

ARTICLE III.

REVELATION AND INSPIRATION.

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No. IX.

INSPIRATION CONSIDERED IN ITS END.

We propose, in the present Number, to consider the inspiration of the record with reference to its *end*, leaving out of view, as far as possible, all questions concerning its *mode*. The inspiration of the record can have in view no other end than that of giving to men, under the sanction of divine authority, a sure rule of faith and practice. Since any divinely authorized rule of faith and practice must have the two attributes of infallibility and sufficiency, the proposition that the books of scripture are inspired includes the two ideas that they are without error, and that they are sufficient for our salvation. It is manifest that each inspired book, taken separately, must be without error; but when we come to the quality of sufficiency, that belongs not so much to single books, as to the whole considered collectively. It was not the divine plan to reveal all truth at once. He communicated it, as occasion required, "in many parts and in many ways,"¹ using to this end the many and diverse gifts of his servants, till, at last, when the record had attained to all needful fulness, the canon of scripture was closed. It is of this record that we affirm infallibility and sufficiency; both qualities being included in its divine authority, which we now proceed to consider.

Here we begin with the great fundamental truth that Jesus of Nazareth was, in the fullest sense of the words, an infallible teacher. We do not assume the infallibility of the

¹ πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως. Heb. i. 1.

record to prove the infallibility of the Saviour. We take the gospel narratives simply as written by honest and competent men, and as worthy of credence in the ordinary acceptance of the words; and we affirm that the numerous declarations recorded by them which fell from the Saviour's own lips show that he was a teacher raised above all error. He claimed for himself the attribute of infallibility in so many ways, that we must receive as an axiom of Christianity that what he taught was pure truth, without any admixture of falsehood. It was not the declaration of the beloved disciple alone, that before his incarnation he dwelt from eternity in the Father's bosom.¹ He himself said: "Father, glorify thou me with thine own self,² with the glory which I had with thee before the world was."³ "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world; again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."⁴ And, during that eternal residence in the Father's bosom he knew all his counsels. This he asserts of himself in the most explicit terms: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself,⁵ but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth."⁶ The mode of representation is drawn from human intercourse; but the truth taught is that the Son has a full knowledge of all the Father's counsels. Accordingly, the Saviour elsewhere says, with the confidence of one who knows what he affirms: "He that sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him";⁷ "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father who sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say

¹ John i. 1, 2, 18.

² *κατὰ σεαυτῆς*, with *thyself*, in the sense of being in the Father's immediate presence.

³ John xvii. 5.

⁴ John xvi. 28.

⁵ *ἑαυτοῦ*, of *himself*; that is, of his own proper will, separated from the Father's will. The words imply perfect knowledge of the Father's will, and perfect union with it.

⁶ John v. 19, 20.

⁷ John viii. 26.

and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting. Whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father, said unto me, so I speak."¹ And, because he knows all truth, and is able and willing to teach all that men need to know, he says of himself: "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life";² "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness;"³ "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"⁴— words which would be blasphemy in the lips of a fallible man. The same great truth is taught in another form, when the Saviour says: "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away."⁵ Here the Saviour places himself side by side with Jehovah, who says, in the Old Testament: "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be forever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."⁶ The same attribute of infallibility is implied in all those passages in which he offers himself to men as worthy of unlimited confidence, such as the following: "Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock";⁷ "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls,"⁸ and many like passages that might be added. The Saviour's infallibility as a teacher being thus established on an immovable foundation, we have a sure point of departure from which to proceed in our inquiries respecting the inspiration of the New Testament record, which is that now under consideration.

¹ John xii. 49, 50.² John viii. 12.³ John xii. 46.⁴ John ix. 5.⁵ Luke xxi. 33.⁶ Isa. li. 6.⁷ Matt. vii. 24.⁸ Matt. xi. 28, 29.

First of all, it is necessary that we carefully consider the *relation to Christ* held by the writers of the New Testament; since, as already remarked,¹ it is here, if anywhere, that we shall find the warrant for receiving their writings as inspired. There are but two grades of relationship to Christ with which we can connect the high endowment now under consideration — that of apostles, and that of their associates in the work of the Christian ministry. Our plan will be to consider, first, the case of the apostles; secondly, that of their acknowledged companions and helpers in the work of preaching the gospel; and finally, to add some remarks that apply equally to the writings of both classes.

The Inspiration of the Apostles.

Early in our Lord's ministry he chose twelve apostles, "that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils."² In this brief notice we have all the distinguishing marks of an apostle. He was chosen that he might be with Christ from the beginning, and thus be to the people an eye-witness of his whole public life. When an apostle was to be chosen in the place of Judas, Peter laid particular stress on this qualification: "Wherefore, of these men who have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection."³ In the case of Paul alone was this condition of apostleship wanting; and the want was made good to him by the special revelations of Jesus Christ, on which he lays particular stress.⁴ An apostle, again, was one who received his commission immediately from the Saviour — a qualification which Paul strenuously asserted in his own behalf, saying: "Paul, an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father,

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xxviii. p. 637.

² Mark iii. 14, 15.

³ Acts i. 21, 22.

⁴ Gal. i. 11, 12.

who raised him from the dead.”¹ An apostle, once more, was one who received directly from Christ the power of working miracles. This was the seal of his apostleship before the world. In the three particulars that have been named the apostles held to Christ the nearest possible relation, and were by this relation distinguished from all other men. Their mission was to preach the gospel and establish Christian churches in all the world: “Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”² Have we evidence that these men, holding to Christ such an intimate relation, and receiving from him such a broad commission, sealed by the power of working miracles, were divinely qualified, through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, to preach and record the facts and doctrines of the gospel without error?

1. Our first argument that they were thus qualified is drawn from *the analogy of the Old Testament record*; the Old Testament record, namely, as it is uniformly regarded by our Lord. We leave out of view, for the present, the judgments expressed by the New Testament writers themselves, so far forth as they may be regarded as authorities. Our sole aim is to gather from them the Saviour’s position in respect to the books of the Old Testament. No unprejudiced reader can study the gospel narratives without the profound conviction that he everywhere assumed the divine authority of the Hebrew scriptures. This conviction is forced upon us not simply by his express declarations, but also by the reverential attitude which he everywhere takes towards them. In his first encounter with the prince of darkness he drew his weapons from the storehouse of scripture. The threefold assault of the devil he met with the threefold answer: *It is written*. No one who reads the narrative with an unprejudiced mind can doubt that he received all that is written in

¹ Gal. i. 1.

² Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

the Hebrew scriptures as of divine authority. So also in his encounters with the Pharisees, his constant appeal is to the record of the Old Testament — *Have ye not read? What is written in the law? How readest thou?* Objections drawn from the record he meets, not by repudiating it wholly or in part, but by a fair interpretation of its meaning. A notable example of this we have in his solution of the question put to him by the Pharisees respecting the Mosaic law of divorce.¹ In answer to his exposition of the primitive law of marriage, they asked: “Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?” The reply of Jesus was: “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so.” In another place he said of the hundred and tenth Psalm: “David himself said in the Holy Ghost, the Lord said unto my Lord,”² etc. He recognized this psalm as written under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; nor is there the shadow of a reason for supposing that he wished to distinguish it from the psalms as a whole. He simply referred to it as containing one of the declarations concerning the Messiah made, like all the rest of them, “in the Holy Ghost.” Again, after his resurrection he said to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: “O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”³ How necessary? Plainly, because there must have been a fulfilment of all things written concerning him in the scriptures of the Old Testament. Accordingly, “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”;⁴ and afterwards said to the assembly of the apostles in Jerusalem: “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses,

¹ Matt. xix. 3-9.

² Mark xii. 36.

³ Οὐχὶ ταῦτα εἶπε παθεῖν τὸν Χριστὸν καὶ εἰσελθεῖν εἰς τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ; Luke xxiv. 26.

⁴ Luke xxiv. 25-27.

and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me.”¹ The above are samples of the way in which our Lord was accustomed to refer to the scriptures of the Old Testament. What inference could his hearers draw from such words? What inference did any one of them ever draw, except that he ascribed to the Hebrew scriptures as a whole divine authority? Finally, the Saviour clinches the argument by his words on the mount: “Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”² Could he who came with his fan in his hand to sever the chaff from the wheat have spoken thus of the law had he known it to be only a heap of unwinnowed wheat—error and truth mixed together? And if he received the law as pure wheat—truth unmixed with error—who can deny that he gave the same honor to the psalms and to the prophets? We do not affirm that our Saviour occupied himself with verbal criticism, or questions respecting the agreement or disagreement of the Greek version with the original Hebrew in particular passages. We shall endeavor to show in a future Number that inspiration, though it necessarily employs human words, has its proper seat not in the letter, but in the spirit; and that the same truth communicated by inspiration of the Holy Ghost may be expressed by two or more writers in two or more forms of words. What we now insist upon is, that the Saviour received the whole Old Testament as a divinely authoritative record of God’s dealings with men, and of the truths which he has revealed for their salvation.

Will it be said, in reply, that herein the Saviour *accommodated* himself to the current belief of the age? That he spoke and acted *in harmony* with that belief, ancient and venerable, coming down from the days of Ezra, is certain. When Paul affirmed of the Old Testament as a whole: “all scripture is given by inspiration of God”;³ and Peter, that

¹ Luke xxiv. 44.

² Matt. v. 17, 18.

³ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

“the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,”¹ they spake not merely as apostles, but as Jews, giving the universal belief of the nation in respect to the Hebrew scriptures. But the doctrine of *accommodation* means that one, for prudential reasons, conforms himself to a current belief, without regard to its truth or falsehood. To say that in the matter of the divine authority of scripture our Lord thus accommodated himself to the age in which he lived is to cast upon him an unworthy imputation, not only without evidence, but against evidence. The most powerful and influential body among the Jews of our Lord’s day was the sect of the Pharisees, who sat in Moses’s seat, and were the acknowledged leaders of the people in religion. They held firmly the traditions of the elders. Yet our Lord set aside these traditions in a very unceremonious way. All classes of the Jews were firm in the belief that their expected Messiah would establish a temporal kingdom — a kingdom, indeed, of truth and righteousness, but yet a temporal kingdom — with its seat at Jerusalem. Yet the Saviour carefully avoided the utterance of any word that might seem to give his sanction to that belief; and before Pilate he publicly declared that his kingdom was not of this world.² On the other hand, he expressly sanctioned the current belief of the Pharisees respecting the resurrection, angels, and spirits.³ He gave also the full sanction of his authority to the doctrine, current in his day, of eternal rewards and punishments. Why this difference? The answer is found in his words to Pilate: “To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.”⁴ All current beliefs that were in accordance with truth he sanctioned, but none that were based on falsehood. But he did undeniably sanction the belief of his day in the divine authority of the Hebrew scriptures; and from his decision there can be no appeal to those who receive

¹ 2 Peter i. 21.

² Matt. xxii. 23–33.

³ John xviii. 36.

⁴ John xviii. 37.

him as the Son of God, who dwelt from eternity with the Father, and knew all his counsels.

The divine authority of the record of revelation contained in the Old Testament being admitted, we infer at once, by analogy, that of the apostolic writings. Otherwise we should be reduced to the necessity of placing the apostles on a lower plane than Moses and the prophets, whereas the Saviour places them, in their office as teachers, above all their predecessors. He says of John the Baptist: "Verily, I say unto you, among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."¹ In a certain sense it might be said that the least *believer* who is *in* the kingdom of heaven is greater than any believer before its establishment. But the context naturally restricts us to *prophets* — men possessing the spirit of prophecy with its extraordinary endowments. John's greatness as a prophet lay in his near relation to Christ as his *fore-runner*, and the one chosen by God to see him and testify to him before the people. But the least prophet *in the kingdom of heaven* was greater than he, as having a nearer relation to Christ and fuller revelations concerning him. But if we deny to the writings of Christ's own apostles, chosen by him to establish his church, and endowed on the day of Pentecost with the gift of the Holy Spirit, that divine authority which we concede to the things written concerning Christ "in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms," we make them not greater than John and the prophets before him, but less than the least of them, which is a true *reductio ad absurdum*. Holding, then, the divine authority of the record left us by Moses and the prophets, we must, *a fortiori*, admit that of the writings of Christ's own apostles, who were greater than they.

