

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Bibliotheca Sacra* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bib-sacra_01.php

Oxford Judaziers'") idolatries, the doctrine of the person of Christ; not His Church, not His sacraments, not His teaching, not even the truths about Him, nor the virtues he most enforces, but Himself; that only object which bars fanaticism and idolatry on the one hand, and gives life and power to all morality on the other."¹

ARTICLE II.

LEE ON INSPIRATION.²

BY PROF. POND, BANGOR, ME.

We welcome the appearance of the work before us, and are glad to see so beautiful a reprint of it from the press of the Messrs. Carter of New York. Not that it is everything we could desire, in a work for general circulation. There is too much parade of learning about it; too many learned mottoes, appendixes, and notes. Then it discusses a variety of topics, more or less connected with the subject in hand, though not directly upon it. From both these causes, the work is too large, commending itself rather to Biblical scholars, than to the generality of Christian readers.

Still, we are glad to see it, and that for more reasons than one. It treats of a vitally important subject, — "the Inspiration of the Holy Scripture;" and amidst all the laxity on the one hand, and extravagance on the other, the denials and avowals, the doubts and the dogmatism, which prevail at this day, it takes substantially the right ground, and

¹ Life and Correspondence, p. 282.

² The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, its Nature and Proof. Eight Discourses preached before the University of Dublin. By William Lee, M. A., Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College. 1857.

maintains it; the ground which has been held by evangelical teachers in this country for a long course of years.

Mr. Lee approaches the Bible just as the well-instructed philosopher approaches nature, to learn the truth, *the facts*, respecting it, and to draw such conclusions as facts justify.

Coming to the Bible in this way, we learn, first of all, that it was the work both of *God* and of *men*. That it was the work of men, — setting aside altogether the historic testimony, — of men, too, in the exercise of their own faculties and powers, — is evident from its entire contents. It bears the impress of human wit and wisdom, of human thought, emotion, feeling, and is throughout a human production.

Yet it could not have been the work of unaided man, — of man alone. This is evident from many considerations. Man, in the unassisted exercise of his own faculties, could no more have made the Bible, than he could have made the world. We most commonly found the argument *à posteriori*, for the existence of God, upon the world's existence; but it is no less conclusive, when founded on the existence of the Bible. Here is the world; and here is the Bible. Both are in existence, and are to be accounted for. And we can no more account for the one, than the other, without bringing in the wisdom and the power of God.

And as the Bible is the work both of God and man, as to the substance, the subject-matter of it, so also it is as to its dress, its style, its language, its utterance. That the Scriptures were *written* by men, and in the style of men, — each writer having his own peculiar style, is too obvious to require proof. Nothing in point of rhetorical utterance can be more unlike, than the styles of Isaiah and Amos, of John and Paul. And yet there is something in the very style and manner of the Sacred writers, as we shall show hereafter, which tells of a power and a wisdom more than human. Besides, it might be inferred, *à priori*, if God was to be at the expense of making a supernatural revelation to men, and causing it to be written in a book, he would take care that the writing should be worthy of the subject; should be as free from mistake and error as the revelation itself.

The conclusions to which we thus come fulfil, as Mr. Lee would say, the *first conditions* of the Bible. They are conclusions to which the serious, earnest student of the Bible, judging from its phenomena, could not fail to come.

And it is important that both these conclusions should be consistently adhered to. Nearly all the errors which have been broached on the subject of inspiration, have originated precisely here. Inspiration has a Divine side, and a human side. It is a work which concerns both God and men. If now we take the Divine side of this work and push it out to an extreme, as some have done, we run into what has been called the *mechanical* theory of inspiration; a theory which supposes God to do all, and man little or nothing; which supposes the natural exercise of the human faculties to have been suspended under the *theopneustia*, and the very words, phrases, figures, grammatical construction, everything, to have been directly suggested and dictated by God. On this theory, there would be little or nothing human about the Bible. The style would all be much the same, and none of it the style of man. In short, it would not be written (except mechanically) by men, or for men, and would be scarcely intelligible to the human understanding. Now every one sees that such a theory does not meet the conditions, the facts of the case. Such is not the Bible which God has given us; and, of course, such is not the kind of inspiration under which it was written.

Suppose then we take what may be called the human side of this work of inspiration, and push it out to an extreme, as many have done, and are doing now. We at once arrive at those lax theories of inspiration which are floating around us, which either make nothing of the special work of God, or reduce it to the very *minimum* of its existence and operation. We come to say, that the sacred writers were inspired only as all good men are inspired; or that their inspiration extended only to some particular subjects, and in these, not at all to the style or the language. There is a revelation in the Bible, of which every one must judge for

himself; and the record of it, being entirely human, is subjected like other human works, to imperfection and error.

The theory of inspiration presented by Mr. Lee, and which he calls the *dynamical* theory, avoids both these extremes and errors, and meets as we have seen all the conditions of the case. It supposes the Bible to be the work both of men and God; and that in producing it, the Divine Spirit wrought in and by the human faculties, so as not to cause any suspension or interruption of their regular exercise. Men thought and wrote, each in his own natural way, while their pens were so supervised or directed, that each wrote according to the mind and the will of God.

