

material universe, to show that he can wield at will all the fearful enginery of fire and flame for the destruction of the wicked, in combinations unknown before. The conflict long waged with the spiritual weapons of truth and love takes on a new type; material forces of all-consuming power flash out before all worlds, and testify that Jesus is indeed King of the universe, with all power given him in heaven, earth, and hell. Before such forms of power, the great, gigantic, representative sinner of our race, "the man of sin," becomes most emphatically "the son of perdition." Before such power, the prince of darkness and his fellows, who "kept not their first estate," having had large range for developing the malignity of their souls, and having had their public trial in the judgment of the great day, are swept away to their final, everlasting doom.

ARTICLE IV.

REVELATION AND INSPIRATION.

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IN ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

No. XI.

INSPIRATION CONSIDERED IN ITS SPHERE.

THE *sphere of inspiration* is that which the wisdom of the Infinite Spirit has prescribed to himself, taking counsel of no created intelligence. It was never his plan to give indiscriminately, in all the departments of human activity, that special illumination and guidance, called inspiration, which, as we have seen, raised its possessors above error, and invested their words with divine authority. This heavenly gift was ever rigidly restricted to the supernatural revelations connected with the plan of redemption through Jesus Christ. We acknowledge, indeed, with devout reverence, the providential guidance of God in all the affairs of human history. It was not without his appointment, for example, that our

own land was colonized at such a peculiar crisis in English history, and by men of such a peculiar character. His hand was in the discoveries of Newton and Laplace; in the invention of the telescope, microscope, steam-engine, power-loom, railroad, and electric telegraph; and in all the wonderful results of modern science. But inspiration has ever gone hand in hand with revelation; and both have been concerned only with the way of salvation contained in scripture.

But there are limitations which the Divine Spirit has prescribed to himself in the sphere of revelation itself, and it is concerning these that we are now to inquire. We may say, at the outset, that, inasmuch as they have the Spirit of truth for their Author, they cannot be of such a nature as to frustrate, in any degree, the end of inspiration, which is to furnish men with a divinely authoritative and sufficient rule of faith and practice. Rather must their effect be to disentangle the truth from all needless complications, and thus make it available to all men, in all ages and in all grades of society.

1. The first limitation which we notice has respect to the *phenomena of nature*. The facts of the physical world are always described according to popular apprehension, not according to any scientific formula. For this there was an antecedent necessity, lying in the divine plan for the culture and training of the human family. God has committed to men the task of developing, under his providential guidance, all the truths of natural science by a slow process, involving many temporary mistakes and misapprehensions, but eminently adapted to elicit the best powers of the human intellect. Meanwhile, he has revealed to men, from time to time, as the way was prepared, truths pertaining to their salvation, in which the laws and operations of nature are described according to appearance; so that the descriptions hold good for all ages, and are available for men of all degrees of culture. Thus the wisdom of God has, from the beginning, left to scientific investigation the largest liberty to press its

inquiries in every direction, under the one comprehensive principle that "the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

In the domain of astronomy this principle is now fully recognized. No one would think, at the present day, of quoting the divine declaration, "The world, also, is stablished, that it cannot be moved," as an argument against the Copernican system, as was done once, not only by a congregation of cardinals, but also by Protestant theologians of the highest rank. Nor would any modern interpreter, admitting the truth of the Copernican system, feel himself constrained to bring the Psalmist's words, by a forced exegesis, into an agreement with the scientific teachings of astronomy, thus: "*Is established*, that is, made steady in its two motions; *cannot be moved*—cannot be disturbed in its two revolutions." All expositors are agreed that the words mean that the earth is immovable to man's apprehension and uses. Thus science is brought into harmony with revelation, without the sacrifice of either. So far as the truth of scripture is concerned, it becomes altogether a superfluous question, whether the Psalmist did or did not understand the true physical system of the universe. The Holy Spirit understood it from the beginning; but there is no valid ground for the assumption that he revealed it to the sacred writer. Doubtless, he spoke in accordance not only with popular apprehension, but with his own belief also. Nor did this abate one jot or tittle from his infallibility as an inspired teacher. That God is the Creator of the world, and that all its arrangements, having him for their Author, have a stability high above the sphere of human power—this is the *divine* truth which the words above quoted inculcate; and it remains as valid for us as for the men of the Psalmist's day.

The same broad principle applies to all the descriptions which the inspired writers give of nature and her operations. Whatever diversity of opinion there may be as to the inter-

pretation of the narrative of the creation, it is generally agreed that the author speaks not scientifically, but phenomenally — that he describes the successive processes of the six days as they would have appeared to a human spectator had he been able to be present. It has, indeed, been suggested, not without probability, that the revelation was originally made in a panoramic way, that is, by a representation to the inward vision of the writer of the scenes of the six days' work of creation in regular order. But, not to insist on this, which lies beyond the sphere of human knowledge, let us look briefly at the record of the second day. The sacred narrative reads: "And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters; and let it divide between waters and waters. And God made the firmament, and divided between the waters which were below the firmament, and the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so." The *waters* under the firmament are those upon the earth's surface. But what are the waters *above* the firmament? A common answer has been that they are the clouds. The clouds did, indeed, belong, according to the idea of the ancients, to the waters above the firmament; but the passage before us does not represent them as constituting, in and of themselves, these waters. The clouds are not a body of waters above the firmament, and coming down through the firmament to the earth. Rather are they fed, from age to age, by the waters above the firmament; so that they are never exhausted. That this was the popular conception of the Hebrews appears from the hundred and forty-eighth Psalm. Here the sacred writer begins with the heavenly intelligences — "all his angels" and "all his hosts." From these he passes down to the ordinances of God which are above the firmament — "sun and moon," "stars of light," "heaven of heavens," and "waters that are above the heavens." Then, after pausing to celebrate the power of God manifested in their creation and the stability which he has conferred upon them (vs. 5, 6), he passes (vs. 7 seq.) to the works of the Creator which are below the firmament:

