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LETTERS

ON

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES;

AND ON THE

HUMAN ELEMENT IN INSPIRATION.

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INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURES.*

ONE of the great efforts of the enemy in these days is against the written word of God. Ecclesiastical office and orthodoxy is in its nature no barrier against this inroad. In its most pretentious forms and highest claims it is injurious to true confidence in scripture, because the authority of the Church, not that of the word, lies at the root of these pretensions. Divinely given authority is its first principle; not divine truth from God.

If its true principle be scrutinized beneath conventional habits and fears, it will be found that the authority of the word is founded, according to this system, on the authority of the Church—that is, the word has none properly divine in itself. I say this, not with a view to controversy with that system, but as a warning that, in the struggle which is going on, such a barrier against unbelief is not to be trusted to.

The confidence in man and his intellectual powers and progress, which characterizes another considerable portion of the professing Church, is surely no security against man's assuming to judge what does and will surely judge him. The word has its authority from God; and God will make good and prove that authority in judgment, as He blesses us with it now in grace. The word, if it be the word of God at all, calls for submission.

* Expressions in the introduction of Dean Alford's New Testament are here and there alluded to in the following paper; but as it is the whole system, and not anything peculiar to him, which is animadverted upon, no further particular notice is taken of it.

It forms, as a means, the link of renewed connection with God, granted to us by sovereign mercy when sin and flesh had separated us from God. It is sent out from Him, as was the living and eternal Word, as a point of contact in mercy and power for man with God; which comes to him where he is, deals with man exactly in the state man is in, and reveals God—and as He is pleased to reveal Himself—to man in that state. But for this God must be its *author*—none but God can rightly reveal Himself. Otherwise that word cannot bear witness of the love, the purpose of love, which is in God.

— It cannot have the wise adaptation to the end which that love proposes to itself, and the gracious consideration for all the infirmities, all the varied circumstances, of those to whom it is addressed, so as to reveal divine love and truth, divine love and plans, to and in spite of those infirmities, if the purpose of doing so be not there—*ἀρχὴ τῆς θεωρίας τέλος τῆς πράξεως*. Now I meet a great deal which takes the form of condescension to believers in divine inspiration, while it really assumes human intellectual powers to be on superior ground on this question, and adapts its reasonings, with great deference to their claims, to the theory of inspiration, so as to save something for the more feeble-minded. Help is allowed on God's part, the aiding the memory according to the Lord's promise. It is thought much to rescue such points as these from the invading grasp of rationalism. Now I do not doubt that the Holy Ghost did help—did recall to the memory of the New Testament writers what our Lord had said. But who was the author of the New Testament? How came it to be written? Is there no purpose in the history and other

writings of the New Testament? and if so, whose purpose was it? Whence do the writings flow? Is the existence of the New Testament an accident, which has its origin in the will or circumstances of four men (I speak particularly now of the Gospels, though the principles apply to the whole New Testament, and with increasing force when it is looked at as a whole) who were afterwards, when they thought fit to undertake the work, graciously assisted? Or is the scripture New Testament history the consequence of a purpose of God, a fruit of a divine intention and plan, of whose execution the Holy Ghost is the author?

We read in Peter, Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Here we have the *source*—the motive power in this work. The word of the Lord came to them. I have no theory as to the manner in which the New Testament writers were inspired. I recognize, in the fullest way, the diversities of style and the stamp of individuality in the different writers. The Lord was pleased to use men. But when I say that, it implies that He used them. I see the Lord declaring that He would use their memories. I see the apostle preferring an inspired communication in which his understanding had a part. But it is evident that if God recalled, by the Holy Ghost, certain events to the memory of a writer, He could recall them in such a way and form as He pleased; or as it had particularly struck the writer at the time the event happened; or while the facts were presented anew to his memory, with such additional apprehensions as the spiritual state of the writer made him capable of at the time of writing, and according to that peculiar form of apprehension

wrought by His power and presence in the writer. He might recall these events to the writer's mind in the succession He thought fit, so as to produce a given order in the narration. But all this supposes the action and purpose—the will—of a divine author, who acts with a plan and wisdom suited to its accomplishment. The wisdom of such an author might (by the combination of the events in a given order, and the selection of such as He recalled) produce a result from them, as a whole, which had a bearing and gave a witness to Christ entirely beyond the thoughts of the writer, though he might in every part be used according to the state of his own mind under the influence of the Spirit of God.

