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## HISTORICAL OUTLINE OF BELIEF IN THE VERBAL INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE UP TO THE 18TH CENTURY.<sup>1</sup>

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**H**UMAN utterances are called "inspired," when the mind of the speaker, writer or artist is recognized to be in closer contact with the Divine Mind than is at all common among men. The self-expression of the inspired, whatever form it takes, is seen to be more than self-expression. The God "in Whom we live, and move, and have our being," is finding expression in and through the human self. We are not concerned to-day with the whole of this wide field of inspiration, nor with the counterfeits of it, but with that particular group of writings known as Holy Scripture. Our concern is with the Jewish and Christian views of inspiration of Holy Scripture.

We may set aside at once the opinions of those who attribute to Holy Scripture no more than a high degree of literary inspiration, for that is recognized by all. The real problems of Scriptural inspiration begin when the question of its authority is raised. Is the authority of Scripture solitary and supreme, or are other authorities concurrent with it? or again, is its supremacy universal and unquestionable as to all matters contained in it, or does it apply only to certain spheres, and if so, to what spheres, of human thought and conduct? It is true that this is not the shape in which the question of inspiration is usually presented. Speculations have commonly taken the form of questions as to the degree of the control exercised by the Divine Spirit over the writers of Scripture. But that is a question about which we have no information, a question of fact, where the facts are unknowable. Such speculations have always had an end in view—the establishing, or the weakening, of an authority that has been claimed. If there is a God, His authority must be supreme. His word must be final. But has He spoken? To whom has He spoken? In what sense is the Scripture His Word? These questions will not be argued in this paper, but a summary will be attempted of the history of

<sup>1</sup> A Paper read at a meeting of Clergy of the Diocese of Rochester.

the answers that have been given in the course of the ages through which the problem has been presented to the Jewish and Christian Churches. We must, however, conclude with the end of the 17th century.

We begin with the last century B.C., by which time the Old Testament Canon was fully formed. The voice of prophecy had long been silent, except for the Messianic hope, the current of which continued to run in strong and increasing volume. But this hope was a purely national hope, its literature a national concern. So far as the outer world was concerned, Judaism stood committed to a sacred book, containing the books which we call canonical in Palestine; with the addition of the Apocrypha in Alexandria. Although all the canonical books were sacred ("defile the hands"), the Pentateuch or Torah outweighed all the rest in authority. Not only public worship rested upon it, but the whole constitution of government, the whole regulation of civil and social order, and the whole conduct and regulation of private life. "He who asserts that the Torah is not from heaven, has no part in the future world." "He who says that Moses wrote even one verse of his own knowledge, is a denier and despiser of the word of God." Even the last eight verses of Deuteronomy recording the death of Moses were said to have been revealed to him by God: it was all dictated to him: nay, it was handed to Moses by God, the only question being whether it was handed to him whole, or in separate volumes. (Schürer's *Jewish People in the Time of Christ*. Div. II, Vol. I, p. 307.) It was not only read in the Synagogue, but taught in the schools, in the elementary schools in the country as well as in the higher schools. "The Jewish child," says Josephus, "is instructed in the law from his swaddling clothes." (Schürer II, II, p. 48.) The work of the scribes was *by interpretation* to apply the precepts of the law to the details of daily life, and *by illustration* to awaken interest and kindle devotion. But this veneration for the law, great as it was, did not hinder Josephus from correcting the history, or Philo from allegorizing the narratives, of the Old Testament. Nor did it, as our Lord points out, prevent the scribes from explaining away its obligations, or adding to its burthens. In so doing the Jews found nothing inconsistent with their veneration for the Divine authority of Scripture. At a time when MSS. still varied, and the Septuagint, in spite of its divergences from the

Hebrew text, claimed to be an inspired translation, there was not room for the extreme theory of verbal inspiration, maintained in later ages—a point which is often overlooked by those who seem to claim our Lord's sanction for a doctrine which had not yet obtained currency.<sup>1</sup> The authority of Scripture was unquestioned, and its Divine origin : but these were no obstacle to the production of legendary matter, nor to the alteration of details to harmonize with more modern, or with Hellenic, sentiment. There was a consciousness that the Old Testament needed fuller interpretation, and it was actually asserted among the Jews that the whole meaning of Scripture would not be reached till the Messiah came, a prediction which was amply verified by fact.

