

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

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

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



Buy me a coffee

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



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS

OF

The Victoria Institute,

OR,

Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

VOL. LV.



LONDON:

(Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W.1.)

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

1923.

THE 648TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,
HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, S.W., ON MONDAY, JANUARY 15TH, 1923,
AT 4.30 P.M.

THEODORE ROBERTS, ESQ., IN THE CHAIR.

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read, confirmed and signed, and the HONORARY SECRETARY announced the following Elections:—

As Members: The Rev. Roland A. Smith, M.A. (Life Member); Miss Hamilton Law; George Andrew Heath, Esq.; and Victor George Levett, Esq.

As Associates: Henry Proctor, Esq., F.R.S.L., and Mrs. Richard Young.

The CHAIRMAN then introduced the Rev. Wilfrid H. Isaacs, M.A., to read his paper on "Is Inspiration a Quality of Holy Scripture?"

IS INSPIRATION A QUALITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE?

THE BIBLE-LOYALISTS' TERMINOLOGY OVERHAULED.

By the Rev. WILFRID H. ISAACS, M.A.

FIRST a few observations upon the sub-title of this paper. Some of you may remember the controversy about the Inspiration of Holy Scripture aroused by two notable papers, one upon the New Testament and the other upon the Old Testament, read at the Islington Clerical Meeting in 1911. For weeks and months the columns of the *Record* were well supplied with letters upon the subject: lots of admirable points were made; and when it was all over the disputants had laboriously reached the point from which they had started, the elucidation of the subject had not advanced an inch. The reason for this was a simple one. The effect of all those thousands of lines of good stuff was vitiated by the fact that the writers either did not know, or did not venture to declare in what sense they were using the word "Inspiration."

I ventured on that occasion to beg my brethren to overhaul their terminology, and have sustained my entreaties ever since. At last, twelve months ago, dire necessity produced the result which I had failed to achieve—to this extent, at all events, that the uselessness, nay the mischievous mystification, of undefined "inspiration" was admitted and the issue between modernist and Bible-loyalist was clearly stated in a formula from which the word "inspiration" was omitted altogether. I regard that,

in fact events have proved it to be, a very notable advance ; but I do not think that we ought to stop there, or that we can. There is the word "inspiration" in our dictionaries and it will be used rightly or wrongly. Undefined, it will continue to obscure the issue and so prolong and intensify controversy instead of allaying it. If it be defined, a meaning must be assigned to it which fits the facts. It will be an enormous advantage if Bible-loyalists can stand shoulder to shoulder : but to ensure concerted action we must have a reasonable measure of uniformity of speech, and uniformity of speech is impossible without definitions which fit the facts. An agreement that ignores facts will close our doors to our friends and open them to our enemies. An agreement is all that I plead for : there can be no compulsion. It is a free country—perhaps too free so far as language is concerned. Anybody is at liberty to use any word in any sense he likes. Consequently the definition of a term is rather of the nature of a request than of the nature of a command. It is not a peremptory statement that a word means so and so, but rather an endeavour to bring about a general use of that word in a certain sense. You have only to look at any respectable dictionary to see the reason for this plea. As soon as a word comes to be used in more senses than one, ambiguity ensues, and in this case we cannot afford to be ambiguous.

There was a great sorting-out and tidying up of ideas at the Reformation. Our Reformers had to deal with dense confusion of thought created by Rome as a smoke-screen to mask her heterodoxy. The benefits that we owe to their uncompromising precision of speech are simply incalculable.

To-day we are confronted by a fresh enemy employing the same tactics. The crying need of to-day is a 39 Articles against rationalism : but the attempt to meet that need will be ridiculed by some and deprecated by others. Some little time ago I noticed two letters in a copy of the *Spectator*, the one deprecating definition of terms in religion, the other strongly insisting upon the necessity of it in politics. The cat was out of the bag. To Gallio a religious question is an affair of words and names. We cannot afford to be Gallios. To us a religious question is the most important of all questions, and knowing how fatal a misunderstanding may be, we are going to be careful even about words and names, in spite of all the Gallios of the superior but secular press.

On the other hand, ambiguity is the cherished charter of those who want to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. In a magazine called *The Churchman* I noticed some time ago an article entitled, "Blessed be vagueness." Yes, the day seems to be fast approaching when Christendom will be reunited by the elimination of all distinctive convictions. But to those who remember the Master's words: "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth," vagueness is not a blessing, quite the contrary.

The modernist in the Church is rather like the Irish republican warrior. A bullet whizzes past your head, if you are lucky: but by the time you have looked round your assailant has merged into the landscape. You see nothing but a harmless civilian who, apparently, has not even heard the shot fired. In warfare a uniform conduces to fair fighting and facilitates a decision. The absence of it is much more dangerous: it engenders bitterness, prolongs the conflict and extends it, and causes in the end greater destruction. Except to those who love fighting and destruction for its own sake, it is an advantage to be able to differentiate friend from foe.

The need of definition becomes evident in the course of a general view of the situation. Let us now take a closer view, and I think there will emerge the facts to which our definition must conform.

Christianity itself and particularly Christian propaganda stands or falls by the AUTHORITY of the Bible. Particularly propaganda, for while a Society which exists solely for the mutual intercourse and edification of its members may well embrace the adherents of widely different schools of thought to their great mutual advantage, an agency which exists for the purpose of propaganda can profitably embrace those only who are in agreement as to the objects to be attained and the methods to be employed.

The purpose of Christian propaganda is to bring sinners to a Saviour.

For this purpose two things are necessary:—

- (1) To induce conviction of sin;
- (2) To make known a salvation that is at once necessary and ample.

When the AUTHORITY of the Bible is called in question, the proposition that man is a sinner guilty before God can no longer

be established, nor can the necessary and ample salvation be made known. It is this that renders it necessary to insist upon a recognition of the supreme and solitary AUTHORITY of the Bible as the *sine qua non* of propaganda.

That authority is like a three-legged stool: its stability depends upon a combination of three different but inter-related facts:—

- (1) Its authenticity—a genuine work of God the Holy Ghost.
- (2) Arising out of that authenticity, its truthfulness involving
 - (a) the historicity of its records,
 - (b) the sufficiency and finality of its teaching.

That is, the Bible is authoritative because of its origin, and each of the different sorts of literature that it contains is authoritative in its own way: its doctrine as doctrine and its history as history: of these the latter is included in the former. The statement that the Word of God is authoritative is a truism. The statement that the Bible is authoritative implies the postulate that the Bible is the Word of God, of which more anon.

There are stools made to stand on two legs and even on one. A three-legged stool, made to stand on three legs, will not stand on less. The comparison therefore implies that of the three features predicated of the Bible no two would suffice to render it authoritative without the third. Trustworthiness is trustworthiness, and an author who misrepresents facts or pretends to be writing history when he is not, cannot be trusted as a guide in faith or morals.

These, I submit, are the facts, for the presentation of which we have to choose suitable words.

I do not propose this afternoon to deal with the proposition that the teaching of Holy Scripture is sufficient and final, except to say that it expresses our conviction and demands, as an axiom that the New Testament is God's last authoritative word to man, that though fresh light is shed upon the New Testament every day, there is no fresh light outside of the New Testament. There are, of course, many who deny this as vigorously as we assert it; but in this part of the battle each combatant knows exactly where his opponent is: so far as terminology is concerned, there is no confusion or misunderstanding that I know of.

HISTORICITY.

If that which differentiates Holy Scripture from all other literature be a certain transaction of which it is the instrument—the act of the Holy Ghost conveying the thought of God to the mind of man, it does not follow that it is all of the nature of history, or intended to be history. It does follow that every claim which it makes for itself is well-founded, and only to be contested at the peril of him who calls it in question.

There are to be found in it many forms of literature, prayers, praises, preachments and parables which are not of the nature of history. Even its narratives may be divided into two classes—narratives which are narratives of fact, and narratives which are not and are not intended to be. The Parables are narratives. It is quite possible that when our Lord told the story of the Unjust Steward, or the Eccentric Philanthropist of Matt. xx, or the Prodigal Son, He may have had an actual case in His mind. But, as the purpose of the Parable is not to record the case, the supposition is quite unnecessary.

Historicity, like “inerrancy” and “authenticity,” and unlike “inspiration,” is a term applicable to certain literature, intimating that the subject-matter is of a certain literary quality.

A question of great importance at once arises. How are we to distinguish narratives which are intended to be narratives of fact from narratives that are not ?

It is most important to observe that though this may be a religious question, it is not necessarily so. It is a question of analysis and interpretation ; it is strictly a literary question, for it aims at the discrimination of different forms of literature. This being so, the enquiry will be governed by principles of literary criticism.