“Praise the Lord *from the earth*, dragons and all deeps; fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind fulfilling his word,” etc. The idea of water rising *from the earth in the shape of mist*,¹ and perhaps of clouds also,² was familiar to the Hebrews. But these belonged, with “fire and hail, snow and vapor, and stormy wind,” to the category of things under the firmament. That the men of high antiquity referred the perpetual replenishing of the clouds to the vaporization of water from the earth’s surface, as we now know to be the fact, cannot be proved, and is a supposition in itself very improbable. Though we need not take the word “windows,” in the account of the deluge,³ in a gross literal sense, any more than in two other passages, which speak of flour and barley as given through windows made in heaven,⁴ and God’s blessing as poured down through the open windows of heaven,⁵ yet the essential idea holds good alike in all three cases, that what comes down to the earth through the windows of heaven comes from above the firmament. We, therefore, understand the sacred writer’s conception of the firmament to be that of an outspread vault, above which are the waters whence the clouds are continually replenished. We have no desire to press this view unduly; but we ask what there is in it at which modern science can justly take offence? The inspired penman speaks simply according to appearance and popular apprehension. That God has such an inexhaustible reservoir of waters is certain; for he has been from the beginning pouring down rain from it, and yet it is not spent. What is the nature of this reservoir, how it is maintained, and how the clouds are replenished from it — these are scientific questions with which the author does not concern himself; nor is it necessary to suppose that he had

¹ Gen. ii. 6.

² 1 Kings xviii. 44, where, however, the original words (עֲלֶה מִיָּם, *ascending from the sea*) do not necessarily mean anything more than coming up from over the sea.

³ Gen. vii. 11; viii. 2.

⁴ 2 Kings vii. 2-19.

⁵ Mal. iii. 10.

information concerning them beyond the men of his age. If any one ask why the inspired writer did not represent this celestial storehouse of waters as diffused *through* the firmament, instead of placing it *above* it, the answer is: This would have been to convert the *firmament* of sense into the *atmosphere* of science, and *phenomena* into *natural philosophy*. The essential *facts* represented by the narrative are, that these celestial waters are invisible to our senses; that the firmament sustains them in their place above the earth, so that they are kept separate from the waters on its surface; and that from them an exhaustless supply of rain is furnished — facts that remain valid for all ages and all stages of science.

In the same way is the narrative of the fourth day's work to be understood. It does not bind us to the necessity of believing that the sun, moon, and stars were created in their substance on that day, but only that then they appeared for the first time in the firmament. "The narrative only tells what sun, moon, and stars are in relation to the earth. When the clouds and mists are dispelled from its surface, the seas confined within their boundaries, and the first vegetation springs up; then the sky is cleared up; the sun, moon, and stars appear, and assume their natural functions, making days and nights, seasons and years; and God makes or appoints them, the sun to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night."¹

The *six days* of creation are, in our view, *symbolic* of higher periods of time — in the mind and purpose of God symbolic from the beginning, but not necessarily understood by men to be symbolic. As in the case of the seventy weeks of Daniel,² and the thousand years during which Satan is to be bound,³ the terms employed might be taken literally, until their symbolic character should be made manifest.⁴

2. A second limitation has respect to the *natural endowments of the sacred writers*. By the gift of inspiration these

¹ Bible [Speaker's] Commentary in loco.

² Dan. ix. 24-27.

³ Rev. chap. xx.

⁴ See Appendix. Note A.

were purified and elevated, not changed. Paul the apostle, the meek and humble disciple of Christ, brought over into his regenerate state all the individuality that belonged to Saul of Tarsus, the proud and haughty persecutor—his native temperament and peculiar turn of mind, as well as his education at the feet of Gamaliel and his rabbinic lore; in a word, all that belonged to him not as a sinner, but as a man. And he used all this individuality, not in show, but in reality. As remarked in a previous number, his epistles are thoroughly Pauline, as well in style and diction as in the mode of argumentation and presentation of truth; just as an oak-tree is oak throughout, not in its leaves and acorns alone, but also in its inmost texture. The Holy Spirit did not *imitate* his style and mode of reasoning; but he filled his mind with light and knowledge, thus enabling him to use in a free and natural way his peculiar endowments and acquisitions for the glory of God and the edification of his church. The same remarks hold good of the apostles Peter and John. Each one thinks and writes like himself, so that we have the same diversity in the writings of inspired, as of uninspired, men. If a further illustration of this truth were needed, it might be found in the writings of the three prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. What can be more unlike in style and manner than the books which bear the names of these three men! They are pervaded throughout with the individuality of their authors; because it was the plan of the Divine Spirit to use this individuality, not to supersede it. The same diversity is conspicuous in other books of the Old Testament; for example, in the writings of Hosea, Joel, and Amos.

Let us now consider briefly some inferences which naturally follow from the truth under consideration.