It shows the *possibility* of this view of inspiration, and is at the same time a recommendation of it, that it conforms to God's method of operating in other things. It is in God that "we live, and move, and have our being;" yet in giving us life, and breath, and being, God interrupts not the regular exercise of our faculties, but rather sustains them. The conversion and sanctification of the soul, too, is the work of God; yet in this work, there is no interference with the normal activities of him who is the subject of it. God *worketh in us* to will and to do of his own good pleasure, while we *work out* our own salvation with fear and trembling. And just so in the matter of inspiration. God supervises, guides, restrains, suggests, and does all that is necessary that the utterance or the record may be complete; and yet the subject of it thinks his own thoughts, exercises his own faculties, and speaks or writes much after his own natural method.

We come now to consider another fact or distinction, which strikes us in looking into the Bible. A very considerable portion of it, if true at all, must have been *directly revealed from heaven*. It could have been known in no other way. Such are the numerous predictions in the Bible. Such are the disclosures of God's mind and will respecting the coming destiny of our race. Such are the descriptions of scenes and events in the future world. What could men

know respecting subjects such as these, except by a direct revelation?

There is also much in the Bible which is *not* revelation, certainly not in the high sense of which we have just spoken. It came to the knowledge of the writers, — for it could not have been otherwise, — in the ordinary exercise of their own powers. Such was the knowledge which Moses had of events which took place under his own eyes in Egypt, and in the wilderness. Such was the knowledge which the four evangelists had of most of the events recorded in the gospels. Two of these evangelists wrote what they had “seen and heard, and handled of the Word of Life.” The other two “had a perfect understanding” of much that they wrote, through intercourse and conversation with the apostles.

Some parts of the Bible, therefore, are necessarily revelation, and some are not. But those parts which are not revelation, are not to be regarded on that account as unimportant. They are of scarcely less importance to us than the other parts. What portions of holy writ can have a higher importance than the personal histories of Moses, and of Christ? We might infer, therefore, *à priori*, that God would take care that we should have a faithful record, not only of his direct revelations, but of all the other parts of Scripture. We might infer that *all* Scripture, whether revelation or not, would be written under such a Divine guidance and direction as would effectually secure its human authors from mistake, and enable them to write just what God would have them write, and in just the manner in which he would have it written. And this is what we mean, specifically, by *the inspiration of the Scriptures*: that degree of assistance afforded to the writers, which was necessary to preserve them from imperfection and error, in making the record of God’s truth and will.

And here we have the distinction; so much insisted on by Mr. Lee, between *revelation* and *inspiration*; a distinction of which he is not the original discoverer, but which is of great importance in the discussion before us. Revelation is

the direct impartation of truth to the mind of the prophet or the seer; truth of which he could in no other way obtain a knowledge. Inspiration denotes the assistance afforded in the utterance of God's truth, or in recording what God was pleased to have written in his word. All Scripture is not Divine revelation; but all Scripture is written under a Divine inspiration, and consequently is an infallible record of what God would have recorded for our "instruction in righteousness."

There are passages in the Bible *which are not true*, and of course are not a *revelation* of God's truth: for example, the speech of the serpent to our first mother; the message of Rabshakeh to the Jews in the days of Hezekiah; the spiteful letter of Sanballat to Nehemiah; the plea of Tertullus against Paul; and the false reasonings and reproaches of Job's three friends. Yet all these and the like Scriptures may have been written under a Divine inspiration, and undoubtedly were so. We have a true and inspired account of them, however false they may be in themselves.

It should be understood, however, that when speaking of the inspiration of the sacred writings, we refer only to the original copies. We refer to them as they were when they came from the hands of the inspired penmen. We do not believe in the inspiration of transcribers, or translators, or interpreters. A copy (and we have none but copies now in existence) is a fair subject for criticism, — to ascertain, not whether the original writer made mistakes, but whether we have an accurate copy, — whether some mistake or error has not been introduced by the transcriber. And so is a translation a fair subject for criticism. We do not hold to the perfection of the Septuagint, or of our English version, or of any other version. Here, however, as before, the inquiry should be, not whether the original was right, but is the translation right? Does it accurately and adequately give the sense? And so also of interpreters, and their works. We trust not implicitly to Augustine, or Luther, or Calvin, or the Pope of Rome. We go to the original Scripture, —

having first ascertained that we have a reliable copy,— and see whether the interpreter has given the true sense.

We have said that inspiration denotes the special assistance afforded to the sacred speaker or writer, *in giving utterance to the Divine word*. A single caution may be necessary here. The apostles were not inspired at *all* times,— in *all* that they said and did. They could not be ; for they were sometimes stupid, ignorant, and at variance among themselves. But when actually employed, according to their Divine commission, in publishing the gospel message to those around them, or in recording it for the benefit of after ages, they had the promise of an infallible guidance, and we doubt not that they enjoyed it.