Now you will find that many discussions on inspiration, or statements on the subject, leave the thought of any purpose or motive power of the Spirit of God wholly aside, or deliberately deny it. The fact of distinct order in the recital of events in two Gospels is assumed to be a proof of the writers being left to themselves in these points; and such like, as I judge, shortsighted arguments are used.

Now either the Holy Ghost moved the inspired writers to compose their accounts, or He did not. If not, then the existence of the written accounts of the life of Jesus are a providential accident, and flow from no intention of God towards His Church and even a ruined world. If He did, then it was with a plan and purpose, flowing from and suited to the object to be attained and to the divine wisdom which so moved them. If this be so, God has thought it right to give to us an account of the wonderful facts of incarnation and redemption and all that accompanied these great events.

And if He has done so, He has done so with a purpose and plan. For the carrying out of this He used fitted instruments ; but the plan was His. He worked in and by them—but to produce what? The uncertain fruit of their own researches, or that which would not answer to His intentions and the glory of Christ and the truth as it is in Him? It is the height of absurdity, a contradiction of the nature and working of God, to think so for a moment. It is in vain to talk of helping them. Whose will was it that it should be done? whose purpose to be carried into effect? whose work was it which was done? Was it God's will to have it done? Did the work flow from the action of the Holy Ghost? and was it, in carrying it out, left to go wrong and be executed contrary to the divine will and wisdom? I press the question—Whose action and purpose was it? The moment I believe it to be God's, I get a divine work. I look for divine wisdom, divine purpose displayed in carrying it out. One tells me that the various arrangements of contents prove human agency in their selection and disposition. Why so? If Christ be presented in various characters, why may not the Holy Ghost present facts which display those characters in a way calculated to do so, employing diverse human agency to do it? The whole argument assumes that there is no purpose or plan of the Holy Ghost in the New Testament narrative. The moment I believe there is, I must expect the materials to be selected and arranged according to that purpose and plan. And nothing can be more absurd and contradictory than the contrary supposition. It is admitted by such authors that the Holy Ghost recalled facts to the memory of the evangelists. Did He

do it at hap-hazard—out of place, time, and order, and differently to the different evangelists, so that they have put them in different and, as to some or perhaps all, in incorrect order?

Where inspiration is wholly denied, then it is easy to understand that men hold that each evangelist did the best he could; and put the things out of due order because he did not know any better. If, on the other hand, God would glorify His Son Jesus, and give to us an adequate account of His life and sufferings—an object so perfectly suited to His grace and our need—we can easily understand the Spirit of God so ordering various accounts, as to present (for those who know in part and prophesy in part) the various aspects of His path on earth, its bearings and results, on Jews, on men at large, or on the hearts of sinners, or as unfolding before men the divine nature; and thus we should have the same true facts, but variously arranged, and with diversity of details. But of all theories, that which makes the Gospels the result of no purpose, or will, or plan of God at all, but that when men took the thought up, the Holy Ghost helped them, and recalled things to their memories, but so as to have all in disorder and confusion without a purpose; and that He did thus with several independent writers, so as to have inconsistency as well as disorder, is of all theories—for theory it is—the most unworthy of God, and absurd for man.

No man can doubt for a moment that the four Gospels present Christ each in a different way. Did this flow from the purpose and intention of God, or is it an accident? If from divine purpose, I must look for an ordering of the materials according to that purpose. It

is in vain to say that this is an *à priori* theory. It is an *à priori* theory to say that the putting the history of the deliverance of the demoniac in Galilee before or after Matthew's call is a proof of human arrangement. Why not of divine? If chronological order had been alleged to have been preserved, or were it the object, then I should see that men had been left to their own weakness. But who says that chronological order is the object, say, in Matthew? I am satisfied it is not. This is not the place to prove that he had another. But the assumption that the Gospels are a compilation of memoirs in chronological order, as far as the writer was competent (which is not true even in many a well arranged human history), is the sole ground on which arrangement can be attributed to human agency. But the assumption is a very foolish one.

That the selection of facts depended on human agency is still more absurd. It is held that the Holy Ghost recalled to the remembrance of the writers what Jesus said. Where, then, is the writers' selection? Did the Holy Ghost come in aid when the evangelist remembered something imperfectly, and left we know not what—perhaps something much more important—wholly unremembered? Such an operation of the Holy Ghost as is here pretended is as irreverent an idea as it is absurd. But if He did move, the writer did not select, and could hardly be said to arrange. God may have led the writers to use all sources, all they had in their memoirs, or directly recalled or revealed what they had not. I make no limit as to the divine use of means: all are at the disposal of God. The question I urge is, Who is the author and mover in the history we have

of the blessed Lord? If it be the Holy Ghost, then is He the source of this history; and He had a purpose in giving it. He has carried it out according to that purpose. To suppose that the Holy Ghost wrought to leave us an imperfect, wrongly arranged, inconsistent account of the Lord Jesus, and of the unspeakable intervention of God in redemption, is the most irreverent—I do not say intentionally so; I do not the least think so: but in fact the most irreverent and absurd of all theories as to inspiration.