The first of these principles is to discriminate between literature that is serious and literature that is frivolous. In applying this principle the critic will be justified in assuming that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, the author is a serious writer. The burden of proof rightly lies upon the critic who contests that postulate. Satisfied of the seriousness of the author with whom he is dealing, the critic will credit him with literary consistency. Again, the burden of proof lies upon the critic who contests that postulate.

These principles are applicable to the criticism of all literature. But beside them there are other principles which dis-

tinguish the criticism of sacred literature from that by which profane literature may rightly be judged. Of these the first is that the whole Bible is essentially one, the work of a single author, though penned by many hands. Therefore, within the two covers of our Bible we may search in any one part for the interpretation of any other. We believe that the Holy Ghost will never be found to contradict Himself. The second is that, in dealing with the Bible, we are dealing with God; with God's own account of Himself and of men, and of His dealings with them. Here, surely, it is reasonable to expect to encounter the supernatural. In dealing with secular literature, it is reasonable and scientific that the principles of our literary criticism should be biassed by naturalistic prejudice. In dealing with the Word of God such bias is neither scientific nor reasonable.

Let us take, as a simple instance, the narrative of the Book of Jonah. This Book contains seventy statements which purport to be statements of fact. Sixty-seven of the facts alleged are natural: three are supernatural. Not only are these three supernatural: they are of such a nature as to lend themselves to humorous treatment; with the result that that evil thing sensitiveness to ridicule helps secretly from within the attacks of the scoffers without. To the sufferer, of course, as to the sufferer from sea-sickness, there is nothing comic in the situation at all. It is pure tragedy. But sea-sickness simply because it is purely temporary, and the horrible experience of Jonah, simply because the contemplation of it is relieved by the knowledge that it also was temporary, has always been fair game for a not too nice pleasantry.

Now the sixty-seven present a fidelity to the facts of human nature, as we know it, so realistic, and all the seventy a mutual consistency and coherence so perfect, that no sane critic would ever doubt their genuine historicity, were it not for the fact that the three are not susceptible of a natural explanation.

The denial of the historicity of Jonah is not the fruit of impartial literary criticism, but of naturalistic prejudice, which is not prepared to encounter the supernatural even in that Book which is devoted entirely to the description and justification of God's dealings with men. There is an inconsistency here which defies logic. The Atheist is at least consistent. You can hardly expect miracles to be taken seriously by a person who does not take God seriously. It is only in those who profess to believe in God that the naturalistic prejudice is incongruous.

The other consideration, to which regard should be had in estimating the historicity of a Bible narrative, is the essential unity of a Book which is the work of a single author. What has the Holy Ghost Himself to say about Jonah? He refers, and our Lord Himself is the Spokesman, to two only of the seventy statements. He refers to them emphatically as statements of fact. Of these two, one is of the sixty-seven, the other is of the three; to this latter in particular He refers as a statement of fact, because He refers to it as proof of the possibility of an event of precisely the same supernatural character.

The rejection of the historicity of Jonah is due to naturalistic prejudice, which is out of place in the criticism of the Bible, and ignores the consistency of the narrative itself, and of the Bible as a whole. In refusing to the Holy Ghost credit for such consistency, the naturalistic critic is refusing that which He accords to any serious writer as his due.

In regard to the narratives of Holy Scripture generally, the only safe, natural and scientific assumption is that wherever historicity is ostensible it is real, and that proof is needed not to show historicity, but to show its absence. This applies not only to the purely narrative portions of Old and New Testaments, but also to the narrative framework of the rest.

Take two short sentences from Luke xv :—

3. He spake this parable unto them . . .—A.

11. A certain man had two sons . . .—B.

Historicity is predicable of "A," but the word "parable" in A justifies a refusal to predicate historicity of "B."

Belief in the historicity of a narrative may be, but is not necessarily, affected by the interpretation of its details. Thus the acceptance of Ex. xx, 11, as a statement of fact ("In six days the Lord made heaven and earth") is compatible with more than one interpretation of the word "day," that word being used in at least three different senses in Holy Writ.

The attempt to prove that the narrative of the Old Testament, from Abraham onwards, instead of being a historical record, is a work of fiction written for a religious purpose is discredited by the disingenuous character of the literary criticism employed by its advocates, by their ignorance, or rejection, of external archæological evidence, and by their contradiction of the facts of human nature and of all historical probability. Here, again,

the claims of the Author are decisive. Speaking to the Corinthian believers, through the Apostle Paul, of events described in the Books of Exodus and Numbers, He says: "these things happened unto them for ensamples," or "for our examples." These things happened.

Those who dispute the historicity of the Scripture records are fond of saying that it is not the events narrated that matter, but the inferences from those events.

That is true, but, as Godet says, it does not necessarily follow that because a fact has a prophetic value, it is therefore a mere fiction.

The power exerted by the Holy Scriptures, extensive and intensive, is largely due to the fact that they are so rich in the concrete. Abstract propositions are always difficult to translate into primitive languages, but statements of fact are not. That comes within the competence of the messenger, that is the ammunition he needs. Only the Holy Ghost can cause hearer or reader to draw the proper inferences.

Whether the events narrated occurred or not: whether the narrative be literal or figurative, parable or record, is a matter of secondary importance.

What does matter enormously to the reliability of the presentation is that when it professes to be a record it is a record, and a true record—that there is no discrepancy whatever between the ostensible and the real.

I venture to hope that I may assure myself not only of your agreement with the foregoing, but of an agreement so cordial as to predispose you favourably to some criticism and a suggestion that I am about to offer. You may have observed that I have not as yet employed the word "Inspiration" (indeed, I wonder whether you have missed it). I am about to ask you to reconsider your use of that word—to use it henceforth at once more boldly and more discriminately than heretofore, or alternatively to discontinue your use of it altogether.

The word "inspiration" occurs twice in our English Bible. In one case it is one of the five words of an adjectival phrase used as the equivalent of a Greek adjective. In the other case it represents a Hebrew word which occurs twenty-one times, is rendered "breath" eleven times out of those twenty-one, but "inspiration" only in Job xxxii, 8. You see then at once that the word is not a literal translation either of a Greek word in the New Testament or of a Hebrew word in the Old Testament.

The word "inspired" does not occur at all. If our Jacobean translators deliberately avoided the word in 2 Tim. iii, 16, I think that they were wise in doing so, and that their five-word phrase is a much more exact and less ambiguous rendering than "inspired" would have been. I am very far from regarding criticism of our Jacobean translators as an act of sacrilege. But in this case I have no fault to find with their interpretation, and I consider our modern use of the word far less correct than theirs.

In using the word "inspiration" to indicate a quality of Holy Scripture we have done what they not only did not do, but I think carefully and wisely avoided doing. That use of the word is, I submit, illegitimate. Here I think we need more discrimination,

But secondly, in our legitimate use of the word, we restrict our application of it to Holy Scripture in the form in which it came forth from God. When challenged to apply it to Holy Scripture in the form in which it reaches mankind, we decline the challenge for the simple reason that we have not a definition of the term which would justify such an application. Here, I think, we need more boldness.

There are two counts to the indictment. Let us deal first with the illegitimate use of the word "inspiration" to denote a quality of Holy Scripture. If it did not legitimately supply a legitimate want, whence did it arise? I think we can see that it arose from the form of the English word "inspiration" which conveys an idea foreign to the original. A homely illustration will show what I mean. Two things take place when you inflate your bicycle-tyre. Air is discharged *from* the pump and forced *into* the tyre. Bearing in mind the purpose of the process, the discharge of air from the pump is incidental: the introduction of air into the tyre is the essential. Consequently we call the whole process the inflation of the tyre, though, strictly speaking, the word inflation is only applicable to the second of the two stages of the process—to the effect of the process, not to the cause. The very same thing may be said of the word "inspiration." The interpretation to which by its form it lends itself is the *reception* of the breath of God, the second stage or the effect of the process that is implied: and to that extent it fails to represent the original, which certainly in 2 Tim. iii, 16, and, if the Septuagint is to be trusted, also in Job xxxii, 8, only refers to the first stage of the process, namely, the *giving*

of the breath of God. I do hope that I have made this clear. In 2 Tim. iii, 16, we have figure and fact. The word "inspiration" represents the figure contained in the word *Θεόπνευστος*: the fact is conveyed in the word "given." The word "given" therefore is infinitely more important than the word "inspiration." If our Jacobean translators had simply rendered, "Given by God," they would have omitted the figure of breath, but they would have told us all that is necessary. The whole merit of their rendering lies in the words "given by God." 2 Tim. iii, 16, is a statement of the divine origin of Holy Scripture, no more and no less.