It will be seen that inspiration, as we have defined it, is a subject *by itself*. Other subjects are intimately connected with it, but yet are distinct from it ; and should be kept distinct. They cannot be confounded with it, without embarrassing the question. First, there is the *canon* of Scripture, a subject of great importance, relating to the books to be acknowledged as divine. Then there is the *authenticity* of Scripture, relating to the authorship of the particular books, and the times when they were respectively written. Then there is the *integrity* of the sacred text, going into the question of copies, and versions, and various readings. Then there is the *credibility* and *Divine authority* of Scripture. Are its statements true ? And has God stamped it with his own authority ? Does it contain, as it claims to, revelations from him ? Now each and all of these questions are of the last importance, requiring to be well considered and settled, before the Bible can be intelligently received. And yet neither of them touches directly the question of inspiration. That, as we said before, is a subject by itself, having its own connections and bearings, and requiring its own specific methods of proof. We may settle the canon of Scripture ever so satisfactorily ; and settle the authenticity and integrity of our sacred books ; and satisfy ourselves that they are true, and contain revelations from God ; but the question still remains : What kind of record have we of

these revelations? This record was made by men, and is in the style and language of men; but is it merely human, and like everything else human, liable to mistake and imperfection? Or were its original writers so guided, guarded, superintended, assisted, that (without any restraint upon the natural exercise of their own powers) they were enabled to give us an infallible record, — an unerring standard of duty and of truth? Those who believe in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, hold the affirmative of this question, and those who deny it, the negative; and thus is the issue brought fully and fairly before us.

Before proceeding, however, to the matter of proof, there is one thing further to be premised. Those who hold to the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, do not claim that the same kind and degree of assistance was, in all cases, afforded to the sacred writers; and for the very good reason, that the same was not, in all cases, needed. When recording direct revelations from God, — things about which they had no other means of knowledge; or when recording, as they often did, the very words of the Lord, uttered by him in his own proper person; they must have had what has been called the inspiration of *suggestion*. The very words to be recorded must have been suggested to them. And when recording things which they had once known, but had been forgotten, they needed (what the Saviour promised his disciples) the aids of the Spirit to bring all things to their remembrance. But when recording events of which they were fully informed, either from personal observation or the information of others, they needed only such a supervision as should prevent all defect and mistake, and lead them to record, and in the right manner, that, and that only, which was agreeable to the Divine will. In every case, they had such assistance as they needed in order to execute their commission, and give to the world a divinely accredited record of the sacred word, — an infallible standard of duty and of truth.

We come now to the question of proof. What evidence have we that the holy Scriptures are, in the sense explained, inspired?

1. As I have intimated already, the supposition of inspiration is, *à priori*, reasonable. If God were to be at the expense of making a revelation, he would not be likely to leave it to human imperfection and weakness, infirmity and error, to make a record of it. We might reasonably anticipate, that he would so inspire and assist his servants, that they should both utter and record his words, in the way most agreeable to his will. This certainly is a reasonable supposition; and it prepares us to look with favor on such evidence as may be presented to show that the supposition is true. Then,

2. There is something in the very *manner* of the sacred writers, which indicates a wisdom higher than their own. The style of our sacred books, I have said, is human. It shows that it is the style of *men*,—of men, too, in the exercise of their own faculties, each evincing his peculiarities of education and thought. And yet there is often a something, almost indescribable, in the style and manner of the sacred writers, which shows that it is not altogether of men; that it carries with it the wisdom and the power of God. Witness the ease and the certainty with which these writers often announce their decisions on the deepest and most difficult subjects,—those farthest removed from the ordinary course of investigation and thought. There is no doubt, no hesitation, no apparent labor of the understanding, but all is easy, and positive, and certain, evincing that that the decisions are from a mind which cannot err. Witness also the unfailing suggestiveness, the inexhaustible fulness of the sacred writings. When read for the thousandth time, there is no wearing out, or palling upon the sense, but always a welling up of something new, showing a depth of meaning, like their author, unsearchable.

There is a peculiarity of manner in the sacred writers, when speaking of the faults one of another, or when describing the inhuman wicked actions of men. In either case, there is no exaggeration and no concealment, but a simple, unimpassioned annunciation of the truth. Take the case of Peter's denial of his Master. As Mr. Lee says, "we find in

the gospels no stern denunciation of the act, and no indignant allusion to its cowardice and ingratitude; but lightly as the glance of his Master's eye fell upon the smitten countenance of the wayward Apostle, so the pen of the sacred writer just describes the occurrence and passes on." So also in recording the sufferings and death of Christ. "There is no strong expression of human sympathy accompanying the story of the agony in the garden, the awful scene before Pilate, or the horrors of the cross. No burst of emotion attends their Master's body to the tomb, or welcomes his resurrection; and yet who has not felt that this treatment of their theme but adds to its pathos and its grandeur?"

The divinity of the style and manner of the sacred writings can be best appreciated, perhaps, by comparison. Let the intelligent and candid reader but step off from the sacred page of either Testament, and begin to traverse other writings of nearly the same period,—for instance, the apocryphal writings, or the works of Philo, Josephus, or even of the Christian Fathers; and he will know what we mean, when we speak of an indescribable something in the style and manner of the sacred penmen, which indicates a wisdom that is from above.

