IS THE BIBLE THE WORK OF INSPIRATION ?

BY THE LATE

ROBERT ROBERTS

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THE question is not as to translations, but as to the original writing. Yet the answer as to the original writing will apply substantially to the translations, because the translation of a book into another language is a mere feat of technical expertness by which the ideas expressed in one tongue are reproduced in the appropriate terms of another—a work, doubtless, of some difficulty, in some cases, because of the idiomatic and constructive difference of most languages from one another, but not a work for which inspiration is necessary.

What is called "genius" in natural writers may illustrate. It requires this "genius" to write Tennyson's poems; but any Frenchman, with a good knowledge of English, could render them into French; and in French, they would, for all practical purposes, have the stamp of Tennyson's idiosyncrasies, as much as in the original English. Or let us say, a political article appears in a Russian paper, "inspired" by the Government of the country: the article is translated into English, and appears in *The Times;* it is as much an inspired article in English as it is in Russian. (A substantially correct translation is a matter of course). It is the ideas expressed that are everything: the form of the expression is only secondary.

If, therefore, we say the Bible, as originally written in Hebrew and Greek, is the work of inspiration, the answer will apply to the English Bible, which for all practical purposes is a substantially correct translation of the original. The integrity of the original is not affected by the number and diversity of the MSS. which have been brought to bear in settlement of the "text." On the contrary, these yield a ground of increased confidence as to authenticity because, although textual variations of a certain sort are numerous as between MS. and MS., there is substantial correspondence in the many hundreds of MSS. that have been discovered, into whatever language they are found to have been translated. To revert to the illustration of Tennyson, Tennyson is Tennyson, whether you find him in Italian, Spanish, French, Russian, or Chinese. Slight variations in particular phrases would not interfere with the character of the work. And it is the character of the work that is everything in the present case.

Our question relates at this time to the Old Testament. The inspiration of the New Testament is conceded (inconsistently enough as we shall see) by those who hold loose views of the inspiration of the Old Testament. Consequently, we may leave the New Testament out of account in the present enquiry except in so far as it may be brought to bear in the determination of the character of the Old Testament.

There are two ways of studying the question, one of which is unspeakably more direct and conclusive than the other. The one that is not conclusive is the plan of studying the Old Testament by itself, and judging it by the principles ordinarily applicable in the deter-

mination of literary problems. By this plan, a man will never reach solid ground. Ordinary principles of criticism will never explain the Bible, *i.e.*, the Bible will not adapt itself to the requirements of such principles, nor will it yield a true knowledge of its character to their application, for a good reason, as we shall see. The German mystic, Novalis, or Jean Paul Richter (we forget which), pronounces the Bible "the problem of authorship," in the sense of being an insoluble problem : and Carlyle never attempted the subject, though glancing now and then towards it.

The way that is direct and conclusive is this : Christ stands related to the subject. If he rose from the dead, his views of it are true, and the views also of his apostles, who in that case, were illuminated by the Spirit of God expressly for their guidance into "all truth." In the present case, we assume the resurrection of Christ, because it is conceded by those who have raised the question asked at the head of this article. We therefore propose to ask these questions :—

1.—*What was the estimate of the Old Testament entertained by Christ and the apostles ?*

2.—*Does the Old Testament itself bear evidence of the correctness of that estimate or otherwise ?*

3.—*Is it possible to reconcile all the facts of the case with the view which they propound ?*

We need not encumber the subject with any discussion of what is called the "canon" of the Old Testament. The material facts are simple. Some genuine writings were undoubtedly not preserved : and some spurious writings were never included (though bound up in some private copies). But the Old Testament, as we have it, is the Old Testament as it was in the hand of the Jews in the first century, as proved by Jewish and Christian witness. This was the Old Testament to which the allusions of Christ and the apostles apply, whether in Hebrew or Greek ; consequently there is no difficulty in making a proper use of the argument.

★ Christ's Estimate of the Old Testament

In what estimate, then, did Christ hold the Scriptures of the Old Testament? of which Scriptures, Josephus, a Jew of the first century, speaks thus: "How firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation is evident by what we do: for during so many ages as have already passed, no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them or take anything from them, or to make any change in them: but it becomes natural to all Jews, immediately and from their very birth, to esteem those books to contain divine doctrine and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them. For it is no new thing for our captives, many of them in number, and frequently in time, to be seen to endure racks and deaths of all kinds upon the theatres, that they may not be obliged to say one word against our laws and the records that contain them" (*Jos. v. Ap.* book 1 : 8).

Christ alludes to the Old Testament under various names. He speaks of "the Scriptures," "Moses and the prophets," "the word of God," "the things that are written," etc. But, whatever be the form of the allusion, he never speaks of them without recognising

their divine authority, expressly or by obvious inference.