I hope I have closed one door to misinterpretation, but there is another still open. There is the adjective "inspired," and "surely," says the misinterpreter, regardless of grammar, "an adjective indicates a quality." Even if you have forgotten your grammar, it hardly requires a moment's thought to realize that many adjectives are not qualitative, verbal adjectives, I think, never except by implication. Thus when you say, "The man is a beaten man," you may mean that because he has been beaten he is hopeless and helpless; but it is obvious that the word beaten does not imply this necessarily, for you might have occasion to say that the beaten man is still hopeful and resourceful. By a "disciplined army" you would probably mean an orderly army; but you might have occasion to say that a highly disciplined army had got out of hand. By "an inspired man" you would probably mean a wise man or an enthusiastic man; but all that you actually say of him is that he had been or was being inspired.

The origin of a thing carries with it a presumption, but not more than a presumption, of qualities akin to it. The statement of origin therefore is not a statement of the resulting qualities.

But, you say, in the case of literature or art is there not a well-recognized connection between character and origin? Should we not be justified in using the terms Shakespearian or Pauline both of the origin and of the qualities of those writings? Certainly, but the corresponding term in dealing with the Work of God the Holy Ghost is not "inspired" but "divine." In saying "inspired" and meaning "divine" you mean well. I am only trying to persuade you of the great advantage in controversy of saying what you mean exactly. Now Holy Scripture has many notable qualities, every quality indeed which is needed to enable it to make the reader wise unto salvation: but I

maintain that there is not one of those qualities that cannot be better expressed than by the word "inspiration," which, in default of a better, must suffice to express the act of God from which all those qualities arise, but is wholly unsuitable as a description of any one of them, or of any combination of them. We do seem to lack a word which would do justice to that act of God. I do not, however, think that we can plead poverty of speech as an excuse for putting fresh burdens upon a word that is already badly overworked. I am not aware of any quality of Holy Scripture for which the resources of our vocabulary do not provide adequate expression.

But perhaps you say, "Here's a good word, 'Inspiration': pity to waste it. Can't you find us a use for it?" To that question I think you will find an answer in the second count of my indictment, which I had better repeat: "In our legitimate use of the word 'Inspiration' we restrict our application of it to Holy Scripture in the form in which it came forth from God. When challenged to apply it to Holy Scripture in the form in which it reaches mankind, we decline the challenge for the simple reason that we have not a definition of the term which would justify such an application."

We now come to the weak spot which, in the hope of remedying the weakness, it is the design of this paper to probe.

My Bible-loyalist brother speaking to *his friends*, always boldly and baldly asserts that *the Bible* is authentic and inerrant. Under cross-examination by an enemy he is liable to crumple up, and modestly explains that he predicates authenticity and inerrancy *only* of original documents and of the Bible, just so far as it is verbally identical with those original documents and no further.

I believe that admission to be futile, disastrous and unnecessary. Futile because you cannot find inerrancy in original documents if you cannot find *them*, and because the statement that the original documents were authentic is to a friend the statement of the obvious, and to an enemy the begging of the question.

The admission is disastrous because it exposes the reliability of the Bible, our Bible, to the untender mercies of the textual critics and all the other critics.

It is unnecessary because it leaves out of account the present action, the overruling, correcting action of the living Spirit.

So far from there being any possibility of proving the Bible to be verbally identical with original documents, every ascertainable fact points not merely to the extreme unlikelihood, but to the utter impossibility of any such verbal identity.

Remember that Babel preceded the Bible : that God inflicted upon mankind a multiplicity of languages before He caused Holy Scripture to be written in one of them. Translation was a necessity from the very beginning. Is it not obvious that so long as languages differ there must be for the conveyance of any given thought as many forms of words as there are languages ? Verbal identity does not survive a single translation, however perfect that translation may be.

Let me put this in another way : There are only three features that I know of in which one word can be identical with another, namely appearance, sound and meaning. Of these three, difference of language allows the possibility only of the third. Nobody claims identity of sound or appearance between an English word and its Hebrew or Greek equivalent. Meaning only remains. It is the meaning and the meaning only that matters.

At this point the translator steps into the witness-box, and he bears his testimony that practically always the thought is conveyed not by single words in isolation, but by words in combination, clauses, sentences, groups and arrangements of words. He bears testimony further that though in the task of interpretation every jot and tittle of his text demands consideration, the tense, mood or voice of a verb, the number and case of a noun, the order of the words and sometimes even their sound, yet that does not compel him to reproduce those forms and groupings in another language in order to reproduce their meaning.

Verbal and grammatical *minutice* not only may be significant as in the two classic instances always quoted (Gal. iii, 16 ; Matt. xxii, 32) they *must* be. They are not, however, on that account indispensable. The thought which they are intended to convey may be expressible, and even more exactly expressible otherwise. You are familiar with passages where the Holy Ghost has availed Himself of the speaker's indubitable right to report Himself in more ways than one. Who then are we to say that one form only is right ?

We must have inerrancy for our standard, yes, verbal inerrancy. But the inerrancy of a word is not unchangeableness in form,

but fidelity to meaning. So, in order to express the exact meaning of a verb, it is quite possible that the translator will be well-advised not merely *not* to reproduce a passive voice by a passive voice, but not to have a verb at all, not to reproduce a plural noun but to substitute several nouns, not to follow the order of the original but to invert it, not to reproduce a figure but to give its meaning. I should like to give instances of this, but that is a lecture all to itself.

We have to face the fact not only that there are variations of the text of the Bible, but that there are variations of text *in* the Bible. As to the latter, it is evident that the Holy Ghost has not tied Himself down to one form of words: as to the former, I should be sorry to be dependent upon the particularity of unbelievers for my possession of an authentic Bible. No, thank God, I have something better. I have the controlling action of Him who sent off the precious freight upon its journey and sees to its safe conveyance, takes the obstacles that men have placed in the way and transforms them into vehicles.

The translator bears testimony further that He is concerned with the words of his original only until he has possessed himself of their meaning, and that as soon as he has reached the point of expressing that meaning in another language, the more completely he banishes the literary form of his original from his mind, the better for his readers. That does not look like the perpetuation of verbal identity. In point of fact it militates strongly against such perpetuation.

The translator's one rule is: fidelity to the matter of his original, and accommodation to the style of his reader. Where this rule is disregarded translation simply does not take place; contact between writer and reader is not established.

It is the meaning that matters. But what is the meaning of a word? The meaning of a word is not something inherent in the word. The meaning of a word is not something that that word possesses. The meaning of a word is the thought that it produces in the mind of the reader or readers. Even where it produces that thought in the minds of millions of readers, its effect is not due to any inherent significance, but to an understanding or agreement among those readers to use that word in that particular way. The meaning of a word is a mental, not a material phenomenon; it is not objective, but subjective. No word has any such thing as a meaning apart from the mind of the reader. In other words, the operation by

which God causes men to use certain words in a certain way is an operation performed not upon the apparatus of language, but upon the minds of men.

Whatever, then, "verbal inspiration" may mean, it cannot mean or involve verbal identity, except in the sense of identity of meaning.

A definition being an agreement with our contemporaries, it is necessary to take account of the modern uses of the word "inspired." The writer of an inspired newspaper article writes what he has been told to write, the writer of an inspired poem what he has been enabled to write, by a power outside of and greater than himself. In the former case the idea of control predominates; in the latter that of a stimulant. Solomon was an intellectual, Amos was a farm-hand; but each spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. It was the word of God. Solomon under that control could say no more; Amos, under that stimulant, could say no less.

Pressed for a definition of "inspiration" (I trust that henceforth pressure will be neither resented nor needed), the Bible-loyalist takes refuge in 2 Peter i, 21: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

Now let me ask you: if I asked you for a definition of war, would it be an answer to my question to say, "A war took place in 1914." Of course it would not. No more is 2 Peter i, 21, a definition of "inspiration." But I admit that that verse provides material for a definition. It tells me that the inspiration of Isaiah was quite different from the inspiration of Shakespeare; that whereas Shakespeare was a free agent, Isaiah was not.

But what I want you to notice is this: that if you regard 2 Peter i, 21, as providing sufficient material for a definition of "inspiration," you are thinking of inspiration not as a characteristic of Holy Scripture, but simply and solely as its origin.

2 Peter i, 21, provides material for *one* definition of "inspiration"—an act of the Holy Spirit whereby He conveyed the thought of God to a man's mind, and caused him to express it in certain words. Are you satisfied with that definition?