In the course of little more than a century, that is, between A.D. 33 and A.D. 150, are comprised events of the first importance in the history of the Scriptures. The world-detested Jewish nation seems to be stamped out. Their holy books had called them God's chosen people, had established the throne of Jehovah on Mount Zion. They had covenanted an everlasting priesthood for the seed of Aaron, and an everlasting dominion for the seed of David. The iron heel of Rome had crushed all these prophecies into the dust, and had carried the sacred furniture of the Temple in triumphal procession through the city of Rome. Was it possible for any Scriptures to survive such absolute falsification of all the hopes to which they had given birth? Yet in that same period had arisen a new interpretation of the Old Testament, by which it gained a fresh and unprecedented authority, and there had been added to the Old another volume, destined to achieve even greater miracles than the first, not superseding it but vitalizing it with a power hitherto unknown. A transforming hand had been at work, by which the Old Testament, so long the sacred book of an exclusive race, had become a revelation of the purposes of God towards the whole world. We are too familiar with the result to be able adequately to recognize its extraordinary significance. Yet is it conceivable that any such revivifying interpretation could be given to the Vedas or to the Quran? Think of the Jewish reverence for the Scriptures ; think of the Temple in all its glory : think of the

<sup>1</sup> The fabled verbal inspiration of the LXX, if accepted, disposed at once of the verbal inspiration of our present Hebrew text, from which it varies considerably.

pride, the bitterness, the fanaticism, the erudition of the representatives of Judaism—and then think of the words, “Search the Scriptures, . . . for these are they which bear witness of ME.”

In the “*Testimonia adversus Judæos*,” collected by Dr. Rendel Harris and Mr. Vacher Burch, we have, I doubt not, as they claim, the remains of a book older than any book of the New Testament, a book containing what we may call the Emmaus teachings of our Blessed Lord. His Personality gave a new meaning to the Old Testament, and invested it with a new authority. But soon, very soon, questions were rife. Who was this Jesus? What did He really teach? What was the secret of His power? The claim of the Gnostics to some inner hidden revelation forced the Church to collect the writings of eyewitnesses and Apostles, and so to bring the authentic tradition of Him into closest relation with the prophetic word concerning Him. The two standing side by side secured the monotheism of the Church without impairing her faith in the Word made flesh. That the oracles concerning the Lord (*λόγια κυριακά*) did not form part of this collection is perhaps due to their fragmentary character as a collection of texts, and to their serving as an elementary book of instruction, not at all unlike the hundred texts of the Irish Church Missions. But though the book, as a book, is lost, the texts are to be found here and there in every book of the New Testament, as well as in Justin Martyr, who tells us most impressively how much he owed to the Old Testament Scriptures.

Those who speak, and rightly speak, of our Lord's authentication of the Old Testament should never forget that He authenticated it as a revelation of the Will of the Father concerning Himself and concerning the world: that He converted it from a record of the glories of Israel into a revelation of the mystery that a new way was open for the Gentile into the Holy of Holies, that a New Covenant, sealed in His own Blood, had superseded the Old. Where so much was transformed, is it right to insist that Jesus Christ did indeed set His seal on the record of the ages of the antediluvian fathers, on the precise measurements of the Ark, on the census of the Israelites in the wilderness, or on many other details which cannot, except by the most fanciful exegesis, be pressed into the great and eternal purposes of God. That our Lord accepted the Old Testa-

ment as Jews accepted it may reasonably be maintained, but the evidence that He used Divine Omniscience to vouch for each separate statement in it, is not in fact forthcoming. The boldness and independence of our Lord's attitude towards the Old Testament should make us careful in the use which we make of His certification of it. His reverence for the Divine Word is unquestionable, but it was reverence compatible with very free treatment of its accepted interpretation. On the other hand, nothing is more clear than that the Old Testament had for Him the authority of a Divine communication, that He so studied it for personal devotion as well as for the discovery of the Father's will concerning Himself, that He substantiated from it whatever claim He made for Himself, and passed it on to His disciples with the impress of a final and indisputable authority. So He made good His word that He came not to destroy the law or the prophets but to fulfil. The modern view that the Old Testament is the record of a progressive revelation does not seem adequately to express our Lord's reverence for Scripture, and His personal submission to its claims. A record gratifies curiosity, explains the course of events, but it does not speak with the voice of the living God. I wish to emphasize this point. To say more would be outside the limits of this paper.

But it would be a mistake to imagine that our Lord's treatment of the Old Testament cleared up all difficulties that surrounded the use of it. Its devotional value was indeed beyond question. As Harnack says (*History of Dogma*, translated by N. Buchanan, IV, 177): "There were in the Old Testament books, above all in the Prophets and Psalms, a great number of sayings—confessions of trust in God, of humility and holy courage, testimonies of a world-overcoming faith, and words of comfort, love and communion which were too exalted for any cavilling, and intelligible to every spiritually awakened mind. Out of this treasure which was handed down to the Greeks and Romans, the Church edified herself, and, in the perception of its riches, was largely rooted in the conviction that the holy book must in every line contain the highest truth." But this conviction opened the way for assaults from many quarters. On one side, the Jew pressed the exclusive right to Divine favour which the Old Testament gave to him. On another, the heathen (notably Celsus and after him Porphyry) developed merci-

less criticism of the history and morality of the Old Testament. On a third, the Ebionite and Gnostic denounced it as the production of some inferior God, or even as a forgery of the Evil One. To meet these objections the Church fell back on the use of a spiritual or allegorical interpretation, herein following the lead of Philo and of the scribes.