I have not a doubt the New Testament history bears the stamp and contains the proof of the most perfect divine arrangement, and that harmonies are wrong in principle. But into so large a subject as this I could not here enter. This would, of course, be a matter of spiritual intelligence and instruction, from the contents and order in which they are formed, and, if extended to the whole New Testament, from the scope of the whole book and the combination of its parts. My object in this flying communication is merely to draw attention to the question which is often in so strange a way silently dropped—Who is the author of the New Testament history? From whose will or purpose does it flow? Whose plan is this history of the Lord Jesus? Is it a divine or a human one? a thing flowing from human will in aid of which the Holy Ghost has wrought, or the fruit of God's counsels and the agency of the Holy Ghost accomplishing the purpose of God? If it be from the purpose and moving of the Holy Ghost, I must look for His carrying that purpose out.

I add one word as to the preface of Luke's Gospel. I say nothing as to the extent to which the writers were

conscious of the Holy Ghost's purpose and action ; but I wholly deny the construction put upon the words of Luke as a matter of fact. It is constantly stated both by rationalists and by others who hold loose views of inspiration, that he declares he gave his own account from what he heard and from his enquiries. He does no such thing. He says, Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to compose an account of what is most surely believed among us, as it has been delivered to us by those who were eye-witnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having accurate knowledge of all things from the origin, to write to thee with method, &c. Now the evangelist contrasts here the ground on which he wrote with that on which others had gone. I do not allege, as some of the fathers have, that he blames those others, as having "taken in hand" themselves in contrast with inspiration ; but it shews that many having done it in that way was a motive for his doing it on more trustworthy ground. He does it because he has thorough personal knowledge of all from the outset. Paul says of Timothy (2 Tim. iii. 10), "Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life," &c. The same word is here used. The others had known what was delivered. Now it is not said Luke knew them himself, but *παρηκολουθηκότι ἄνωθεν πᾶσιν ἀκριβῶς*. It would be hard to express personal accurate knowledge more strongly. It has nothing to do with the question of inspiration. It is the fitness of the instrument which appears. Whether the Holy Ghost made use of it is not touched upon ; but the conclusion which is drawn from it, that Luke denied it and derived his materials from other accounts, is wholly unfounded.

THE
HUMAN ELEMENT IN INSPIRATION.

MY DEAR BROTHER,

As the question of inspiration has been so much before the minds of Christians, and indeed of all men, in countries where Christianity is professed, and is a vital question for every soul, I would desire to notice one point in connection with it, because on it even those who are accounted orthodox have used very equivocal language. It is what is called the "human element" in it. That there is a human element is evident, for it is men who are inspired, men whose language and whose minds have been used. I say, whose minds have been used; for the apostle tells of speaking with his understanding; but the expression is used to signify *also* the defect and errors to which man's mind is liable. Now this last means man's mind left to itself, that is, *not* inspired: a very different thing from inspiring man's mind.

The reason I notice it is, that the human element is of infinite price to us, the very character of the grace shewn to us and conferred on us. God's favour is not only shewn *to* man, but *in* man. In the blessed Lord—the centre and effectuator of all grace to us—this is evident, though this is much more than inspiration, for He is a Person, the Word made flesh, yet it characterizes all God's ways with us. It is what is divine in

man. It has a human element—birth, hunger, thirst, sorrow, suffering, His compassion moved by what He saw, growth in wisdom and stature, dependence in prayer, obedience, temptation (sin apart), and, when He had given Himself up to it, death (for which indeed He had expressly become a man); and though now in glory, yet the human element is there also. The Son of man is at the right hand of God, and when we are in that blessed place, He will gird Himself and make us to sit down to meat, and come forth and serve us. And this last, though surely a figure, yet is a figure of that blessed love in which He took upon Him the form of a servant and became a man, and continues to exercise now, as man who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and which He will then exercise as man to minister in perfect and devoted tenderness—fit to win and fix man's heart—divine love, where we can fully know its value in the service of that love; for love delights to serve, and He has become a man so to exercise it. It is His glory surely; what shews the infiniteness of divine love where angels desire to look into it; but it is, blessed be God, and therein infinite and blessed in a human element. God shews in the ages to come the exceeding riches of His grace, in His *kindness* towards us by Christ Jesus. The very character given to this grace is *φιλανθρωπία*. So, when He was born, the unenvious angels celebrate glory to God in the highest, in (*εὐδοκία ἐν ἀνθρώποις*) good pleasure in men. It is for us a blessed, as it is a glorious theme. Now, though this was different from all else (for it is the Incarnate Word), yet it characterizes all God's ways

