are introduced to the second dogma in respect to Holy Scripture taught by the Catholic religion. The first is that Scripture is inspired, the second that the Church is the infallible interpreter of that inspiration.

16. That the Church, and therefore the Pope, is that Interpreter is defined in the following words:—



First by the Council of Trent: ‘Nemo suâ prudentiâ innixus, in rebus fidei et morum ad ædificationem doctrinæ Christianæ pertinentium, Sacram Scripturam ad suos sensus contorquens, contra eum sensum quem tenuit et tenet Sancta Mater Ecclesia, cujus est judicare de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum Sanctarum, aut etiam contra unanimem consensum Patrum, ipsam Scripturam Sacram interpretari audeat.’

Secondly by the Council of the Vatican: ‘Nos, idem Decretum [Tridentinum] renovantes, hanc illius mentem esse declaramus, ut in rebus fidei et morum ad ædificationem doctrinæ Christianæ pertinentium, is pro vero sensu Sacræ Scripturæ habendus sit, quem tenuit et tenet Sancta Mater Ecclesia, cujus est judicare de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum Sanctarum,’ &c.

17. Since then there is in the Church an authority, divinely appointed and plenary, for judgment and for appeal in questions of Scripture interpretation, in matters of faith and morals, therefore, by the very force of the words, there is one such authority, and only one.

Again, it follows hence, that, when the legitimate authority has spoken, to resist its interpretation is a sin against the faith and an act of heresy.

And from this again it follows, that, till the Infallible Authority formally interprets a passage of Scripture, there is nothing heretical in advocating a contrary interpretation, provided of course there is nothing in the act intrinsically inconsistent with the faith, or the *pietas fidei*, nothing of contempt or rebellion, nothing temerarious, nothing offensive or scandalous, in the manner of acting or the circumstances of the case. I repeat, I am all along inquiring what Scripture, by reason of its literal text, obliges us to believe. An original view about Scripture or its parts may be as little contrary to the mind of the Church about it, as it need be an offence against its inspiration.

The proviso, however, or condition, which I have just made, must carefully be kept in mind. Doubtless, a certain interpretation of a doctrinal text may be so strongly supported by the Fathers, so continuous and universal, and so cognate and connatural with the Church’s teaching, that it is virtually or practically as dogmatic as if it were a formal judgment delivered on appeal by the Holy See, and cannot be disputed except as the Church or Holy See opens its wording or its conditions. Hence the Vatican Council says, ‘Fide divinâ et Catholicâ ea omnia credenda sunt, quæ in verbo Dei scripto vel tradito continentur, vel ab Ecclesiâ sive solemnî judicio, sive *ordinario et universali magisterio*, tanquam divinitus revelata, credenda proponuntur.’ And I repeat, that, though the Fathers were not inspired, yet their united testimony is of supreme authority; at the same time, since no Canon or List has been determined of the

Fathers, the practical rule of duty is obedience to the voice of the Church.

18. Such then is the answer which I make to the main question which has led to my writing. I asked what obligation of duty lay upon the Catholic scholar or man of science as regards his critical treatment of the text and the matter of Holy Scripture. And now I say that it is his duty, first, never to forget that what he is handling is the Word of God, which, by reason of the difficulty of always drawing the line between what is human and what is divine, cannot be put on the level of other books, as it is now the fashion to do, but has the nature of a Sacrament, which is outward and inward, and a channel of supernatural grace; and secondly, that, in what he writes upon it or its separate books, he is bound to submit himself internally, and to profess to submit himself, in all that relates to faith and morals, to the definite teaching of Holy Church.

This being laid down, let me go on to consider some of the critical distinctions and conclusions which are consistent with a faithful observance of these obligations.

19. Are the books or are the writers inspired? I answer, Both. The Council of Trent says the writers ('*ab ipsis Apostolis, Spiritu Sancto dictante*'); the Vatican says the books ('*si quis libros integros &c. divinitus inspiratos esse negaverit, anathema sit*'). Of course the Vatican decision is *de fide*, but it cannot annul the Tridentine. Both decrees are dogmatic truths. The Tridentine teaches us that the Divine Inspirer, inasmuch as He acted on the writer, acted, not immediately on the books themselves, but through the men who wrote them. The books are inspired, because the writers were inspired to write them. They are not inspired books, unless they came from inspired men.

