

ARTICLE V.

THE EXTENT OF INSPIRATION.

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MR. SANDAY, in his generally admirable book on the Gospels in the Second Century, speaks of the demand for a restatement of the doctrine of revelation or inspiration, inductive in its nature, and bringing out what inspiration is, not what it ought to be. I suppose that he means by this a theory based on a careful observation of the facts of Scripture, and such as to comprehend all these facts, as far as they can be ascertained, instead of a theory reasoned out from the nature of things, real or supposed. If we analyze the popular theory of inspiration, we shall see, I think, what Mr. Sanday has in his mind when he speaks of what inspiration ought to be. We have, first, the underlying fact assumed by all believers in inspiration, that the Bible is a revelation from God. Following this assumption, we have next the idea that it must therefore be perfect, like everything else proceeding from God's hands. And finally, perfection is made to mean infallibility — the absence of all errors of whatever kind. This is the popular idea of inspiration, and the short-hand method for its proof, which involves infallibility in inspiration, proving the one from the other in the nature of things.

If we examine, now, the modification of this view generally adopted by scholars, we find that they make a distinction between the substance and the form of revelation, holding that the former is divine and the latter human, and that inspiration and infallibility belong to the former only. This distinction is partly deductive, proceeding from the general law of economy in the use of the supernatural; the minor premise being that this is all that is necessary for the

accomplishment of God's purpose in revelation. But it is also partly inductive, being forced upon scholars by a consideration of the facts in regard to the manifest human character of the books of the Bible as a whole, in their literary form, and the individuality of the several parts. A modification of this view supposes that the elevated mental state of the writers communicates itself to their style; and this, too, proceeds partly from what is seen to be natural in the circumstances, and partly from observation of the otherwise unaccountable excellence of the literary quality of these books.

But we are witnessing a still further modification of the common view of inspiration, which separates not only between the substance and the form, but also between different classes of things included in the substance itself. We may make a distinction here, in order to show the general line of division adopted, between facts and ideas — between historical and scientific facts, for instance, and their moral, religious, or doctrinal import. Now, the view is gaining ground that inspiration and infallibility belong exclusively or specially to the latter, and are either wholly or mostly wanting in the former. Here, again, we have a partly deductive, partly inductive, view. Deductive in its assumption that the Bible is designed to teach only moral and religious truth, and that its narration of facts is not intended as a contribution to history and science, but simply to convey moral and religious truth, and that infallibility is therefore required only with reference to the latter, not the former, standard. Really, then, in the minds of those holding the view, this would be a distinction not between different parts of the substance of Scripture, but between the real substance and what is only apparently substance, but is really part of the form. And inductive in this — that a comparison of different parts of the Bible has discovered supposed discrepancies, and a comparison with outside sources of knowledge has revealed supposed errors; so that as an authority in matters of science the book is sometimes entirely discarded, and in history only substantial

accuracy is accorded to it, with a margin for errors such as any well-informed historian might make. Partly, too, there is no doubt that this theory is a matter of convenience, reducing the claims of the Bible to such a point as to make attack impossible, or at least certain of defeat. It seems to get rid of all the difficulties, and save all that is important. I do not mean that this view has just arisen. It has been held by some scholars for years. But it has until lately been regarded as a sceptical or rationalistic theory, and has not been supposed to be the view of evangelical scholars. But now a very considerable party among the latter is accepting it, and it is apparently becoming the received view of a certain school of theology, with an occasional statement that is certainly misleading — that it is the general view of orthodox scholarship.

Now, this review of the different theories of inspiration will show what is meant by a deductive and inductive theory of it, and to what extent the two methods of investigation and proof enter into the different views. At the same time, I think, it shows the necessity of a re-investigation of the subject. For it is evident that the scientific method has not been as yet carefully followed in the investigation. The induction of facts has not been sufficiently broad and careful. On this side, at least, the entire ground needs to be thoroughly canvassed. For while the several steps in the formation of opinion about it have been under the pressure of facts, some of them real, some of them supposed, and have been thus the correction or modification of the purely deductive theory by the results of a more or less perfect induction, and the progress has thus been toward the scientific method, it is evident that sufficient pains have not been taken to make the induction complete and thorough. I venture to say that the last view mentioned is, and can be shown to be, inconsistent with a large class of facts, and therefore inadequate. And, at the same time, I doubt if the defenders of the conservative view have taken sufficient account of the present state of the facts, or are making sufficient preparations

to defend their theory against the accumulated and carefully prepared assault that is certain to be made on it. For it is evident that the speculative defences behind which they have taken their position are not going to be sufficient, and that the point at which they have got to strengthen their line is in a careful re-examination of the facts.

The painful result of all this is a vagueness and uncertainty hanging over the entire subject of the extent of inspiration. The first step away from the extreme orthodox view seems to have been taken with some deliberation, and in view of indubitable facts. And the reasons were generally known, so as to give opportunity for intelligent choice between conflicting views. But we seem to find ourselves — and here I am speaking of the state of things in this country mainly — suddenly confronted with the third theory, scarcely knowing whence it came, what are its grounds, nor how largely it is held. And as yet scarcely any one has challenged it. So that this seems to be one of the questions in regard to which men's minds are drifting into a state of flux and uncertainty, scholars recognizing the apparent weight of the objections to the old view, and yet unwilling to attempt a new solution of the problem.