1.—*He makes the fact of a thing being written in the Scriptures always a sufficient reason for its reception as divine.*

His answers to the tempter in the wilderness were all of this character, *e.g.*, "*It is written,* Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4 : 10). Of John the Baptist, he says, "This is he *of whom it is written,* Behold I send my messenger," etc. (Matt. 11 : 10). Justifying his violent expulsion of mere traders from the precincts of the temple, he said, "*It is written,* my house shall be called the house of prayer," etc. (Matt. 21 : 13). He supported his doctrine concerning the holy character of the true children of Abraham by saying, "*It is written in the prophets,* they shall be all taught of God" (Jno. 6 : 45). He referred to his approaching sufferings in Jerusalem as the accomplishment of "*all things that are written by the prophets* concerning the son of man" (Lu. 18 : 31). He combated an objection of the Pharisees by saying, "What is this then *that is written*" (Luke 20 : 17). Explaining the meaning of his sufferings to his disciples after his resurrection, he said, "*Thus it is written,* and thus it behoved Christ to suffer," etc. (Luke 24 : 46).

The apostolic record shows us Jesus using this phrase on many other occasions, but these are sufficient. The use of it could not be accounted for except on the principle that he regarded the Old Testament as a divine document. His references in the form of this phrase extend from Moses to Malachi, taking the historical books and Psalms between.

2.—*His statements concerning the writings of Moses and the prophets are all of a character that recognises them as divine.*

These statements occur in various connections, but they are all of one character. When he said, "I am not come to destroy (the law and the prophets) but to *fulfil*" (Matt. 5 : 17), it was as good as saying that the law and the prophets were divine, for with man there can never originate anything for the Son of God to "fulfil." He expressly said, "*All the prophets and the law prophesied until John*" (Matt. 11 : 13). This affirms the matter in question. He made Abraham in parable say, "They have *Moses and the prophets*: LET THEM HEAR THEM" (Lu. 16 : 29): which he could not be imagined to have done on any supposition but that Moses and the prophets were divine. He accused his disciples of being "slow of heart to believe ALL *that the prophets had spoken*" (Lu. 24 : 25), which would not have been a ground of accusation unless "all that the prophets had spoken" was divine. After his resurrection, on the journey to Emmaus, he began at Moses, and going through "all the prophets," he expounded to the two disciples "the *things concerning himself*" (Lu. 24 : 27).

"Moses, the prophets, and the psalms" (thus endorsed by Christ as divine) are practically the whole Bible. The historical writings are not distinguished from the prophets, because they were all the work of prophets—Joshua, Samuel, Nathan, and the inspired seers and scribes. That Christ's recognition extended to the whole Scriptures will appear more particularly from the next proposition.

3.—*Jesus constantly evinced a reverence for the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and an anxiety that men should understand them,*

which cannot be understood unless he recognised them as of divine origin and authority. We may go further under this heading, and say that he referred to them as the source of divine knowledge, of an authority so great that he plainly said they COULD NOT BE BROKEN.

The evidence of this is partly comprised in the statements quoted already. But it is found more particularly in those that refer specifically to the Scriptures as a whole. In his argument with the Sadducees, he said, "*Ye do err,* NOT KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES" (Matt. 22 : 29). What is this but saying that the Scriptures are an unerring guide to divine truth? And how could they be so if they were not wholly divine? On another occasion, he opened the understanding of his disciples "THAT THEY MIGHT UNDERSTAND THE SCRIPTURES" Luke 24 : 45). Taking such pains to make his disciples understand the Scriptures, is proof of his recognition of their divine character. Why should he be so anxious for them to understand the Scriptures, if the Scriptures were, in any degree, of human origin? He said, on another occasion, to the Pharisees, "Have ye not read the Scriptures, etc.?" an interrogatory carrying with it the recognition of their authority. Such, also, is the character of the words, "as the Scripture hath said," with which he introduces the prophecy of the gift of the Spirit (Jno. 7 : 38). He surrendered himself, at last, into the hands of his enemies, for this reason: "THE SCRIPTURES MUST BE FULFILLED" (Mark 14 : 49). In no plainer way could Jesus have asserted the divine character of the Old Testament, unless it be in his parenthetical declaration in an argument with the Jews concerning a quotation he had made, "THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN" (Jno. 10 : 35).

★ What the Apostles Thought

In next introducing the testimony of the apostles, it is not with the idea that the testimony of Christ needs any confirmation, but because the matter in hand is of such vital moment as to make every support valuable and because Christ has placed the authority of the apostles on an equal footing with his own in saying, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." "He that heareth you, heareth me."

Their teaching on the subject runs in exactly the same channel as Christ's. The fact of a thing being written in the Scriptures was with them an end of all doubt. "Then remembered they that *these things were written of him*" (Jno. 12 : 16). "His disciples *remembered that it was written,* The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Jno. 2 : 17). "When they had fulfilled *all that was written of him,* they took him down from the tree" (Acts 13 : 29). Paul defined his faith by the standard of what was written. "I worship the God of my fathers, *believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets*" (Acts 24 : 14). His letters are full of allusions to what is written in support of what he himself says. Nearly 40 times does he say, "AS IT IS WRITTEN"—his quotations ranging throughout Moses, the prophets, and the psalms. We give a specimen in each section: MOSES: "*As it is written,* I have made thee a father of many nations" (Rom. 4 : 17). The PROPHETS: "*As it is written,* There shall come, out of Zion the Deliverer" (Rom. 11 26). The PSALMS: "AS IT IS WRITTEN, For this cause I will confess

to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy name" (Rom. 15:9).