There is one instance in Scripture of Divine Inspiration without a human medium; the Decalogue was written by the very finger of God. He wrote the law upon the stone tables Himself. It has been thought that the Urim and Thummim was another instance of the immediate inspiration of a material substance; but anyhow such instances are exceptional; certainly, as regards Scripture, which alone concerns us here, there always have been two minds in the process of inspiration, a Divine Auctor, and a human Scriptor; and various important consequences follow from this appointment.

20. If there be at once a divine and a human mind co-operating in the formation of the sacred text, it is not surprising if there often be a double sense in that text, and, with obvious exceptions, never certain that there is not.

Thus Sara had her human and literal meaning in her words, 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son,' &c.; but we know from St. Paul that those words were inspired by the Holy Ghost to convey a spiritual meaning. Abraham, too, on the Mount, when his son asked

him whence was to come the victim for the sacrifice which his father was about to offer, answered 'God will provide;' and he showed his own sense of his words afterwards, when he took the ram which was caught in the briers, and offered it as a holocaust. Yet those words were a solemn prophecy.

And is it extravagant to say, that, even in the case of men who have no pretension to be prophets or servants of God, He may by their means give us great maxims and lessons, which the speakers little thought they were delivering? as in the case of the Architrachus in the marriage feast, who spoke of the bridegroom as having 'kept the good wine until now;' words which it was needless for St. John to record, unless they had a mystical meaning.

Such instances raise the question whether the Scripture saints and prophets always understood the higher and divine sense of their words. As to Abraham, this will be answered in the affirmative; but I do not see reason for thinking that Sara was equally favoured. Nor is her case solitary; Caiphas, as high priest, spoke a divine truth by virtue of his office, little thinking of it, when he said that 'one man must die for the people;' and St. Peter at Joppa at first did not see beyond a literal sense in his vision, though he knew that there was a higher sense, which in God's good time would be revealed to him.

And hence there is no difficulty in supposing that the Prophet Osee, though inspired, only knew his own literal sense of the words which he transmitted to posterity, 'I have called my Son out of Egypt,' the further prophetic meaning of them being declared by St. Matthew in his gospel. And such a divine sense would be both concurrent with and confirmed by that antecedent belief which prevailed among the Jews in St. Matthew's time, that their sacred books were in great measure typical, with an evangelical bearing, though as yet they might not know what those books contained in prospect.

21. Nor is it *de fide* (for that alone with a view to Catholic Biblicists I am considering) that inspired men, at the time when they speak from inspiration, should always know that the Divine Spirit is visiting them.

The Psalms are inspired; but, when David, in the outpouring of his deep contrition, disburdened himself before his God in the words of the *Miserere*, could he, possibly, while uttering them, have been directly conscious that every word he uttered was not simply his, but another's? Did he not think that he was personally asking forgiveness and spiritual help?

Doubt again seems incompatible with a consciousness of being inspired. But Father Patrizi, while reconciling two Evangelists in a passage of their narratives, says, if I understand him rightly (ii. p. 405), that though we admit that there were some things about which inspired writers doubted, this does not imply that inspiration allowed

them to state what is doubtful as certain, but only it did not hinder them from stating things with a doubt on their minds about them ; but how can the All-knowing Spirit doubt? or how can an inspired man doubt, if he is conscious of his inspiration?

And again, how can a man whose hand is guided by the Holy Spirit, and who knows it, make apologies for his style of writing, as if deficient in literary exactness and finish? If then the writer of Ecclesiasticus, at the very time that he wrote his Prologue, was not only inspired but conscious of his inspiration, how could he have entreated his readers to 'come with benevolence,' and to make excuse for his 'coming short in the composition of words'? Surely, if at the very time he wrote he had known it, he would, like other inspired men, have said, 'Thus saith the Lord,' or what was equivalent to it.

The same remark applies to the writer of the second book of Machabees, who ends his narrative by saying, 'If I have done well, it is what I desired, but if not so perfectly, it must be pardoned me.' What a contrast to St. Paul, who, speaking of his inspiration (1 Cor. vii. 40) and of his 'weakness and fear' (*ibid.* ii. 4), does so in order to *boast* that his 'speech was, not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the Spirit and of power.' The historian of the Machabees would have surely adopted a like tone of 'glorying,' had he had at the time a like consciousness of his divine gift.