And, first, with respect to the *matter* of the sacred writers. The law of harmony and adaptation pervades the realm of redemption, not less than that of nature. When a man was wanted to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, and to be the mediator through whom they should receive the divine law,

Moses was chosen, who had added to a mind thoroughly practical and juridical in its structure a twofold training: first, on the active side, by an education at Pharaoh's court in all the wisdom of Egypt; secondly, on the passive side, by a sojourn of forty years in the land of Midian, in the humble capacity of a shepherd. David, the man after God's own heart, whom he raised up to be the ruler of his people, had the natural endowments which fitted him to be a military commander, and to these was superadded a long and severe discipline during the reign of Saul. The man whom *God* placed on the throne of Israel had been thoroughly trained for the situation. It was not so with Absalom. *He* made a dash for the throne without any such preparation, and with a result familiar to all. The same great law of adaptation appears in the case of the inspired writers. There can be no doubt that Isaiah was prepared, as well by native endowments as by education, to be the recipient of those bright visions of the future glory of Zion which have been the stay and solace of her children through centuries of darkness and trial. Not less manifest is the adaptation of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, each to the work assigned him by the Divine Spirit. The Gospel of John is pre-eminently the gospel of our Lord's person. The glorious revelations which it contains were received from God through the Saviour's personal teachings and the superadded illumination of the Holy Spirit, in accordance with his promise: "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you;"¹ "When he the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he shall show you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you."² But the other apostles enjoyed the same personal teachings of Christ, and had the same Holy Spirit. How is it that the Gospel of John moves in such a peculiar sphere of revelation? It cannot be explained simply from

John xiv. 26.

² John xvi. 13, 14.

the circumstances and wants of the churches at the time when John wrote. Doubtless, the apostle had respect to these; but how was he able to meet them in a way at once so original and so effective for all time? If one refer it to the sovereignty of the Divine Spirit, let him remember that his sovereignty is not arbitrariness. He works in harmony with the character of the men through whom he makes his revelations. The bosom disciple had from the beginning, as we may reasonably believe, listened with peculiar interest to those discourses of our Lord in which he unfolded the truth respecting his person and office as the Redeemer of the world. This was the part of the Saviour's teachings for which he had a special receptivity. They sank down into his memory; he pondered them long and earnestly; and now, in his old age, he was led by the Holy Ghost to record them, at a time when they were specially needed to counteract the errors of the false teachers. In a similar way might it be shown that the apostle Paul was wonderfully fitted by his native endowments, his education, and his early associations for the sphere of labor assigned to him by his divine Master. He had been a Pharisee, and he understood Jewish legalism as it lay in the minds of the Pharisees. When grace had delivered him from his error, and revealed to him the way of salvation through faith in Christ, his strong and acute logical mind and his education at the feet of Gamaliel found ample scope in unfolding the doctrine of justification by faith, and in defending the liberty of the Gentiles against those who sought to impose upon them the yoke of the Mosaic law. He did the work to which he was called thoroughly; and he did it, so far as the great principles of the gospel are concerned, for all coming generations. The plan of the Holy Ghost from the beginning was to employ each of the inspired writers in the sphere for which he was fitted. Revelation was not only progressive, but given in many parts (*πολυμερῶς*). Jesus Christ alone had the whole truth, withholding during his personal ministry only that part of it which his disciples were not yet prepared to re-

ceive.¹ To each of the apostles, as to each of the prophets before them, was assigned his measure of revelation. All that any one of them spoke or wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost was truth; but it was not the whole of the truth. The revelations given by each supplemented those received by all the rest; so that it is in *the sum of scripture* that we find its divine fulness and sufficiency.

Secondly, with respect to *style and diction*. The form and costume of a writer's thoughts is an outgrowth from the texture of his mind. So far as what he says is genuine and natural, it is the image of his inward personality. A page of Cicero is distinguished immediately from one of Tacitus, because each is instinct throughout with the writer's inward life — with his peculiar mode of thinking, reasoning, and describing. As long as Cicero remains Cicero, he must speak and write like Cicero, not like Tacitus. All this individuality inspiration leaves intact. It does not *imitate* it, nor *overbear* it, but *uses* it. Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, speaks and writes like Paul, because he remains Paul in the inmost texture of his mind. And so it is with John and all the other sacred penmen. Hence appears the irrelevancy of the question, once discussed with so much warmth, whether the writers of the New Testament used pure Greek; as if the Holy Ghost were responsible for the classic character of their style, as well as for the great and mighty truths which he communicated through them to mankind. To go back, for a moment, to the Old Testament. The Aramaisms of Ezekiel and the other anomalies which appear in his writings came not from the immediate inspiration of the Spirit, but from the age and circumstances in which the prophet lived. It would be ridiculous, except in a purely philological respect, to raise any questions concerning the purity of Ezekiel's Hebrew as compared with that of the earlier writers — a thing about which the Divine Spirit does not concern himself. God took Ezekiel, with his Aramaisms and all his other peculiarities, and used him as the organ of

¹ John xvi. 12.

communication with his people. In the same way he took the writers of the New Testament, each with his individual culture in language, as in other respects. How far the style of the New Testament conforms to the classic standard of purity, or how far it departs from it, is a matter of philological, not of theological interest.

The *obscurity of style* which belongs to some of the sacred penmen is to be explained by the same comprehensive principle. We refer not now to difficulties of interpretation extrinsic to the writer's mode of presentation, — such, namely, as arise from the nature of the themes discussed, or such as have their ground in ignorance of the meaning of the terms employed by him, or in allusion to unknown usages or events of history. Over and above such extrinsic difficulties, there are those which may properly be called intrinsic to the style itself. No one, probably, will deny that obscurities of this kind belong to Hosea, for example, under the Old Testament, and Paul, under the New. Keil, having ascribed to Hosea a style “highly poetical, rich in bold and strong images, full of power in thoughts and beauty in presentation,” adds that he is, nevertheless, “often abrupt, leaping from one image to another, and not free from difficulties and obscurities”¹; a quality of style which Jerome sums up in the words: “Osee commaticus est et quasi per sententias loquens”² — “Hosea’s discourse is broken up into short clauses, and he speaks, as it were, by maxims.” That the main difficulties connected with Paul’s writings grow out of the nature of the themes discussed by him is freely conceded. But, beyond these, there are obscurities belonging properly to his style; as when, for example, he pauses in the midst of a sentence to introduce and amplify a parenthetical thought, sometimes never returning to complete it in regular grammatical form. We need not ascribe such peculiarities of style to the immediate agency of the Holy Spirit, as if he had dictated to Hosea in Hosea’s abrupt and sententious style, and to Paul in his peculiar discursive style, parentheses and all. No.