The temptations to expand the use of this method were considerable. Not altogether without reason, the Church believed that it found sanction in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles. It was to be traced in the Testimonia, in St. Paul's teaching as to the true Israel, in the Epistle to the Hebrews where the Mosaic ordinances were represented as shadows of better things to come. But Allegorism was as dangerous as it was useful. What it explained, it could also be used to explain away. Therefore the Church had to lay claim to possessing the sound use of Allegorism, and further to claim, in opposition to the Gnostic tradition, that it had inherited this use from Christ and His Apostles. If there had been one self-consistent tradition within the Church, the claim would have been easy to sustain. But it was not so. In the hands of some the tradition became a means of fostering mechanical systems and hierarchical tendencies. The whole sacrificial law was by these regarded as the charter of the hierarchy. The sound tradition was that which came through Bishops who could prove that they had received it ultimately from Bishops, who had received it from the Apostles. The Alexandrine Fathers, on the other hand, looked to Teachers rather than Bishops as transmitters of the true tradition and, bringing Greek philosophy to bear on the Old Testament, held the far-reaching principle that "nothing was to be believed which is unworthy of God." They hesitated not to set aside the Old Testament where it conflicted, as they thought, with Science, or to explain it away by allegory.

In any history of belief in the Inspiration of Scripture the name of Origen must have special prominence. His labours to obtain a true text—even the text of the New Testament was already grievously corrupt—his honesty in exposition, and especially his anxiety to reach the literal sense of Scripture, as a guide to its spiritual and moral meaning : his clear recognition of the fact that Scripture contains physical and moral impossibilities : his recognition and confession of inconsistencies in the New Testament as

well as in the Old, all mark him as one of the greatest, perhaps, having regard to his age, the greatest of the exponents of Scripture. He maintained that the authority of Scripture as the Word of God depends upon its truth. For truth is, as Dr. Hort says, what we *must* believe, not what we choose to believe. Truth compels obedience, falsehood and error do not. His way of escape from the difficulties of Scripture is described by Dr. Bigg (*The Christian Platonists of Alexandria*, p. 138) as follows: "These passages, he admitted, in their literal sense are not true. Why then, urged the adversary, are they found in what you Christians call the Word of God? To this he replied that, though in one sense they are not true, they are in another the highest, the only valuable, truth. They are permitted for an object. These impossibilities, trivialities, ineptitudes are wires stretched across our path by the Holy Spirit to warn us that we are not in the right way. We must not leap over them; we must go beneath, piercing down to the smooth, broad road of spiritual intelligence. They are the rough outer husk, which repels the ignorant and unfit reader, but stimulates the true child of God to increased exertion. The letter is the external garb, often sordid and torn, but the King's daughter is all glorious within. It is as if the sunlight streamed in through the crannies of a ruinous wall; the wall is ruinous in order that the sunlight may stream in." The man who thus thought of Holy Scripture was no dilettante speculator, guessing at that which he had taken no pains to understand. His monumental work the Hexapla reproduced in parallel columns the Hebrew text and the five versions. It consisted of fifty great rolls of parchment, and perished, to our infinite loss, at the hands of the Arabs when they destroyed the library of Cæsarea.

The method by which Origen tried to base the authority of Scripture on its perfect truthfulness was no doubt open to some objections. But at least the attempt pointed in the right direction. The course of Church history was gravely deflected by the persecutions of the latter half of the third century. Origen himself perished in the persecution of Decius, A.D. 254. Those persecutions inevitably raised the question of the validity of baptism by renegades, and consequently of the bounds and limits of the true Church, outside which there was no salvation. The Papacy was not yet in a position of such recognized authority as to decide the question, and



left it undecided in spite of its overwhelming practical importance. So this question and others of no less importance were argued from Scripture. But what was the Scripture? What books were canonical? Of conflicting readings in the acknowledged books, which was the true reading? Above all, what was the real authority of the LXX? Was it more truly inspired than the Hebrew, because our Lord and His Apostles quoted it? Or did they only quote it when it agreed with the Hebrew, and where the two differed, give preference to the Hebrew?