These allusions to what is written in the Old Testament, recognise its authoritative, and therefore its divine character, as a whole, for if it were not divine, it would not be authoritative. What they do thus for it as a whole, they do for its parts. This follows: but as in the case of Christ so in the case of the apostles; they not only endorse the Old Testament as a whole: they speak of its parts in a way that expressly asserts for them a divine character. Peter, interpreting to a Jewish audience the recent opposition of the Jewish people to Christ, says: "Those things which *God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets,* that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3 : 18). Zacharias, filled with the Holy Spirit, said, of the birth of Christ: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel: for . . . he hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; *as he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began*" (Luke 1 : 69, 70). "The mystery . . . . now made manifest, and BY THE SCRIPTURES OF THE PROPHETS, *according to the commandment of the everlasting God,* made known to all nations for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16 : 26), "*Being witnessed by the law and the prophets*" (Rom. 3 . 21), "Well SPAKE THE HOLY SPIRIT *by Esaias the prophet*" (Acts 28:25): "Persuaded them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets" (Acts 28 : 23): "We are built upon the foundation of the apostles *and prophets*" (Eph. 2 : 20). "*God spake unto the fathers* by the prophets" (Heb. 1 : 1): "The prophets spake *in the name of the Lord*" (Jas. 5 : 10): "As *he hath declared* to his servants the prophets" (Rev. 10 : 7).

Further, the apostles speak of "the Scriptures" in the same way as Christ does—as an unquestionable and divine authority in all things of which they speak. They do this both in an express manner, and in the inferences arising out of the form and purpose of their general allusions. Paul's custom was to "reason out of the *scriptures*" (Acts 17 : 2), which implies that, in his estimation, the sanction of the Scriptures was conclusive. If they were divine, this is intelligible. If there was a human (*i.e.,* erring) element in them it would, to that extent, not be so. Apollos "showed *by the Scriptures* that Jesus was Christ," which he could not have done unless they were of divine authority. The people of Berea "searched the *scriptures* daily" to verify apostolic declarations, which they could not have done with any conclusiveness of result on the supposition of the Scriptures having a human origin and character. The description of a sound and useful brother is one "mighty in *the scriptures*" (Acts 18 : 24). "What saith *the scripture?*" is Paul's appeal in an apparent logical dilemma (Rom. 11 : 2; 4 : 3; Gal. 4 : 30). He also speaks of "*The scripture, foreseeing* that God would justify the heathen," which identifies all Scripture as a divine unit (Gal. 3 : 8), so also "*The scripture hath concluded* all under sin" (Gal. 3:22), and "*the scripture saith,* thou shalt not muzzle the ox" (I Tim. 5 : 18). "*The scripture saith* unto Pharoah," etc. (Rom. 9 : 17). "Do ye think *the scripture saith in vain,*" etc. (Jas. 4 : 5). Peter thinks it a conclusive way of presenting a matter to say, "*It is contained in the scripture,*" etc. (I Pet. 2 : 6): also Paul "*The scripture saith,* Whosoever believeth," etc. (Rom. 10 : 11). To say that a matter is "accord-

ing to the scriptures," is with the apostles the highest and most authoritative manner of introducing it (1 Cor. 15 : 3, 4 ; Jas. 2 : 8). So to " wrest the Scriptures " is with them the highest offence in spiritual things (2 Pet. 3 : 16).

In addition to these general allusions, implying in the strongest manner the authoritative character of the Old Testament Scriptures, the apostles designate them in a way that expressly affirms their divine authority. " If any man speak, let him speak as THE ORACLES OF GOD " (1 Pet. 4 : 11). " Ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of THE ORACLES OF GOD " (Heb. 5 : 12). " Unto them (the Jews) were committed THE ORACLES OF GOD " (Rom. 3 : 2). This designation—the oracles of God—of itself excludes the supposition of a human (*i.e.*, an erring) element having entered into their composition: so also does the apostolic command to speak according to them, and to abide by their first principles.

Of the same force is the description of these Scriptures (both by Jesus and the apostles) as the WORD OF GOD, e.g., " Handling THE WORD OF GOD deceitfully " (2 Cor. 4 : 2). " THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance" (Acts 20 : 32). " The sword of the Spirit, which is the WORD OF GOD " (Eph. 6 : 17). " To whom the WORD OF GOD came (Jno. 10 : 35). " Have made the WORD OF GOD of none effect " (Mark 7 : 13). " They preached the WORD OF GOD " (none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come)—(Acts 13 : 5, 44 ; 26 : 22).

★ Why the Old Testament is the Word of God

What has now to be considered is the principle upon which documents written by men, with willing and witting mind on their part, and in the free exercise of their free intelligence, could come to be estimated and described as the word of God and the standard of truth. On this point we are not left to speculation. We are directly informed, and the information is presented in a variety of form that excludes misconception. If we take the information in its simplest form, we have it thus from Paul: " ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD " (2 Tim. 3 : 16). The force of this declaration is not reduced by the fact that the word " is " does not occur in the Greek text as written by Paul, nor any word corresponding to " given." The absence of the verb is an idiomatic omission, which requires to be made good in translating into English. Every translation recognises this by supplying it, only some insert it after " God," instead of after " Scripture," and read it, " All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable," etc. But this is not translation: it is gloss. It throws out the word " and " to make room for the omitted verb in a false position. We must keep " and," and place the verb in a position to make sense of Paul's statement, and to make it agree with the subject in hand. The subject in hand is, " The Holy Scriptures," with which Timothy had been acquainted from a child. These are the same Scriptures of which Jesus said " they cannot be broken," and which all the apostles recognise as the word of God. Paul here says of them : " *They are able to make thee wise unto salvation.*" He then explains how they come to possess this ability. The explanation is the statement in question : " They

are *Theopneustos*—God-inspired "—(which is even more forcible than "given by inspiration of God") "all scripture (is) God-inspired and (is) profitable for doctrine, for reproof," &c.