with men. Inspiration (that is, the Spirit of Christ acting in the limited manifestation of God's mind in whatever degree in a man) has this character, and it is its peculiar value. It was given in various ways, as well as at divers times, dealing with man and unfolding the things of man historically in relation to God, and in moral testimony, so that we might have God's mind about them, either according to the light which man possessed, so as to be thereby responsible, or revelations of God's own mind and judgment, so as to teach, which last was only fully revealed in Christ, who spoke what He was in His own perfection, and was what He spoke—God manifest in flesh, the Word made flesh and dwelling among us.

The revelation of the New Testament is different in character, because it has taken man out of the earth and up to heaven; and hence its proper revelations (I mean after Christ's death) are the bringing in of present heavenly relations and character into earthly things. Hence, save prophecies, which are not proper to it, it is the man in heaven in all the details of life on earth—more intimate, more familiar, more present and practical. The Christian is the epistle of Christ—hence has to be formed by the word of revelation into His image, and then guided in the manifestation of it. It is evident how fully there is a human element here, not only in our realization of Christianity, but in the revelation of it; but it is the human element taken possession of by God. Divine power, and what, if the use of the word were not liable to be abused, might fairly be called inspiration, works in everyone who is blessed in the use

of a gift, and in all spiritual wisdom ; that is, God acts and forms the judgment, and the agent is only so far blessed as this is the case. But this scripture carefully distinguishes from inspiration in the sense we now use it in, viz., communications having a divine authority over the soul, because given by God Himself. An inspired man may say, "I have received mercy of the Lord to be found faithful ;" "I think also that I have the Spirit of God ;" and add, "The married I command, not I, but the Lord ;" "to the rest speak I, not the Lord." Thus the apostle carefully distinguishes the sound and godly wisdom which he had experimentally by the Spirit—the action of the Holy Ghost in his own mind morally—from what he had from the Lord Himself, so as to give it as His command. This has been stupidly alleged as shewing all was not inspired, since part was distinguished as spiritual experience. But this is a mistake as to the whole nature of inspiration, and leads me to some notice of this.

The truth of inspiration is not that all that is stated or recorded as done or spoken was inspired. We have the devil's words, and wicked men's words, and holy, but failing, men's words; but in such cases the writer was inspired to give us these things as he has given them. So God, knowing our liability to be misled as to inspiration, has inspired Paul to record the difference between the highest spiritual wisdom and apprehension, and inspiration. There cannot be on this point a more important inspired testimony. It decides the question recently raised, and judges the error into which presumptuous men have fallen. The operation of the Spirit

forming and leading men's minds is not inspiration in the proper sense of the word. Now the forms and bearings of inspiration are various, though the source and the authority be one, because there is a human element. God's works have to be revealed, and they are so by a simple and blessed statement of them, such as nothing but inspiration could give. Man's failure and sin has to be traced and brought to light in its origin and its development. For this latter God's ways had to be revealed; but this had a double character, the history of the facts in connection with which these ways were manifested, and the dealings of God in which they were expressed.

Thus we have the history of Abraham; but, to get his place, I must have the judgment of man at Babel after the flood, and the formation of nations and languages, out of which he is called by God's glory. Then promise, calling, separation from the world, come out to view as a root principle. But was Abraham to be only a pillar to hang these principles on? No; he was a living man, who acted by faith as called out, and trusted in God as to the promises. God reveals Himself in both these ways. He is the Almighty (Shaddāi) for the present path of faith, but the revealer of the promises, so as to open the wide history of His purposes as to Israel, and His grace for all nations. Man, let me say, would have been perfectly incapable of connecting these things in one history of a man, yet so as they bear in principle of walk and purpose on the whole present history of the world, Jew and Gentile, and how those who look to God are blessed with believing

Abraham. But in all this there is a human element, because the thing to be taught is God's relationship with man: how they subsist on His part, how they subsist on man's part. Promise is God's, but it is not for man connected with man, with human state and hopes, even if these go on to heaven, still more clearly if they are on earth. Faith, though of and in God, yet is in man, may be exercised and shine brightly and perfectly, or may fail, so that man is shewn. Now all this is the revelation. It traces an ordinary, or it may be an extraordinary, history, in which all this (and far more than this) is brought out. But who could do this so as to instruct us in all these ways of God, whose full import is only brought to light in the New Testament, where the true light shines (save God, who knows what He meant to teach us, and what to teach us by)?