It was in reply to such questions as these that Jerome produced his Latin Bible, the Vulgate, which, according to Milman, exercised a greater influence on Latin Christianity than the Papacy itself. Believing, as he did, that the very order of the words in the original had a sacred significance, believing also that the admission of even a trifling false statement into Scripture would destroy the whole of its authority, purging himself of his Ciceronian Latin, for which he had seen himself in a dream excluded from heaven, he not only studied Hebrew, but settled in Palestine and travelled in the East, that his mind might be soaked, as it were, in Oriental atmosphere, and so produced his translation of the Old and New Testaments, in face of much opposition, of accusations that he was corrupting the Scriptures, and undermining the faith of the Church. Then, as now, the book of Jonah was a storm centre, but for a different reason. An African Bishop, who read Jerome's (*hedera*) "ivy" instead of the old *cucurbita* or "gourd," found himself deserted by his congregation. Such was the faith of the laity in the verbal inspiration of translations. Augustine himself was uneasy at Jerome's handling of the LXX.

Augustine's acceptance of Jerome's work secured its ultimate triumph over all other Latin versions, though many centuries passed before the Vulgate was recognized by the Church to the complete exclusion of all other translations. But Augustine did far more than that. In a world, of which the old civilization was threatened with extinction, a world overshadowed by clouds of barbaric and heathen invasion, so that the future of the Church itself was all uncertain, and that Church so distracted with heresies that the faithful appeared to be but a small remnant of humanity, Augustine was called upon to establish the justice of a God who brought multitudes into the world, only to perish everlastingly. Augustine

rested his defence on the Fall of Man, as recorded in the first chapters of Genesis. Thus the Mosaic cosmogony became the very groundwork of the faith of the Church, so essential to justification of the Divine righteousness that the Reformers, who went back upon many doctrines of the Church, could not go back upon this. Primitive science became part and parcel of Christian faith, and the doctrine of verbal inspiration, not a new doctrine indeed, but hitherto often questioned, became the accepted teaching of the Church concerning Scripture. It is not necessary here to repeat the well-known extravagant statements of Augustine. It is enough to say that for their teaching of Scriptural infallibility the Reformers were always able to find support in the teaching of Augustine.

It is true that on this, as on so many other points, Augustine was inconsistent. He even went so far as to say that the study of Scripture is the path towards love, and that he who possesses love no longer needs Scripture. In another place he writes: "It is a very shameful and dangerous thing, and one to be carefully avoided, that an unbeliever should hear a Christian talking nonsense about the earth, the air, the motions, and magnitudes and distances of the stars; the courses of seasons, the nature of minerals, on the pretended authority of Scripture. For if his hearer has a real knowledge of these things grounded on observation and reasonings, he cannot refrain from laughing at the abysmal ignorance of the Christian." Such statements availed little as against the use which he made of the early chapters of Genesis, and as against his letter to Jerome: "I most firmly believe that no writer of the Canonical Scriptures committed any error in what he wrote. And if anything in them seems to offend against the truth, I take it to be nothing but a fault in the MSS., or on the part of the translater, or a misunderstanding of my own."

The sublime ambition of the mediæval Church to be the Kingdom of God upon earth, not merely in theory but in realized fact, involved the necessity of a revelation sufficiently extensive to cover all the ground which such a claim involved. The direction of all knowledge, the regulation of all conduct in private and in public life, the supremacy over all authority, civil as well as religious, were burthens boldly undertaken because behind them all stood the Divine revelation, the infallible guide for every emergency, if

only it were rightly understood and rightly interpreted, that is, according to the traditions of the Church. Revelation and reason were no longer in conflict, for it became the office of reason simply to work upon the material which revelation supplied, and to pass on its findings for the acceptance of faith. Faith became acceptance of the intellectual statements so passed on. Many of the old difficulties about Scripture were difficulties no longer. Why should its miracles be questioned, when miracles were of everyday occurrence? Why should the barbarities of Israel offend races slowly emerging out of barbarism? The superstitions and religious rites of the invading hordes were rechristened, their gods became saints, their festivals saints' days, and their holy places consecrated ground. For the ordinary layman Scripture became an unknown book. He could not read it, and fragments only out of it were read to him, and those not always in such a way as to edify. In the lofty conceptions of the Church the layman had no part save that of submission to teaching which he could not question without suspicion of heresy.

Two great movements external to the Church contributed during the Middle Ages to stereotype its belief in the infallibility of Scripture. These were the appearance of the Quran, which claimed to be a heaven-sent document complete from the hand of God, and admitting therefore no possibility of error. The other was the labour of the Massorettes who reduced all preceding Hebrew MSS. of the Old Testament practically to one, so guarded by rules of punctuation and transliteration as to obviate all possibility of MSS. variations. The Church was thus confronted with two rival revelations, each claiming infallibility. She could scarcely do less than put her own Bible on the same plane, and claim for it an equal degree of reverence.