The position of the biblical scholar in such a state of things is certainly embarrassing. He encounters these apparent discrepancies, errors of statement, and misquotations, which a fair interpretation of the passages, in themselves considered, does not remove. But, on the other side, is a theory of inspiration quite generally held, and, on the whole, by himself, which excludes errors of any kind from the Scriptures, which leads him either to explain away the difficulty, or to claim, in case of the present impossibility of explanation, that it is due to insufficient knowledge. And yet the question is in such an unsettled condition that he does not feel quite sure; every new difficulty increases his perplexity, and he begins to wonder how long it will be before these apparently exceptional cases will force him to modify his view. For it is sure that there has been as yet

no adequate statement nor proof of that theory, and specially none proceeding on the scientific method, which examines and weighs all facts pro and con. Evidently, I repeat, this question has yet to be decided on adequate grounds. And by this statement I do not mean as yet to question either of the existing theories, but simply to deny the adequacy of any proof yet presented to establish either of them securely. And this mainly because the inductive proof has not been sufficiently tested and applied to them. In the successive steps that have been taken the occasion has been, as we have seen, not a speculative difficulty, but the apparent inconsistency of the facts with the existing theory. But the result has been to too great a degree the formation of new theories on new speculative grounds, and not a re-examination of the facts in various directions in order to a reconstruction of the doctrine on scientific grounds. But I do not propose to myself any such task, for obvious reasons. I only wish to discuss tentatively some of the points involved with special reference to the third theory; that which claims inspiration for the Bible only in the region of moral and religious truth, and either expressly disclaims it elsewhere, or leaves it in doubt.

But before proceeding with this discussion let us notice briefly this alternation between denial and doubt of inspiration, outside of the moral and religious sphere, which is certainly significant. The assumption is that either of these two positions, either denial or doubt, may be adopted, it makes little difference which; the important point being in the positive claim made. The general position of the indifference of this part of the question of inspiration rests on the assumption, which is certainly plausible, that the whole purpose of the Scriptures lies within the sphere for which alone the claim of inspiration is made, and that everything else is means to this end. Of course substantial historical accuracy is, or ought to be, thereby pledged; for here is the vital distinction between the Bible and the part that modern fiction and the drama play in the enforcement of moral truths, that it presents actual facts

in individual life and in history with their lessons, instead of creating characters and scenes to illustrate real or supposed truth. And it is to be noticed, moreover, that the doctrines of Scripture, most of them, have a historical basis; and of course the doctrines stand or fall with the substantial truth of the history. Both these points need to be borne in mind, for they have an important bearing on our discussion. But apparently minute accuracy in detail is not demanded by this theory. A great truth is taught by the fall of Jericho, and the manner of its capture; but it does not seem to be essential to this that the exact number of priests or of trumpets or of days be given; nor, if there were two accounts of this, that they should exactly agree in such points. And it must probably be admitted that this is a sufficient answer to the objection that history and instruction, facts and truths, are inextricably interwoven in the pattern of Scripture, and that you cannot separate them, as is proposed in this theory. They are thus interwoven, but not co-ordinate. They stand to each other in the relation of means to ends; and while the Scripture, being God's work, must infallibly reach its ends and accomplish its purpose in the exact inculcation of exact moral and religious truth, this standard of exact truth applies to the means used only so far as it is essential to their object. And for that, apparently, substantial historical accuracy is necessary, but not minute correctness of detail. Now what I wish to say is that all this depends, in the first place, on the truth of the underlying assumption that the only purpose of Scripture is the inculcation of moral and religious truth. Then, on the validity of the inference that only those parts will be inspired which bear directly on this object, and that general accuracy in the narration of facts is all that is necessary. And, finally, that to insure even this, inspiration is not sometimes needed. And here the facts come in to play an important part. Theoretically the assumption in regard to the object of the Scriptures is certainly plausible. But will the facts support it? It seems a valid inference that minute accuracy of detail in the narra-

tion of the facts used to convey truth, and forming the basis of doctrine, is not required on this assumption. But do we find such accuracy, and if so, is the premise wrong, or the inference incorrectly drawn? And, finally, are there not some facts which imply inspiration, even on the ground of general accuracy? These two things must be thoroughly tested by the facts — first, the soundness of the principle, and, second, the validity of the several steps leading from that to the conclusion that inspiration is confined to the moral and religious element in the Scriptures. Now the alternative, which either disclaims or doubts inspiration elsewhere, is open to this difficulty. If there may be other things in Scripture inspired, then it follows either that the supposed object may not be broad enough, or that the accomplishment of this purpose may require a wider range of inspiration than the one supposed. The admission of the possibility of such an alternative, which those who hold this theory seem to feel may be forced on them by the facts, is an admission that the Scriptures may take precautions to secure what is not postulated in their theory of its purpose, which manifestly weakens their entire position.