22. Again, it follows from there being two agencies, divine grace and human intelligence, co-operating in the production of the Scriptures, that, whereas, if they were written, as in the Decalogue, by the immediate finger of God, every word of them must be His and His only, on the contrary, if they are man's writing, informed and quickened by the presence of the Holy Ghost, they admit, should it so happen, of being composed of outlying materials, which have passed through the minds and from the fingers of inspired penmen, and are known to be inspired on the ground that those who were the immediate editors, as they may be called, were inspired.

For an example of this we are supplied by the writer of the second book of Machabees, to which reference has already been made. 'All such things,' says the writer, 'as have been comprised in five books by Jason of Cyrene, we have attempted to abridge in one book.' Here we have the human aspect of an inspired work. Jason need not, the writer of the second book of Machabees must, have been inspired.

Again ; St. Luke's gospel is inspired, as having gone through and come forth from an inspired mind ; but the extrinsic sources of his narrative were not necessarily all inspired any more than was Jason of Cyrene ; yet such sources there were, for, in contrast with the testimony of the actual eye-witnesses of the events which he records, he says of himself that he wrote after a careful inquiry, 'according as

they delivered them to us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word;’ as to himself, he had but ‘diligently attained to all things from the beginning.’ Here it was not the original statements, but his edition of them, which needed to be inspired.

23. Hence we have no reason to be surprised, nor is it against the faith to hold, that a canonical book may be composed, not only from, but even of, pre-existing documents, it being always borne in mind, as a necessary condition, that an inspired mind has exercised a supreme and an ultimate judgment on the work, determining what was to be selected and embodied in it, in order to its truth in all ‘matters of faith and morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine,’ and its unadulterated truth.

Thus Moses may have incorporated in his manuscript as much from foreign documents as is commonly maintained by the critical school; yet the existing Pentateuch, with the miracles which it contains, may still (from that personal inspiration which belongs to a prophet) have flowed from his mind and hand on to his composition. He new-made and authenticated what till then was no matter of faith.

This being considered, it follows that a book may be, and may be accepted as, inspired, though not a word of it is an original document. Such is almost the case with the first book of Esdras. A learned writer in a publication of the day<sup>1</sup> says: ‘It consists of the contemporary historical journals, kept from time to time by the prophets or other authorised persons, who were eye-witnesses for the most part of what they record, and whose several narratives were afterwards strung together, and either abridged or added to, as the case required, by a later hand, of course an inspired hand.’

And in like manner the Chaldee and Greek portions of the book of Daniel, even though not written by Daniel, may be, and we believe are, written by penmen inspired in matters of faith and morals; and so much, and nothing beyond, does the Church ‘oblige’ us to believe.

24. I have said that the Chaldee, as well as the Hebrew portion of Daniel, requires, in order to its inspiration, not that it should be Daniel’s writing, but that its writer, whoever he was, should be inspired. This leads me to the question whether inspiration requires and implies that the book inspired should in its form and matter be homogeneous, and all its parts belong to each other. Certainly not. The Book of Psalms is the obvious instance destructive of any such idea. What it really requires is an inspired Editor;<sup>2</sup> that is, an

<sup>1</sup> Smith’s *Dictionary*.

<sup>2</sup> This representation must not be confused with either of the two views of canonicity which are pronounced insufficient by the Vatican Council—viz. 1, that in order to be sacred and canonical, it is enough for a book to be a work of mere

inspired mind, authoritative in faith and morals, from whose fingers the sacred text passed. I believe it is allowed generally, that at the date of the captivity and under the persecution of Antiochus, the books of Scripture and the sacred text suffered much loss and injury. Originally the Psalms seem to have consisted of five books; of which, only a portion, perhaps the first and second, were David's. That arrangement is now broken up, and the Council of Trent was so impressed with the difficulty of their authorship, that, in its formal decree respecting the Canon, instead of calling the collection 'David's Psalms,' as was usual, they called it the '*Psalterium Davidicum*,' thereby meaning to imply, that, although canonical and inspired and in spiritual fellowship and relationship with those of 'the choice Psalmist of Israel,' the whole collection is not therefore necessarily the writing of David.