2. Our second argument is drawn from *the necessity of the case*. Though our Lord finished the work which the Father gave him to do on earth, he did not finish the revelation of

¹ Matt. xi. 11.

his gospel. On the contrary, he said to his disciples just before his crucifixion: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all the truth";¹ a plain intimation that these "many things," reserved for future communication, should be imparted to them not by himself in person, but through the Holy Spirit. And what were these "many things"? One of them was the purely spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. This was not understood by the apostles till after the day of Pentecost; for we find them asking, just before his ascension, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" a question which he declined answering, while he referred them to the promised gift of the Spirit.² Another of the things which they could not bear during our Lord's personal ministry, was the abolition of the Mosaic law, and thus of the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. This great truth was so connected with the import of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice (to be next considered) that the unfolding of the two necessarily went hand in hand with each other. By the preaching of the cross the apostles taught *doctrinally* that in Christ there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; but Christ is all, and in all";³ and they taught the same truth *practically* by their decisions in respect to the Gentile converts.⁴ Then, again, what a rich unfolding we have in the apostolic epistles of the meaning of Christ's death on Calvary, and, in connection with this, of the doctrine of justification by faith! Faith *in Christ's person* had always been required. This the apostles had before his crucifixion. But faith *in Christ crucified* for the sins of the world they could not have till after the counsel of God had been revealed by his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension to heaven. We might specify other truths, as, for example, what Paul says of the resurrection and the spiritual body.⁵ But those that have been men-

¹ John xvi. 12, 13.² Acts i. 6-8.³ Col. iii. 11.⁴ See Acts x., xi., and xv.⁵ 1 Cor. xv.; 1 Thess. iv. 13-18.

tioned enter into the very substance of the gospel. They are, in fact, integral parts of it; and that they might be unfolded without error the apostles needed a special illumination and guidance from on high. Can we now suppose that our Lord began the revelation of his gospel by his own infallible wisdom, and then left it to be completed by the wisdom of fallible men? The case of evangelical teachers since the days of the apostles is exceedingly different. They are not commissioned to *add* anything to the revelations of the New Testament, and need not, therefore, the attribute of infallibility. If Augustine and Jerome, in the later period of the Roman empire, if Anselm and Bernard in the Middle Ages, if Luther and Calvin at the era of the Reformation, if Wesley and Edwards in later days, have committed errors, these are comparatively of small account, provided only that we have in the apostolic writings an infallible standard by which to try their doctrines. But if the apostles whom Christ himself appointed to finish the work of revelation which he had begun, and whom he endowed with miraculous powers, as the broad seal of their commission, were left without any sure guarantee against error, then we are afloat on a sea of uncertainty without chart or compass, there being no standard of truth to which the church since the apostolic period can appeal. No man who believes that Jesus is the Son of God, and that he came into the world to make to men a perfect revelation of the way of life, can admit such an absurd supposition.

3. Our third argument is drawn from *Christ's express promises to his apostles*. The substance of these is, that they should be divinely qualified for the work committed to them through the gift of the Holy Ghost. For convenience of discussion we will first consider the promises recorded in the so-called synoptic Gospels. In immediate connection with their commission to preach his gospel the Saviour said: "Ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony to them and to the nations. But when they

deliver you up, be not solicitous¹ how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given to you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For not ye are the speakers, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.”² And again, referring to the persecutions that should come upon his apostles, he said: “But when they shall lead you and deliver you up, be not solicitous beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for not ye are the speakers, but the Holy Spirit”;³ “And when they bring you unto the synagogues and the magistrates and the powers, be not solicitous how or what ye shall answer, or what ye shall say. For the Holy Spirit shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say”;⁴ “Settle it therefore in your hearts not to premeditate what ye shall answer. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist.”⁵ These promises are explicit enough. The only way in which one could attempt to evade their force would be to say that they referred to a *specific emergency* alone — “when they bring you unto the synagogues and the magistrates and the powers”; but that they did not contain any *general promise* of infallible guidance. Thus he would interpret the gracious Saviour’s promise to his disciples not in the largest sense, but in the most narrow and restricted way possible, as Portia did Shylock’s bond for a pound of Antonio’s flesh, standing upon the exact letter:

“This bond doth give thee here no jot of blood;
 The words expressly are, a pound of flesh.

 Therefore prepare thee to cut off the flesh.
 Shed thou no blood; nor cutt^hou less nor more,
 But just a pound of flesh.”

Such a narrow principle of interpretation suited well the necessity of Portia’s case, which was to eviscerate from the bond all its substance; but it is not the Saviour’s manner to

¹ The original is *μη μεριμνήσητε.*

² Matt. x. 18-20.

³ Mark xiii. 11.

⁴ Luke xii. 11, 12.

⁵ Luke xxi. 14, 15.

weigh out his promises after this legal fashion, carefully guarding his disciples against expecting one jot too much from them. His rule is rather to give "good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over." And in the present instance it is manifest that he specifies their being brought before kings and rulers as a *representative case*. In so great an emergency as this, one to which the apostles must have looked forward with special anxiety, the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit shall not fail them. The legitimate inference is that they shall have help from him for all other emergencies. Consider for a moment the absurdity of the supposition that Christ's promises to his apostles did indeed guarantee to them all needful help when they should stand before kings and rulers; but not when they should preach his gospel verbally or in writing, and settle the constitution of his church. Which, one might ask, was the more needful, that they should be kept from error in answering the magistrate, or in deliberating on the momentous question of imposing upon the Gentiles the Mosaic law? In standing before Caesar, or in writing for the use of the churches the history of our Lord's life and teachings? In expounding before Festus and Agrippa the doctrine of the resurrection, or in unfolding for all coming ages the great doctrine of justification by faith?

But, if there could be any doubt as to the true scope of the promises which we have been considering, it must be removed by the character of those recorded in the Gospel of John, all of which are comprehensive and general in their character. It will be sufficient to adduce two of them. "These things," said Jesus, in his last discourse with his disciples before his crucifixion, "have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, 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."¹ And again: "I have yet many things to say unto you; but ye

¹ John xiv. 25, 26.

cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth;¹ for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine; therefore said I that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."² In the former of these passages the special promise is that the Holy Spirit shall bring to the remembrance of the apostles, and unfold to their understanding, all Christ's personal teachings which they have enjoyed: "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." Thus they shall have a fuller apprehension of the meaning of their Lord's words than was possible at the time when they were uttered. The second promise is introduced by the declaration that the Saviour has yet many things in reserve for his apostles, which they cannot now bear. Of course, he will not communicate them personally. They are reserved for the ministration of the Spirit, as he immediately proceeds to show: "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth." He shall glorify Christ; for he shall take of the things that are Christ's, and reveal them to the apostles. And what are the things which are Christ's? The Saviour himself answers: "All things which the Father hath are mine"; as the scripture says elsewhere that "the Father had given all things into his hands."³ Among these "all things" are included all the Father's counsels pertaining to the way of salvation through his Son. These are given to the Son; and the Holy Spirit takes of them, and reveals to the churches, through the apostles, as much as is needful for their edification and salvation. Wonderful words are these! In them our Lord's Deity shines forth; and they contain, at the same time, a sure guarantee to the apostles

¹ ὁδηγήσει ὑμᾶς εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, *he shall guide you into all the truth*; that is, all that pertains to Christ's person and offices.

² John xvi. 12-15.

³ John xiii. 3.

of all the supernatural illumination and guidance which they needed in the work committed to their hands.