Could Moses or (as these besotted rationalists would tell us) some fraudulent impostors in Josiah's reign, have known all that would serve as a principle for all ages, and a root and foreshadowing of purpose not even yet all fully brought out? Yet Moses must give the history as a series of facts that then happened (useful to Israel at the time, needful to their understanding their place before God, and a ground of confidence in Him), clothing it in apprehensions and feelings which should do this, and as entering in heart into it, and using it this way himself. That is, the human element is found in the revelation, is essential to it, if it is to act in, on, and by, the heart of man; but it is God's taking possession of it, and using it for the purposes of His own grace

(and these cannot be greater, save the perfection of it all in Christ). Must not faith have a human element in it?

Now all communications of the word are not faith, though implicitly in them; but in a very large part, the historical part, it is in many things the exercise and expression of faith, or it would have no value. It is impossible to separate it from the revelation. When we read (Ex. xxxii.), "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants," is it not a revelation? It is the turning-point of the whole matter, casting God, so to speak, on promise, and not on judgment, by the blessed faith and true-heartedness of His servant (a principle on which all human hope hangs, on which Galatians is founded, yea, on which our hope of heaven itself is founded); yet is there not a human element? Is it not Moses' faith and grace, and blessed self-denying devotedness to God's glory and His people's blessing? Am not I divinely taught by it how grace works in a man withal? Yet if I have it not from God, of what account is it? Nay, the very fact of all this being a history, the part where man seems to enter most specially requires that it should be inspired of God, that it may have the elements which will divinely instruct me. The very value of it is, that I have divinely given instruction in the scene and sphere of man.

And, take the other side: if I am to learn what man is truly, and what God's ways of dealing with him are, is it to be only in dogmas settled in a council, as dry and inoperative as the great Sahara? Or am I to get them where all passes among living men with the living God?

God has in His wisdom chosen the latter; but then I must get it truly, the faults, failures, shortcomings, sins, mixed actions and motives—in short, what man is as he is before God and with God to learn by. I must have the facts really, but according to the mind of God, or I shall not learn that mind by them at all—the evil as it came, as it was pardoned, was judged, bore fruit of sorrow afterwards, and the like.

I may be told, You are confounding what we just distinguished, the record, and the thing recorded. No: here the record (though not always, for we have God's words in the thing recorded) is the revelation in a large part of it; the word is perfect, and must be to be of any use; but there is more than that. The things pass according to and make a part of man's then relationship with God; praise, for example, say at the Red Sea. Had Moses and Israel praised then according to our heavenly notions now, all would have been out of place; they praise according to their then state. All this is revealed as history in the same spirit. It is not a commentary on it, but a history of it. There is the human element; yet that is the very means of my getting the divine instruction, both as to principles and as a foreshadowed future (for they happened to them for types, and are *written* for our instruction on whom the ends of the world are come), and as to God's patient gracious dealing with man, on from the beginning, when he had fallen. If I find promise precede law, yet law came in to raise the question of righteousness; and then, man being fully convinced of sin, He who was the object of promise became our righteousness in a divine way. I

get a taking up the history in a divine way for eternal principles of truth ; but I get besides, in the history, an instruction as to what man is under God's dealings, acting on my heart and conscience as it never could have done, had the human element not been there. It is the whole value of the history and its revelation. But take away the divine use of the human element and all is lost, and worse ; for I have a history to teach me erroneously.

Let us remember the simple principle, that God's entering into man and using the human element for His service is just the opposite to His leaving a man to his own thoughts and mental appreciations, which is what is meant by the human element when unbelief talks of it ; and the history is not only man's history, but a man's history of it. But it is man's history so as to bring out fully what he is with God and under God's dealings, so as to teach all men by it and in all ages, and foreshadow things to come ; and hence a divinely given history of it all, yet with the historian entering into it all as a living history in which the people and himself were interested, or it would not have been reality then nor now. I speak of facts ; I read it, see Moses in a large part of it acting, feeling, thinking, speaking, praising ; nor can I separate, nor do I desire to separate, the account given from the reality of the thoughts and feelings of him who recounts it. Nor, if it be Abraham and other history, is there any *real* difference, though the proof be less apparent ; for in both it is the Holy Ghost recounting by man what passed in and with man. Only, when of other

persons, the interest of Moses or the sacred historian in them is less evident; but I believe Moses' heart and interest went with Abraham's history as much as with his own, as much as when he said, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord since the day that I knew you."