We are now prepared to take up our inquiry as to the bearing of certain facts on this theory. What has been said in regard to the theory itself will enable us to enter somewhat intelligently upon this inquiry. And first there is the somewhat wide range of prediction or prophecy in the Scripture. What is the exact relation of this to the theory under consideration? If the theory be taken in its extreme form of denial of inspiration outside of the moral and religious element in the Bible, then prophecy is certainly included in this denial. For prophecy, no more than history, is itself moral and religious, but it has moral and religious bearings. And this of course invalidates the theory by making it prove too much. For there can be no doubt in the nature of things, or as a fact, that Scripture prophecy is inspired. For certainly if history must be substantially true in order to accomplish the enforcement of moral truth, the same is true

of prediction in an enhanced degree. Otherwise God could be accused of procuring things under false pretences, and the trick would soon fail of its effect. And while to secure this general truthfulness in history only natural means are necessary, the same quality in prediction requires revelation. So that there is here revelation or inspiration outside of moral and religious truth in the Scriptures. On the other hand, if the theory is that inspiration is required not only in the moral and religious element, but also where the proper enforcement of these truths is not attainable by human means, then prophecy comes in under the latter head. But on the same principle, possibly unexpected parts of the Bible will come in in the company of prophecy. It needs to be clearly understood which of these forms of the theory is adopted. For if the former, that inspiration is confined to the moral and religious element in the Bible, we need not go any further. That is clearly disproved by the single case of prophecy, which as such, not as moral or religious, is plainly inspired; and as such is yet not included in this scheme of inspiration. And if the latter, that inspiration extends to that which is necessary to secure moral and religious ends of Scripture, but does not go further, then the terms on which it admits the inspiration of prophecy need to be remembered in the following discussion. Furthermore, one theory or the other must be consistently held in regard to prophecy itself. For it presents, at least, one serious difficulty to the defenders of inspiration, which there is a temptation to obviate by the exclusion of all except strictly moral and religious truth from its sphere. Prophecy in the Old Testament is largely occupied with one fact, the coming of the Messiah; and in the New Testament with his second coming to judgment. And it is in this theme of New Testament prophecy that the difficulty arises to which I refer. Of course I mean the time of this second coming, which is represented in the New Testament to all appearances as near at hand. Now it is obvious that this very grave difficulty is not obviated by the tenable form of our

theory. For this is certainly prediction; and the only way to obviate the difficulty presented in it is on the broader ground which would exclude all prediction from the range of inspiration, and thereby destroy itself. I repeat it, that one form of the theory or the other must be consistently held; either that which involves this difficulty, or that which obviates this difficulty and involves the greater one of excluding all prophecy from the sphere of inspiration. And so prophecy leaves us with a very serious difficulty which the moderate and only tenable form of this theory does not obviate, and we are called upon to guard against the adoption of the other under the pressure of this fact.

Possibly the bearing of this theory on prediction is not generally recognized by its defenders. But history and science are expressly included within its range, inspiration being denied in regard to both, either absolutely, or else in all cases in which inspiration is not necessary to the enforcement by means of them of moral and religious truth. In discussing this part of our subject we will begin at the beginning, since here, if anywhere, the battle rages most fiercely. The account of creation in Genesis is a crucial passage in this discussion. It is one of the things which have forced many to take this limited view of inspiration. And we do not feel sure but that it will force some of them to retract it. To my mind there is a marvellous interest attaching to this history. For here is an account of the creation certainly not written by an eye-witness, and certainly not the product of scientific investigation, written ages after the events, and ages before science had come to discover anything about the events. Of course, then, on ordinary, natural grounds, it is a myth, like the other guesses at the same thing belonging to the same time. But on the ground of infallible inspiration of the entire Bible, even on the ground of general truthfulness of its narration of events, it is a true account. And such it was supposed to be till the science of geology began its investigations, with results at first, apparently, widely different from the Mosaic record.

Then came, first, conflict, then attempts to reconcile the two accounts on the part of wise men who believed in both. But in the midst of the discussion, when nothing had been fairly decided, but when things were looking favorably for the establishment of at least general harmony, we find a change in the theory of inspiration proposed, to make room for this and other supposed difficulties. It looks very much, as far as this account is concerned, like the Battle of Bull Run, in which the Federals are said to have retreated when the battle was going quite favorably.

In discussing the bearings of this on our general subject we need to keep in mind again the two forms of the theory which we are discussing. On the more moderate form of it, which admits inspiration where it is necessary to secure the moral and religious ends of Scripture, this passage can be plainly shown to be inspired. And the other, which admits it only within the moral and religious sphere, by its exclusion of this account from the sphere of inspiration, can be clearly proved untenable. And yet we find the latter applied to this very passage. Professor Fisher, in the *New Englander*, Jan. 1877, makes the following statement:

“Another pretext for atheism is the alleged contrariety of the teaching of the Bible to the discoveries of natural and physical science. But there is no discrepancy. The Bible is our guide in morals and religion; it does not anticipate the discoveries of science. The biblical writers take the science of their time, or the ordinary conceptions of men respecting the material world, and proceed on that basis. As for geology, there was none. We know not when or by whom the story of creation in its present form was first received. But that sublime passage is plainly the old Semitic tradition, cleansed of polytheistic error, and made the vehicle of conveying the loftiest moral and religious truth. There is no inconsistency, then, between the Bible taken as the teacher of moral and religious truth and the results of scientific study.”