Suppose it were even allowed that Paul merely meant to formulate the abstract and superfluous proposition that "all God-inspired writing is profitable," the statement would still prove the inspiration of the "Holy Scriptures," with which Timothy was acquainted from childhood; because it is made in support of Paul's exhortation to Timothy to continue in the things that he had learnt from them. If those "Holy Scriptures" were not God-inspired, it would have been without meaning (after speaking of them as able to make wise unto salvation) to say "all God-inspired scripture is profitable." His statement, even in the mildest form to which philologists would like to reduce it, would amount constructively to an assertion that the Scriptures, with which Timothy had been acquainted from childhood, were God-inspired. But, in point of fact, Paul's statement is absolute, that all Scripture (that is all the Scripture of Timothy's early acquaintance—that is, the Scriptures of the Old Testament), "ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-INSPIRED," and therefore profitable for instruction and guidance in all its parts, which a Scripture would not be that had been in any degree humanly-generated. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime (*i.e.*, in these Scriptures) were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15 : 4).

We have referred to this as *direct information* as to the origin of the Scriptures. There is a great deal of indirect information. The whole composition of the Old Testament bears internal evidence of the divine character claimed for it by Jesus and the apostles. If we take for example the five books of Moses. Moses wrote them (this we take as granted, so as to save the time that needless proof would consume) : but Moses was not a man of merely natural function. The spirit of God was on Moses. Thus saith God to him, at the time of the appointment of seventy assistants : "I will take of THE SPIRIT THAT IS UPON THEE and will put it upon them" (Num. 11 : 17). Thus Moses was a prophet in whom the Spirit of God dwelt. When Joshua was jealous of others for Moses' sake, Moses said, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put HIS SPIRIT upon them" (verse 29). Now, if Moses, on whom the spirit of God rested for the performance of God's work, wrote by God's command, was not that writing necessarily a Spirit-regulated or "God-inspired" performance? There could be no reasonable doubt about the answer, even if we had not God's own adoption of these writings as His own : which we have, thus : Moses wrote the law; and God says "I HAVE WRITTEN to him (Israel) *the great things of my law*" (Hos. 8 : 12). How did God write the great things of his law by Moses except by the Spirit of God upon Moses, guiding him in the performance of the work? The process is illustrated in the case of David's plans from which Solomon built the Temple. These were not the conception of David, though actually passed through David's brain, and drafted by his hand. "David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof . . . . the pattern of all that he had *by the Spirit*. . . . . All this, said David, *the Lord*

made me understand in writing BY HIS HAND UPON ME, even all the works of this pattern" (1 Chron. 28 : 11, 12, 19).

What is true of the five books of Moses is true of the historical and other books. From the time of Moses onward there was a long succession of seers, prophets and scribes in whom the Spirit of God dwelt, and by whom the national records were kept as private secretaries of the kings. The Spirit of God is visible upon the scene in an unbroken line throughout (taking the books in the order in which they are placed in the Bible). Thus JOSHUA is, by God's declaration, "a man *in whom is the Spirit*" (Num. 27 : 18). In JUDGES we see "the Spirit of the Lord" come upon them (Jud. 3 : 10; 6 : 34; 11 : 29; &c.). In SAMUEL, we have one who was "established to be a prophet of the Lord," and to whom the Lord revealed himself (1 Sam. 3 : 20-21). In KINGS, we have Elijah and Elisha, in whom the Spirit of the Lord dwelt as it rarely had in any man (2 Kings 2 : 9, 15, 16). In CHRONICLES, the Spirit of the Lord is visible at all important junctures of the matters recorded (1 Chron. 12 : 18; 2 Chron. 15 : 1; 20 : 14; 24 : 20). In EZRA and NEHEMIAH, we have "all them whose spirit God had raised" (Ezra 1 : 5). In JOB, we have the Lord answering Job, and speaking his mind to Job's critics (Job. 40 : 1; 42 : 7). In the PSALMS, we have the Holy Spirit in the writer throughout (Psa. 51 : 11; 2 Sam. 23 : 2; Matt. 22 : 43). In PROVERBS, we have the writings of a man to whom "God gave wisdom and understanding exceeding much" (1 Kings 4 : 29), and which are quoted by the apostles as the word of the Spirit to the saints (Heb. 12 : 5). The same with ECCLESIASTES and CANTICLES. From ISAIAH to MALACHI, we have the writings in which the preface to almost everything that is written is "Thus saith the Lord."