Hence we have, in the history by various persons, the distinct succession of all the ways and dealings of God from one mind, ascertained from a history in which the individual writers had (for the most part could have) no knowledge of the whole scheme itself. Innocence, man without law and lawless, promise coming in as a thing apart, man under law, under priesthood, obedient royalty with law, sovereign unlimited royalty over the world, prophets to recall to law and to foretell the coming One and judgments, and at last the Seed of promise, grace in the world—this is history, history as it appears in fact in scripture, yet principles of dealing with man which test him morally in every way, and bring out the whole state in which he is, in which I am, before God; yet the connection of one part with another no one of the writers could have had in his mind, or does not refer to. All is man; but all is man brought out by God's dealings, and the record given of it by man, as interested in it as the history of his own people, or what led to it from the creation onward, but as the people beloved of God in whom God displayed His ways, and as a whole of which no one man was author—a divine exhibition of what man was, and God's ways with him.

This leads me to another remark: that to understand

such a revelation the purpose of God must be known. The Holy Ghost must act in us to enable us to understand these things. Here He works in connection with the moral state of man, and we have degrees of spiritual apprehension. Where scripture was given or used by scriptural writers, there I get the divine account I have to understand. Nor should I trouble myself with it as divine instruction if it be not so; perfectly given to be an object adequate to afford God's mind and ways, prophetic declarations, and christian absolute truth furnishing a key to it all. The holy scriptures are given by inspiration of God, and are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Divine light is needed, as every Christian knows, in us, in order to understand them. (See Luke xxiv. 45 and 1 Cor. ii. 14—passages on which I might insist, were I speaking generally on inspiration: my object is now the human element).

This purpose is constantly overlooked—we are liable to mistake in it; for this is a question of spiritual understanding, and depends directly on our moral state. Such as are meek, them shall He guide in judgment. God hides these things from wise and prudent, and reveals them to babes. Thus, in a celebrated infidel attack on scripture, the question raised was as to the historical character of the Pentateuch. Now Genesis is historical; that is, it so far takes the facts of history as are sufficient to establish all the great principles of God's government of the world, and His purposes concerning it, taking Abraham's seed as a centre.

So the beginning of Exodus is historical, but to give us the great principle of a divine redemption with its effects (unknown till then), of God's dwelling with men, and of holiness to God. After that the great body of it is not historical at all. We gather elsewhere that the ordinances of God were neglected. No child was circumcised. They took up the tabernacle of Moloch, and the star of their god Remphan. No doubt some pious ones may have kept them, but neither is this recorded. It was not the object. After their reaching Sinai, what is given is the pattern of things shewn on the mount—just as true and important if not a sacrifice had ever been offered. Even if we take the history, only such facts are taken as happened to them for types, and are written for instruction. That is, the object was, not to give a detailed history of Israel, but to give significant facts for our instruction. I say *facts*, but in no adequate account of them to bind them historically together, but perfect for the purpose they were meant for—to teach us God's ways with His people; their ways with Him, their difficulties and dangers; His patience and His goodness. I do not doubt, I need not say, that Israel passed through the Red Sea, that God gave them the manna, that the ark of the covenant was made. But what is the importance of these facts to me?

The consequence is that we have not facts out of which a whole connected history can be made; though all needed for the then connection of the people with God, and their responsibility in after ages, is clearly and fully given. But we have a perfect store of divine

instruction in every respect to which the history can be scripturally applied.

X | Deuteronomy is a quite distinct revelation—declared to be so—a covenant made in the plains of Moab besides the covenant made in Horeb. (Deut. xxviii. 63.) It is not a history save some small portions of it laying a ground for others, but exhortations and directions for the future, for the time of judges and priests, when Israel had already departed from God, going on to the case of asking for a king. This distinct covenant was founded, no doubt, on the relationship with God formed under the Sinaitic covenant, but formally supposes the people to have been unfaithful, and provides, in mercy, practical directions for the state, and predicts the issue in judgment and sovereign grace.