¹ Introduction to the Old Testament, § 82.

² Pref. in xii. Proph.

The prophet and the apostle, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, wrote each in the style that belonged to him as an individual. Undoubtedly each had a peculiar fitness for the work to which he was called ; but this fitness lay in the sum of his qualifications, rather than in his separate individualities taken one by one. It would be a superfluous inquiry whether the involved style in which the great apostle of the Gentiles sometimes wrote was *per se* an excellence, and as such constituted one of his special qualifications. It belonged, rather, to the very texture of his mind. A man of such rapidity and compass of thought, of such compactness and depth of argument, cannot be followed without much earnest and vigorous thinking. Had the ordering of the matter been left to some modern preachers, doubtless we should have had epistles in a very different style, and of a very different character. Instead of a giant striding along the Andes, stepping only on the highest peaks, and summoning the world to follow as fast and as well as it could, we should have had a very gentle pedagogue, carefully leading his pupils along, step by step, and pausing to cut up every little bush that grew in the path, lest it should hurt their feet or tear their clothes. The grand object would have been not to elicit hard thinking, but to supersede its necessity. But the foolishness of God is wiser than man. It was his pleasure that the apostle Paul should be a man whom none but earnest thinkers could follow in all his reasonings. He took him, if not *for* the above-named peculiarity of his style, yet certainly *with* it, as inseparably belonging to his mental constitution ; foreseeing that, on the broad scale, it would be no detriment to the cause of divine truth.¹

¹ A friend has suggested as a pertinent illustration of the powerlessness of exact definitions to exclude scepticism, the scriptural utterances respecting the eternal punishment of the wicked. These are as explicit and unambiguous as we can well conceive them to have been made. Yet we find men continually calling into question the truth of the doctrine on *a priori* grounds. They first assume that it cannot be consistent with the divine goodness, and then set themselves resolutely at work to explain away the declarations of God's word upon

3. A third limitation which the Divine Spirit has prescribed to himself relates to *unessential circumstances*; such, for example, as the exact chronological order of events, and various details connected with the truths revealed. We do not mean that such matters are left to chance. They come within the purview of the Omniscient Spirit, and, so far as needful, are defined with accuracy. But it has pleased him to leave them oftentimes undetermined; because, as we may reverently suppose, he saw that this was best for the general interests of truth. If, for example, we compare the three synoptic Gospels with each other and with the fourth Gospel, we find that no one author professes to give a complete history of our Lord's life, or to arrange all the incidents which he relates in the exact order of time. Under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, each one pursues his own course, independently of the others, here inserting what one or more of the rest have omitted, or omitting what one or more of them have inserted. Sometimes the order of time is exactly indicated; at other times it is left indefinite, with only some general prefatory remark — "At that time," "and he began again," "and it came to pass," etc. Hence, in the attempt to exhibit in chronological order the entire text of the four Gospels arranged in parallel columns, the harmonist often finds himself baffled. It is certain that the evangelists do not always follow the exact order of time, and it is sometimes impossible to decide between the different arrangements of events in their records. A notable example of this we have in the Sermon on the Mount. The identity of the discourse as recorded by Matthew and Luke must be admitted as a fact raised above reasonable doubt.¹ Yet Matthew inserts it almost at the beginning of his account of

which it rests. Simplicity and perspicuity are good in their place; but men need something deeper than these as a basis for true faith; namely, the "honest and good heart," which the Saviour makes the indispensable condition of spiritual fruitfulness.

¹ See on this point Robinson's *Harmony of the Gospels*, notes to § 41. Tholuck, *Bergpredigt*, *Einleitung*, § 1. Andrew's *Life of our Lord*, pp. 247-253; Alford, *Wordsworth*, and the commentators generally in loco.

our Lord's ministry; with prefatory words, however, from which we gather that Jesus, before its delivery, "went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people."¹ Luke, on the contrary, informs us that it was delivered immediately after the choice of the twelve apostles, thus assigning to it its proper place in the order of events.² This one instance may stand as a representative of the indefiniteness which often appears in the evangelic narratives in respect to the chronological sequence of events. With regard to the four narratives of the resurrection, Alford remarks, with much justice: "*Supposing us to be acquainted with everything said and done, in its order and exactness, we should doubtless be able to reconcile, or account for, the present forms of the narratives; but not having this key to the harmonizing of them, all attempts to do so in minute particulars must be full of arbitrary assumptions, and carry no certainty with them.*"³

What is true of the chronological order of events holds good, also, in respect to various *historic incidents*. The Sermon on the Mount (its identity in the two evangelic narratives being assumed) affords here, also, a pertinent example. Matthew, after mentioning the multitudes that followed the Saviour "from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan," simply adds that, "seeing the multitudes, he went up into the mountain; and when he was set, his disciples came to him."⁴ Luke informs us that "he went out into the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God"; that in the morning he chose the twelve apostles, of whom the names are given; that then he came down with them, and stood on a level place,⁵ where,

¹ Matt. iv. 23 seq.

² Luke vi. 12 seq.

³ Commentary on Matt. xxviii. 1-10.