★ Inspiration of the Old Testament a Necessity

Now, the Spirit of God being actively and visibly present in the house of Israel during all the time covered by the authorship of the books of the Old Testament, and that activity being particularly connected with the men who had to do with their production, it follows that what the New Testament declares to be the fact, must be the fact, and is reasonable, namely, that they are "God-inspired." For it is not supposable that God would superintend his spoken word in the midst of Israel, and leave unsuperintended that which was reduced to writing, which was to fulfil a much more extended and lasting purpose than the verbal messages delivered in the people's ears.

That he has done so is manifest from the composition of the books themselves. They are not in the style of human books anywhere, either as to the selection of topics or the manner of their treatment. There is a brevity—a conciseness—a chasteness—a majesty—an unsparing impartiality—a leaving out of matters of mere human interest —a keeping of God forward—that is to be found in no writings of men in any country or any age, so far as they are known.

That He should have done so is in harmony with the whole situation of which the Bible is a part. The history of Israel is a history of the work of God in the earth—a work, overt, direct, and visible, with collateral operations of providence branching out from his visible work on all hands. He called Abraham from Chaldea, He

delivered Israel from Egypt ; He gave them his law by open voice and showing, on Sinai ; He wrought miracles in their behalf in the wilderness and Canaan : He spoke to them for many generations by the direct word of inspiration in his prophets. The Bible is the literary consolidation and continuation of his work in their midst, and now to all nations ; is it reasonable that he should leave this to human hands ?

He told Moses to be careful to see that the tabernacle was made according to the pattern shown him. As a double safeguard in the matter, he put his Spirit upon two men in the congregation—Bezaleel and Aholiab. If he was thus careful about the type, is it not according to the analogy of things that he should be at least similarly careful in the composition of his written word—a sort of perpetual tabernacle among men during the absence of the open vision, and that it should not be left to the " will of men," but should be the work, as Jesus and the apostles testify it is the work, of the Spirit of God by the hand of chosen writers ?

It is not only fitting it should be so ; it is needful it should be so. Man could not be trusted to write divine history. The written history of God's work is the principal part of the work of God in a day like ours. It is the principal illustration of his mind and will. In the writing of such a history man would leave out that which was divinely essential—the record of man's continual failures and sins—whoever might happen to be affected ; and he would insert that which was immaterial—the mere political gossip of the age, tending either to human exaltation or depreciation according to the prejudices of the moment. And in all cases, he would be liable to err in his representations, and, therefore, could not be trusted to give us a writing on which the children of God could rely. Things might be " infallibly true " in themselves, as it is inaptly phrased ; but the record of them for divine purposes is an affair of correct knowledge, divine discrimination as to what is important, and unsparing fidelity in the record of the things selected. All these things required inspiration. The things might be known in the mass without inspiration ; but only inspiration could assort and select for divine ends. It is a question of the divine use of human materials, and for this divine guidance was necessary.

★ In What Way Did Inspiration Act ?

As to how the Spirit affected the mentality of the writers in the process of writing by inspiration, we need not trouble ourselves with it ; it is the fact of inspiration that is all-important. Nevertheless, there is no practical difficulty in it to those who bring practical experience to bear instead of the lore of the schools. Inspiration of a human kind is a matter of every-day occurrence. It may come in the shape of ideas imparted from without, as when a statesman (communicating with an editor) inspires a political article, revising the language afterwards. Or it may take the form of an appeal to motives, such as when great inducement is held out ; or it may be in the way of the imparting a dread or love of things by innuendo. Or it may be experienced as the result of taking something, as in the inspiration of alcohol or opium. The influence of a highly magnetic human being over another is another form of inspiration notorious to those who

study this sort of subject.

In all these cases, an inspiring influence is added to the persons operated upon, controlling and regulating their individual utterances, without, at the same time, interfering with their personal volition, or setting aside their individual peculiarities of utterance.

We do not mean to suggest a comparison between these cases and divine inspiration, except as anticipating the difficulty of conceiving how two mentalities (as it were) can co-operate in an operation which proximately appears to be the work of one. All comparisons necessarily fail to illustrate for us the inspiration of the Spirit of God, because the things of God are immeasurably higher than those of men. Still, they illustrate to us in a faint measure how the Spirit of God could so guide men in their utterance that while the things said were the *ipsissima verba* of inspiration, they were at the same time the free utterances of the men made use of, and characterised by idiosyncracies of speech natural to their particular organisations.

The case of Caiaphas, the high priest, in his public counsel to the Sanhedrim, may serve as an example. He said it was necessary that Jesus should be put to death to prevent the whole nation perishing. John tells us, " This spake he not of himself, but *being high priest that year*, HE PROPHESIED that Jesus should die for that nation " (Jno. 11 : 51). In his official capacity as Aaron's descendant and head of the Mosaic service, the Spirit of God made him say a thing that he conceived very differently in his own heart. The saying was Caiaphian in complexion, and yet it was a form of words shaped by the Spirit. Balaam is a case of utterance compelled, of which also Jeremiah in a certain case is a notable example. He was disposed to keep silence because of the derision with which his words were received, but he could not resist the power upon him : " His word was as A BURNING FIRE SHUT UP IN MY BONES " (Jer. 20 : 9).