It is unexceptionable as far as it goes. But I would point out that if that is all that the word "inspiration" means, I do not need it at all. I can state the fact expressed in that definition without using the word "inspiration"; for all that

it means is that Holy Scripture is the authentic word of God the Holy Ghost.

I would point out further that not only in this case is the *word* superfluous; the *thing* is insufficient. If I am not sure that the word of God has reached *me*, I am not consoled or compensated by the reflection that it reached Isaiah. As an assurance of this latter, I could do without the word "inspiration"; but I cling to the word "inspiration," because it is suggestive to me of a completed transaction—the conveyance of the thought of God right from its starting-point to its destination, the reader. This word, indicating an act of God upon the mind of man, seems to me to be an eminently suitable and convenient word for this purpose. It includes the reference to origin; but why should it be restricted to that? The cause is surely a worthy one, for the reader is the end, the writer is but the means, and the end is greater than the means.

I have said that it is the meaning that matters: I must be careful; for that statement is susceptible of the interpretation that the words do not matter, that inspiration is not verbal; and I am promptly confronted with the sound argument that God must have chosen the words, because He could not have conveyed the thoughts without them. Well, He could not have conveyed His thoughts to the mind of Isaiah in words without choosing words which Isaiah understood, and He could not convey His thoughts to my mind without the choice of English words. In this latter case the choice is rendered valid and effective by the correcting action of the Holy Spirit. Are you sure that in the former case that correcting action was unnecessary? I submit that the difference between the demand for that correcting action in my case and in Isaiah's was a difference in degree, not in kind. Naturally the longer the Word of God is in the hands of human messengers the more there is to overrule and correct in its transmission.

No, the suggestion that the word "inspiration" may be used of the act of God upon the mind of reader as well as writer is perfectly consistent with the conviction that the choice of words for the purpose is under His control.

There is no need, by the way, to support the fact of verbal inspiration by means of an imaginary distinction between the inspiration of the writers and the inspiration of the writings. When I say the writings were inspired (2 Tim. iii, 16) I mean that God caused certain men to express in writing certain

thoughts ; and when I say the writers were inspired (2 Peter i, 21) I mean that God caused certain men to express in writing certain thoughts. I submit that the distinction drawn between these two inspirations is a clear case of a distinction without a difference.

I think I know what I have to contend with. Is it not the conviction that the Holy Spirit's action in imparting the thought of God to the mind of the writer and his action in imparting it to the mind of the reader are on two entirely different planes, so different that the two actions can only be expressed by two different words, namely "inspiration" and "illumination," of which the former is authoritative and the latter is not ?

All I can say is that if the conveyance of God's thought to the reader is no more different from its conveyance to the writer than "illumination" is from "inspiration," the difference would not seem to be great. Inspiration and illumination are both of them figurative terms. The conveyance of thought is compared in the one to the imparting of breath and in the other to the imparting of light ; but the idea of the conveyance of thought is common to both and is equally appropriate to God's dealings with writer and reader. Either word might quite well be applied to either transaction.

I have no desire lightly to dismiss this contrast between the authoritative and the unauthoritative.

There is a danger that we may think ourselves to be relying on the Holy Spirit when we are not, consequently we need to test and check our spiritual impressions by something that is independent of them. A prominent Bible-loyalist wrote to me the other day : "I require something visible as a standard whereby to test or check all spiritual impressions." "That is true," I reply, "but it is only a half-truth. You need more than the visible something, you need eyes to see it with."

For God's Holy Word is a book that is sealed
Unless by the Spirit its truths are revealed.

Our Reformers used the word Inspiration of an action of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of the believer :—

"That by thine inspiration we may think those things that be rightful."

"Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy Holy Spirit."

Our need of that inspiration is in no wise diminished by our possession of a visible standard. Nay, without the personal

inspiration the standard will actually mislead us, for we shall mis-read it to a certainty. I am prepared to believe that reliance upon a visible standard divorced from reliance upon the personal guidance of the Holy Spirit is responsible for just as many heresies as reliance upon the Holy Spirit divorced from reliance upon the written Word. Neither works without the other.

You will have observed that I readily admit the unreliability of spiritual impressions, and the need of that unreliability being corrected. In order to correct it we must diagnose its cause, and I submit that the unreliability of spiritual impressions is invariably traceable to the tacit assumption that personal contact with God, once established, maintains itself automatically ; that illumination or sanctification once received maintains itself automatically. We have always, as someone observed the other day, to be on our guard against the automatic in religion. A point we need to remember is that that only can fulfil the function of a standard which is at once perfect and accessible. Original documents are not accessible ; therefore we must find our standard in that form in which the word of God has reached us, which is rendered inerrant only by the correcting action of the Holy Spirit.

As soon as you admit that the correcting action of the Holy Spirit suffices to ensure the inerrancy of the form in which the Word of God has reached us, you are obliged to admit that it suffices to ensure the inerrancy of the forms in which the Word of God reaches others also. Why should it not ? For (1) Inerrancy, as I have shown, cannot be predicated of any extant text of Holy Scripture in the sense of visible or audible identity with originals, and (2) God is no respecter of persons. There is only one thing I know of that constitutes an indefeasible claim upon his interposition and that is *need*. You see the inference. The native Christian of India, Africa or China has just as inerrant a Bible as you or I. The particular version accessible to him may be a very tentative affair judged as a translation, but its adequacy as a standard whereby to test and check his spiritual impressions is guaranteed by the same sanction that guarantees the adequacy of our versions, it is ensured by the action of the Holy Spirit, who alone makes the right word effective and corrects the effect of the wrong one. "The Bible," wrote Mr. Russell Howden, in the *Life of Faith* last May, "is one long witness to the fact that God is not much hampered by earthly disadvantages."

Inspiration is always and only an act of God upon the mind of man. It was so when He caused Holy Scripture to be written : it is so still when He enables men to read it. God has made the Bible a sharp sword, but a sword cannot cut a pat of butter. It is not the sword but the swordsman that does the cutting.

God has not put a certain potency into the letter of Holy Scripture and left it there. A word, a sentence, a book, a library is no more susceptible of inspiration in that sense than a chair or a table. What the Holy Spirit does not do Himself is not done. He acts not on matter, but on mind. The Romanist would have us believe that in the Holy Communion at the prayer of consecration something happens to bread and wine, and that when we say, " Bless, O Lord, these gifts to our use," something happens to our mutton-chop. No, the Holy Spirit does not bless the food but the eater : He does not inspire things but men, and He alone inspires.

The Word of God is the thought of God communicated to man. Two vehicles have been employed—a book and a Person. Each therefore is called the Word of God. The Word of God always gives life. In the Lord Jesus Christ the vehicle was a living Person. The analogy is close ; but it is possible to over-estimate it. There is a difference. The Son of God had life in Himself. He had in Himself the power of imparting life. He Himself radiated life. He was one with the Father, so that in endowing Him with life-giving power God was not giving it away. God never gives it away. That is what He would have done, had He put it into a book and left it there.

I should not be afraid of saying that Holy Scripture exhales, gives off, spiritual potency. If so it is as vapour is given off, not by petrol in a tank, but by a volcano. The vapour is inherent in the petrol and is given off all the time. The volcano is only the point of discharge : the source is behind, and vapour comes forth from the volcano only when the subterranean fires are active. In the case of the Son of God, the vehicle Himself radiated life. In the case of the book life comes *from* it like vapour from the volcano, not really but apparently : really it comes *through* it.

About forty years ago a vigorous effort was made to rob us of St. Paul's testimony to the divine origin of Holy Scripture. Θεόπνευστος said Cremer, does not mean " God-breathed " but " breathing God," exhaling the divine. A good deal of ingenuity and also some disingenuity was put into the effort. Happily

it failed: I have the refutation here, if anybody is interested in it.

The issue upon which I am asking you to make up your minds is whether *the Bible* is authentic, inerrant, inspired, and if so, on what grounds ?

Can you claim for it authenticity, inerrancy and inspiration on the ground of verbal identity with original autographs ?

Is it worth while to claim for it an incomplete authenticity, inerrancy and inspiration proportionate to an unascertainable but admittedly incomplete verbal identity with those autographs ?

To me there seems to be a better way.

To regard the process of the conveyance of the thought of God to the mind of man as one whole, the singularity of the message undamaged by transit in a multiplicity of forms and guaranteed by the correcting action of Him from whom it came. In all those forms there is a common factor—not a quality but a transaction—*the Act of the Holy Spirit conveying the thought of God to the mind of man.*

I submit that a definition of Inspiration should consist of a statement of that common factor in connotation with the factors that are not common, *the writer and the reader*, that no other idea has any right to a place in the definition, and that there is no other useful use of the word.