And in a foot-note he adds: “In the first three chapters

of Genesis we find asserted the truths that the universe owes its being to the creative agency of one personal God; that man is like God in his spiritual faculties; that sin is not a physical or metaphysical necessity, but has its origin and seat in the will of the creature; that guilt brings shame and separation from communion with God; that immorality is the natural fruit of impiety." This latter statement suggests the first difficulty in the application of the theory stated to this passage. For, according to this, the moral and religious truth taught in the account of creation is simply this: "That the universe owes its being to the creative agency of one personal God. All the other points in the enumeration belong to succeeding chapters and to another subject. And this being the object for which the account is given, there is certainly a large amount of extraneous matter, and therefore a lack of adaptation of means to ends, — a sad want of proportion, — in this "sublime passage." If we are to judge by the narrative itself, aside from any theory of its object drawn from the supposed general purpose of Scripture, we should surely say that it was intended to teach something else than the general truth that God is the personal Creator; that it goes beyond this into the statement of the manner and order of creation; and that this, if not a part of the purpose of the account, certainly contributes nothing to the supposed object. And this extraneous matter is so disproportionately large as to nearly cover up the supposed real design. An analogous case may help us see the strength of this objection. Suppose a book giving an account of the building of Cologne Cathedral. It is generally accepted as a true account, until some architect, comparing it with the cathedral itself, finds mistakes in it. There is, to be sure, general correctness, but errors of some importance in detail. The defenders of the book try to overcome these difficulties, but at last give up that; and then, in order to save the book, they set up the story that it was intended only to give the builder's name, and that, inasmuch as this was its sole object, it must be judged by that standard. Imagine the situation.

But in another way this passage presents a still more anomalous aspect on the theory that it is uninspired, and therefore untrue. Wherever else we look into the Bible we find that it employs historical facts, substantially corresponding to the truth, to convey moral and religious truth. And we have seen that this degree of truth is certainly essential to its purpose. But on this theory we have here a "Semitic tradition," "the science of the time," "a poem, a product of the imagination" used for the purpose, i.e. since the science of the time was false in regard to this subject, a mythical account of the manner and order of creation, given merely as the vehicle of the fact that God is the Creator. This is radically different from the Book of Job, in which a drama is supposed to be used as the vehicle of religious truth. For the supposition in that case is that no such events ever occurred, whereas in this case we are supposed to have a false account of actual events. There is the difference between fiction, in which only ideal truth is expected, and false history. The former we do find in Scripture; the latter, — well, we certainly ought to give ourselves long pause before admitting it. For notice that we should have, in this case, not errors in detail, but substantial untruth. There was no scientific knowledge of the subject. Men do not guess at stupendous facts like these with any degree of success; and so, on the assumption that this is the science of the time, it must be substantially untrue — there can be only an infinitesimal amount of truth in it. Once admit that here is substantial truth, and only error of detail, and the entire position is overthrown. Substantial truth here must be the product of revelation, and we have thus the revelation of scientific truth — the Bible a teacher of science, and its writers using not the science of their time, but anticipating the science of six thousand years later. On any other supposition, we could expect truth here as little as we might hope to take the requisite letters of the alphabet, shake them up in a hat, and take them out in the order of a poem of Tennyson.

But notice, again, what it is that we are asked to believe in regard to this. We want above all here clear thought and exact statement, so that we may know what it is that we are pledged to by this theory that the Bible does not teach science, but uses the science of the time to convey religious truth. According to this, we have in this statement the science of the time—atheism, pantheism, dualism, and polytheism, and † monotheism. Let any one try this sum in addition on any of the old cosmogonies outside and independent of the Bible, and see if the result is the story of Genesis. It would be an interesting sight to stand by and see any of the advocates of this theory working out the problem. Success would have to depend on a process similar to that by which Mr. Mill thought, or pretended to think, that in some other world two and two might make five.

But there is one thing involved in this theory that gives it a positively startling aspect. One feels as if he would like to try the Socratic method on one of its advocates, and cross-question him somewhat as follows :

“What is the principle in regard to the biblical history when it is made the basis of doctrine? Is it probable, do you think, that the Scripture would employ anything except the truth in this way?” — “I think not.”

“As a matter of fact, does the Bible ever depart from this rule?” — “No; I believe not.”

“Suppose, then, that there is some important religious truth or duty based on this account of creation,— the part of it, I mean, which is supposed to be the science of the time,— would not this force us to accept it as true?” — “I suppose that it would. But do you mean that it is the foundation of this truth, or simply the vehicle of it?”

“I mean the former; and I am glad that you have suggested the distinction, as it is fundamental here. I mean founded on it as the doctrine of the atonement is based on the fact of Christ’s death.” — “In that case, we should certainly have to suppose that the narrative is true.”

“Well, then, on what is the law of the Sabbath founded ?”

— “It is certainly said to be based on the six days of creation followed by the rest of the seventh day.”

“Then, according to the principle which you have just admitted, the account is true, — is it not? There must have been six creative days; for an important law like this cannot, certainly, be founded on a myth. — “What you assert seems, at least, conclusive.”

“I delight in your candor. But let us be sure of our position. What do you understand, now, to be the distinction between science and revelation?” — “Why, by science I understand that which man discovers by the use of his faculties; while revelation is what he is told in some way by God.”

“I think that your distinction is correct. Now, assuming the account of the creation to be true, do you think that it is science or revelation?” — “I suppose that it must be the latter, i.e. I do not see how any one could have discovered it except from the unknown science of geology.”

“But is this fact a moral or religious, or a physical, truth?” — “The latter, of course. There is no moral or religious truth in it; though, as we have seen, such a truth is based on it.”