The question has often been asked: Were these promises given to the apostles alone, or through them to the church at large? The answer is at hand. They were given *primarily* and in a *special sense* to the apostles; for they had reference to a special work committed to them, which required for its performance special divine illumination and guidance. They were given in a *secondary sense* to the church at large, inasmuch as all believers enjoy, through the apostles, the benefit of these revelations of the Holy Spirit. It is important to remember that the promises in question are not made to all believers personally, but were given, once for all, through the apostles, to all believers. The gift of the Holy Spirit is, indeed, made to all believers personally, according to the measure of their necessities. They are not called, as were the apostles, to lay the foundations of the Christian faith, and have, therefore, no promise of new revelations from the Spirit or of personal elevation above all error, any more than they have of miraculous gifts.

4. We add a fourth argument, drawn from the *miraculous gifts* conferred on the apostles. These must, of course, be considered in strict connection with the tenor of their office. They were the divine seal of their commission. The contents of the commission must be learned from other sources, chiefly from the testimony of the apostles themselves. Here we may draw a pertinent illustration from the mission of Moses. God sent Moses to Egypt with a commission to lead forth his people from bondage; and this commission he attested by the miracles which he empowered him to perform: "And it shall be, if they will not believe thee, neither hearken to the voice of the first sign, that they will believe the voice of the latter sign. And it shall be, if they will not believe also these two signs, neither hearken unto thy voice, that thou shalt take of the water of the river, and pour it upon the dry land; and the water which thou takest

out of the river shall become blood upon the dry land.”¹ Now, we have seen the tenor of the apostles’ commission, which was to go into all the world, and teach all nations the things commanded them by Christ, and also to communicate to them the further revelations of the Spirit, concerning things which they were not prepared to receive from our Lord during his personal ministry. For this work they were qualified by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and Christ himself attested their qualification by the miraculous endowments which he conferred upon them. When Peter, in the presence of the assembled multitudes, healed a man that had been lame from his birth, and then proceeded to unfold to the people the way of salvation through Christ, he both gave them the contents of his commission and showed them the divine seal impressed upon it. The only legitimate inference to be drawn from what he *did* in the name of Christ was, that the *message* which he delivered to the people in Christ’s name was authentic and worthy of full credence. What man in his sober senses could believe that Peter and John wrought miracles in the name of Christ, but that when they taught the people the way of salvation through Christ their words did not have the sanction of Christ’s authority? But if they were qualified to preach, so were they also to write, with divine authority. For no other inspiration was required in the latter case than in the former. And what was spoken or written by Christ’s authority must be received as truth coming from Christ himself.

Some may think that in past days the miraculous element in Christianity was made too exclusively prominent. With such we will not contend. We simply remark that now the tendency is in the opposite direction. With a certain class of writers, of whom Renan may be taken as the representative, the passion for eliminating from the history of the world all that is properly supernatural amounts to moral insanity. They give us to understand that they have seen quite through the universe, and know that such a thing as

¹ Ex. iv. 8, 9.

a miracle never did, and never can, happen in it. Zophar asked, long ago: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea."¹ In accordance with the spirit of these questions it has been thought presumptuous to deny that supernatural interposition in certain great crises of the world's history may be a part of the divine plan, and therefore not unnatural, but in strict harmony with the constitution and office of nature, which is not itself a final end, but only God's handmaid ministering to a high moral end. But these men are confident that they have found out the Almighty unto perfection; that miracles have no normal place in the plan of his universe; and that, consequently, the belief in them is an inadmissible violation of their "scientific conscience." So they address themselves resolutely to the work of eliminating from Christianity its supernatural element, which, as a late writer well remarks, "is to reject the Gospels as credible narratives, and, if we still call ourselves Christians, to be Christians in no sense known to human language or history — to be disciples of a Christ solely of our own fabrication, therefore our own disciples, not another's."¹ The statement is well put. The very aim of rationalism is to make us "our own disciples," our own reason being the arbiter as to what may, and what may not, be admitted in the scriptural record. In other words, the fundamental principle of rationalism is, that God has never made an authoritative, supernatural revelation of himself to men, which, though not contrary to unperverted human reason, is yet above it, revealing things that lie beyond its sphere. The religion of rationalism needs, of course, no miracles; for it contains no proper revelations from God to be attested by them. But if God has, in very deed, revealed himself to men, the divine authentication of the fact is needed, and thus miracles have their appropriate

¹ Job xi. 7-9. ² Dr. A. P. Peabody, in the Boston Lectures for 1870, p. 187.

place in the plan of revelation. To return to the case of the apostles, the miraculous gifts conferred upon them were God's seal to their commission; and, since he never sets his seal to falsehood, these miraculous gifts gave to their words, spoken or written, the stamp of divine authority.

5. We are now prepared to consider, as a fifth argument, the *claims made by the apostles themselves* to speak and write with divine authority. It has been shown in the preceding Number that their simple declaration concerning themselves, taken by itself, could avail nothing. But this same declaration, taken in connection with their acknowledged relation to Christ, the work committed by him to them, his promises to them, and the miraculous gifts bestowed upon them, is of the weightiest import. It was not, indeed, their custom to make gratuitous assertions of their superhuman guidance and authority. Their position rendered this unnecessary. The self-oblivion that pervades the historical books of the New Testament, two of which were written by apostles, is truly majestic, and is itself a mark of inspiration. In the Gospel of Matthew the personality of the writer does not so much as once come to the surface; in the Gospel of John it appears very rarely, and only when the nature of the circumstances related makes it appropriate. All the historical writers go forward serenely, in the full confidence that they can rightfully claim, and shall have, the credence of the churches, and aiming only to set forth the truth in its naked simplicity. Yet, when occasions arose, chiefly from the opposition of false teachers, the apostles did not hesitate to assert the authority which they had received from their Master in unambiguous terms. In the memorable letter of the apostles and elders and brethren to the Gentile churches, they say: "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things."¹ The words "to the Holy Ghost, and to us," can only mean, to us under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The apostle Paul, again, writing to the Corinthians, says: "Now we have re-

¹ Acts xv. 28.

ceived not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."¹ Here he undeniably speaks of himself and his associates in the gospel ministry; and his reference is not to any particular occasion, but to the general tenor of their preaching. They habitually spoke — and by parity of reason wrote also — not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which were taught them by the Holy Ghost. So also, writing to the Galatians, among whom his apostolic standing had been called in question by certain Judaizing teachers, he says: "I certify you brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man; for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ."² This language is explicit enough. It could have been used only by one who was conscious of having been divinely qualified and authorized to preach the gospel. Accordingly, in this same epistle, he more than once opposes his apostolic authority to the false teachers who were troubling the churches of Galatia: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you in the grace of Christ, unto another gospel: which is not another; except that there are some who trouble you, wishing to subvert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven preach a gospel to you other than we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now again say I: "If any man preaches to you a gospel other than ye received, let him be accursed;"³ and once more: "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing."⁴ Writing also to the Corinthians he says: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandments of the Lord."⁵ On the above passages we remark:

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.² Gal. i. 11, 12.³ Gal. i. 6-9.⁴ Gal. v. 2.⁵ 1 Cor. xiv. 37.