And as the name of David, though not really applicable to every Psalm, nevertheless protected and sanctioned them all, so the appendices which conclude the book of Daniel, Susanna and Bel, though not belonging to the main history, come under the shadow of that Divine Presence, which primarily rests on what goes before.

And so again, whether or not the last verses of St. Mark's, and two portions of St. John's Gospel, belong to those Evangelists respectively, matters not as regards their inspiration; for the Church has recognised them as portions of that sacred narrative which precedes or embraces them.

Nor does it matter, whether one or two Isaiahs wrote the book which bears that Prophet's name; the Church, without settling this point, pronounces it inspired in respect of faith and morals, both Isaiahs being inspired; and, if this be assured to us, all other questions are irrelevant and unnecessary.

Nor do the Councils forbid our holding that there are interpolations or additions in the sacred text, say, the last chapter of the Pentateuch, provided they are held to come from an inspired penman, such as Esdras, and are thereby authoritative in faith and morals.

25. From what has been last said it follows, that the titles of the Canonical books, and their ascription to definite authors, either do not come under their inspiration, or need not be accepted literally.

For instance: the Epistle to the Hebrews is said in our Bibles to be the writing of St. Paul, and so virtually it is, and to deny that it is so in any sense might be temerarious; but its authorship is not a matter of faith as its inspiration is, but an acceptance of received opinion, and because to no other writer can it be so well assigned.

Again, the 89th Psalm has for its title 'A Prayer of Moses,' yet human industry, provided it be afterwards approved by the authority of the Church; and 2, that it is enough if it contains revealed teaching without error. Neither of these views supposes the presence of inspiration, whether in the writer or the writing; what is contemplated above is an inspired writer in the exercise of his inspiration, and a work inspired from first to last under the action of that inspiration.

that has not hindered a succession of Catholic writers, from Athanasius to Bellarmine, from denying it to be his.

Again, the Book of Wisdom professes (*e.g.*, chs. vii. and ix.) to be written by Solomon; yet our Bibles say, 'It is written in the *person* of Solomon,' and 'it is uncertain who was the writer;' and St. Augustine, whose authority had so much influence in the settlement of the Canon, speaking of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, says: 'The two books by reason of a certain similarity of style are usually called Solomon's, though the more learned have no doubt they do not belong to him.' (Martin. *Pref. to Wisdom and Eccl.*; Aug. *Opp.* t. iii. p. 733.)

If these instances hold, they are precedents for saying that it is no sin against the faith (for of such I have all along been speaking), nor indeed, if done conscientiously and on reasonable grounds, any sin, to hold that Ecclesiastes is not the writing of Solomon, in spite of its opening with a profession of being his; and that first, because that profession is a heading, not a portion of the book; secondly, because, even though it be part of the book, a like profession is made in the Book of Wisdom, without its being a proof that 'Wisdom' is Solomon's; and thirdly, because such a profession may well be considered a *prosopopœia* not so difficult to understand as that of the Angel Raphael, when he called himself 'the Son of the great Ananias.'

On this subject Melchior Canus says: 'It does not much matter to the Catholic Faith, that a book was written by this or that writer, so long as the Spirit of God is believed to be the author of it; which Gregory delivers and explains, in his Preface to Job, "It matters not with what pen the King has written his letter, if it be true that He has written it."' (Loc. Th. p. 44.)

I say then of the Book of Ecclesiastes, its authorship is one of those questions which still lie in the hands of the Church. If the Church formally declared that it was written by Solomon, I consider that, in accordance with its heading (and, as implied in what follows, as in 'Wisdom,') we should be bound, recollecting that she has the gift of judging '*de vero sensu et interpretatione Scripturarum Sanctarum,*' to accept such a decree as a matter of faith; and in like manner, in spite of its heading, we should be bound to accept a contrary decree, if made to the effect that the book was not Solomon's. At present as the Church (or Pope) has not pronounced on one side or on the other, I conceive that, till a decision comes from Rome, either opinion is open to the Catholic without any impeachment of his faith.