Yet even in the Middle Ages the use which the Church made of Scripture did not pass without question. Mysticism had not died with Origen. With Plotinus and the Neoplatonists it took a new lease of life outside the Church, and often in violent antagonism to it. But through Augustine it flowed again in Christian channels and inspired the famous work attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite. The mystics found in Scripture a meaning deeper than the letter. Their position cannot be more easily explained than in the words of Dean Inge, who writes of Dionysius (as we must call him): "The soul is bipartite. The higher portion sees the Divine

image directly, the lower by means of symbols. The latter are not to be despised, for they are true impressions of the Divine character, 'and necessary steps which enable us to mount to the one undivided truth by analogy. This is the way in which we should use the Scriptures. They have a symbolic truth and beauty, which is intelligible only to those who can free themselves from the puerile myths (τολμῶσα θεοπλασία and παιδαγωγῆς φαντασία) of the Old Testament (the language is startling in a saint of the Church) in which they are sometimes embedded.' In virtue of this claim to penetrate to the inner meaning of Scripture, the long line of mystics sat loosely to the facts. They did not so much deny them as regard them, even the great events in the life of Christ, as manifestations of a universal law, enacted not in this world of shadows but in the eternal counsels of the Most High. He who believes in the universal truths need not trouble himself about their particular manifestations in time" (Inge on *Mysticism*, p. 89).

A much humbler but not less important class of believers was unconsciously feeling its way towards discovery of the main error that underlay Scholasticism. That error was the belief that knowledge is man's great end in life. It was taken over from Aristotle, whose God spends eternity in self-contemplation. But these, the Waldenses, the poor men of Lyons, and a long line of pre-Reformation heretics or reformers, call them which you will, believed that the great end of life was to be Christ-like, to do good, to manifest love, to walk humbly with God. They desired to possess and to read the Scriptures for this end. They had no interest in the building up of philosophies, but in the reorganization of society on Christian lines. They did not question the Scriptures. They had no desire to do so. But the use which they wished to make of them, while it emphasized the literal in preference to the allegorical or analogical meaning, pointed to a possible reevaluation of the different parts of Scripture.

The time for such revelation, however, was not yet come. It must first be proved that the unlearned layman would not receive more harm than good from reading the Scriptures in his own tongue. Translations of the gospels or other books might be made for the devout nobility or gentry, to be read under the guidance of spiritual advisers, or for convents. For them the interpretation built up in long ages by the learned could accompany the reading.

But what could the plain burgher or peasant know of the fourfold meaning of each sacred passage, even of each sacred word? Wyclif met these arguments by bold assertions that "the whole of Scripture is of equal authority in respect of each several part. That is plain, since the whole of Scripture is the one and only word of God, and our authors are but scribes or heralds of God, to write down the law which He dictates to them, and in comparison of Him can only be called authors by a loose use of the term." He opposes Scripture with its clear and pure unworldly utterances to the polluted worldly traditions of men. "If Scripture," he says, "asserts anything, then it is true." So he gave the impetus to translation and circulation of Scripture in England on a scale quite unknown in any part of the Continent, and prepared the way for the spiritual, as opposed to the political, elements in the English Reformation.

There are two distinct stages in the Reformation, each having its own bearing on the question of Scriptural Inspiration. The first is the attempt to escape from the spiritual bondage in which souls were held by the disciplinary system and institutions of the mediæval Church. Sacraments designed for spiritual help and guidance had become lifeless ordinances, dogmas intended to unify human knowledge, and correlate it with Divine revelation, had become fetters to all advance of thought, the Scriptures overlaid with traditions had almost ceased to be a word of God to the human soul. In this stage the attitude of the Reformers to Scripture was free from entanglements of verbal inspiration. "To the Reformers," says Lindsay in his *History of the Reformation*, "the Scriptures were a personal rather than a dogmatic revelation. They record the experience of a fellowship with God enjoyed by His saints in past ages, which may still be shared by the faithful. In Bible history as the Reformers conceived it, we hear two voices, the voice of God speaking love to man, and the voice of the renewed man answering in faith to God. The Protestants did not mean by infallibility (i.e. of Scripture) what the Romanists meant. The Romanists, as much as the Protestants, based their whole system on Scripture. But the Romanists found that the Protestants had a conception of the unity of Scripture which upset their interpretation. The Romanists had therefore to create an artificial unity by means of the doctrine of the Church, so as to use the Bible as

a 'storehouse of divinely communicated knowledge, of doctrinal truths and rules for moral conduct,' and nothing more. The Protestants found in it a new home for a new life, not merely knowledge about God, but communion with Him. The mediæval student, by Origen's fourfold method had practically destroyed the value of the Bible, from which he could draw any meanings that he pleased. But, on the other hand, faith being assent to doctrinal positions, he was really tied up to meanings imposed by the Church. Infallibility guaranteed correcting of propositions stating relations between God and man, with the result that the use of the Bible as a means of communication between God and the plain believer was destroyed. With the Protestants saving faith was not assent to propositions, but trust in the promise of God, and this trust could be drawn from, and strengthened by, ordinary reading of the Bible, even though parts seemed to be useless or unintelligible. For them it was God speaking to man, therefore they hastened to translate it."