First, that they express not the authority which the apostle's words and writings had on certain occasions ; but that which belonged to them always, though it was only on certain occasions that he felt the necessity of asserting it. Secondly, that the authority which belonged to his words and writings belonged also to those of the apostles as a body. Accordingly we find the apostle John writing with the same absolute assurance: " We are of God. He that knoweth God, heareth us ; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."¹ Thirdly, that honest men, such as the apostles are admitted to have been, could not have used language of this kind, except under the full consciousness that they spoke and wrote by Christ's authority in such a high sense that their commandments were " the commandments of the Lord." Besides explicit assertions, like those that have been quoted, there is a tone of divine authority running through the apostolic writings. They assert the weightiest truths, and make the weightiest revelations concerning the future, as men who know that they have a valid claim to be explicitly believed and obeyed. What majesty of authority, for example, shines through Paul's discussion of the doctrine of the resurrection ! He announces truths, that lie wholly beyond the ken of human reason, with the full and calm assurance of one who speaks from God. The same tone of certainty runs through the remarks which the apostle John interweaves with his Gospel and his Epistles, as well as though the other apostolic Epistles.

The Inspiration of the Associates of the Apostles.

We restrict the term " associates " in the present discussion to those who were the recognized associates of the apostles in the work of preaching the gospel ; since it is not claimed that any other men than apostles or their helpers in the gospel ministry were the authors of the canonical books of the New Testament, though the miraculous gifts of the Spirit

¹ 1 John iv. 6.

cannot be restricted to these, as will be manifest from a brief survey of the early history of the church. After our Lord's ascension the eleven apostles returned to Jerusalem, and they with the disciples — that is, those openly known as such — took up their abode in an upper room.¹ Luke gives the number of the names at “about an hundred and twenty.” This, according to the ordinary Jewish mode of reckoning,² is probably the number of the men present, besides whom were the women who had followed the Saviour. From these disciples Matthias was, at Peter's suggestion, chosen by lot to take the place of Judas. During the time that intervened between the ascension and the day of Pentecost “these all continued in prayer and supplication with one accord”; and it was upon this company, not exclusively upon the twelve apostles, that the Spirit descended. Upon the day of Pentecost “they were all with one accord in one place,” the Spirit fell on them all, “and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”³ We know that among those present on this memorable occasion were our Lord's brethren,⁴ a fact to which we shall have occasion to refer hereafter. In like manner, upon the inauguration of the work of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, a work which Peter began by express revelation from God, “while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God.”⁵ But with the exception of these notable instances, the gift of the Holy Ghost — that is, in the high and special sense of miraculous endowments — was, so far as the sacred record gives us information, imparted by the laying on of the apostle's hands. Thus, when Philip the evangelist preached the gospel to the Samaritans, they

¹ Acts i.² Matt. xiv. 21; xv. 38.³ Acts ii. 1 seq.⁴ Acts i. 14.⁵ Acts x.

received it joyfully, and were baptized in the name of Christ. Philip himself had the gift of the Spirit, and wrought miracles and signs among the people, but he did not impart to others this gift. It was when the apostles Peter and John came and laid their hands on the believers that they received the Holy Ghost.¹ Another analagous case is that of the disciples at Ephesus who had been baptized to John's baptism, and afterwards, upon being more fully instructed by Paul, "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues and prophesied."² The gift of the Holy Ghost, then, in the special sense of miraculous endowments, was widely enjoyed in the primitive churches.

We are not, however, to infer that all who received this gift were judged by the apostles competent to be associated with them in the work of preaching the word. "Tongues are for a sign,"³ says the apostle; and the same is more or less true of all the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. They did not, in and of themselves, indicate the qualifications requisite for a preacher of the gospel. They who spoke under the impulse of the Holy Spirit in a language intelligible to the hearers uttered, of course, words of edification. But something more than this is needed in the man who is set apart for the ministry of the word. He must have the qualifications insisted upon by Paul in the pastoral Epistles; among which are a good report, aptness to teach, and the ability "by sound doctrine to exhort and to convince the gainsayers."⁴ He must be a man who has a comprehensive knowledge of the gospel — "a scribe instructed unto the kingdom of heaven, like a man who is a householder, who brings forth out of his treasure, things new and old."⁵ In this respect the practice of the apostle Paul agreed with his theory. For his first missionary tour the Holy Ghost as-

¹ Acts viii. 14-17.

² Acts xix. 1-7.

³ 1 Cor. xiv. 22.

⁴ See 1 Tim. iii. 1-7; 2 Tim. ii. 2; Titus i. 6-9.

⁵ Matt. xiii. 52.

signed Barnabas as his companion,¹ doubtless, because of his pre-eminent fitness for the work. "And they had also," the narrative adds, "John to their minister,"² that is, as appears from the context, "John whose surname was Mark."³ On his second missionary tour, the apostle, rejecting Mark for reasons that will be considered presently, chose Silas for his helper.⁴ Again, finding in Asia Minor a young man by the name of Timothy, whose father was a Greek, "well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium," he circumcised him, and took him with him.⁵ It is manifest that in choosing his associates in the work of preaching the gospel he had respect not simply to the miraculous endowments of the Spirit, but also to their qualifications, natural and acquired, which these supernatural gifts did not supersede, but rather supplemented.

Thus there arose very naturally, within the sphere of those who had the gift of the Spirit, partly by the immediate selection of the apostle, and partly without any formal action on their part, an interior circle of men, whose endowments were recognized by the apostles and the churches, and who were their acknowledged helpers in the work of the ministry. It would be very contrary to the genius of primitive Christianity to conceive of the apostles as taking towards these men a patronizing attitude, and keeping them under their leading-strings. The apostles were raised by their position above all petty jealousies. They joyfully recognized the gifts bestowed by the great Head of the church on others, and gave them their confidence, so long as they proved themselves worthy of it, not in name, but in reality. It is not surprising that within this circle of helpers should have been found men peculiarly gifted with the pen, whose writings were unanimously received by the churches as co-ordinate in authority with those of the apostles. It is not necessary to assume that they wrote at the dictation of apostles, or under their formal supervision. If they had the

¹ Acts xiii. 2.² Acts xiii. 5.³ Acts xii. 25; xv. 37.⁴ Acts xv. 40.⁵ Acts xvi. 1-3.

confidence of the apostles and churches for the works which they undertook, that was enough; and this may be reasonably believed in respect to all the books of the New Testament not emanating from apostles. .