“Then, unless you have made an unnecessary concession somewhere, if our premises and processes are correct, we have established at least the probability that the Scriptures do contain something else than religious truth.”

We have thus advanced from the probable evidence of the preceding argument to what seems the almost certain proof of this. In the former we saw that it is probable from the analogy of other Scripture that when historical events are used in the Scriptures to convey religious truth, the account of these is probably substantially true. But when these events are made the basis of religious truth or of moral law, then the connection between the truth of the one and the other becomes so close as to make it certain and necessary that the account be substantially true.

There is one more step to be taken in this investigation, and that the most important of all. Our inquiry has pro-

ceeded so far largely on the nature of things. We have seen what the apparent purport of the narrative itself is, and what, in the nature of things, reasoning from the analogy of Scripture, we should expect from an account purporting to be of this character. Our argument has thus been not entirely theoretical, for we have examined the account itself, and compared it with others of the same kind in Scripture with a view to its probable truth. Of course, however, while this differs from the purely theoretical process, on the one hand, it differs from the purely inductive, on the other, which must always begin, if it does not end, with an interrogation of the account in regard to its facts, and a comparison of this with other records of the same thing. We have found that our witness generally tells the truth. But is there rebutting testimony? Does he tell the truth here?

But first we must consider an important element in the testimony of the witnesses whom we have to question, viz. that the nature of their testimony is not yet fully determined, which of course prevents an entirely conclusive settlement of their relations to each other. As regards the biblical narrative, any such statement of facts may have light thrown on it by comparison with the facts themselves. Especially is this the case when the statement is excessively condensed. Still more so, if the language is at once concise and popular. And, again, if the statement is of facts unknown in themselves, outside of revelation, to the writer, not only individually, but as a class. Now we find all these elements in the Mosaic account of creation. What God did in creation is evidently compressed into a very small space, even in the most limited view of it. Evidently, too, the language is not exact, but popular. And the facts stated were in themselves absolutely unknown. That the language should be, therefore, to a certain extent, flexible is no surprise, but what we should expect in the nature of things. Nor is it improbable, but probable, that it will accommodate itself to different theories. For instance, the flexibility of the word "day" in the account may be regarded as now definitely established. So the state-

ment that God said "Let there be light" determines nothing as to the nature of the process by which the light was produced. And the same may be said of the manner in which the waters and the lands were separated. Clearly here are immense natural processes presented in the barest outline, and the possible developments of this are various.

But the same is true to a degree of the science of geology, with whose discoveries this record has to be compared. It is not chaotic nor insecure, as some rigid interpreters would have us believe. But it is not, any more than any other science, possibly not so much as some, complete; and further discoveries may modify, more or less, some of its conclusions. It seems strange that such obvious facts should be left out of the account, as they certainly have been, by many who have pronounced on the inconsistency of the two records. For it is quite evident that until all the facts are known on both sides, we cannot pronounce certainly on their agreement or disagreement in detail. If there is substantial disagreement in the great outlines presented by each, then we may say that reconciliation is probably, almost certainly, impossible. For instance, if it should be shown that creation was in the inverse order, proceeding from man to vegetation, that would certainly invalidate the Mosaic account. Or if it should be proved that any two of the days really belong together, and are one day, and the separated events thus shown to be contemporaneous, the same would follow. Now this margin for doubt and further investigation has been too hastily overlooked by those who give up inspiration here, and say that this is not science, and that it is therefore absurd and unwise to attempt its reconciliation with recent discoveries, and who have narrowed the range of inspiration to accommodate it to this supposed state of things.

Now with this reservation as to the incompleteness of our knowledge of either of these records, let us see what their relations are as they stand. I say, without any fear of successful contradiction, that of substantial agreement. Professor Dana says, *Bib. Sac.*, 1856: "The first thing that

strikes the scientific reader is the evidence of divinity ; not merely in the first verse and the successive fiats, but in the whole order of creation. There is so much that the most recent readings of science have for the first time explained, that the idea of man as the author becomes utterly incomprehensible. By proving the record true science pronounces it divine ; for who could have correctly narrated the secrets of eternity but God himself ?” He then proceeds to show the special points which God’s testimonies in nature have made clear. Among these, as germane to our purpose, we will cite the following :

First, that “light was necessarily the work of the first day, the signal of creation begun.” Second, that the next step was “the earth gradually brought to a condition in which dry land and seas existed.” Third, “the introduction of vegetation on the third day,” which Professor Dana says “was one of the mysterious facts of creation until the recent revelations of science.” Fourth, “the creation or unveiling of the sun on the fourth day.” Fifth, the creation of “the invertebrates, fishes, reptiles, and birds, the earlier animal creations,” in regard to which he says, “the harmony of geology with Genesis could not be more exact.” Sixth, “the creation of mammals, introducing a new element into the world.” And, seventh, “man, the last creation. Science has no evidence that any living species have been created since his appearance.” It is not my intention here to dwell on these details. But I must notice, in passing, one thing which greatly enhances the difficulty of making this a mere human philosophy of the order of things. In such a work, proceeding merely on the supposed nature of things, we certainly expect antecedently probable statements, not those which become probable or certain only after the discovery of things absolutely hidden at the time. But we have such antecedently improbable things in this account, the most obvious of which is the place of the creation of the sun in the series of events. This is represented as created only on the fourth day. Whereas we should certainly expect that it

would precede the introduction of light and the creation of vegetation. I do not mean that we should expect a perfect ideal order of creation in this infancy of human intelligence. But if a person is constructing such an order, we should expect that so obvious things as these would not be the exceptions. Indeed, the marvel is just here: that the general order should be exactly conformed to the ideal, and that the only exceptions should be exactly those justified by scientific discovery.