3. From the very nature of the case, a very considerable portion of the Bible *must be inspired*; else it is palpable imposture. In no small part of the Old Testament, we have God himself speaking in the first person. We have what purports to be his own words. And if the Bible is true, these *are* his own words; and the sacred writers must have been *verbally inspired* in recording them. So in the gospels, we have, through whole chapters, what purports to be the very words of Christ. Now the writers of the gospels may have been perfectly honest, but their memories were treacherous; and how could they be sure, after the lapse of years, that they were giving the real words of Christ, unless they were guided and assisted from above? Hence the value of that promise which was given to the disciples: "The Comforter, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have spoken unto you."

There are still other portions of the Bible which (if they are true) must, from the very nature of the case, be inspired. We refer to those parts in which the writer records transactions which took place long ages before he was born. For example, how did Moses know what God said to Adam, and Cain, and Noah, and Abraham, and the other patriarchs, and what these men said in reply, unless he were under a Divine inspiration? He might have received some general account of things by tradition; but he does not profess to record doubtful traditions, but the very words which were spoken one way and the other. But in order to do this, he must have had a plenary, verbal inspiration.

4. The sacred writers were *commissioned of God* to give utterance to his truth, and they had a *promise*, expressed or implied, of all needed assistance in their work. This was true of Moses. "Now, therefore, go, and *I will be with thy mouth, and I will teach thee what thou shalt say.*" (Ex. 4: 12.) Here we have both the commission and the promise,—an express promise of plenary inspiration. The same also was true of the other prophets. They were all sent, commissioned of God, and had a promise, expressed or implied, that he would be with them. "Thou, therefore," says God to Jeremiah, "gird up thy loins, and arise and speak unto them all that I command thee. Be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee, for *I am with thee*, saith the Lord." (Jer. 1: 17, 19.) In similar language, God commissioned Ezekiel. "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation, that hath rebelled against me. I do send thee unto them, and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. Be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions. Thou shalt speak my words unto them, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." (Ezek. 2: 3—7.)

Jeremiah had an express commission from God, twice repeated, not only to speak his words of warning and rebuke, but to write them in a book. "Take thee a roll of

a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spoke unto thee even unto this day." Jeremiah did as he was commanded; and when the King of Judah had madly destroyed the record, the prophet was commissioned to write it again. "Take thee another roll, and write in it all the words that were in the first roll which the King of Judah hath burnt." (Jer. 36: 2, 28.)

The Apostle John was commissioned to write the Apocalypse; and his commission was repeated, in respect to different parts of the book, no less than twelve times. The two last instances in which the commission was repeated are particularly instructive in regard to the point before us.

"*Write*: blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he said unto me, *These are the true sayings of God.*" "And he that sat upon the throne said, *Write*: for these words are *true and faithful.*" (Chap. 19: 9; 21: 5.) Who shall doubt, after declarations such as these, that John wrote the Revelation at the command, and under the inspiration, of God?

That the Apostles acted under a commission from Christ, in going forth to publish his truth, no one can entertain a doubt. As much as this was implied in the very name that was given to them — *Apostles, Missionaries*, men *sent forth* to a specific work. And that they had assurances of all needed support and assistance, amounting to a plenary inspiration, is certain. "Lo, *I am with you always*, even unto the end of the world." "*I will give you a mouth and wisdom*, which no adversary can gainsay or resist." "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, *he shall teach you all things*, and *bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.*" "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, *he shall guide you into all truth.* He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." "When they shall deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you, in that same hour, what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but *the Spirit of our Father which speaketh in you.*"

There is no mistaking the import of language such as this. We have here promise upon promise that the servants of Christ, in giving utterance to his truth, should be directed by an influence from on high. They should have the Spirit to guide them into all truth, and bring all things accurately to their remembrance.

And now if it be said that the promises here quoted refer rather to the work of teaching than writing; we answer, first, that this is not true of them all. In some instances, inspired men were commissioned specifically to write. But where the promise does refer more directly to the work of teaching, we are not to regard it as confined to this. We may conclude, *à fortiori*, that it was intended to reach further. For if inspired men stood in need of Divine assistance in *speaking* the word to those around them, much more did they need it in committing this living word to *writing*, for the benefit of the church in all coming time. And that same good Being, who was so careful to meet their necessities in the former case, would not be likely to fail them in the latter.

5. The writers of both Testaments virtually *claimed* inspiration. They claimed to speak, not their own words, but the words of God. This did Moses and the prophets continually. They came to the people with a "Thus saith the Lord;" and in many instances, through whole chapters, they profess to give the very words of the Most High; a thing which they could never do, unless these words were suggested to them, at the time.

David says of himself: "*The Spirit of the Lord spake in me, and his word was in my tongue.*" (2 Sam. 23, 2.) "*The Spirit entered into me,*" says Ezekiel, "when he spake to me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me." (Chap. 2: 2.)

The writers of the New Testament customarily speak of their communications as *the word of God*, and thus virtually claim for themselves a Divine inspiration. "It was necessary that *the word of God* should first have been spoken unto you." "They spake *the word of God* with boldness."

"I certify you," says Paul, "that the gospel which was preached of me, was not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but *by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*" "Which things we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which *the Holy Ghost teacheth.*" "The things which I write unto you are *the commandments of the Lord.*" The only question in regard to such passages is: *Did the writers speak the truth?* If they did, there can be no doubt, certainly, as to the fact of their inspiration.