1. *The Writings of Mark and Luke.*

There is no valid ground for assuming the existence of two persons by the name of Mark, or for doubting the correctness of the ancient tradition which identifies the author of the second Gospel with "John whose surname was Mark,"¹ who is called simply John² and Marcus, or Mark.³ He was a kinsman of Barnabas,⁴ which relationship may explain Barnabas's earnest defence of him against Paul.⁵ His mother Mary resided at Jerusalem. Her house was a well-known place of resort for the primitive Christians, and to this Peter went immediately upon his miraculous deliverance from prison.⁶ The intimacy of Peter with Mary's family must have brought about an early acquaintance between the apostle Peter and Mark, which continued, according to the common interpretation of 1 Pet. v. 13, to the end of Peter's life, and which is affirmed with great unanimity by ecclesiastical tradition. His connection with the apostle Paul began upon the occasion of the visit of Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem to carry alms to the disciples who dwelt in Judea. Upon the return of these two men to Antioch they "took with them John whose surname was Mark,"⁷ and he accompanied them on their first missionary tour as far as Perga in Pamphylia, whence, departing from them, he returned to Jerusalem.⁸ The apostle Paul regarded this act as highly reprehensible, and on the ground of it he rejected him on his second missionary tour, and took Silas in his stead.⁹ There was no difference of opinion between him and Barnabas as to the ministerial gifts of

¹ Acts xii. 12, 25; xv. 37.

² Acts xiii. 5, 13.

³ Acts xv. 39; Col. iv. 10; 2 Tim. iv. 11; perhaps, also, 1 Pet. v. 13.

⁴ Col. iv. 10.

⁵ Acts xv. 37-39.

⁶ Acts xii. 12.

⁷ Acts xii. 25.

⁸ Acts xiii. 5, 13.

⁹ Acts xv. 37-40.

Mark. The contention between them related to the moral quality of his conduct. Paul evidently ascribed his departure from them to the influence of unworthy motives, and gave, as it would seem, or caused to be given, commandments of an unfavorable character. But these he afterwards revoked;¹ and during his final imprisonment at Rome he made the most honorable mention of him: "Take Mark, and bring him with thee; for he is profitable to me for the ministry."² The above is the sum of all that we know concerning Mark from the New Testament. There is, however, as is well-known, a mass of ecclesiastical tradition concerning him, not altogether self-consistent, yet all its parts agreeing in the representation that Mark was the constant companion of Peter during the later years of the apostle's life, and was his "interpreter." The first writer is Papias, quoted by Eusebius, who says, upon the testimony of John the presbyter: "Mark, being Peter's interpreter, wrote down accurately as many things as he remembered, not, indeed, as giving in order the things which were spoken or done by Christ; for he was neither a hearer nor a follower of our Lord, but, as I said, of Peter, who gave his instructions as occasion required, but not as one who was composing an orderly account of our Lord's words. Mark, therefore, committed no error when he thus wrote down certain things as he remembered them. For he was careful of one thing—to omit nothing of the things which he heard, and to make no false statements concerning them."³ Irenaeus, as cited by Eusebius, says: "Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself also delivered to us in writing the things that were preached by Peter"; and this he represents as having been done *μετὰ τὴν τούτων ἔξοδον*, that is, as we must understand him, *after the death of these men* [Peter and Paul].⁴ Eusebius also says, on the authority of Clement of Alexandria, that Mark, at the request of Peter's hearers at Rome, wrote out the doctrine which Peter had delivered to them orally,

¹ Col. iv. 10.² Eusebius's History Eccl. iii. 39.³ 2 Tim. iv. 11.⁴ Ibid. v. 8.

and that the apostle "was delighted with the zeal of the men, and sanctioned the writing for use in the assembly of the church."¹ But, again, referring to the same request on the part of the Roman Christians, and Mark's compliance with it, Clement says, according to Eusebius, that when Peter knew of Mark's writing, he neither forbade it nor encouraged it."² Eusebius also gives his own judgment when he says that "all things written by Mark are called the memoirs of Peter's discourses."³ Tertullian's words are: "The Gospel which Mark published is reckoned as Peter's, whose interpreter he was";⁴ and Jerome says: "So then he [Paul] had Titus as interpreter; just as the blessed Peter had Mark, in the composition of whose Gospel Peter narrated and he wrote."⁵ And so the stream of tradition flows on.

If, now, we rested the canonical authority of Mark's Gospel upon the assumption that he wrote at Peter's dictation, or at least under his supervision, so as to make it virtually not his, but Peter's, Gospel, it would be necessary to subject these traditional notices to a critical examination, that we might determine accurately the authority due to them, and also the way, if any could be found, of harmonizing them with each other. But the question is to be settled on broader principles. We have, first, the witness of the Gospel itself to Mark's gifts as a writer; secondly, the concurrent testimony of the New Testament and of ecclesiastical tradition to the fact of his intimate association with two of the apostles in the work of the ministry; thirdly, the unanimous reception of his Gospel by all the churches. This last consideration is one of great weight. The churches knew Mark's gifts, natural and supernatural; they knew, also his relation

¹ Eusebius's Hist. Eccl. ii. 15.

² προτρέπτικῶς μὴτε κωλύσαι μὴτε προτρέψασθαι. — Hist. Eccl. vi. 14.

³ πάντα γὰρ τὰ παρὰ Μάρκου τοῦ Πέτρου διαλέξεων εἶναι λέγεται ἀπομνημονεύματα. — Demonstr. Evang. iii. 5.

⁴ Marcus quod edidit evangelium Petri adfirmatur, cujus interpres Marcus. — Contra Marc. iv. 5.

⁵ Cujus evangelium Petro narrante et illo scribente compositum est. — Ad Hedib. Quaest. 11. Vol. i.

to the apostles and their judgment concerning him. Whether he did or did not write under the supervision of the apostle Peter, or at his suggestion, their unhesitating reception of his Gospel from the very first is the expression of their judgment that he had not transcended the sphere assigned to him by the Holy Ghost and recognized by the apostles; and in this judgment we may well acquiesce.