If you are afraid to use the word in a sense which harmonizes with its etymology and the facts of the situation, the sense in fact in which Our Reformers used it, I dare to entreat you not to use it at all.

POSTSCRIPT.

I think it possible that among my hearers there are some who are now saying to themselves: You have stated that the authority of the Bible stands upon a combination of three factors—

- (1) Its authenticity, a genuine work of God the Holy Ghost ;
- (2) The historicity of its records ;
- (3) The sufficiency and finality of its teaching.

You admit the presence of error in the form in which the Word of God has reached us, and you suggest that the correcting action of God the Holy Ghost acting not upon the text but upon the mind of the reader, overrules any such error, making

it a medium for the conveyance of the truth, or, at all events, neutralizing it as a medium for the conveyance of what is not true.

Now I can understand that this correcting action of the Holy Spirit can make all the teaching of the whole Bible sufficient and final in spite of textual errors.

I cannot, however, understand how it can prevent the presence even of small errors of detail from marring the completeness of the historicity of the records or of the authenticity of the whole.

That is a genuine difficulty, and the only reply that I can make to it is a metaphysical one. It is, however, a reply which satisfies myself, and if, as I think, it is sound, I hope it may satisfy others.

The correcting action of God the Holy Ghost gives me *the equivalent of complete authenticity*, for that word or phrase or passage, which either accidentally or fraudulently has been introduced into the text, if God has permitted it to take its place there, and so long as He permits it to retain its place there, he incorporates it into his plan, appropriates it and makes it as really His own, as really a part of His message, as though He had put it there originally Himself.

The correcting action of God the Holy Ghost gives me *the equivalent of complete historicity*, for if an error of detail has crept into a record, He so acts upon the mind of the believing reader as to safeguard him from an erroneous impression either of the course of the events recorded or of their significance.

I am very shy, however, of speaking of errors or discrepancies except in my own department. There seems to be no limit to the possibilities of explanation of apparent discrepancies: anyhow, I am quite sure that we are very far from having exhausted those possibilities as yet.

Meantime, the *effect* of the permission of such apparent discrepancies, a severe test of faith, is the index of its *purpose*.

DISCUSSION.

Dr. DAVID ANDERSON-BERRY said: Inspiration is a good word. It is a good word because it expresses figuratively what is spiritually true. Inspiration and expiration are the *diastole* and *systole* of respiration. Inspiration points the way to life; expiration the way to death, for when we say a man expires we mean he dies.

Thus it is connected, as we see from its derivation, with breath, and it comes from the same source as spirit. *Spiritus lenis, spiritus asper*, are terms well known to linguists: light breathing, harsh breathing.

In Greek also the word translated wind may be translated spirit.

Inspiration is a good word historically. The common doctrine of the Church in all ages is and has been that inspiration is an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain persons, that they may express outwardly what is impressed inwardly.

Inspiration differs from *illumination*. They differ in their subjects: the former's subjects are certain selected persons, the latter's every true believer. They differ as to their object. The object of inspiration is to render the teaching of certain men infallible; that of illumination is to render men holy. Inspiration does not in itself sanctify. Balaam, Saul and Caiaphas were all inspired but were all bad men.

Again, *inspiration* differs from *revelation*. As to their objects: the object of the former is to secure infallibility of teaching, the object of the latter is to impart knowledge. The effect of the former is to preserve a man from error in teaching, that of the latter is to make him wiser.

In 1 Cor. ii, 13, Paul sets this forth in the clearest manner. The subject-matter of his teaching had never entered into the mind of man, but God had revealed it by His Spirit. As to the Corinthians' objection to his language and manner of presentation, he remarks that we teach "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth; but which the Holy Spirit teacheth," *combining spiritual with spiritual*, that is, clothing the truths of the Spirit in the words of the Spirit. Nowhere can we find a better definition of the Spirit's action in inspiring a man.

For time and eternity I have to risk myself resting on this naked Word. Well is it for me that it is inspired, for then it is infallible. And what is infallible is absolutely trustworthy.

The Rev. J. J. B. COLES said: What Scripture says of itself and the use which Our blessed Lord made of it should ever be before our hearts when the question of inspiration is touched on—especially nowadays. No theories of inspiration can be acceptable to us

which in the slightest degree would blunt the edge of the sword of the Spirit—which is the Word of God.

Mr. Coles also quoted Heb. iv, 12, Eph. vi, 12-17, 2 Cor. x, 4 and 5, Jud. vii, 20.

Mr. SIDNEY COLLETT said : After listening carefully to the reading of this paper, I must confess that my mind is somewhat confused as to what the lecturer really wishes to convey to us concerning the word "Inspiration"! The whole lecture seems to be an attack upon that familiar and expressive word; yet on p. 33 he says he clings to it himself! If, however, as the paper seems to indicate, he would take it from us, what is he going to give us in its place? We must have a word to express the absolutely unique character of the Word of God, and in the scriptural word "inspiration" we have that word.

Probably few, if any, of us have found the difficulty that appears to trouble the lecturer of understanding what I should call the obvious meaning of the word; for not only is it used in the most simple and natural manner in 2 Tim. iii, 16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," but the fact is most beautifully amplified in 2 Peter i, 21: "Holy men of God spake as they were moved (or borne along) by the Holy Ghost."

Then on pp. 35 and 36, if I understand him aright, the lecturer would have us believe that the Bible is not *inspired* in itself, but only in the way in which it reaches the minds of men! Now such a view of inspiration I entirely reject; for I venture to assert that if no human eye had ever gazed upon the pages of the Bible, it would be just as truly inspired by God as it is to-day, otherwise the passages quoted above would have no meaning.

The lecturer also, on p. 29, endeavours to make a strong point of the fact that none of the original documents (*i.e.*, those which were actually written by prophets and Apostles) are now in existence. But, it ought to be more widely known that, the number of ancient documents, copied from the originals, is so great that by means of them we can, for all practical purposes, get at the very words which were originally penned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Mr. W. HOSTE said : While there is much in a general way to be thankful for in the paper we have listened to, I fear, when we come to its particular thesis, I have gained no clear idea of what

Mr. Isaacs wants us to understand by "Inspiration," as he seems to believe in a quadruple form of it and predicates it equally of writers, writings (in their original translations) and readers. I have heard men lay a sort of tacit claim to "Inspiration" for their own interpretations, but it was rarely inspiring. The trouble is not to get a definition, but to get the same. Modernists, "Bible-loyalists" and "Bible-wobblers" will all define differently. We do not separate the illuminating Spirit from the Word He has given in Inspiration; but whereas Inspiration is absolute, the measure in which we apprehend the truth is partial.

On p. 29 Mr. Isaacs qualifies as "futile, disastrous and unnecessary" to refer to the "authenticity and inerrancy of original documents," but I suppose we all admit there were such. How could "God-breathed" words (2 Tim. iii, 16) be anything but authentic, or the *ipsissima verba* of men borne along by the Spirit of God (2 Peter i, 21) be anything but inerrant? Indeed on p. 33, at bottom, Mr. Isaacs virtually admits this: "Naturally the longer the Word of God is in the hands of human messengers the more there is to overrule and correct in its transmission."

But what alternative is offered us? "We must find our standard in that form in which the Word of God has reached us," answers our lecturer on p. 35, "which is rendered inerrant only by the correcting action of the Holy Spirit"; and then he goes on, "As soon as you admit that," etc. We admit nothing of the sort. We energetically refuse any such assumption. We hold that our English Bible represents to all intents and purposes the Word of God, but that in transmission, through the failures of scribes and translators, here and there false readings, insertions, errors, have crept in—really a negligible quantity compared to the whole—and we welcome sane and reverent criticism of the text as discoveries are made of new MSS. or versions. The reverse would be sheer obscurantism.

In 1916 I had occasion to take a long journey with a boatful of blacks down the great Zambezi to the Victoria Falls, and we drank of the water all the way. But if anyone had said, "Can you guarantee its absolute purity?" I should have replied, "No, for that you must mount to the sources." It would have been a queer reply: "You have never seen them; you must not make them your standard." One day there was great excitement: my negroes found a big dead fish floating on the water. It was not

edible, according to our notions, but they were delighted. As a matter of fact, I should not have chosen to drink of the river just there. God has not promised a continual miracle to make scribes and translators infallible. They are responsible to do their work correctly, just as we are to "contend earnestly for the faith," and not to fold our arms and say "the Bible will defend itself." In my judgment the conclusion of the paper almost reaches bathos: "The correcting action of the Holy Ghost gives us the equivalent of complete authenticity" for mistakes "accidentally or fraudulently introduced into the text," or "the equivalent of complete historicity, if an error of detail have crept into the record." This savours of jugglery, and seems to make God a party to a fraud in conveying the impression that error is truth, because it is within the covers of His Word. Is it immaterial, for instance, whether we read A.V. or R.V. in Rev. xxii, 14? Once I ordered a copy of the Bible in French. It was well bound and printed and excellent value, but I found this serious printers' error: "Dieu résiste aux humbles, mais il fait grâce aux orgueilleux" (1 Peter v, 3). Was I wrong in writing to the publishers, and were they wrong in at once rectifying the error, or ought we to have trusted to the corrective action of the Holy Spirit?