Two short extracts may serve as illustrations of these generalizations. The first is from Luther's *Table Talk*. "Melanchthon, discoursing with Luther touching the prophets, who continually boast thus: 'Thus saith the Lord,' asked whether God in person spoke with them or no. Luther replied, 'They were very holy spiritual people, who seriously contemplated upon holy and divine things: therefore God spake with them in their consciences, which the prophets held as sure and certain revelations.'" A little reflection will show the far-reaching import of this answer.

The other extract is from Calvin's Catechism:—

*Catechist :*

How can we reach so great a benefit? (i.e. the knowledge of God).

*Child :*

For this end He left us His holy Word. For it is a spiritual instruction, like to a door, whereby we enter into His heavenly kingdom.

*Catechist :*

Where are we to search for this word?

*Child :*

In the holy Scriptures, in which it is contained.

Here we have the highly important statement, that the word

of God is contained in the Scripture, and must be sought for in the Scripture. It does not lie on the surface. In short, at the outset, "the Reformers," as Sabatier says, "were conscience free on the question of inspiration."

How then did the second stage in their attitude to it come about? For there is no doubt that they did come to use the Scripture as a storehouse of doctrinal revelations, and consequently to insist on literal verbal inspiration.

The change was due partly to political exigency, and partly to controversial entanglements.

1. *Political exigency.* The Reformation involved a break-up of the political system of Europe. This system had been built up on the intimate alliance of the Papacy with the Holy Roman Empire, and the dependence of the Empire, and of all political authority in the West upon the Papacy. The new States had to justify their existence, and to justify it—not on the will of man—the social contract was yet to be invented—but on the will of God. The new rulers had to pose as defenders of the true faith. Confessions of faith had to be framed on Scripture, and for this purpose the letter of Scripture had to be pressed, and pressed very often, for purposes for which it was not intended. The old controversy between predestination and free will, which raged fiercely at the break-up of the old Roman Empire, revived once more, and added sharpness to the definitions of faith. Political and religious issues became strangely confused.

2. *Controversial entanglement.* At this stage the great Jesuit protagonist Bellarmin stepped into the fray with his book *De controversiis*, and exposed, as unsparingly as man could, the difficulty of interpreting Scripture, the strange and uncertain conclusions to which it led, and set forth the necessity of using the traditions of the Church, if the true meaning of Scripture was to be reached. In England it fell to Dr. Whittaker, the Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge, to answer Bellarmin. In his work on *Disputations on Scripture*, Dr. Whittaker goes through Bellarmin's arguments *seriatim*. We need not follow him. It is enough to note that he adopts the most extreme of the sayings of Augustine and finds fault with Erasmus for suggesting that St. Matthew may have substituted in the 27th chapter the name of Jeremiah for that of Zechariah. "We must not be so easy or indulgent," he says,

“ as to concede that a lapse could be incident to the sacred writers. They wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as Peter tells us : and all Scripture is inspired of God, as Paul expressly writes. Whereas, therefore, no one may say that any infirmity could befall the Holy Spirit, it follows that the sacred writers could not be deceived nor err in any respect. Here, then, it becomes us to be so scrupulous as not to allow that any slip can be found in Scripture.” Whittaker says in another place : “ God inspired the prophets with what they said, and made use of their mouths, tongues, and hands : the Scripture is therefore immediately the voice of God.” He is obliged to admit that it is only the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit that can convince us solidly of the authority of Scripture, and gets out of the Jesuits’ objection : How is it that you Lutherans and Calvinists are not agreed among yourselves as to what is the Scripture, whether or not it includes the Apocrypha ? by saying, “ We all of us have the Holy Spirit, but not all of us the same measure of the Spirit.”

The political and doctrinal aspects of the Reformation are very far from exhausting the whole significance of the movement. The Reformation cannot be understood apart from the literary Renaissance, of which it might be called one aspect. The revived knowledge of Greek, the cry “ Ad fontes,” the critical spirit which necessarily grew out of appeal to the original text, the art of printing which set the student free from the domination of monastic cloisters, the translation of the Bible, the formation of English as a language in which learning could express itself, the discovery of the new world, the overthrow of the Ptolemaic astronomy, the splendid conceptions of Giordano Bruno, the revolutionizing discoveries of Galileo, what might be called the discovery of the power of reason when used as an instrument for observing Nature, these are but some out of the many forces set loose in the sixteenth and first part of the seventeenth centuries, and, so set loose, that the mind of man seemed to be passing out of the confines of a narrow inland sea into the uncharted waters of an illimitable ocean. Such a vast change as this could not fail to challenge the unquestioned authority of Scripture. The ancient chart that had sufficed for man’s need, as he crept round the shores of the Mediterranean, could it in truth pilot him over the new world, or answer all the problems which the new world raised ?