The apostles in their speeches before the tribunals illustrate the subject still more pointedly. Jesus said they were not to think beforehand what they were to say : " it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak : for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you " (Matt. 10 : 19, 20). Now, when the hour came—when Peter and John, say, were arraigned before the council—the Spirit acted : but, acting on the brains of Peter and John, the utterance was affected by those brains as the medium of utterance. Peter's voice would sound Peter's voice (though the Spirit was speaking) by reason of the shape of Peter's larynx : and John's voice would be John's voice, and not Peter's, though acting under the same impulse. So also the literary form of the Spirit-utterance would be affected by the phrenological apparatus employed in each case. But the Spirit-impulse would guide and limit and control the action of the apparatus it was employing in a way to secure the utterance of its own ideas to the exclusion of the mere man's ideas. We may thus understand the slight diversity of style marking the authorship of the various books in the Bible without in the least admitting a human authorship. They are the Spirit's books, produced by men whom the Spirit used as pens. The Spirit would guide into all truth and exclude error ; it would regulate while employing the mentalities of various prophets and apostles. Through Paul's style, you have the Spirit speaking : so through John's style, you have the same Spirit

speaking—the spirit in all cases inspiring the ideas and guiding the utterance while necessarily taking somewhat the quality of the medium of expression. It has been aptly compared to a man playing on a variety of wind instruments. The music-creating intelligence is the same in each case, but the quality of the sound is affected by the shape of the instrument. But, after all, this principle operates in only a very slight degree. The difference of style between one Bible writer and another is very slight, much less than might have been expected. The "God-inspiration" which Paul affirms of all their writings was the most powerful element in the case, and so controlled their individual peculiarites, while employing them, so as to over-ride the will of man, and give us a book unlike all human books under the sun, reflecting its own mind and its own mind alone.

★ Apparent Discrepancies

The reconciliation of apparent discrepancies with this inevitable view of the case, is a work of detail. It can be done. Any violence there may appear in the process is as nothing to the violence done when these apparent discrepancies are used as a lever for overturning the divine character of any part of the Bible. This divine character is an established and unimpeachable truth ; and all difficulties must be harmonised with it ; or if that cannot be done, they must be left alone, as a something we cannot solve for want of some ingredient in the case that would put all straight. It is absurd to use a difficulty to destroy demonstrated truth.

Some of the difficulties are no difficulties at all, as when the Spirit of God in the apostles adopts variations in quoting from the Old Testament—Hebrew or Greek (Septuagint). A man quoting his own utterances, while preserving the sense, can vary the words without imputation of inaccuracy ; because, knowing his own meaning, he can adopt any words he chooses in repeating it. So the Spirit of God, interpreting and varying its own expressions in reproducing them by the apostles, does not expose us to any sense of error, when the common-sense bearing of things is apprehended.

SUMMARY

The argument may be brought to a focus thus :—

1.—Christ rose from the dead : therefore whatever view of the Old Testament Scriptures was entertained by him and the apostles must be correct.

2.—The view which Christ entertained and always expressed was that the Old Testament was of divine authority, and "could not be broken."

3.—The same view was held by the apostles, and illustrated by them in all the uses they put the Old Testament to, and the allusions they made to it.

4.—The ground of this view was their conviction that these Scriptures were God-inspired—a conviction which they declared in terms without qualification.

5.—The inspired character of the Old Testament Scriptures is evident from their non-human style of composition, and from the nature of the topics which they select for presentation, whether in history, contemplation, or prophecy.

6.—This divine inspiration was a necessity for the objects divinely proposed in the writing of the Scriptures (whether in its historical, preceptive, or prophetic departments). A reliable exhibition of any of these elements would not have been possible without it.

7.—That the analogy of God's whole work with Israel requires that the writing of the Scriptures should be his own word.

8.—That they are, in fact, owned by him as such.

9.—That his authorship of them is not interfered with by the fact that human writers were employed in their literary fabrication—his Spirit controlling and supervising their performance in a manner that secured the exhibition of his mind, and his mind alone, whether in the utterance of a prophecy or the quotation of a blasphemer's document.

10.—That there are no insuperable difficulties in the way of this attested and inevitable view. Apparent discrepancies are mostly susceptible of explanation : and where they are not, it is for the want of the knowledge of some element of the case that would supply the solution.

THE HUMAN-ELEMENT THEORY AND WHERE IT LEADS TO

The article that is the occasion of these remarks, lays down these principles, either by express formulation of the writer, or implied endorsement of other men's definitions :

1.—That only parts of the Old Testament Scriptures are inspired, viz., such parts as could not otherwise be produced.

2.—That the Bible is not to be spoken of as the word of God, without qualification.

3.—That there is in it a human (*i.e.*, an erring) as well as a divine element.

4.—That historical infallibility is not to be conceded to everything recorded in the Bible.

5.—That inspiration only covers " all that *may be said* to belong to divine revelation proper : by which is to be understood everything in the Scriptures that may have been beyond the power of man to discover for himself."

6.—That subordinate features " may have been introduced into the Bible," with which inspiration has nothing to do, and that such things form " legitimate topics of critical enquiry."

7.—That inspiration does not teach that which is otherwise ascertainable.

8.—That, except where Christ expressly ascribes a divine authority to particular predictions, we are not to regard his allusion to particular books of the Bible as proving the inspiration and authority of those books : such allusions being merely proof of the notoriety of the books at the time and of their reception by the Jews.