The Rev. F. E. MARSH said: The reader of the paper has not made it clear to some of our minds as to where he stands upon the Inspiration of the Scriptures. If Inspiration is not a "quality" of the Scriptures, what is the quality which makes them different from any other book? I recognize it is wise to drop all our theories about Inspiration and accept its fact. Back of my mind I believe in verbal and plenary inspiration, but the one thing to emphasize is the fact of Scripture. The Scriptures are God-breathed in their origin and God-breathing in their influence.

Surely there are qualities which prove the "quality" of Scripture, for as I understand the word "quality," quality indicates the nature of any given thing and expresses its character. Apart from the word "inspiration," there are certain qualities which the Scriptures claim for themselves. Among the many claims of the Word of God are: it is "living" in nature (Heb. iv, 12), "effective" in working (Acts xix, 20), "incorruptible" in character (1 Peter i, 23), "perfect" in form (Ps. xix, 7), "settled" in revelation (Ps. cxix,

89), "spiritual" in soul (1 Cor. ii, 9, 10) and "pure" in doctrine (Ps. xix, 8).

Unless we are very careful, we shall divorce the Spirit from the Word. Christ said, "The Words that I speak unto you are spirit and life" (John vi, 53); and, as Prof. Godet points out, the words of Christ are not merely the vehicle which convey to us the life of the Spirit, but that the Spirit Himself is embodied in the words. If we miss them we miss Him. As a Puritan says, "The Holy Spirit always rides in the chariot of His Word."

The Rev. JAMES M. POLLOCK said: Like others, I am not sure that I have grasped the Lecturer's position, but one of his fundamental statements—viz., that on p. 36: "God has not put a certain potency into the letter of Holy Scripture and left it there"—I would like to challenge entirely. We all are, I take it, believers in the infallibility of Holy Scripture" (note, what I meant was rather in the supreme authority of Holy Scripture in matters of faith), and therefore we are prepared to accept its statements concerning itself as true; and I contend that some of these statements do imply a potency or quality in the actual words of Scripture. Thus Our Lord said in St. John vi, 63: "The Words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Mark, "The Words . . . are spirit and life" do not merely convey spirit and life. And again, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews declares: "The Word of God is living" (Greek ζων), not merely conveys life. So that when we look into our Bibles, while we see with our outward eyes so much black letterpress, yet these words are instinct with Divine truth and life.

The Chairman, Mr. THEODORE ROBERTS, moved a vote of thanks to the Lecturer for his paper, which he characterized as able, suggestive and thoroughly orthodox.

He, the Chairman, avowed himself to be all that was meant by a "Bible-loyalist," though he thought our loyalty was due to a Person, Christ, rather than to a book.

The Reformers and their successors had insisted upon the authority and sufficiency of Scripture, but quite recently inerrancy had been claimed for the autographs. This was only of practical value if the Bible-loyalist shut his eyes to the numerous variations displayed

in the existing documents. Westcott and Hort estimate the doubtful words in the New Testament at one-thousandth part of the whole, but many say this should be put at one-hundredth.

But even if certainty were possible, it would be of no value to the vast majority of Bible readers, who do not go beyond the Authorized Version, which is manifestly inaccurate in numberless instances.

He pointed out that inerrancy was not distinctive of divine work, as he knew of one Act of Parliament at least (the Fines and Recoveries Act), in which no defect had been found since it was passed nearly a century ago. He considered this claim for inerrancy a poverty-stricken view of inspiration, but he recognized that the natural man must have some visible support for his belief, and if he could not find it in an infallible Church, then he wanted an infallible Book. The Romanists, in making everything of the Church, ignored the power and presence of the Holy Spirit, and he feared lest Bible-loyalists might do the same.

This desire for an inerrant book was frustrated because the autographs had perished. He believed God had ensured this, lest they should have been treated as the Jews treated the Brazen Serpent, which once was the vehicle of giving life to the people, but finally became an object of worship, so that the reforming Hezekiah had to destroy it. It certainly was remarkable that the early Christians, who readily gave up their lives rather than betray the Scriptures to their persecutors, had so little regard for the originals that they appear to have thrown them on the dust-heap as soon as they became unsuited for public reading through continuous use.

There was no difficulty about all this, if we remembered that God's object was not to give us a perfect Book, but rather a sufficient vehicle for His Spirit's use in communicating His mind to us, and this is why he so appreciated the Lecturer's position that inspiration involved a transaction between God and the reader.

He thought this was borne out by the four steps which the Apostle Paul indicated in 1 Cor. ii. There was, *first*, the Revelation to the apostolic men of the things which had not entered into man's heart, and this was by the Spirit (verse 10). *Secondly*, there was the Knowledge of these things by the inspired writers, a capacity given by the Spirit of God (verse 12). *Thirdly*, there was the communica

tion of the things (thus revealed and known) to others, and for this the very words were given by the Spirit (verse 13).

He believed that these words had been providentially preserved in all material respects in the various copies and translations that had been made. It was, at all events, significant that no false doctrine seemed ever to have been derived from any mistake of a copyist or translator. *Fourthly*, there was the Reception of this communication by the reader, for which also the Spirit was requisite (verse 14).

He thought that this view put the Bible-loyalist on far stronger ground, as he was able to say that the English reader had the Word of God in his hands. As a dear Welsh Saint once said, "My Lord always speaks to me in Welsh."

In conclusion, he would plead with his hearers to let the Bible speak for itself. For anyone to attempt to defend it seemed to him like a man with a bow-and-arrows defending a Dreadnought. The Bible claimed for itself authority and sufficiency. The most important text in his view was the word of our Lord Jesus, "Scripture cannot be broken" (John x, 35).

This included translations, for our Lord would appear to be quoting from the Septuagint. In the Synagogue at Nazareth, after apparently reading from this version a passage which differs considerably from the Hebrew, He added, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke iv, 21).

He concluded by calling for a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Isaacs, which was carried by acclamation.

The Rev. Dr. J. E. H. THOMSON wrote : "In the far-off days when I began my study of divinity there was a distinction made between Inspiration and Revelation, which Mr. Isaacs does not appear to recognize. His definition of Inspiration is 'an act of the Holy Spirit whereby He conveyed the thought of God to a man's mind, and caused him to express it in certain words.' The latter clause, it seems to me, belongs to the sphere of Revelation. (I am somewhat in conflict with the psychology of Mr. Isaacs. On p. 33 he says, 'He [God] could not have conveyed His thoughts to the mind of Isaiah without choosing words which Isaiah understood.' That implies that we can only think in words and can only have the thoughts of others conveyed to us in the vehicle of

words. If so, an uneducated mute would be unable to think. Pictures as well as words may be the signs by which thoughts are fixed, marked off from each other and remembered. The absolute dependence of thoughts on words may be disproved by the number of visual terms used to characterize thought, as obscure or clear. The very word 'definition' implies the marking off of visible boundaries. The Psychology of Prophecy is a subject that has not been sufficiently studied. I think Mr. Isaacs is rather unfortunate in choosing Isaiah as an example: to him, at any rate, God revealed His message by vision; the opening words of the book prove this: 'The Vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.' A study of the prophecy itself confirms this; it is full of pictures which are implied rather than described. If Mr. Isaacs takes any of the sections of the Book of Isaiah he will, I think, recognize that the connection of the different paragraphs is that between successive pictures in a panorama. It is true that alliteration, assonance and even rhyme characterize the style of Isaiah; yet the connection of paragraphs is what I have indicated. Jeremiah would have been a better example for Mr. Isaacs' purpose. It seems to me that the influence of the Divine Spirit might be translated into words or pictures, according to the idiosyncrasy of the prophet).

"I am glad to see that Mr. Isaacs defends the historicity of the Book of Jonah."