26. And here I am led on to inquire whether *obiter dicta* are conceivable in an inspired document. We know that they are held to exist and even required in treating of the dogmatic utterances of Popes, but are they compatible with inspiration? The common

opinion is that they are not. Professor Lamy thus writes about them, in the form of an objection: 'Many minute matters occur in the sacred writers which have regard only to human feebleness and the natural necessities of life, and by no means require inspiration, since they can otherwise be perfectly well known, and seem scarcely worthy of the Holy Spirit, as for instance what is said of the dog of Tobias, St. Paul's *penula*, and the salutations at the end of the Epistles.' Neither he nor Fr. Patrizi allow of these exceptions; but Fr. Patrizi, as Lamy quotes him, 'damnare non audet eos qui hæc tenerent,' viz., exceptions, and he himself, by keeping silence, seems unable to condemn them either.

By *obiter dicta* in Scripture I also mean such statements as we find in the Book of Judith, that Nabuchodonosor was king of Nineve. Now it is in favour of there being such unauthoritative *obiter dicta*, that unlike those which occur in dogmatic utterances of Popes and Councils, they are, in Scripture, not doctrinal, but mere unimportant statements of fact; whereas those of Popes and Councils may relate to faith and morals, and are said to be uttered *obiter*, because they are not contained within the scope of the formal definition, and imply no intention of binding the consciences of the faithful. There does not then seem any serious difficulty in admitting their existence in Scripture. Let it be observed, its miracles are doctrinal facts, and in no sense of the phrase can be considered *obiter dicta*.

27. It may be questioned, too, whether the absence of chronological sequence might not be represented as an infringement of plenary inspiration, more serious than the *obiter dicta* of which I have been speaking. Yet St. Matthew is admitted by approved commentators to be unsolicitous as to order of time. So says Fr. Patrizi (*De Evang.* lib. ii. p. 1), viz., 'Matthæum de observando temporis ordine minime sollicitum esse.' He gives instances, and then repeats 'Matthew did not observe order of time.' If such absence of order is compatible with inspiration in St. Matthew, as it is, it might be consistent with inspiration in parts of the Old Testament, supposing they are open to re-arrangement in chronology. Does not this teach us to fall back upon the decision of the Councils that 'faith and morals pertaining to the edification of Christian doctrine' are the scope, the true scope, of inspiration? And is not the Holy See the judge given us for determining what is for edification and what is not?

There is another practical exception to the ideal continuity of Scripture inspiration in mere matters of fact, and that is the multitude of various manuscript readings which surround the sacred text. Unless we have the text as inspired men wrote it, we have not the divine gift in its fulness, and as far as we have no certainty which out of many is the true reading, so far, wherever the sense is affected, we are in the same difficulty as may be the consequence of an *obiter*



*dictum*. Yet, in spite of this danger, even cautious theologians do not hesitate to apply the gratuitous hypothesis of errors in transcription as a means of accounting for such statements of fact as they feel to need an explanation. Thus Fr. Patrizi, not favouring the order of our Lord's three temptations in the desert, as given by St. Luke, attributes it to the mistake of the transcribers. 'I have no doubt at all,' he says, 'that it is to be attributed, not to Luke himself, but to his transcribers' (*ibid.* p. 5); and again, he says that it is owing 'vicio librariorum' (p. 394). If I recollect rightly, Melchior Canus has recourse to the 'fault of transcribers' also. Indeed it is commonly urged in controversy (*vide* Lamy, i. p. 31).

28. I do not here go on to treat of the special instance urged against us by M. Renan, drawn from the Book of Judith, because I have wished to lay down principles, and next because his charge can neither be proved nor refuted just now, while the strange discoveries are in progress about Assyrian and Persian history by means of the cuneiform inscriptions. When the need comes, the Church, or the Holy See, will interpret the sacred book for us.

I conclude by reminding the reader that in these remarks I have been concerned only with the question—what have Catholics to hold and profess *de fide* about Scripture? that is, what it is the Church 'insists' on their holding; and next, by unreservedly submitting what I have written to the judgment of the Holy See, being more desirous that the question should be satisfactorily answered, than that my own answer should prove to be in every respect the right one.

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