6. The sacred writers not only claimed inspiration for themselves, but they assert it one of another, and of the Scriptures generally. The *titles* which they give to the sacred writings are enough of themselves to prove their inspiration. They are not only *the Scriptures, the Writings,* — which is itself a most significant title, — but they are "*the Holy Scriptures,*" "*the Scriptures of Truth,*" "*the Oracles of God,*" etc. This last is a peculiarly expressive title, — *the Oracles of God.* No one can be in doubt as to the design and use of the ancient oracles. Among the heathen, they were the places where the voice of God was heard; where his responses were sounded forth. Yet this most significant title is given by Paul to the entire canon of the Old Testament Scriptures. They are "the Oracles of God." (Romans 3: 2.)

Most of the Jewish prophets lived and wrote either during the captivity, or before it. Let us now consult those men who wrote after the captivity, and see how unequivocally they ascribe inspiration to those who preceded them. "We have forsaken," says Ezra, thy commandments, which *thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets.*" (Ez. 9: 10, 11.) "Yet many years," says Nehemiah, "didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them *by thy Spirit in thy prophets.*" (Neh. 9: 30.) "They made their hearts," says Zechariah, "like an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which *the Lord of hosts hath sent in his Spirit, by the former prophets.*" (Zech. 7: 12.) In passages such as these, to which many of like import might

be added, the inspiration of the earlier prophets is most expressly asserted.

Our Saviour uniformly speaks of the Scriptures, — meaning, of course, the Old Testament Scriptures, — as *the word of God*, and *inspired*. Addressing the Sadducees, he says: “Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you *by God*, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob”? “The *Holy Ghost spake* by the mouth of David,” etc. “Well *spake the Holy Ghost* by Esaias the prophet,” etc. “*The word of God*,” says Christ, in John 10: 35, “cannot be broken.” “Making *the word of God* of none effect by your traditions.” (Mark 7: 12.)

Paul says, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*.” And again: “The prophecy came not in olden time by the will of man, but *holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*.” “God, who, at sundry times and in divers manners, *spake in time past by the prophets*, hath, in these latter days, *spoken unto us by his Son*.” Nothing can be more decisive than this testimony. If Language such as this does not prove the inspiration of the Bible, no language can. I only add,

7. The full inspiration of the Scriptures has been the doctrine of the church, in all periods of its history. Nothing more need be said to show that the *sacred writers*, both before and after Christ, held this doctrine. We have seen that they had the promise of inspiration, that they claimed it, and that they assert it of the Scriptures in general, and of one another. But how was the doctrine held by learned Jews between the closing of the canon of the Old Testament, and the opening of the New? And how by the early Christian fathers? Looking into the apocryphal books of the Old Testament, we find the following prayer in Baruch: “O Lord our God as thou spakest to thy servant Moses, in the day that *thou didst command him to write thy law*.” (Chap. 2: 28.) In Ecclesiasticus, the law of Moses is spoken of as “*the covenant of the most high God*,” which “covenant is everlasting,” its “light uncorrupt,” and its “decrees eternal.”

Philo entertained the most extravagant ideas of inspiration, representing the subject of it as unconscious, his spirit being controlled by the indwelling spirit of God. The prophet, for the time, is like "an instrument of music, moved invisibly by God's power. All his utterances proceed from the suggestions of another. The prophetic rapture having mastered his faculties, and the power of reflection having retired from the citadel of the soul, the Divine Spirit comes upon him, dwells in him, and moves the entire organism of his voice, prompting to the announcement of all that he foretells." (Lee on Inspiration, p. 65.)

The views of Josephus on the subject before us were very much like those of Philo. "With us," says he, addressing Apion, "there is no endless series of works, discordant and contradictory. Twenty-two books contain the annals of all time, and *are justly believed to be Divine.*"¹ "It is implanted in every Jew, from the hour of his birth, to esteem these as *the ordinances of God*, to stand fast by them, and in defence of them, if need be, to die."

With regard to the faith of the primitive Christians on this subject, we can have no better evidence than some of their early creeds. The creed of Irenæus commences thus: "The church, though it be dispersed over all the earth, has received from the apostles, the belief in one God the Father, and in one Christ Jesus, the Son of God, and in the Holy Ghost, *who preached by the prophets,*" etc. In the Nicene creed, as completed by the Council of Constantinople, we have the following: "We believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and Son is worshipped and glorified, and *who spake by the prophets.*"

Clement of Rome, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, (Chap. 45) says: "Give diligent heed to the Scriptures, *the true sayings of the Holy Ghost.*"

¹ The Jews, in the time of Josephus, had limited the number of their sacred books to twenty-two, to correspond with the number of Hebrew letters. To effect this limitation, they had joined several of their books, as Judges and Ruth, Ezra and Nehemiah, Jeremiah and the Lamentations, and all the minor prophets together.

Justin Martyr says: "Think not that the words which you hear the prophet speaking, in his own person, were uttered by himself. Being filled with the Spirit, *they are from the Divine Word which moves him.*" (Apol. i. 336.)

"The sacred books," says Origen, "breathe the fulness of the Spirit. There is nothing, either in the law, in the gospels, or in the apostles, which did not descend from the fulness of the Divine Majesty." (Vol. 3, p. 282.)