9.—That it is unreasonable to suppose " that the attestation which Christ and the apostles gave to the divine mission of Moses and the prophets extends to every point and portion of the Jewish history," or proves the circumstantial truth of every narrative of the Old Testament.

10.—That the apostles did not regard the very words of all the Hebrew Scriptures as the product of inspiration.

As corollaries, we have these :

a.—That attempts to reconcile apparent inconsistencies are often

characterised by straining and ingenuity; and that our "sense of candour and integrity is distressed and weakened in the enforced attempt to extract harmony" from them.

b.—That the Bible needs to be saved from those who stand up for its absolutely divine character, "who are (alleged to be) too little acquainted with its history, and with the embarrassments which beset the theory they entertain of its origin and contents."

These postulates are extracted from the article nearly in the order in which they occur. Let us see where they lead to. They may seem to be rendered innocuous by saving clauses in favour of the inspiration of reserved portions of Scripture. In point of fact, we may find that they re-act to the destruction of these as well. Logical results are not to be averted by well-meant disclaimers. A wrong principle will work itself out in the long run, however little contemplated or earnestly deprecated by those starting it in the first case; and no doubt many who think the view of things involved in the foregoing propositions easy, harmless, natural, and irresistible, would be the last to welcome the results that come out of it.

If only parts of the Bible are inspired, the other parts are the word of man—not the word of God—and therefore not to be relied upon as an unmistakable guide in the matters of which they treat. Nay, they must even more likely be erring than true: because it is to account for supposed errors that the supposition of a human element is introduced.

How are we invited to discriminate between what is inspired and what is not?—between the divine element and the human (*i.e.*, erring) element? By this rule: "that is divine which could not otherwise have been produced; inspiration does not teach that which is otherwise ascertainable," but only that which "may have been beyond the power of man to discover for himself." The application of this to history yields the following result: history is otherwise producible than by inspiration: historical facts are ascertainable by uninspired human faculty: they are in the power of man to discover for himself. Therefore, Bible history has not been written by inspiration but by uninspired human faculty: and as uninspired human faculty is liable to error, Bible history is not necessarily free from error, but may, in fact, as the language quoted from Paley plainly hints, be untrue in some (and therefore in any) of its narratives.

Let us see the application of this: the life of Abraham was within the power of human faculty to know and to record. Therefore, the Bible history of Abraham is not inspired. Therefore it is part of the "human element." Therefore it is liable to error. Therefore we cannot be sure in reading any part of it that we are not dealing with distortion, perversion, tradition, or even myth. What would be the value of such a narrative either for the illustration of divine principles or the derivation of human hope? We should have in such a case to sit in judgment upon it instead of surrendering to the guidance of it. The practical working of this Bible-destroying theory was very recently illustrated by an upholder of it arguing against the credibility of God's command to offer up Isaac. If Bible history is

uninspired history, we stand upon a very shaky foundation in trusting to the promises made unto the fathers. The fact of the promises having been made would of course be " within the power of (contemporary) man to discover," and, therefore, by the proposed rule, would need no inspiration to record it.

Again, the exodus of Israel from Egypt was certainly a fact " otherwise ascertainable " than by inspiration : it was very palpably " in the power of man to discover for himself," as the Egyptians experienced to their cost. Consequently, by the new rule, the Bible account of it is not the work of inspiration. Therefore, it is part of the " human element," and the human element is the erring element. Therefore, this account may be an erring account. It is " a legitimate topic of critical enquiry," that is, we may sit in judgment upon it, whether it is likely to be true or not ; and if we find our " brows knitting " over the emergence of supernatural swarms of frogs from the Nile, or the opening of the sea to let the unarmed host of Israel escape from the chariots of Pharaoh, we may avail ourselves of the calming relief that being a human-element history, it is as likely to be erroneous as not. This is exactly what is done by the " modern criticism," belauded with so little reason. Of what value would such a narrative be ? What reliance could we place in it, as an exemplification of God's purpose and work in the earth, and the aims with which it is being conducted from generation to generation ? The loosing of this foundation will loosen the whole structure : for the whole scheme of Bible things is built on the divinity of God's work with Israel in Egypt.

Again, the life of David was certainly a matter " in the power of man to discover for himself." Therefore, by the new rule, inspiration was not needed to write it, and, therefore, as a matter of fact, did not write it. It is part of the " human element," that is, the erring element, and therefore may be in error in any part of it. What confidence, or comfort, or advantage, therefore, can we have in reading it ? Why should we, all the days of our life, read an antiquated history that may be vitiated with the superstitious errors of the superstitious age in which it was produced by the will and faculty of erring man ? How can we be sure that God chose David, or that God delivered David by miraculous interpositions, or that God covenanted with him the everlasting duration of his throne ? If the Bible history of David is not an inspired history, these may be the childish exaggerations and distortions of perfectly natural circumstances. It is no answer to say the facts are " infallibly true in themselves "; of course they are. But the question is the getting to know them. Everything, in the sense of this suggestion, is infallibly true in itself ; but of what advantage is this, if we cannot certainly know what the truth of the matter is ? Christ's resurrection was infallibly true in itself : but its intrinsic truth could not have benefited us unless it had been testified " by many infallible proofs," which requires the action of inspiration.