⁴ Matt. iv. 23 seq.

⁵ Ἐπὶ τῶνου πεδινῶ, the exact rendering of which words is: upon a level place, not: upon the plain, for which sense the article would have been required, as in the Sept. version of Deut. iv. 43, ἐν τῇ γῆ τῇ πεδινῇ, that is, in the plateau, that namely, east of the Jordan; and Josh. ix. 1; ἐν τῇ πεδινῇ, in the plain of the Mediterranean. The words do not necessarily imply that the Saviour descended

surrounded by great multitudes, he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed be ye poor," etc.¹ We see here how one evangelist omits incidents carefully detailed by the other. Another striking illustration is furnished by the three notices of the robbers who were crucified with Jesus. Matthew, after describing the mocking to which our Saviour was subjected by the bystanders, adds that "the robbers who were crucified with him reviled him after the same manner";² Mark, that "they who were crucified with him reviled him."³ But Luke informs us that while one mocked, the other prayed.⁴ Now, whichever of the proffered explanations we adopt here, the difference in the details of the narrative remains. We may say that Matthew and Mark use the so-called *plural of category*, referring not to the number, but to the class.⁵ But, had we not Luke's account, the impression would be left on our minds that both of the malefactors reviled the Saviour. Or, we may say (without any warrant, however, from the evangelic narratives) "that at first *both* the malefactors railed on him; but afterwards one of them (Luke xxiii. 40), moved by the prodigies which he saw (the darkness and the earthquake, etc.), was penitent, and rebuked the other."⁶ Or, we may assume, with Alford, that "neither Matthew nor Mark is in possession of the more particular account given by Luke."⁷ Upon either mode of explanation it must be admitted that

to the plain country lying at the foot of the mountain. We do not, however, stake the truthfulness of the two narratives on this, or any other particular solution of the apparent discrepancy between Matthew and Luke.

¹ Luke vi. 12 seq.

² Matt. xxvii. 44.

³ Mark xv. 32.

⁴ Luke xxiii. 39-43.

⁵ So Augustine, De Consensu Evang. iii. 16: "Matthaeum et Marcum, breviter perstringentes hunc locum, pluralem numerum pro singulari posuisse"; Ambrose, Expositio Evang. Luc. Lib. x. 122: "Potuit etiam de uno pluraliter dicere"; Jerome on Matt. xxvii. 44: "Hic per tropum qui appellatur *εὐλαψία*, pro uno latrone uterque inducitur blasphemasse." Though each of these writers gives also as an alternative the explanation next referred to.

⁶ Wordsworth on Matt. xxvii. 44, following the language of Jerome.

⁷ Alford on Matt. xxvii. 44.

the Holy Spirit was not careful to secure agreement in the letter of the narrative. We add one more illustration drawn from the account given in the three synoptic Gospels of the miracle performed by our Lord in the vicinity of Jericho. According to Matthew, as Jesus with his disciples and the accompanying multitude was departing from Jericho, two blind men, sitting by the wayside, heard that he was passing by, applied to him for help, and were healed.¹ Mark, like Matthew, states that the miracle was performed as Jesus was departing from Jericho, but names only one blind man, Bartimeus, the son of Timaeus.² Luke agrees with Mark in the mention of a single blind man, but says that the event occurred as Jesus was coming nigh to Jericho.³ We assume the identity of the miracle in all three of the narratives, although it is sufficient for our present purpose to remark that concerning the identity of the transaction as recorded by Mark and Luke there can be no reasonable doubt. That the miracle took place in the vicinity of Jericho all three writers are agreed. But the two former record it as having been performed when Jesus was departing from Jericho; the latter, when he was entering that city. For reconciling the letter of the narratives various hypotheses have been proposed. Augustine assumes *two* miracles,—one upon our Saviour's entrance into Jericho; the other, upon his departure from the place.⁴ Calvin promptly rejects this hypothesis, and proposes the following solution of the difficulty: "My conjecture is, that, when Christ was approaching the city, a blind man called to him; but that, when he could not be heard on account of the tumult, he sat down by the wayside at the egress of the city, and then, at length, was

¹ Matt. xx. 29-34.

² Mark x. 46-52.

³ Luke xviii. 35-43. His words are: 'Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ ἐγγίζειν αὐτὸν εἰς Ἱεριχὼ; and, in accordance with this statement, after recording the miracle, he adds (xix. 1), that Jesus "entered and passed through Jericho." Here are all the marks of circumstantial accuracy.

⁴ "Duo similia similiterque miracula fecisse Jesum." — De consensu Evang., Lib. iii. 126 [LXV.]

called by Christ. Thus Luke, starting from the true beginning, does not follow out the narrative, but passes over Christ's sojourn in the city. But the other two [evangelists] mention only the time which was nearest to the miracle. It is a probable conjecture that Christ, inasmuch as he often delayed answering men's prayers for a season that he might try their faith, employed the same test with this blind man."¹ We leave it to the reader's judgment to decide whether such artificial attempts at reconciliation do not involve greater difficulties than those which they are intended to remove; and whether it is not more probable that in such unessential matters the Holy Spirit saw good to leave the evangelic narratives to the ordinary law of authentic history where different independent writers describe the same events. This law, as all know, is substantial agreement, with variety in details.