"It is needless to ask," says Gregory the great, "who wrote the book of Job, since we may surely believe *that the Holy Ghost was its author.*" (Vol. 1, p. 7.)

"What avails it," says Theodoret "to know whether all the Psalms were written by David; it being plain that *all were composed under the influence of the Divine Spirit.*" (Vol. 1, p. 395.)

It is needless to quote further from the early Christian fathers. They were unanimous on the subject of inspiration, and took high ground in regard to it. They customarily speak of the Scriptures as "the law of God," "the word of God," "the voice of God," "the oracles of Heaven," "the oracles of the Holy Ghost," as "dictated by the Spirit of God," and "the doctrine of the Holy Ghost." Borrowing the figure from Philo, they not unfrequently compare the soul of the prophet, when under the Divine influence, to an instrument of music, into which the Holy Spirit breathes, on the strings of which he strikes. They even represent those as infidels "who do not believe that the Holy Ghost uttered the Divine Scriptures." (Euseb. V. 28.)

But this blessed doctrine of inspiration, so dear to the church in the earliest and purest times, is doubted of by many at the present day. A variety of objections have been urged against it, which, before we close, it will be necessary to consider.

Some of these objections have been in great measure anticipated by the explanations which have been given. It has been objected, for instance, to the idea of a plenary inspiration, that there are great differences of style in different parts of the Bible, each individual seeming to write and

speak in his own peculiar, natural way. And so, on the theory of inspiration which we adopt, we might suppose it would be. If as some have believed, the sacred writers, while under the influence of the Spirit, had been deprived of the regular exercise of their own powers, so as to be mere passive instruments in the hands of God, there would be some reason for connecting the idea of inspiration with great uniformity in point of style. But if, as we hold, they were left to the natural exercise of their own powers, while they were instructed, guided, superintended by the Spirit, and led by him to write that, and only that, which was agreeable to his will, then the differences of style which appear in their writings are no objection to the idea of their inspiration. They are just what we might reasonably expect.

That these differences of style are consistent even with a verbal inspiration, is evident from the Scriptures themselves. In many parts of Scripture, we find God speaking in his own person. Whole chapters of this nature occur not unfrequently in the prophets. Now such chapters, as we have before remarked, must have been written under a verbal inspiration. The very words must have been suggested to the minds of the writers. And yet we find the same differences of style here, as in the other parts of the Scripture. God, speaking in his own person by the mouth of Hosea or Amos, adopts the natural style of these men; but when speaking by the mouth of Isaiah or Joel, he adopts the higher and more poetical diction of these latter prophets.

The proof of inspiration, we have seen, rests mainly on the testimony of the sacred writers. Now it has been objected by some, that these writers when under the influence of the Spirit, may not have been *conscious* of his presence with them, and consequently were not prepared to give a valid testimony in the case. But it is evident from the Scriptures, that the sacred writers *did know* when they were under the inspiration of the Spirit. They were not in the Spirit at all times, and when the inspiration was upon them, and God was speaking by them, they must have known it.

Did not Moses know when God met him, and give him his messages to Pharaoh? Did he not know, when he was writing out the law, that he was writing God's words, and not his own? And when it is said so many times over by the prophets, "The word of the Lord came unto me;" did they not know whereof they affirmed?

Of the particular state of the prophet's mind, while under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, we can have no accurate knowledge, having had no experience or observation of the same. Perhaps they were not all affected in the same way. But that there was a peculiarity about their state of which they were fully conscious, and which enabled them to give a decided and valid testimony, there can be no doubt. "I am full of power," says the prophet Micah, "by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and unto Israel his sin." (Chap. 3: 8.)

Jeremiah resolved, on one occasion, that he would not again make mention of the Lord, or speak any more in his name. "But his word," says he, "was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones. I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (Chap. 20: 9.) On another occasion, Jeremiah says: "I am full of the fury of the Lord; I am weary with holding in; I will pour it out upon the children, and upon the assembly of young men." (Chap. 6: 11.) Ezekiel too, says: "The Spirit lifted me up, and took me away: and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me." (Chap. 3: 14.) We see in these Scriptures how little reason there is to call in question the testimony of the sacred writers, on the ground that they could not know when they were inspired, or whether they were inspired or not.

It has been thought by some that this whole question of inspiration amounts to but little, since we have naught in our hands, at present, but transcripts and translations, the original copies, which alone were inspired, having long been lost. But we do think it of great importance to have had an *inspired and infallible original*. From such an original,

all the existing copies and versions came; and, though we have not the autographs with which to compare them, still we can compare them one with another; we can judge of differences, where they exist; we can judge wherein they differ, if at all, from the inspired copies; and can thus approximate, at least, to the true standard. The original copies of the ancient classics have all passed away; yet we like to know that there *were* such copies, and by careful revision, comparison, and criticism, we can measurably restore them.

A copy of the Scriptures, or a version, as I have said before, is a proper subject of criticism. We may properly inquire, not whether the original writers made mistakes, but whether mistakes have not occurred since; whether the copy or the version conforms to the original. Thus far may human criticism lawfully go in this direction; but no farther. If it may transcend this limit; if it may go to the original itself, or to what is decided, on sufficient grounds, to have been the original, to pass upon mistakes and errors there; then we have no standard left.