I dwell less on prophecy proper than on history, because the human element is less apparent when it is “thus saith the Lord,” or “the word of the Lord came;” it is a formal utterance. Yet even here it cannot be doubted that He who spake by the prophets formed the vessel also; only He possessed it. Holy men of old spake as they were moved (*φερόμενοι*) by the Holy Ghost. When Isaiah says, “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,” who doubts that the heart of Isaiah was engaged, and that that heart in its feelings was the elevated earnest one which sought God’s glory, and identified it with the people which God had formed for the service to which He called him? But God working in the prophet wrought the testimony of earnest desire, as proper to move as

warnings or prophetic announcements were to awaken conscience or sustain faith. So when Jeremiah, in the midst of overwhelming sorrows and hopeless wickedness, cries, "Woe is me that my mother has borne me, a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth:" or uses several other such expressions, who doubts there is a human element—a broken and sorrowful heart? When he expresses the difficulty between his righteous judgment of evil and love to the people because they were God's people, and has the answer of God as to the exactly right feeling and path, a true heart finds more perfect divine instruction in it for his own heart, wrought in by analogous feelings, than if it was a mere dry declaration of truth; and much more God's divine interest in the feelings wrought in his heart, and his own association with God's interest and glory in His people in the earth. But this is by the human element, but by God's drawing it fully out in its place, and expressing it in a divine way, with His own reply. Thus far, for the prophets, we have distinctly the divine use of the human element. I turn to the New Testament.

Here we have it, partly less, partly a great deal more, and this in a way exceedingly beautiful. In the Gospels we have the Word made flesh, and, as has been often noticed, the diverse characters of Christ—Messiah, Immanuel, the Servant, Prophet, the Son of man, Second Adam in grace, after a lovely scene of the remnant in Israel; and lastly, not Jesus in Galilee with the poor of the flock, or his heart reaching out in grace to Gentiles, but the love of God in Judea in the midst of

a rejected and reprobate race, bringing in a new and divine thing into the earth, personally or by a given Comforter. Here the *subject* is, God manifest in flesh; and, of course, the human element is, so to speak, everything where His divinity is known. But the subject is absorbing—doubts, ignorance, enmity, in those surrounding Him we have, but the subject absorbs everything; and, unless at the utmost one or two expressions in John, I am not aware of a trace of the human element in the recital. The subject was everything, no epithet, no “blessed Jesus”—“beloved Jesus.” The subject was too high, too holy, for the Holy Ghost in recording it by man’s pen, to bring in man’s feelings. He was the model and perfection of what was divine in man in the circumstances where we are; and there needed no other human expressions to know how God met man in them. He was it. There is to me great perfection and loveliness in this. It sets a halo round the person of Jesus which no expression could have reached. Such would have spoiled it—been an intrusion on the heart. We want only that which moves it, not the movings of others about it. Besides, as I have said, it could not be; because the whole perfection of God meeting man was in His person.

Now in the Acts we find the human element again, and it is in its place, but calls for no particular notice; but in the Epistles it overflows. It is the expression of that particular character of privilege and grace in which the love and Spirit of God works in us towards others; the unfolding and description of God’s work in us, brought out by the gifts operating in the body. Christ

had received gifts in man (דָּבָר) and for him. It was introducing man into heavenly places where Christ had gone, and conformity to this wrought in him by the Holy Ghost, and unfolded by them in whom it had been first wrought that they might communicate; as the Lord Himself expresses it, "He that is athirst, let him come unto me and drink." This is the man's own soul. But then "out of his belly"—his inmost affections—"shall flow rivers of living water." Now this He spake of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter to be given after His ascension, yet in one who had drunk of Christ, and out of whose inmost affection the divine testimony flowed forth.

Yet there were cases where the human element was wholly inoperative. A man spoke with a tongue and spoke mysteries (which others could enjoy if they knew the tongue), and did not know what he said himself, though he knew the Spirit was working in him, connecting his soul with divine things in God; but his understanding was unfruitful, and if he spoke with his understanding, it was also a revelation to himself; and then, if an inspired instrument of communication to others, he spoke in words which the Holy Ghost taught, communicating things given by the Spirit, by words given by the Spirit too (*πνευματικῶς πνευματικά*).

What characterizes then the Epistles especially is the human element. The privilege of loving with divine love, enduring all things for the elect's sake that they might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory; and, as Christ's life was to pervade and be expressed in all the circumstances of human life, that

love and life in the inspired ones entered with the perfect wisdom of the Holy Ghost into them all, but expressed Christ's mind as to it as the Holy Ghost led them to express it, that it might be divine wisdom, and directly from God, though in and by a man.