I have spent a long time over this; but it is because it is the conclusive test of the theory which we are examining, as far as regards the science in the Bible. There are allusions to scientific matters elsewhere, in which accuracy may, or may not, be expected or discovered. But here is a detailed account of the origin of things, lying at the very foundation of science, which can be made, in fact must be, a test of the validity of the theory. The issue cannot be avoided; one side or the other must ground its arms here at this very point. And I claim in view of all the facts that it must be the side whose theory we have been examining. Whether for moral and religious, or other purposes, there is inspiration here, and if not here, then nowhere in the Bible. There is no other place in the book where it can be proved more demonstratively than here. And yet this, nearly the strongest point in our whole line of defence, is the one that we are called on to give up, to satisfy a theory intended to remove other difficulties. To rehearse the argument in brief, here is a record which, if it is substantially true, certainly cannot be a myth, i.e. substantially false; it cannot be in any case the result of scientific discovery, for there was absolutely no scientific knowledge of these things; if it is true, it cannot be the result of speculation on the order of creation; that would imply an inconceivably profound and prophetic insight; and besides there are antecedently improbable elements in the records which would make this supposition untenable; if it is substantially true, there is only one explanation of it, that the one Being then cognizant of the facts must have

revealed them in some way. And that it is substantially true, Professor Hitchcock says, is generally admitted among scientific men.

It must be remembered, as we showed at the beginning, that this substantial truth is all that is necessary for our purpose. In the history of events within the range of human knowledge only unusual or unnatural precision could be used to prove inspiration. But if the events are without that range, any knowledge is presumptive proof of revelation or inspiration, and substantial truth is proof positive. Possibly the failure to notice this peculiarity in the requisite argument has produced the unfavorable judgment of some on the question of inspiration here. And it must also be borne in mind that this substantial truth, considering the imperfect knowledge that we have, of the exact purport of the scientific and biblical records, furnishes strong presumptive proof of the complete harmony between the two.

In considering, now, the question of the inspiration of the Bible history, we need to remark, first, the nature of the argument necessary to its proof. In this case merely general accuracy is mostly inadequate, since this is attainable by natural means. On the other hand, neither is infallibility demanded, since it is not necessarily implied in inspiration, and it would thus be a separate question, regarding the degree, rather than the fact, of inspiration. But, as we have already seen, unusual and unnatural exactness is generally necessary to prove this.

In order to understand, further, the exact state of the case, we must consider two general facts. First, that we have in the Bible not one book, nor one author, but a number and variety of both. This fact is one that has been considered in various aspects; but its bearing on this subject needs more careful consideration. A very high degree of historical accuracy, such as it must be admitted that we have in the Bible, would be singular in any one book or author, even of the latest period assigned to any of the books of the Bible. But it might be explained, on natural grounds, as

due to the extraordinary natural endowments of the man. But the same thing in so many books and authors multiplies the wonder, and the difficulty of the explanation by the number of these. Now, if we add to this the second fact, that these books under consideration are admitted in certain things to be inspired, we have right at hand an explanation of the phenomenon, which certainly takes precedence of all others, and claims our first consideration.

When we come, now, to examine the earliest historical records of the Bible, we are called on to notice, first, the crucial nature of many of the facts narrated. We have, first, the statement of the unity of man, his descent from a single pair. And this fact is made the basis of the whole doctrine of man. Then the record of the equally important and fundamental fact of the fall. Then, carefully preserved, the account of the age of man. Then the history of the flood, which was local, to be sure, but for the race universal. Then the re-peopling of the earth by the sons of Noah, and the division of the race into three great families. And finally, the account of the dispersion and distribution of the different families of man, and of the confusion of tongues.

Now, these accounts of the origins of things are derived from tradition, and a very remote tradition at that, i.e. if they are to be attributed to natural sources at all. They are not contemporaneous history, nor derived from written records, but a remote oral tradition — one of the most unreliable sources from which history can be drawn. We can scarcely suppose, then, that any respectable degree of historical truth or probability would be reached in these, except under supernatural guidance. In fact, we have, in this case, other traditions of the same things with which to compare the biblical records; and an examination of these makes it seem incredible, on natural grounds, that we should have such an account as the Bible gives.