The Rev. R. WRIGHT HAY remarked that Mr. Isaacs' statements in the middle of his p. 36 challenge criticism, and said: All believers will agree that the Scriptures are the speech of the Holy Spirit. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit *is saying* unto the Churches" (Rev. ii, 7). In that sense the "potency" attaching to the writing is not "*left there*" because the Speaker is always with His word. But surely this fact does give a *quality* to Scripture, and surely the quality is essentially one with the means of its production. "The words that *I speak* unto you, they are *spirit* and they are *life*" (John vi, 63).

Θεόπνευστος is used in 2 Tim. iii, 16, as qualifying not the writers (or the readers), but the writings. The record is God-breathed. Dr. Chalmers discriminates most helpfully between Revelation and Inspiration when he speaks of the former as "*influx*" and of the

latter as "efflux." In the influx the Divine communication was effectually borne in upon the mind of the sacred writer, and in the efflux the knowledge thus communicated was infallibly expressed to others in writing.

The knowledge communicated to John in Patmos was imparted to him by Revelation ; our knowledge of what John saw and heard has been communicated to us by Inspiration. And, as Dr. Watts has so well said, " Not only is Inspiration to be distinguished from Revelation ; it is to be distinguished also from that Illumination by which the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of the understanding to apprehend what is written : ' The entrance of Thy Word giveth light.' "

The Rev. JOHN TUCKWELL, M.R.A.S., writes : " I do not think Mr. Isaacs is likely to persuade English-speaking people to adopt the new meaning he suggests for the word ' Inspiration,' viz., ' the thought of God right from its starting-point [*i.e.* in God Himself, through the inspired men, into the written document] to its destination, the reader.' We have the word, and our dictionaries give to it a more limited meaning, such as (i) the act of the Holy Spirit upon the mind of the man, or (ii) the quality that action imparts to the writings of Scripture. But they do not include the effect upon the reader. I am afraid also I must reject his exposition of 2 Tim. iii, 16, and his analogy of the inflation of a bicycle tyre. The bicycle tyre existed before the inflation by the air-pump took place, but Scripture is the product of the ' God-breathing ' and did not exist before it. The text reads, ' All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable,' etc. Here *Theopneustos* is equivalent to ' Divinely inspired.' Yet Mr. Isaacs prefers the rendering of the A.V., ' given by God,' and even goes so far as to say : ' The word " given " therefore is infinitely more important than the word " inspiration.' " Yet there is no such word in the Greek. *Theopneustos* is an adjective qualifying the word *Graphe* (' writing,' ' Scripture '). But the A.V., instead of saying, ' All Scripture is God-inspired,' turned the Greek adjective into a noun and added the word ' given,' which is a distinct irrelevancy. I cannot, therefore, agree with Mr. Isaacs when he says, ' 2 Tim. iii, 16, is a statement of the divine origin of Holy Scripture, no more and no less '—there is something more. It has the special and unique quality of being ' God-breathed,'

i.e. 'inspired of God.' A pebble on the beach has a Divine origin but it is not 'inspired of God.'

"Again, as a Bible-loyalist I am not satisfied with the way in which I am represented as using 2 Peter i, 21. I should prefer to use verses 20 and 21, and in so doing I may be allowed to say that I am not thinking of inspiration 'simply and solely as its origin.' The verses read: 'No prophecy of Scripture is of private [*i.e.* personal] utterance [or 'expression': Weymouth has 'of the prophet's own prompting']. For not by the will of man was any prophecy ever brought, but men of God spake being borne (or borne up) by the Holy Spirit.' Here I am not only told of the Divine origin of the 'prophecy of Scripture,' but something of the *method* by which it was brought; that it was not the 'personal utterance' of the prophet and it was not 'by the will of man,' but men 'spake being borne [or borne up) by the Holy Spirit.' So I think these verses do help us to a definition of the 'Inspiration of holy Scripture.'

"Surely Mr. Isaacs was suffering from some confusion of thought when he tried to identify 'inspiration' with 'illumination.' A beautiful vase may stand in a dark room, but it needs illumination to enable me to see it. St. Paul tells us that 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God'; and again, 'If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost.' The Gospel and things spiritual are there all the time, but the natural man needs 'illumination' in order to see them.

"But perhaps the most surprising among all the author's statements are those concerning 'the correcting action of God the Holy Ghost.' That there is such action I do not dispute. But that He should incorporate into His plan anything 'accidentally or fraudulently introduced into the text' and make it 'as really a part of His message as though He had put it there originally Himself,' is an incredible statement. What if two MSS., through the accident or fraud of one of the copyists, contain two opposite statements—one, let us say, tells us that 100,000 men were killed in battle and the other says 10,000—does the Holy Ghost adopt them both? Does He adopt the errors of the Douai Version as well as the accuracies of the A.V.? The Bible is an objective fact, and it is what it is quite apart from the reader's opinion of it, be he saint or atheist. That the correcting action of the Holy Ghost keeps

His people from fatal errors I gladly believe. But nothing can be more delusive than Coleridge's fallacious maxim that 'the Bible is inspired because it inspires one.'"

THE AUTHOR'S REPLY.

I have to thank the following for helpful criticism :—

D. Anderson-Berry, Esq., M.D.	..	..	..	..	A.
Rev. J. J. B. Coles, M.A.	..	..	..	..	B.
Sidney Collett, Esq.	..	..	..	..	C.
Benjamin I. Greenwood, Esq.	..	..	..	..	D.
W. Hoste, Esq.	..	..	..	..	E.
Pastor F. E. Marsh	..	..	..	..	F.
Rev. J. M. Pollock	..	..	..	..	G.
Theodore Roberts, Esq.	..	..	..	..	H.
Rev. J. E. H. Thomson, D.D.	..	..	..	..	J.
Rev. John Tuckwell	..	..	..	..	K.
Pastor R. Wright-Hay	..	..	..	..	L.

It will be found that the whole ground is covered by E. G. J. L., and that in replying to these I am replying to all.

I have to deal :—

I. With certain misreadings of my paper in E and J—the latter of minor importance and excusable.

II. Certain errors of detail :—

(a) Misuse of the word "Infallibility." A. G.

(b) Erroneous synthesis of Revelation, Inspiration, Illumination. J. L.

III. Two important misconceptions :—

(a) That the harmlessness of error in Holy Scripture is determined by its proportion in bulk or quantity to the rest. E.

(b) That the qualities of Holy Scripture are disparaged by the refusal to use "Inspiration" as a label for one of them. C. F. L.

I.—Dr. Thomson rightly points out that my words on p. 33, last line but 19, might be taken to exclude revelation by pictorial presentation. They were not so intended. I have now inserted "in words" between "Isaiah" and "without."

He thinks me unfortunate in my choice of Isaiah as an example, on the ground that, to him at any rate, God revealed his message by "vision."

It is *not*, however, the fact that the word "vision" is used in Holy Scripture *only* of wordless mental pictures. Even in the Apocalypse, which is overwhelmingly pictorial, there are considerable passages where the pictorial gives place to the worded communication.

To Isaiah God conveyed his thought in words. There is hardly a wordless picture in the whole vision.

Dr. Thomson rightly adds: "visual terms are used to characterize thought" (*e.g.*, seer).

With regard to the use of hyperbolic language: this is a form of the figurative, and quite consistent with historicity. Figurative description is always inexact description as distinguished from literal.

Mr. Hoste quotes my indictment on p. 29 inaccurately. He omits the word "only" (line 14). It is the *limitation* of the application of "Inspiration" to original documents that I deprecate as disastrous.

He suggests that I am reluctant to admit the authenticity of autographs: "Mr. Isaacs," he says, "*virtually*" (italics mine) "admits this." My words are that the statement of such authenticity is "a statement of the obvious." Could pronouncement be more explicit and emphatic. To call it an "admission" is to misrepresent it.

II.—(a) Mr. Pollock's reference to an "Infallible" Scripture gives me the opportunity of an energetic protest against a double mistake, the prevalence of which astounds me: the application of the adjectives "fallible" and "infallible" (1) in an active sense, (2) to an inanimate object. The former of these errors gratuitously introduces a moral consideration into a purely intellectual question—moral, for the liability to deceive, unlike the liability to be deceived, is a purely moral defect.

This error can easily be traced to its source. When men call themselves "infallible" they would have it to be understood that they are incapable alike of being deceived and of deceiving. But we are not, I hope, going to take lessons in English (or Latin) from those who notoriously manipulate language for propagandist purposes.

The passive sense remains; and a word, a sentence, a book, a library, is no more liable to be deceived than a chair or a table. Consequently to predicate infallibility in this case is a work of supererogation.

I have called Holy Scripture an "inanimate object." Pastors Marsh and Wright Hay and Mr. Coles quote "quick" (living) and "powerful": "the words that I speak are spirit and life."