In considering the question of plenary inspiration, we should have primary reference to the *end* which it has in view, rather than to the *particular way* in which it accomplishes that end. The end of inspiration is, as we have seen, to give men a divinely authorized and infallible rule of faith and practice. The scriptures are plenary inspired, because they come to us with the full authority of God, and contain a revelation made under the full illumination and guidance of the Holy Ghost, and therefore free from all mixture of error. While the revelation itself was immediately from God, everything connected with it, and with the record of it, came under God's superintendence. If the sacred writers, under the inspiration of the Spirit, were left free to use each one his own peculiar diction and mode of reasoning, that freedom was itself a part of the divine plan. If, in recording the same transaction, two or more of the evangelists, writing independently of each other, have used variety of details, sometimes amounting to discrepancies, which we find it

¹ In *Harmoniam Evang.*, in loco. We are unable to say whether this explanation (which Wordsworth follows for substance, so far as the place of the miracle is concerned) is, or is not, original with Calvin.

difficult to harmonize with each other in any satisfactory manner, this too was wisely permitted by the omniscient Spirit; nor does it derogate in the least from the full authority of scripture. The variety in incidental matters and the uniformity of substance and spirit are both comprehended in the divine plan for giving to men a revelation of God's will. In this we have a guarantee that no discrepancy can exist which shall be detrimental to the truth; all the limitations connected with the inspiration of the record being such as the Holy Spirit has, for wise reasons, prescribed to himself. In truth, we may say of these discrepancies, real or alleged, as has been said of the "various readings" of the sacred text, that, taken altogether, they neither mar the heavenly system of doctrines and duties contained in the Bible, nor even dim its brightness.

It might seem to us very desirable that we should have an immaculate text, in which we might know with absolute certainty that every word and letter was just as the sacred penman wrote it. In like manner, it might be the judgment of human wisdom that all the parts of a revelation from God should be nicely adjusted to each other, not only in their substance and scope, but also in the minute details of time, place, and historic circumstances; so that there should be no perplexing questions left for our solution. But in neither of these two respects has the wisdom of God conformed itself to what we might think expedient. We have no absolutely pure text, but are compelled to make the nearest possible approximation to it by the laborious collation of manuscripts and versions; always, however, with the cheering assurance that the "various readings" of the sacred text neither change nor obscure a single doctrine or duty of Christianity. So, also, in comparing the different evangelic narratives, we find a glorious harmony in their spirit and doctrine in "all things that pertain unto life and godliness," but a noble negligence in details that lie without their proper scope and office. In this way, the wisdom of God has guarded us against the error of exalting the letter of the

gospel above its spirit—a species of *formalism* into which some good men fall who are very earnest in their protestations against formalism in other spheres. There are, for example, theologians who contend earnestly (and, as we think, justly) against the claim of any particular form of church polity to be of divine right, and against the claim of a particular form of administering baptism as essential to its validity, who yet denounce in severe terms all who do not adopt their theory of verbal inspiration, as if they rejected the substance itself of the doctrine that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Thus, in their denunciation of formalism in some spheres and their unconscious maintenance of it in other, they illustrate the inconsistency of error.

4. The last limitation which we notice has respect to the *amount of light* which it has pleased the Divine Spirit to give us in the holy scriptures. The light of supernatural revelation, from its first dawn in Eden to the close of the sacred canon, was “as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” But the “perfect” day of revelation is relative, not absolute. Doubtless there are oceans of divine truth which remain hidden from our view, partly because flesh and blood could not bear the disclosure, and partly because the premature communication of it would hinder, not help us in the divine life. In the scriptures God has given us “all things that pertain unto life and godliness,” not all things which might minister nutriment to a vain and prurient curiosity. The reserve, for example, which God has maintained in his revelations concerning the *world of spirits*, is worthy of special notice. We learn from the Bible that there is such a world, embracing innumerable spirits, good and bad, of different orders, and that they stand in an intimate relation to us; the bad tempting us, and the good ministering to us. But on the particular question whether the spirits of our departed friends are present with us, and can minister to our wants, they maintain a solemn silence—a silence which the folly of man has in all ages

been endeavoring to break, and always with the same disastrous results. Here God's manner of treating the subject is in harmony with human nature, and modern spiritualism (which is only another form of ancient necromancy) is at war with it. We have, inclosed in our body of flesh and blood, a higher form of being, which is destined one day to unfold itself in a normal way, and which, when clothed with its perfect spiritual body, will be "equal to the angels" — able to see and hold converse with Gabriel face to face; able, if necessary, to encounter and withstand evil angels personally, as Michael did Satan. But here in the flesh we cannot bear the excitement of a conscious personal communion with spirits; nor is such a communion needful for us. God has given us in his word all the light we need respecting the spiritual world, respecting our duty here, and respecting our destiny here and hereafter. God's word, God's Spirit, and God's providence — these three constitute a perfect directory of faith and practice. Unbelief alone can incline us to seek another guide. To turn away from God's word to the spirits of the dead is rebellion and folly. It is to pursue a wrong end in a wrong way. Unhealthy excitement, the rejection of God's word, and the unsettling of all fundamental principles of faith and practice — these are the natural results of the doctrine; and of its followers we may say; "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."¹ We may take, for another illustration, the *sphere of prophecy*. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God." This is the key-note of prophecy. The veil is lifted enough to show us a mighty conflict between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, reaching from century to century; the consummation of which is to be the triumph of Christ and his cause. In the system of prophecy the grand salient points of the future stand out in bold relief. But they are not given after the manner of a map, with its scale of miles, so that we can accurately measure the distance from one event to another. The repre-

¹ See in Appendix, note B.

sentation is rather that of mountains rising magnificently on the distant horizon, with no clear indication of the intervening valleys. There are, it is true, some prophecies (like those of Daniel and the Apocalypse) in which the representation gives an orderly succession of events, with their signature of months and weeks and years. But even here the wisdom of God has hitherto baffled all attempts to construct out of them an *almanac of the future*. Uncertainty rests, by divine appointment, either upon the nature of the symbolism with its signatures of time and number, or upon the *terminus a quo* of an event, or upon the *terminus ad quem*, or upon all these elements of interpretation. The prophecies minister consolation to faith, but not satisfaction to curiosity. We believe that at "the time of the end" all will be made plain. But every attempt to anticipate the interpretation of God's providence must necessarily prove abortive.