It was surely fortunate for the Church of England that it was not officially committed either to any doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, or to any sharply defined view as to Predestination. For sharply defined views on Predestination cannot well be separated from extreme theories of Biblical inspiration. It was also well for our Church that, while renouncing Roman supremacy, it did not officially rest the English political system on a Scriptural basis. Calvin had indeed built up a scholastic system more true to Scripture than the Papal: a system to which the religious life and political freedom of England are deeply indebted, but scholasticism could not contain in its old wineskins the new life which was fermenting in the world.

Richard Hooker, the protagonist of the Church of England in her struggle with Puritanism, found himself in this position. Jewel, whom Hooker styles "the worthiest divine that Christendom hath bred for the space of some hundreds of years," had argued against the Jesuit Harding "the sufficiency of Scripture for establishment of all doctrine without the traditions of men." On this position the Puritan Cartwright fastened eagerly. You say that "Scripture is sufficient: if so, that which is not in Scripture is forbidden." So Jewel himself had argued: "The bread which our Lord gave unto His disciples, saying unto them, 'Take and eat,' He deferred not, nor commanded to be reserved unto the next day. If this negative argument holds good in respect of Reservation of the Sacrament, if that which our Lord has not commanded is forbidden, how can you defend a multitude of ceremonies in your Prayer Book, which have not the authority of Scripture?" Pressed by this argument, Hooker found himself obliged to consider the whole question of the relation of Scripture to Reason. In answer to Cartwright's plea, "Wisdom doth teach every good way," he says: "Yes—every good way, but not by one way of teaching. Whatsoever men on earth or angels in heaven do know, it is as a drop out of that unemptiable fountain. . . . Some things she openeth by the sacred books of Scripture: some things by the glorious works of Nature: with some things she inspireth them from above with spiritual influence: in some things she leadeth and traineth them only by worldly experience and practice." Hooker contends, in fact, that the sufficiency for Scripture for all things necessary to salvation does not exclude the use of reason. While he admits

that the authority of Scripture outweighs all other authority, even that of our senses, he is careful to add "that it is not to be required, nor can be exacted at our hands, that we should yield unto anything other assent than such as doth answer the evidence which is to be had of that we assent unto. For which cause, even in matters divine, concerning some things we may lawfully doubt and suspend our judgment," giving as instances the fall both of men and angels, and the virginity of the Mother of our Lord *after*, though not before His birth, and concluding, "finally in all things our consciences are best resolved, and in a most agreeable sort unto God and Nature settled, when they are so far persuaded as those grounds of persuasion which are to be had will bear." Hooker gives a most solemn warning against attributing to Scripture more than it can have, and warns us that the incredibility (so raised) will cause even those things which indeed Scripture hath to be less reverently esteemed. . . .

In the history of belief in the Inspiration of the Bible two great names may be selected as influencing thought for many subsequent generations. Those names are Pascal and Spinoza. They were practically contemporaries. Pascal lived from 1623 to 1662, and Spinoza from 1632 to 1677. Both lived under the shadow of the horrors of the Thirty Years' War, that devastating conflict fought in the name of religion. Though outside the region of it, and not concerned in it, they could not either of them be unconscious of the spirit of the words "Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum." Both reacted against the prevalent mechanical theory of the universe, but in different ways. Into this region we must not follow them. But both were serious in their efforts to establish faith on philosophic grounds. Pascal having joined the recluses of Port Royal, and having fought against the Jesuits in defence of the Augustinian theory of grace, was preparing an apology for the Christian religion when death overtook him. Fragments of that apology are preserved in his *Pensées*. The foundation of his system is the inadequacy of man to satisfy the highest powers of which he is conscious, apart from God. The things of God which are above reason are preserved to us in Scripture. As creation became more remote, God provided an historian, and charged a whole people with care of the book, in order that it might be the most authentic history in the world. "Shem, who had seen Adam, saw at least

Abraham, who saw Jacob, who saw Moses." Thus the historicity of the early chapters of Genesis is proved. Pascal goes on to lay down a series of suggestions, which for centuries formed the basis of Christian apologetics. He was not unconscious of the inconsistencies of the Old Testament, but he solved them by insisting that all of them can be harmonized in Jesus Christ, Who is therefore the true author. It would be a grave injustice to Pascal to suppose that this demonstrative, scholastic theology was to him the heart and core of true religion. "Holy Scripture," he says, "is not a science of the mind but of the heart. It is intelligible only to those whose heart is right. The veil which is over the Scripture for the Jews is over it for the Christians also. Love is not only the end of Holy Scripture: it is the door to it also." He shares the ambiguity of the position of St. Augustine, sometimes exalting the letter at the expense of the spirit: at others the spirit at the expense of the letter.