The criticism of copies and versions has come to be "a science of well defined principles, which has been rewarded and enriched by proud results. But the criticism of prophets and apostles, the sitting in judgment upon those who preached and wrote by inspiration, and to whom the Spirit of God brought all things to remembrance,—this is a new science, one upon which we do not care to venture, and the results of which we should distrust and dread."

It is objected to the idea that "*all* Scripture is given by inspiration of God," that there are things of small importance in the Bible, — things not worthy to be inspired. But we are not suitable judges always as to the greatness or smallness of events. Things may seem small to us which, in their connections, are of vast importance. Great effects flow often from little causes. "The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments." No one can tell at this day of how great importance it may have been to Paul, the close prisoner at Rome, to get his cloak, his books, and his parchments.

But granting that there are small things in the Bible; do we not find the same in nature? Yet who would conclude from this circumstance, that God was not the author of nature? The resemblance in this respect between the Bible and nature indicates that both may have proceeded from the same hand.

Again; it is said that there are indelicate expressions, *vulgaries*, in the Bible, which forbid the idea that it should all have been inspired. But are we fully competent to judge in regard to this matter? Shall we set ourselves up as a standard of delicacy for all ages and people? In regard to this matter, as with most others, the notions of people vary, in different places, and at different times. What would be sufficiently delicate to an Oriental now, and would have been so regarded by our own fathers and mothers two hundred years ago, may strike us differently. Besides, words and phrases often become indelicate, as they become common, and there is a necessity for changing them for those which are less common. But here is a book of which the words and phrases, as they stand in the original, must remain unchanged. They must stand the same in all periods of time. This, doubtless, is a principal reason why some few of the words of Scripture, to a modern ear, may seem indelicate.

But it is urged that there is *false philosophy* in the Bible. It speaks of the sun's rising and setting, and standing still. It represents the firmament as a shining canopy over our heads, and the opaque moon as one of the lights of heaven. In reply to this, it is enough to say, that the Bible was never designed to teach us philosophy. It is not a book of natural science. In describing natural, visible objects, the writers were directed, and for the best reasons, to speak *phenomenally*, to use the current phraseology of the times, to write according to invariable appearances, without any philosophical theory whatever. And we should as soon think of charging a writer with falsehood now, who should speak of the sun's rising and setting, and of the moon as one of the lights of heaven, as to prefer the like charge against Moses,

and insist that he could not be inspired, because such language occurs in his writings.

It is further objected that there are *contradictions* in the Bible. That there are a few seeming inconsistencies, passages which, with our means of knowledge, we may not be able fully to harmonize, need not be denied. But that there are any real contradictions in the original Scriptures, as they came from God, is what no believer in Divine inspiration can admit, and no denier of it can prove. We speak advisedly on this subject, having had occasion, within the last few months, to examine most, if not all, the cases which have been alleged. Some are the result, obviously, of mistake in transcribing, translating, or interpreting; while others, in all probability, might be harmonized at once, if attendant circumstances were fully known. Mr. Lee gives an instance from civil history, to show how instantly apparent discrepancies disappear, so soon as we come to a knowledge of attendant circumstances. "The medals struck for the coronation of Louis XIV. give a different day from that upon which all contemporary historians agree, in fixing the date of that event. Of all these writers, one only has noticed a circumstance which accounts for the discrepancy. The coronation had been appointed to take place on the day given by the medals,—which were prepared accordingly; but circumstances caused a delay, until the date assigned by the historians." (p. 363.)

With regard to alleged contradictions in the Bible, most cordially do we acquiesce in the following declaration of Justin, in his dialogue with Trypho: "I dare not either imagine or assert that the Scriptures contradict each other; but were any passage to be adduced which has the appearance of being opposed to another, being altogether persuaded that no such opposition really exists, I will rather confess, that I do not myself understand what is said." (Chap. 65, p. 162.)

It has been objected to the inspiration of the New Testament, that its writers sometimes make quotations from the Old Testament incorrectly, and apply them improperly.

They do not always quote with strict verbal accuracy, nor do they pretend to; but we see not how this can be urged against either their inspiration or their truth. How often do we quote, in the same way, from the Scriptures, and from other books, without any impeachment of veracity?

Nor do the writers of the New Testament always *apply* the language quoted from the Old, according to its original and literal acceptation. In some few instances, they *adopt* this language, as a phraseology familiar to them, in which to express and enforce their thoughts; just as a classical scholar now sometimes incorporates a passage from his favorite author, without stopping to inquire whether his application of it is precisely according to the original intent. It is to his purpose, — he adopts it, and passes on. To the writers of the New Testament, the Old Testament was almost their only classic. Its language was dear and familiar to them. They were literally men of one book. And from this loved book they, in some few instances, take a passage or a clause, because it is apposite, because it tends to illustrate the sense, without pretending to apply it just as it was applied by the original writer. And we see nothing in this which is at all inconsistent either with their good character or their inspiration. It is to be understood, of course, that the language thus quoted becomes, by its adoption, the language of inspiration, and carries with it a Divine authority.