The figure implicit in these passages is exactly similar to that implied in our modern phrase, "a live wire." The life implied is not a potency inherent in the wire: it is not there as in an electric battery, by storage, but depends entirely upon contact established and maintained (Griffith Thomas).

(b) It was a happy accident that Dr. Thomson mistook my definition of the Inspiration of writers and writings (pp. 32, 33, 34) for my definition of "Inspiration" (p. 37). To this accident I am indebted for the discovery of a flaw in Bible-loyalist terminology that is astounding. I am endeavouring to induce my Bible-loyalist brethren to bring their terminology into rational, useful, tenable relation with ideas, and, in particular, to adopt a rational basis of agreement in the use of the word "Inspiration." Mr. Collett calls it a "scriptural" word. I have shown (p. 27) that it would be more correct to call it "Jacobean."

The one grand fact with which we have to deal is *the conveyance of the thought of God to the mind of man*. We have several words to express that fact: "Revelation," "Inspiration," "Illumination." Their identity in meaning is basic; their differences are superficial. Each of them sheds its own light upon the fact by suggesting a different illustration.

When the thought of God is conveyed to the mind of man, that which was concealed is, as by the withdrawal of a curtain, exposed to view: it is a revelation.

The thought comes forth from the very person of God, as breath from a man's body. It is *πνοή, πνεῦμα, πνεύστος* (breathed).

Wherever it comes darkness is dissipated: it is "illumination." The words may be discussed separately. The facts represented by the words are simultaneous. Their differences have been greatly over-emphasized. The common factor has been lost sight of, with the result that differentiations have been as artificial and arbitrary as they are numerous and ingenious. Collated, they become mutually destructive. Now the word of God

came forth from God	..	..	..	A.
came to the writer	..	..	..	B.
came from the writer	..	..	..	C.
came to the reader	..	..	..	D.

Pastor Wright Hay writes as follows :—“ Dr. Chalmers discriminates most helpfully between Revelation and Inspiration when he speaks of the *former* as *influx*, and of the latter as *efflux*. ‘ In the influx, the divine communication was effectually borne in upon the mind of the sacred writer, and in the efflux the knowledge thus communicated was infallibly expressed to others in writing.’ ”

Observe that Dr. Chalmers and Pastor Wright Hay employ the word Revelation for B and Inspiration for C.

Dr. Thomson of Edinburgh writes :—“ In the far-off days when I began my study of divinity there was a distinction made between Inspiration and Revelation which Mr. Isaacs does not appear to recognize. In his definition of Inspiration—‘ An act of the Holy Spirit whereby He conveyed the thought of God to a man’s mind and caused him to express it in certain words,’ the *latter* clause seems to me to belong to the sphere of Revelation.”

Observe that Dr. Thomson employs the word Revelation not for B, but for C.

It may further be observed that neither of these mutually destructive views sheds any light upon 2 Tim. iii, 16, where Inspiration stands neither for B nor for C, but only for A.

III.—(a) Mr. Hoste’s illustration (of a little decayed matter in a big river) leaks. His point appears to be that a trifle of sewerage does not matter if there is water enough to carry it off : my point is that when there is “ death in the pot ” (2 Kings iv.) it is not enough to swamp the poison with more meal, but that an act of God is necessary.

As a traveller Mr. Hoste must know that under certain physiological conditions a large proportion of sewerage in quite a small river does not matter.

The innocuousness of the poison is not (as in a scientifically blended tincture) determined by the proportion between the quantities.

Imperfections do not matter, according to Mr. Hoste, because they are negligible in quantity ; and secondly, because they yield to “ sane and scientific treatment.”

I agree with Mr. Hoste that “ sane and reverent criticism ” is a talent which may not be neglected with impunity by him to whom it is given. God never excuses us the trouble of using the means which He has made available.

And I believe that Mr. Hoste will, on reflection, agree with me that, after all, this is but one way in which the correcting action of the Holy Spirit takes effect ; but that the removal of an error from the text is the exception, and that the safeguarding of the reader whom He is instructing from spiritual damage is the overwhelmingly general rule.

I am confident that this consideration will commend itself to my critic. But if not, I appeal from him to the Rev. J. J. B. Coles, who aptly quotes Eph. vi, 12, and I submit that were there but one trivial mistake in my Bible and Satan behind it, there is every probability that that mistake would get between my soul and God unless the Holy Spirit intervene on my behalf. §

Reliance upon God Himself is the peg to which we are happily tethered.

The last page of my paper was a postscript ; it was so described in my instructions to the printer and in my preliminary remarks : the printer, however, failed to notice the one, and my critic the other. Hence the impression of bathos of which he complains.

(b) Pastors Marsh, Wright Hay and Pollock and Mr. Collett are unable to accept my statement on p. 36, paras. 2 and 3. The statement is a strong one—intentionally so. Let us face the issue.

Is the personal work of the Holy Spirit indispensable to the efficacy of Holy Scripture ?

I challenge my critics to give a negative reply to this question. But if, as every one of us knows, please God, the answer is in the affirmative, then the potency of Holy Scripture is not inherent. Precisely upon this ground the Author of the Word, in whom potency is inherent, is superior to the Word, in which it is not.

The operations of God may be divided into two classes : normal (or natural) and abnormal (or miraculous). God feeds men by natural means ; but He could do so by turning stones into bread. It would be a similar miracle in the spiritual world if He used Shakespeare to make a man wise unto salvation.

Actually, it may be said of Word and Spirit, neither works without the other. This does not imply equality, for whereas the Spirit could, if He chose, work without the Word, under no circumstances could the Word work without the Spirit. Pastor Marsh utters a wise warning : “ Unless we are very careful we shall divorce the Spirit from the Word.” I submit that this risk is incurred by those who hold that *it* acts without *Him*.

The qualities of Holy Scripture may be divided into two classes: distinctive and non-distinctive.

Distinctive ..	..	divine, authoritative . . .
Non-distinctive ..	..	true, profitable . . .

And the qualities of this second class, though not distinctive in kind, are distinctive in degree. (C. F. L.)

Mr. Tuckwell's first criticism is a curious one—that I am not likely to persuade English-speaking people to enlarge their use of the word Inspiration to cover all persons concerned. That is quite possible. I have offered my readers the alternative namely, to drop it. Evidence is already coming in that that alternative is being adopted. Our muddled thought and slipshod speech has so discredited the word that Bible-loyalists are beginning to discard it.

Mr. Tuckwell's reading of my paper has been so hurried that he is under the impression that I used the analogy of the inflation of a bicycle-tyre to prove my point. I used it, of course, only to account for that use of the word which I am deprecating. In each case we have a word used in a sense which does not correspond with its form.

When Mr. Tuckwell points out that Holy Scripture is the "product of the God-breathing and did not exist before it," his interpretation of 2 Tim. iii, 16, tallies with mine exactly. I trust that this was not an accident.

Mr. Tuckwell's translation of Θεόπνευστος must be judged by translational considerations. At that bar we stand, and that verdict I claim.

Mr. Tuckwell having admitted that Holy Scripture is the *product* of God-breathing, insists on reading a quality also into Θεόπνευστος on the ground that the figure of breath implicit in the word would be unsuitable to the creation of a pebble. That is a very curious argument—that a word exactly suitable to the creation of a literature must mean something more than creation because it is not suitable to the creation of a pebble!

Mr. Tuckwell protests that in 2 Pet. i, 21, he is not thinking solely of the origin of Holy Scripture. I have certainly not said otherwise. On the contrary, that is the very thing that I deplore, on the ground that in verse 21—the verse that is always quoted—the *Apostle* is thinking *solely* of the origin of Holy Scripture.

These verses, says Mr. Tuckwell, *do* help us to a definition of the Inspiration of Holy Scripture. Most decidedly; and the definition that emerges is mine, not his.

Mr. Tuckwell's illustration of the vase in a dark room illustrates my point that the Bible does not perform the function of a standard without the operation of the Holy Spirit enabling the reader so to use it.

It does not, however, disprove my point that that which Revelation, Inspiration and Illumination have in common is basic, namely, the conveyance of God's thought to man's mind, and that their differences, due to the different figures implicit in them, are mere matters of detail. I submit that the confusion of thought is not mine.

As to the correcting action of the Holy Spirit, Mr. Tuckwell cannot escape from the facts. Some errors the Holy Spirit (employing "the sane and reverent treatment" of devout scholars) removes from the text.

Those which He does not remove become innocuous only by his benign interposition.

This is what I call (I think quite justifiably) His correcting action.

§ This applies to H., page 44, line 6.