Now, keeping these things in mind, let us examine a little in detail these brief, but immensely important records. In regard to the unity of the race, it is, first, theologically cer-

tain, for it is made the basis of the biblical doctrine of man. This argument, of course, has no weight with sceptics; but, of course, it must weigh with those who admit inspiration as far as religious and moral truth are involved. And it certainly seems in a fair way to be proved by linguistic science. The account of the fall is also theologically certain; it is philosophically probable, as accounting for the moral condition of the race; and it is confirmed by the concurrent traditions of numerous races. The age of man, which is almost inextricably interwoven with the two preceding statements, and therefore with their doctrinal implications, is of course liable to attack and overthrow at any time by geological and antiquarian discoveries. But it is not overthrown yet, though it has been subjected to fierce attack. The account of the flood, though subjected to relentless scrutiny and assault, is now regarded as a historically certain event; and its universality, as far as the race is concerned — a crucial element in it, — is sustained by the concurrent traditions of all the chief divisions of the human family. And, at the same time, the biblical account sifts and combines and supplements these traditional accounts in a remarkable manner. In regard to the re-peopling of the earth by the sons of Noah, ethnology confirms the principal features of the Mosaic account in a remarkable manner. First, the triple division of mankind is the one adopted by ethnologists after an independent examination of the facts. And secondly, the families named correspond remarkably with the classification of races by the same science on physical and linguistic grounds. The accuracy of this genealogy of the sons of Noah as a representation of the race-divisions of the human family is generally admitted. And the importance of this fact in our discussion can be scarcely overestimated. In regard to the dispersion and the confusion of tongues, the traditions of Babylon itself, where the event is located, confirm it. And a remarkable coincidence with the Scripture narrative, to say the least, is afforded by the character of the early monumental language of Babylon, which has in it distinctly

marked Turanian, Semitic, and Aryan elements, while all other early languages known to us are distinct and unmixed.

Now all this seems to me as remarkable as anything in Scripture. We see how tradition and science come in to test these records of the origins of things at every point; how they fail to overthrow them at any one, and, on the other hand, confirm them minutely and remarkably at many, if not most points; and how unique is the excellence and accuracy of the biblical account, wherever there is a chance for comparison. And when we think that a remote oral tradition is the only natural source that the writer had to draw from, the principle of adequate cause forces us to assume supernatural guidance, if not revelation, to account for it. This part of the Scripture narrative, then, does not present exactly the same appearance as the account of creation, where revelation was absolutely necessary to account for any real knowledge of the facts; neither is it the same as the remainder of the Bible history, which is largely contemporaneous, so that a considerable degree of accuracy is to be expected on purely natural grounds. But it is a case in which the ordinary accuracy of history cannot be accounted for naturally, and where, therefore, this at least being found, calls for other explanation. And this, as we have seen, lies at hand in the admitted inspiration of large parts of the volume in which these records are found.

We have left ourselves little space in which to consider the other historical parts of the Bible. But if we have established our position in the cases already considered, the purpose of this Article is accomplished. One well-established case of inspiration within the range from which this theory excludes it overthrows the theory. And we have examined not one, but many cases, with this probable result. But it will be well for us to consider the general facts in regard to the rest of the Bible history. As we have seen, these accounts deal largely with contemporaneous history, and therefore general accuracy is not sufficient for our purpose. Then we have to consider that they are exposed to, and have been

actually subjected to, extremely severe tests. When we take into account the long periods of time covered by these histories, the constant contact with profane history, the numerous allusions to the customs of different lands ; the opportunities for error, judging by ordinary standards, are certainly very great. And on the other hand, the facilities for a fair judgment of their trustworthiness are correspondingly large. The Christian centuries have been gathering the materials for this judgment, and a great collection has been made. For the opportunity given to our opponents in this preponderance of the historical element in our sacred books has been improved by them ; the challenge has been accepted, and on the other hand, its defenders have been equally busy. No other books were ever subjected to a tithe of the historical criticism encountered by the Bible. Every available source has been ransacked for the weapons of attack and defence. And with what results ? Such that it seems to me any careful, candid, and thorough student of the subject must say "no weapon formed against thee shall prosper." Such as to make it seem a probable, if not, indeed, a necessary conclusion, that supernatural guidance is to be found in the historical, as well as the moral and religious element in Scripture. The number of unexplained difficulties is almost ridiculously small compared with the vast and continually multiplying proofs of the minute historical accuracy of these books. And the amount of probable error is very much less. I repeat it, and am willing to go into the detailed proof which this space will not admit, any books that can go through such an ordeal, and come out with scarcely the smell of fire on their garments, cannot be accounted for on natural grounds, if we admit the principle of sufficient cause. And to these results so far, it must be added that ancient records and monuments throwing light on biblical history are from time to time discovered, and that these almost invariably strengthen the hands of its defenders, and weaken the position of its opponents. Moreover, the Scriptures can be compared not only with other records, but also the different books with each

other. In regard to the period of the Kings in Jewish history and of the nation's captivity, we have three independent sources of information in the Bible itself, viz. the books of Kings and of Chronicles, and the prophetic books. And in the New Testament we have the four Gospels, giving independent records of the life of Christ, and the Acts, Epistles, and speeches of Paul in regard to the life of the Apostle to the Gentiles. These have been all thoroughly compared, and minutely scrutinized, to detect possible inconsistencies; but so far with inappreciable results in this direction, but with most gratifying results in the confirmation of even minute accuracy. Of course this concurrence of independent writers is a very strong proof of the truthfulness of the story in which they all agree. And when we consider the difficulties in the way of exact agreement between two persons telling the same story, even if both are eye-witnesses, a difficulty which increases always with the lapse of time, such agreement as we certainly find in the several accounts of the same thing in the Bible, seems at least inexplicable on natural grounds. Indeed, this is only another form of the general argument from the unusual accuracy of the Scriptures. The difficulty of explaining this mutual agreement of the records is really due to the difficulty of obtaining anything more than general accuracy in any history. We do not expect it. Human memory is not sufficiently reliable. In general it can be trusted; but the particulars it does not hold with sufficient exactness. And yet, we find this minute accuracy in all the many historical parts of the Bible, which would be strange in one, and is simply unaccountable in all.