The diligent student of scripture must be profoundly impressed with the fact that God with whom a thousand years are as one day makes but little account of the bare element of time, and is very sparing in his revelations to men concerning times and seasons. When the disciples asked our Lord, just before his ascension: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" he answered: "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power"; and directed their thoughts to the work appointed them to perform.¹ A like reserve is maintained in the New Testament respecting the time of his second coming. There are some passages in the epistles which make upon the reader's mind the impression that the apostles themselves expected the Lord's advent before their generation should have passed away.² Nor is there anything in this that ought to offend the devout be-

¹ Acts i. 6-8.

² See particularly 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52; 1 Thess. iv. 15-17. The expectation probably had its ground in the interpretation of our Lord's words, Matt. xxiv. 34, as having exclusive reference to the end of the world.

liever. They had received no revelation on the subject, and it is not probable that they conceived of that grand event as removed tens of centuries from their day. It was a part of the divine plan that they should be left to the common expectations of their day — expectations to be corrected by the course of history. Only when the occasion required, Paul was illuminated to reveal the fact that a great apostasy must first take place.¹ Nineteen centuries have nearly run their course since the time when our Lord was received up into heaven; yet the church still awaits his return in glory, “with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God.” The grand event is certain. The time is hidden alike from men and angels, and all curious computations for the purpose of determining it are worse than useless. They turn away men’s thoughts from the substance of divine revelation to non-essential matters “which minister questions, rather than the edification of God which is in faith.”²

We propose, in a closing Article, to consider the *quotations of the New Testament* in their relation to the question of inspiration.

APPENDIX.

NOTE A.

We add a few remarks respecting some points on which the Bible has been supposed to be at variance with the results of modern science.

I. THE MOSAIC SIX DAYS OF CREATION. The author’s views respecting these are given at large in his two Articles, entitled, *The Mosaic Narrative of the Creation*,³ and, *The Mosaic Six Days and Geology*.⁴ He simply calls the reader’s attention here to the contrast in the *ends* proposed by the scriptural narrator and the geologist, and the corresponding contrast

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 3 seq.

² 1 Tim. i. 4, according to the common text. The more approved reading: *the dispensation (oikonomia) of God which is in faith*; that is, the gospel dispensation which has faith for its sphere, gives the same truth, so far as our present use of the text is concerned. For whatever ministers to the advancement of the economy of grace ministers also to the edification of the believers included under it.

³ *Bibliotheca Sacra* for 1856, pp. 743–789.

⁴ *Ibid.* for 1857, pp. 61–98.

in the *manner* of procedure. The end of the scriptural narrator is to exhibit in bold outline the six grand processes of creation ending in the present order of things as a foundation for the divine institution of the Sabbath — six days of labor and one of rest. The geologist's end is to give a history of the successive changes by which the earth has been brought to its present condition, with an account of the vegetable and animal life belonging to each period. In the manner of procedure each conforms himself strictly to his proposed end. The sacred writer gives each of the grand processes, *in its idea and once for all, as the effect of divine power*. Whether he assigns it to the day on which it was begun, or to that on which it had its *culminating development*, is a question open to scientific inquiry. The geologist, on the other hand, describes each process *in its second causes and details*, as far as data are furnished him in the silent record of past geological ages. This contrast will appear more clearly if we look at a few particulars. The divine fiat: "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear," gives once for all, in its entirety, the grand principle of a division between the waters and the dry land. It is as if God had said: Let this order of things come into being. It was one of the two grand features of the third day's work, and to that day it is assigned. We are not, however, to infer that no changes in the relative position of land and water took place afterwards. We know that such changes were very numerous; but, being only the continuation of the idea contained in the original fiat, it did not come within the plan of the sacred penman to notice them in detail. The geologist, on the other hand, aims to give, as far as possible, a history of these changes in their regular succession.

Take another example. The introduction of the vegetable world in its three grand divisions belongs to the same third day. It is all given at once, as an organic whole. So far as the truth of the sacred record is concerned, it would be a vain question whether *grass, herbs, and fruit-trees* came into being simultaneously. All three belong to one idea, that of vegetable life; and all three are given together as the constituent elements of that idea. Just so the sacred writer proceeds in his account of the introduction of the animal kingdom; only that here the marine animals and birds belong to the fifth day, the land animals and man to the sixth. But the geologist, in accordance with his plan, endeavors to give in detail the history of the different orders of plants and animals, as they appeared, one after another, in the successive geologic ages.

We have here a satisfactory answer to the objection sometimes urged against the Mosaic narrative that the writer manifestly refers to the *existing orders* of plants and animals, and to these alone. That he refers to the existing orders of organic life is evident. And he does so right-fully; for they are, as we have seen, included, as parts of a grand whole, in the Mosaic account of creation. If, as seems probable, he refers to the

existing orders alone, the simple inference is, that he does not know all that was included in the divine idea when God called into being the vegetable and animal kingdoms. This may be freely conceded; for it has its perfect counterpart in prophecy. How little could our first parents know of the deep meaning contained in the original promise: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel"! And how little can we know of the process of the final judgment, when "every one of us shall give account of himself to God!"