What is true of Abraham, Moses, and David is true of the great bulk of the facts recorded in the Bible. They were " otherwise ascertainable " than by inspiration, and, consequently, by the new rule, have not been written by inspiration, but by mere human volition, and therefore are no more to be trusted than any other

similarly ancient records—which is no trust at all. We are then at liberty to expunge whatever offends our conceptions of the probable. Like the workers of " the apparatus of sound criticism," we shall be likely under the operation of such a rule to throw overboard Jonah and the whale : Daniel and the lions : Nebuchadnezzar's dream : Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fire : Elijah's raising the widow's son, and his own ascent to heaven : Elisha's cure of Naaman, and leading the blinded Syrian army to Samaria ; and, in a word, all the historic marvels which have signalised God's dealings with his people. By such a rule, the Old Testament becomes a wreck.

★ The New Testament in Danger Also

Is it quite certain that the result would be limited to the Old Testament ? If it is to be a rule for the Old Testament that inspiration only co-operates in matters " beyond the power of man to discover for himself," it will be difficult to keep it away from the New. Why should inspiration guide the apostle in the record of matters " otherwise ascertainable," and not guide the prophets who wrote the narratives of the Old Testament ? No good reason could be shown. And where should we be ? The history of Christ, surely, was " within the power of the apostles " to discover for themselves. The history of the apostles, surely that was also within their natural power to know. Consequently, by the new rule, inspiration took no part in their narratives. Therefore, these narratives are part of the " human element " and, as such, they are an erring element ; and, consequently, we can never be quite sure, when reading them, that we are not reading the result of misapprehension, mis-information, or impressions springing from the prejudices and predilections of the " unlearned and ignorant " Galilean fishermen, who were Christ's companions during his life and witnesses after his death. With what confidence, in that case, can we read their report of Christ's precepts or their record of his actions ? The whole foundation of faith is loosened if inspiration did not participate—guiding them into all truth. If it did participate (which it undoubtedly did), then the rule is upset by which the spirit is excluded as the Recorder of " things within the power of man to discover." And if this false rule be upset for the apostles, it is upset for the prophets, and the whole Bible rescued.

It is consistent that the holders of such a theory should scruple to speak of the Bible as the word of God without qualification. It is so to be spoken of, however, on authority quoted before, which cannot be set aside—the authority of Christ and the apostles. And this way of speaking of it means that historical infallibility is its attribute in all matters with which it historically deals. The reconciliation of apparent discords is not an encroachment on " candour and integrity." Where the eye and heart are fully open to the demonstrated divinity of the records, the reconciliation is an imperative mathematical necessity, whether we may in particular instances be able to accomplish it or not. Inability in any case is not a disproof of its possibility : the cases are few where there is any real difficulty ; and even these are open to plausible suggestion. They no more militate against the manifest and demonstrated inspiration of the record than the discrepancies and difficulties of any science militate against that

science. The earth is proved globular, but our feelings and impressions as we walk abroad are all in favour of its being flat; to uneducated faculty, the explanation of the facts that make these impressions appears to savour of "straining and ingenuity," and to make considerable drafts on "integrity and candour." We know it is not the subject, but the person superficially conversant with the subject, that in this case is responsible for the idea.

★ The Bible's Enemies and Friends

The new theory may be expressed in the old Unitarian *formula* with which we may have been nauseatingly familiar from childhood; that "the Bible is not the word of God, but *contains* the word of God." We know what this theory has done for them. It has eaten out the whole power and marrow of the word of God, and left them starving and dying in the present wilderness of human life—theorising about morals and social improvements, but faithless of the gospel and disobedient to the apostolic commandments. The next step, in natural logical order, is that of modern Unitarians, who hold that the Bible is a good moral book, in some parts of its teaching, but not historically true where it goes contrary to human experience; that it is inspired in a sense, but only in the sense in which Shakespeare is inspired. It is the natural result of this to hold that Israel was not miraculously delivered from Egypt; that Moses and not God is the author of the Jewish law; and that Christ did not rise from the dead. The last stage is represented by Atheism, and good-bye to hope and all moral incentive. The doctrine now recommended has its logical issue here.

The Bible can never command or retain its place as the supreme mentor of human life unless its absolutely divine character is recognised. Its histories will never be studied as they require to be, or its hopes practically blended with the motives of human action, or its self-denying precepts adopted and acted upon in human life, where there is the least suspicion of the presence of a human element in its composition. This suspicion saps confidence: and the lack of confidence leads but too easily to a neglect to which we are naturally pre-disposed. Society is a desolation to-day because of this. The divine authority of the Bible is not recognised. If it were recognised, as it has been hitherto among the brethren, there would be that application to it in constant reading which would purify and ennoble with righteousness and hope. Instead of this, it is regarded as a venerable piece of literary antiquity, good in its way, but not deserving of the first place in human life, and, on the whole, inconvenient and even hurtful, if it is put into that position. All confidence in it as the word of God has been undermined in the general ranks of society through the influence of learned but false theories. A few have had that confidence restored, with the result of light and comfort and righteousness entering into their dark lives by the daily reading of the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation. And they cannot stand by unmoved while the principles are being promulgated which, if successful, would lead us back to the old quagmire, and destroy the foundation of hope and purity, whether intended or not.