The unanimous voice of antiquity ascribes the third Gospel, with the Acts of the Apostles, to Luke. He first appears as the travelling companion of Paul when he leaves Troas for Macedonia; ¹ for the use of the first person plural — “we endeavored,” “the Lord had called us,” “we came,” etc. — which occurs from that point in Paul’s history and onward, with certain interruptions, admits of no other natural and reasonable explanation. It is generally believed that he is identical with “Luke, the beloved physician,” who was with Paul when a prisoner at Rome.² The evangelist himself gives us, in his dedicatory address to Theophilus,³ clear and definite information respecting the sources of his Gospel. He does not profess to have been himself an eye-witness; but he has drawn his accounts from those “who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.” From the long and intimate connection of Luke with Paul, it is reasonable to suppose that the apostle must have exerted an influence on the composition of the Gospel. Luke, however, gives us to understand that he draws his materials not from Paul (at least, not principally), but from those “who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word.” He did not, then, write at Paul’s dictation, but in a free and independent way. There cannot be, however, any reasonable ground for doubting that he wrote both his works with Paul’s knowledge and approbation. The closing passage in the Acts of the Apostles brings down Paul’s history to the end of the second year of his imprisonment at Rome. The natural inference is that this is the date of the book. It was written at Rome, not very long

¹ Acts xvi. 10. ² Col. iv. 14; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11. ³ Luke i. 1 seq.

after the composition of the Gospel, while Paul was yet a prisoner there, and Luke with him. This fact alone sufficiently accounts for the unanimous reception of these two books by the churches. Then we have as in the case of Mark's Gospel, the witness of the works themselves to Luke's gifts as a writer.

2. *The Epistles of James and Jude.*

We do not propose to discuss the much controverted question respecting "James the Lord's brother." It is sufficient to say that the author of the Epistle which bears the name of James is, beyond reasonable doubt, the same James who gave the final opinion in the assembly of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem,¹ whom Paul names with Cephas and John as one of the "pillars" there,² who elsewhere appears as a man of commanding influence in the church at Jerusalem,³ and whom ecclesiastical tradition represents as presiding over the church in that city. If one doubts, as many do, the identity of this James with James the son of Alphaeus, who was one of the twelve, this cannot affect the canonical authority of the Epistle. For the position of this man in the church at Jerusalem, and his relation to the apostolic college, is such that, even though he did not belong to the number of the twelve, his writings must have to us the full weight of apostolic authority. Lardner, indeed, lays down the rule that "no men, besides apostles, have the privilege of writing epistles, or other works, preceptive and doctrinal, that shall be received by the churches in that quality." And he adds: "Mark and Luke, apostolical men, may write histories of our Lord's and his apostles' preaching and doctrine and miracles, which shall be received as sacred and of authority; but no epistles, or other writings delivering doctrines and precepts (except only in the way of historical narration), can be of authority, but those written by apostles."⁴ Not to dwell on the distinction here made

¹ Acts xv. 13-21.

² Gal. ii. 9.

³ Acts xxi. 18; Gal. ii. 12.

⁴ *History of the Apostles and Evangelists*, chap. ii.

between the inspiration of evangelists and the writers of doctrinal epistles, it is sufficient to say that this is a question of fact, rather than of theory. We might very naturally have reasoned *a priori* that none but apostles would be chosen by the Holy Ghost to write the Gospels; or, if men were taken outside of their number, that they would be those who had themselves been eye-witnesses of the facts and discourses which they recorded, not those who had simply gathered their knowledge from eye-witnesses. But both these hypotheses are set aside by the plain facts in the case, and to these our theory must be accommodated. Just so is it in respect to the Epistles. Undoubtedly the circle of men who could write authoritative epistles to the churches was very limited. But when we assume that not even James, the Lord's brother, who was one of the hundred and twenty who originally received the gift of the Spirit, who occupied so central a position in the mother church at Jerusalem, and had such authority in the deliberations of the apostles and elders—that not even this man could write an epistle to his brethren scattered abroad which should “be received as sacred and of authority,” unless he were himself an apostle in the strict sense of the word, we unwarrantably limit the gifts of the Holy Spirit. If any think they can maintain, on valid historic grounds, that James who wrote the Epistle belonged to the number of the twelve apostles, let them do so. But if, as many are persuaded, this cannot be done, we are not therefore to deny the right of the Epistle to “be received as sacred and of authority.”

The question whether *Jude*, who styles himself “the servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James,”¹ was the apostle Judas mentioned by Luke and John,² or Judas the Lord's brother,³ has been, in like manner, much discussed. Upon either supposition, the remarks made respecting the canonical authority of the Epistle of James apply to this short Epistle also.

¹ Jude 1.

² Luke vi. 16; John xiv. 22.

³ Matt. xiii. 55; Mark vi. 3.

3. *The Epistle to the Hebrews.*

This Epistle is without address, and omits also at the beginning the apostolic salutation. Thus it commences in the form of an essay, though it closes in that of an epistle. These circumstances, in connection with its peculiar style and diction, and the peculiar range of the topics discussed in it, have led many to deny its Pauline authorship, at least in the immediate sense in which Paul was the author of the epistles which bear his name. The Eastern churches, among whom it was first put in circulation, and from whom the knowledge of it was spread abroad, ascribed it to Paul as its author, either immediately or virtually. We say immediately or virtually; for it is well known that Clement of Alexandria accounted for its peculiar diction by the assumption that it was written to the Hebrews in the Hebrew tongue, but translated by Luke into Greek;² and that Origen's position respecting it was that the thoughts are the apostle's, but the diction and composition those of some one who recorded the apostle's views.³ In the Western churches the case was different. Clement of Rome did, indeed, refer to the Epistle as authoritative, but without naming its author; and its Pauline authorship was not generally admitted, nor was it generally received as a part of the sacred canon, till the fourth century, apparently on the ground that the two questions of its Pauline authorship and its canonical authority were not separated from each other. But this is, as we have seen in the case of the Epistles of James and Jude, an unwarrantable limitation. If we cannot affirm that all who were associated with the apostles in the work of the ministry had the gifts needful for the composition of epistles that should be received by the churches "as sacred and of authority," it would, nevertheless, be presumptuous to deny to some the possession of these gifts. Herein the judgment of the primitive churches ought to have great weight with us. The writer to the Hebrews,

¹ As quoted by Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* vi. 14.

² Eusebius, as above, vi. 25.

whoever he may have been, was well known to those whom he addressed, as is manifest from his closing words: "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you."¹ They received the epistle as coming, if not immediately from Paul, yet under the sanction of his authority; at least, as coming from one who held such relations to the apostle that in writing to them an authoritative epistle he had not transcended the sphere of his gifts as acknowledged by the apostle and the churches. Such was the judgment of the Eastern churches from the beginning, and in this the Western churches finally acquiesced.