The imprecations of David are sometimes urged as an objection to the doctrine of inspiration. But so far from being an objection, we see not how to account for these imprecations, in the connections in which they stand, and in consistency with the acknowledged good character of David, but by supposing him inspired. If he spoke of his own mind and heart, and mingled up his imprecations, as we sometimes find them, with the highest strains of devotional feeling; this certainly was very strange. It was unaccountable. But when we regard him as an inspired prophet of God, standing in the place of God, the visible head of the theocracy under God, and denouncing, by Divine inspiration, the judgments of God against the enemies of his

church and people; the case assumes a very different aspect. The mystery of it is in great measure removed.

It is said, finally, that Paul, in some places, expressly *disclaims* a Divine inspiration. "To the rest speak I, *not the Lord*, If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away." "Concerning virgins, *I have no commandment of the Lord*, yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy." (1 Cor. 7: 12, 25.) In these passages, the apostle disclaims, as it seems to me, not Divine inspiration, but his having any express Divine command to be enforced. He was not directed to lay *injunctions* upon the Corinthians in respect to these matters, as from God, but was inspired to give his *judgment*, his *advice*. "Herein I give *my advice*," etc. He also tells us that he *thinks* he has the Spirit. (1 Cor. 7: 40.) And if Paul thought that he had the Spirit, who shall say or think that he had it not?

There is another passage which is sometimes quoted to disprove the inspiration of Paul. "That which I speak, I speak it *not after the Lord*, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting." (2 Cor. 11: 17.) The apostle here speaks, *not after the Lord*; i. e., not after the *example* of the Lord, not after the *usual manner* of the Lord, without intending to disclaim a Divine inspiration. He may have been plenary inspired, and yet not speak after the usual manner of the Lord.

The full inspiration of the holy Scriptures, as explained, proved, and vindicated in the foregoing pages, is a doctrine of *great practical importance*. It is so at all times, but especially at this time, when such insidious and persevering efforts are made to wrest it from us. If the Bible is not inspired in the sense explained, if it is not *all* inspired, then it is not an infallible standard of truth and duty, and nothing can be certainly known or established by it. We may think it a good book, a remarkable book, the work of good and honest men; and yet, if not inspired, it is marked with imperfections, of which its readers must judge for themselves. We may believe that it contains revelations from

God; but if it is not an inspired book, if it is not *all* inspired; then who shall tell us what particular parts are inspired, and what not; how much to receive as the word of God, and how much to impute to the ignorance or the device of man? One passage may seem unreasonable to me, and I may reject it as constituting no part of the revelation. For the same reason, my neighbor may reject another passage. In this way, the whole Bible may be rejected, while it is professedly received. Because William Whiston could not believe some of the doctrines of Paul, he rejected the inspiration of those parts of the Epistle to the Romans in which these doctrines are inculcated. "They seem to have been no part of Christ's revelation to him, but rather certain strange and weak reasonings of his own, accommodated to the weak Roman Jews of that period." Most of the old English Infidels professed to respect the Bible, and to receive certain portions of it as from God; while they adopted principles, and acted on them, which went to destroy it.

If the Bible is not inspired, even as to its language, then it does not come to us duly *authenticated* as the word and the law of God. In all authoritative communications, or laws, it is important that we have the precise words of the law-giver. So it is with human laws. The judge on the bench must have the precise words of the law, or he cannot interpret them. The people, too, must have the law correctly before them, or they cannot tell what it requires. Suppose one of our legislatures should frame a code of laws, but, instead of writing them themselves, or causing them to be written under their own inspection, should leave it to the reporters in different parts of the house, to take down the substance, so much of them as they could recollect, and publish them in the newspapers. These reporters might be honest and capable men; and yet who would regard their notes as laws? Who could determine whether they had been correctly reported; whether they expressed the real sense of the legislature, or not?

In matters such as these, we want, I repeat, the matured

words of the lawgiver. And just so in respect to the Bible. The Bible professes to be a code of laws, coming down to us from the great Lawgiver of the universe, and binding directly on our consciences and hearts. But in order that it may be duly authenticated; may be a rule of life to us here, and of judgment hereafter, we must have the very words of God. A merely human record of his truth and will cannot bind us. We must have a Bible, the whole of which is given by the inspiration of God, or we have no standard to which we may implicitly appeal, or on which to rely.

ARTICLE III.

BAPTISM, A CONSECRATORY RITE.

BY REV. I. E. DWINELL, SALEM, MASS.

There is much confusion in the public mind on the subject of Baptism.

Some, as Neander, regard it as a "sign of the participation in a sanctifying, divine spirit of life;"¹ others, like Kurtz, as a sacrament coexisting with the renewing activity of the Holy Spirit, and hence essential to salvation.² Others, like Olshausen and the Lutherans generally, consider that it "removes . . . the guilt of original sin, but not its dominion, which is first overthrown in regeneration."³ By others, as the Catholics and High Church-Men, the scholastic doctrine of baptismal regeneration is perpetuated. A more common statement, among moderate Evangelical Christians, is, that baptism is a symbol of purification; or a seal either of a devotement to God, or of a covenant with him.

¹ Church History, I. 304.

² See Manual of Sacred History, §§ 188, 189.

³ Commentary on Acts 16: 14, 15, n.