It was in this sense different from Old Testament inspiration, in that the Man, the Lord, the Head of all, was gone on high, and had received gifts for men, members of His body. Of old, men might say, Who hath known the mind of the Lord?—but, inspired by Him, give such an utterance of a part of His counsels as He was pleased to communicate, or write a history as perfectly led of Him, the bearing of which, or its part in completing the whole, they were ignorant of, only when we see what is in the whole, thereby proving it divine; and prophets might search out their own prophecies to understand them; but the apostle may say, "But we have the mind of Christ."

No doubt they could only give what was given, but they gave it as what they had as His mind who was the wisdom of God. Inferior utterances, without fruit to the speaker's understanding, there might be, proving all was of God; but the proper inspiration of the New Testament to the apostles in their service was the perfect communication of the mind of Christ to them, and the perfect communication of it by them in the words given by the Holy Ghost who had revealed it. It was received intelligently by the same Spirit. But this mind of Christ took up man into all the glory and all the counsels of which He is the centre

before the Father; but it descended, because He had become our life, into the conduct of a slave to his master, and a master to his slave, and to the babes who were not counted unworthy of the grace and guidance of Him whose arms had once embraced them. Nothing is too small for a person to be a Christian in—nothing, consequently, for the Spirit of Christ to guide us in. Nothing (blessed be God!) too high for them who are united to Christ, and are one day to be like Him, though lowliness alone can embrace them. “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.”

I am aware how imperfect a sketch I have given of even the part of this subject which was before my mind. My object was not to prove inspiration. I sought only to speak of what is called the human element in inspiration; that we might fully give its precious place to that, and the simple not be deceived by even learned or orthodox unbelief; as if God's using man—his lips, or his understanding, his mind in every way—meant the same as leaving him to himself, and me to his folly, so that what God did give should be uncertain, as inseparably mixed up with what is man's. Every scripture (and the New Testament comes under that title) is given by inspiration of God; every prophecy of scripture, for holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; the New too, for what the Holy Ghost revealed was communicated in words which the Holy Ghost taught. It is to scripture we are referred by the apostle in the dangers of the last days.

As regards the human element in inspiration, of which I have written, especially in the New Testament, we have

one or two passages which express it clearly. The Old Testament gave a testimony to Christ besides the historical bases of the whole matter in the history of man and God's people. He was the subject and object of their testimony; but Christ's, and, through grace, our proper testimony, is different. The testimony was the expression of the thing in Himself; so ours, though imperfect, the life of Jesus manifested in our mortal bodies, the epistle of Christ written by the Spirit of the living God on the fleshy tables of the heart. Now the New Testament inspiration partook of this (though there was also, in tongues and prophecy, dictated utterances); that is, the full blessing of the thing was conveyed to the heart and understanding. How was St. Paul made an apostle and even minister of the Church? By the revelation of Christ in glory to him for his own conversion through grace. So he speaks: "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." So in 2 Corinthians iv., "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give [out] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." So indeed in 1 Corinthians ii. 12—14, they had received the Spirit to know. Only, when it was to be for divine communication also, they spoke it in words taught of the Holy Ghost. And this is the instruction of the Lord Himself on the subject: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink; and, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of

living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The streams which flowed forth for others were the fruit of what had been drunk for self. This is true of all so ministering; only, as we have seen, for what is properly called inspiration, the WORDS were given by the *Holy Ghost also*.

The very nature of Christianity is, God manifest in the flesh, entering personally into all our sorrows, temptations, and trials; manifesting God's perfect goodness in them; and then, through redemption, raising man to the elevation of which Christ's person and work were worthy in glorifying God; the divine glory; likeness to Christ as He is, gone in, in virtue of it, to heaven. And such is the character of inspiration, or work of the Holy Ghost as to the revelation of it; and indeed necessarily must be. That is, it enters into the whole place and circumstances of man, reveals the glory into which he is to be brought, God glorified perfectly in Christ being the holy and eternal ground, and the Lord's sympathy with him in all his circumstances. Hence nothing is too great for man—still man—for he is brought into the glory of God, like Christ the Son, and in righteousness, and partaker of the divine nature: nothing too little for God, because He is entered into the sympathy of love with all that man is, and introduces divine life itself into every detail—words—what? the tone of a man's voice, counts the hairs of his head. It will enter into the case of a runaway slave and his master, of the health of the children of an elect lady. It will take up everything in which divine life can exercise itself and give a tone to

our ways, children and parents, masters and slaves. And there is nothing in which divine life does not shew itself. It is the blessed truth that, first in person, then in inspired doctrine and the life of Christ in us, God is entered into everything in which the heart of man is engaged. I find God and God in grace, where the unhappy rationalist only finds a *cloak*.



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