But what about the epistles of the so-called apostolic Fathers, that are acknowledged to be genuine, but were yet not allowed a place in the canon of the New Testament? In answering this question, two epistles only require notice. Clement of Rome has left an epistle which is received as genuine. Upon the supposition that he is identical with the Clement named in the Epistle to the Philippians, all that can be shown is that he was a helper of Paul, along with various other persons of both sexes, to whom the apostle refers in connection with him: "Yea, I entreat thee, also, true yoke-fellow, help those women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement, also, and my other fellow-laborers (*τῶν λοιπῶν συνεργῶν μου*), whose names are in the book of life."² This is no more than is said of Priscilla and Aquila and Urban, to whom Paul applied the same epithet.³ It does not prove that Clement was associated with the apostle in any such sense as were Mark and Luke, or Timothy and Titus, or that the churches regarded the writing of authoritative epistles as coming within the sphere of his office. There is also extant an epistle bearing the name of Barnabas. This is undeniably the same as that so often referred to by the ancient church Fathers; but whether it proceeded from the pen of the Barnabas who was Paul's companion in missionary labor is a question respecting which learned men are not agreed. The weight of evidence from early ecclesi-

¹ Heb. xiii. 23.² Phil. iv. 3.³ Rom. xvi. 3, 9.

astical tradition favors the identity of the writer with the Barnabas of the New Testament. But the internal character of the epistle militates strongly against it.¹ The primitive Christians, however, in excluding this epistle from the authoritative writings of the New Testament, seem to have been influenced by the character of its contents, taken in connection with the acknowledged fact that the author, whomsoever they may have judged him to have been, was not himself an apostle. They certainly would not have rejected an epistle known to have proceeded from an apostle, directly or indirectly. But in the case of an apostolic man (or one supposed to have been such) they felt themselves at liberty to exercise, in the words of Lee, "that critical sagacity which the most ingenious and subtle investigations of modern times have never been able to prove at fault, that unceasing caution and anxious vigilance which never admitted into the canon a single book for the rejection of which any valid reasons have been shown."² In ascribing the epistle to Paul's missionary companion³ they may have been at fault; but in denying to it a place in the canon of the New Testament they were not at fault.

General Remarks.

We add some general remarks, applicable alike to the writings of apostles and apostolical men.

1. *The testimony of the primitive churches* to the canonical authority of these writings is of the highest importance. By the primitive churches we here mean the churches of apostolic times, or those immediately following. Aside from the books of the New Testament, the writings that have come down to us from the apostolic age are so scanty that we are compelled to gather this testimony mainly at second hand. We appeal to the writings of Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Ter-

¹ See on this point Neander's Church History (Torrey's translation), Vol. i. p. 457.

² *The Inspiration of Scripture*, Lect. ii.

³ As was done by Clement of Alexandria. See Lee, as above, and the Appendix to his work marked E.

tullian, Clement of Alexandria, and others of later days. But it is only that we may learn through them the judgment of the churches that first received the books of the New Testament. This is the ground on which these later writers themselves stand. They give us not their own private judgment, but the tradition of the churches, that is, the testimony handed down in the churches from the beginning. This testimony, let it be carefully remembered, is not simply an authoritative dictum, like the declarations of the Hebrew prophets, prefaced with the words: "Thus saith the Lord"; nor is it simply a subjective opinion, drawn from the contents of the books. It is rather a comprehensive judgment, based on all the known facts in the case. The knowledge that a book had proceeded from the pen of an apostle at once secured it an unquestioned reception everywhere. Doubts respecting the apostolic authorship of a book — the Second Epistle of Peter, for example — led to a careful examination of the evidence in the case. In regard to the writings of men not belonging to the apostolic college, the churches based their decision, as has been shown, on the known relation of the authors to the apostles and the acknowledged gifts of the Spirit possessed by them, as well as on the character of the writings themselves. For the formation of a correct judgment on these points they enjoyed such advantages as we cannot possess. Earnestness and sincerity are traits which will not be denied to them, and they were certainly not wanting in common discernment. Their caution and hesitation in respect to the so-called *antilegomena* shows with what conscientious deliberation they acted, and will defend them, in the judgment of all candid men, from the unworthy imputation of a credulousness that was ready to take without examination any book that professed to have come from the pen of an apostle or an apostolic man.

2. Very important indeed is the question respecting the *contents* of a book which claims to have been written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It has been shown in a previous Number how unsafe is the rule of judging con-

cerning the inspiration of a book from the character of its contents alone. Nevertheless, we must believe that the man who writes as he is moved by the Holy Ghost will be kept from puerilities and fantastic allegorizing; that what he says will have the marks of simplicity, directness, and purity of intention, will be in harmony with the general tenor of revelation, and will consist of "wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the doctrine which is according to godliness." We need waste no time in showing that these characteristics belong in full measure to the canonical books of the New Testament. They are radiant throughout with heavenly light, in the presence of which all merely human writings lose their splendor, as the glow-worm pales "his uneffectual fire" when the matin approaches.

"A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic, like the sun :
It gives a light to every age ;
It gives, but borrows none."

We do not propose to eulogize these books, for the same reason that we would not eulogize the sun shining in his strength. But it is very instructive to notice the wide chasm which separates them from even the best writings of the so-called apostolic Fathers. The descent from the majesty and power of the canonical writings to those of the following age is abrupt and great. That this should have been so is altogether in analogy with God's established mode of procedure. At certain great crises in the world's history he manifests himself in an extraordinary way, for the purpose of establishing a new system of means and influences. Then he withdraws his sensible presence, and waits till this system has, under the superintendence of his Spirit and his providence, worked out its appropriate results. The appearance of the Son of God in this world was, to borrow the happy figure of a late writer,¹ a blessed *periouranon*, when this fallen world approached very near to the great Sun of Righteousness, and received from him an extraordinary

¹ Rev. Dr. Peabody, in the Boston Lectures for 1870, p. 190.

measure of light and life. But it was not God's plan to administer the affairs of his church through the permanent agency of miraculous gifts. When they had accomplished their end, they were withdrawn, and the history of Christ's kingdom went on, under the ordinary instrumentality of God's word, God's Spirit, and God's providence. The uninspired teachers and leaders of the church, like uninspired leaders and teachers in all ages, committed many errors, and she was, as the necessary result, compelled to learn many things by a bitter, but salutary experience. It was only by a slow process that uninspired Christian literature was able to rise from its humble beginnings to a high and commanding position through the purifying and elevating influence of the gospel upon Christian society. And even as we see it in the writings of Justin Martyr, of Irenaeus, of Tertullian, of Clement of Alexandria, and their successors, how far is it removed from the simplicity of the canonical books! How much of dross is mixed with the gold of scriptural truth! A seal of the inspiration of the books of the New Testament, broad and patent to all, is found in the fact that the more nearly the churches return to their simplicity in doctrine and practice, the more vigorous is their Christian life, and the more perfectly do they manifest to the world the beauty and glory and divine energy of Christ's kingdom on earth.