We need to remember again, here, that infallibility is not claimed. It is very probable that this is the snare into which many who deny the inspiration of the historical parts of the Bible have fallen. Having been accustomed to associate inspiration and infallibility as inseparably connected, they are taken unawares as they find one case after another of supposed error, and too hastily give up the whole case. Whereas, it is almost certain that unusual accuracy uniformly characterizing so many books in a single collection, the in-

piration of which in other parts is acknowledged, involves inspiration as its adequate and natural cause, and proves it beyond the power of occasional errors to overthrow. Indeed, it creates the presumption against error, so that it can be admitted only after incontestable proof. This has been seen and used in defending inspiration by those with whom it meant infallibility. But it needs to be combined with this other view of inspiration in order to produce its full effect. For while the presumption is strong, starting from the unusual accuracy in itself, it is greatly increased, when the latter is seen to involve inspiration.

On the whole then, if this theory that the Scriptures are intended to teach only moral and religious truth, and that inspiration is, therefore, for the same purpose, be taken in its extreme form, so as to exclude all except these elements from the sphere of inspiration, and especially its science and history, we shall have to reject it. Not on deductive grounds, for in itself it is plausible. But on inductive grounds, since it is not borne out by the facts. There may be individual errors in these parts of the Bible, but neither of them as a whole, can be excluded from the range of inspiration. We may take the most unfavorable statement of the case, regarding as errors all unexplained difficulties, and leaving out of view the presumption in favor of explaining many of these in time, and still we have a state of things which will not allow us to deny inspiration of these parts of the Bible. For, if we do, let us remember that we must be prepared to give up for the same reason the inspiration of its moral and religious truths. It seems to me a mistake to suppose that apparent weakness and vulnerability belong entirely to the historical parts of the book. There are difficulties just as great, we think, if not so numerous, in the system of truth which it presents — and not in the outskirts of doctrine either, but in its fundamental teachings. The difference has been that the danger of touching this part of the structure has been so fully realized, that these difficulties have been treated cautiously and conservatively; while the inspiration of these other parts which we have been consider-

ing, have been felt to be a matter of comparative unimportance, and difficulties no way greater have been given hastily all the weight that could possibly be claimed for them, and have been allowed to invalidate the claims not only of the passages in which they occur, but of the entire class of passages to which these belong. And it is in the spirit with which the former class of difficulties has been treated by the wisest leaders of Christian thought, that the rule should be found for the treatment of the other difficulties under consideration. We all of us recognize the force of the internal argument for the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and its necessity. And in this argument the character of its teachings, their conformity to reason and to the moral sense, is the most important consideration. And yet we all feel that if the system of truth which it presents, fulfils this demand as a whole, this makes so strong a claim on our faith, that we may attribute the difficulties to deficiencies in us rather than in the Bible. Now we claim that if the difficulties in the Scripture history are only equally great, and the only difference is in the comparative importance of the history and the doctrine, the same principle should be observed.

But if, on the other hand, this theory be held not in the extreme form, but simply as a statement of the exclusively or predominantly moral and religious purpose of the Scriptures, and therefore of their inspiration, I should accept it as probably true. But I think that the above discussion has shown how careful we need to be in reasoning from this to the nature and extent of inspiration. It seems to me quite evident that we cannot decide with any certainty, *a priori*, what means will be necessary to accomplish these purposes. The only thing possible to us is to study the means that have been used, and then adjust these actual methods to the supposed purpose of the book. This question of the relation of the above facts in regard to the extent of inspiration to the assumed scope of inspiration is too large and difficult to be discussed in the limited space left to us. We can only glance at it. We have to do, not with the question what is the object of the history itself, but what is the object of its in-

spiration, not in its moral and religious aspects, but in its historical character. In regard to some of these histories the question has already been answered. For we have seen that, when the Scriptures employ history as the vehicle of moral and religious truth, and especially when it is made the basis of doctrine, its substantial truth is necessary to the accomplishment of its object. And in the earlier records of Scripture this substantial truth could have been secured only through inspiration. On the other hand we have also seen that probably only this degree of truth was necessary for the immediate purpose assumed. How, then, are we to account for the greater exactness which certainly characterizes Scripture? Evidently only by admitting some one or more secondary objects subordinate to the main purpose, and contributing indirectly to its accomplishment. And one such secondary object will be readily suggested to one who has become familiar with the history of the discussion. The evidential value of this extraordinary accuracy of the biblical records is certainly great and indisputable. The moral and religious impression may not be produced, nor directly increased by this, but indirectly it may and does heighten it. I do not mean to say that this is demanded on first principles by the exigences of the theory; but inasmuch as we find this degree of minute accuracy, here is one great purpose subserved by it. If a witness has in view simply the establishment of the truth, the greater and more detailed the consistency of his account with itself and with other accounts, the more surely he accomplishes his object. And if he is trying to make a religious impression or teach a religious truth by means of his story, the same thing will indirectly further his object. And if we wish to convince men that we are speaking divine truth under divine direction, the principle applies with multiplied force. The history of religious controversy is almost a demonstration of this fact. We have only to see how largely the question of the evidences has turned on this very thing, to be convinced of its importance, human nature being what it is.