Pascal's contemporary, Spinoza, sought to counteract the mechanical view of the universe by insisting on the Divine Immanence. To him God was *Natura Naturans*, not, however, a God Who wills, or loves, save that He loves Himself with an intellectual love, which is the unity of finite minds. Our finite thoughts together form the infinite self-loving intellect of God. But Spinoza was not content with these lofty abstractions. He wished to preserve religion for the masses, who could obey, though they could not acquire a virtuous disposition by reason. For them he uses language far away from his philosophy. He was equally anxious to make his philosophers religious. For their benefit he tried to restate the religion of the time in philosophic language. Scripture, he says, cannot teach nonsense. If the Bible disagrees with science, we must have misinterpreted the Bible, or we must find out what the Bible really is. He boldly attacks the questions of miracle and prophecy, the dates and authorship of various books of the Bible. In his language concerning our Lord, he anticipates the findings of the Conference of Modernists at Cambridge. "God can communicate immediately with man: still, a man who can by pure intuition comprehend ideas neither contained in, nor deducible from, the foundations of our natural knowledge must possess a mind far superior to those of his fellow-men, nor do I believe that any have been so endowed save Christ . . . it may be said that the wisdom

of God took upon itself human nature, and that He is the way of salvation." In yet another passage again we seem to hear the Modernist speaking: "I admit that the Evangelists took the resurrection of Christ literally, but they might well be in error without prejudice to Christian doctrine. Paul, to whom also Christ appeared later, asserts that he knows Christ not after the flesh, but after the spirit."

The very real personal virtues of Spinoza and his extraordinary intellectual power failed to make any mark on the religious conservatives of his generation. On the contrary popular theology hardened, and became more and more committed to verbal inspiration, which Buxtorf, at about this date, would have extended even to the vowel points of the Hebrew text. It would not be true to say that the critical attitude towards inspiration passed wholly into the hands of rationalists. For instance, Richard Baxter asserts that not all parts of Scripture were equally divine, since all had not an equal bearing on religion. He held also that it was impossible to demonstrate the divine origin of words and phrases. Similarly Philip Doddridge distinguished between two kinds of inspiration in Scripture, one an immediate work of God, increasing the powers of writers, preserving them from error, and leading them into the truth: the other an inspiration that governed and uplifted their minds, without the same safeguard against error. Still further, the Society of Friends by the stress which they laid on the personal influence of the Holy Spirit were led to give a secondary place to Scripture. They insisted that it was not the Word of God, and nowhere called itself the Word of God. George Fox says quite distinctly: "Though I read the Scriptures, that spake of Christ and of God, yet I knew Him not, but by Revelation, as He who hath the key did open, and as the Father of Life drew me to His Son by His Spirit." With the Friends must be classed the mystics. The comparative silence of William Law concerning Scripture is very remarkable. Even in advising young clergy how to prepare themselves for preaching, while he mentions good books, he does not explicitly mention Scripture. "The book of all books," he says, "is your own heart."

We must also add that while the official doctrine of the Church of Rome in the Council of Trent maintained that "all the books of the Old and New Testament, since God is the author of both,

and the traditions, are to be received as though verbally dictated by Christ and the Holy Spirit," this dogma did not prevent the Jesuits and especially Bellarmin from maintaining that inspiration did not extend to matters that were trifling and well known. Bellarmin would have shielded Galileo if he could. As it was, it fell to his lot to convey to him the censure of the Church. Richard Simon, an opponent of Pascal, is called by Sabatier the father of Higher Criticism. He repudiated altogether literal and verbal inspiration. This attitude of the Jesuits no doubt helped to stiffen the resistance of English Churchmen to more liberal views of Scriptural inspiration. Chillingworth goes great lengths in his *The Bible the Religion of Protestants*, and Waterland is not afraid to stake the truths of the whole of the Old and New Testaments on the Story of the Fall of Man in Genesis.

Here time compels me to draw this outline to a premature conclusion. But enough has been said to show that within the Church itself there have been serious differences of opinion as to the true limits of the authority of Scripture. That which God has said must be true. But what has He said? Through whom has He spoken? How far has He permitted human mentality to colour His words, or used human material to convey spiritual truth? If this outline serves to show that answers to such questions as these cannot be given offhand it will have served its purpose. The Bible has outlived centuries of criticism and will outlive all time, because of the Divine voice that reaches man through it. That voice must not be confused with the instruments employed to convey it, in which some notes may be antiquated, some harsh, some even discordant. But the child of God will not fail to recognize his Father's voice therein, hearing it there, as he hears it in no other book, a voice at once of authority and of love.