II. **SCRIPTURAL CHRONOLOGY.** The chronology of the Bible involves some very difficult questions. In the genealogical tables contained in the fifth and eleventh chapters of the Book of Genesis the texts of the Masoretic Hebrew (which is, of course, followed in our version), of the Hebrew-Samaritan, and of the Septuagint, differ in a remarkable manner. For the details, the reader must consult the treatises devoted to this subject; we give only the final result. The Septuagint makes the period from the creation of Adam to the deluge, 2262 years (according to the Vatican manuscript, 2242 years); the Masoretic text, 1656 years; the Samaritan-Hebrew, 1307 years. From Noah to Abraham, again, the Septuagint and Samaritan-Hebrew give a much longer period than the Masoretic text — the Samaritan-Hebrew 650 years in excess; the Septuagint, 880 years. We dismiss the subject with the general remark that any uncertainty which may rest on the details of numbers in the Pentateuch (and occasionally elsewhere) ought not to affect our confidence in the record as a whole; for here, as is well-known, there is a peculiar liability to variations.

III. **THE LONGEVITY OF THE ANTEDILUVIAN PATRIARCHS.** This was well nigh tenfold the present term of life for robust and healthful men. The laws of physiology require us to assume that, before the flood, the period of childhood and youth was protracted in a corresponding manner; and that, after this catastrophe, the whole process of human life began to be gradually quickened, — to run its course from infancy to old age in a shorter time; — till the age of man was at last reduced to its present measure. This result God accomplished, as he does so many of his other operations within the sphere of nature, in a secret and invisible way; whether by immediately touching man's physical nature in its inmost recesses, or by the influence of natural causes, we cannot say.

IV. **THE ANTIQUITY OF MAN.** Some modern writers have assigned to the human race a very high antiquity. From what has already been said concerning the uncertainty of the early chronological tables contained in the Book of Genesis, it is plain that we may, if the evidence be furnished, assume that man has been in existence more than six thousand years; perhaps, in accordance with the chronology of the Septuagint, more than seven thousand years. But the arguments adduced to carry his existence

back a hundred thousand years or more rest only on uncertain data. The most that can be made out with probability is that man was coeval with some of the extinct mammals. On this species of evidence, Prestwich, as quoted by Dana,¹ remarks that, "as it at present stands, it does not seem to me to necessitate the carrying of man back in past time, so much as the bringing forward of the extinct animals towards our own time." As to the argument from the present rate of deposition of geological strata, it is at best uncertain; and it is still further invalidated by the fact, now well established, that various parts of the earth's surface are at present in process of slow elevation or depression. We hold ourselves ready to accept the certain results of scientific investigation, but not the crude inferences of scientific men, whether advanced in the interest of unbelief or of high orthodoxy. It is certain that the scriptural narrative is occupied with an account of the Adamic race, and of God's dealings with it. It will be time enough to assume the existence of a pre-Adamic race, when cogent grounds for so doing shall appear.

V. The UNITY OF THE HUMAN RACE is assumed in scripture. Some modern scientific men have denied this; but their arguments are theoretic, rather than demonstrative, and do not amount to proof. We must remember, moreover, that man lives under a supernatural dispensation. The narrative in the eleventh chapter of Genesis seems to imply that God interposed in a supernatural way to confound human speech. In like manner he may have interposed in a secret way to produce or intensify the diversity of types in the human race. It does not appear, however, on physiological grounds, necessary to assume any such immediate interposition. The question of the origin of varieties in the same species is involved in obscurity. We leave it among the inscrutable things concerning which dogmatism is very inappropriate, certainly at the present stage of scientific investigation.

NOTE B.

Respecting the commerce with the spirits of the dead to which modern spiritualists lay claim, a few additional remarks may be in place. It is especially important that the preacher of the gospel plant himself on no lower or narrower platform than that which the scriptures themselves furnish. They do not deny the reality of witchcraft (of which necromancy is a prominent part); but they forbid witchcraft, as they do every form of divination, because its immediate influence is to transfer men's supreme love and trust from the living God to created spirits, whether demons or the souls of the dead: "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep and mutter; should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead?"² This is

¹ Manual of Geology (edition of 1867), p. 582.

² Isa. viii. 19.

the language of inspiration. The modern "medium" answers to the ancient wizard or witch that had a "familiar spirit." That there are various modifications in the machinery of the system of spiritualism, as compared with ancient necromancy, is freely conceded. But for substance, both are the same; and both are to be rejected with abhorrence, on the same ground, by all who acknowledge God's word as an infallible and sufficient rule of faith and practice. The preacher may believe that spiritualism is all jugglery and legerdemain. But when he condemns it on this ground alone, he relinquishes the high vantage ground on which it is both his privilege and his duty to stand. Let him, as far as he is able, expose the cheats of spiritualist manipulators. But let him also demonstrate to his people that whatsoever reality any one may claim for the system is only claiming reality for witchcraft. If it be impossible to reclaim those who have gone through the gateway of spiritualism into practical infidelity — the rejection of God's word, if not wholly, yet as an *infallible* and *sufficient* rule of faith and practice, — he may at least hope to save some from entering that gateway.

ARTICLE V.

INFANT BAPTISM AND A REGENERATED CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP IRRECONCILABLE.

BY REV. W. H. H. MARSH, WILMINGTON, DEL.

Two remarkable Articles on the subject of Infant Church-membership appeared during the past year — the first, in the "Methodist Quarterly Review" for January, from the pen of the late Rev. B. H. Nadal, D.D., Professor in the Drew Theological Seminary, New Jersey, entitled, "The Logic of Infant Church-membership"; and the second in the *Bibliotheca Sacra* for April, written by the Rev. Lewis Grout, formerly missionary of the A. B. C. F. M., entitled, "The Church-membership of Baptized Children." The appearance of these two Articles on the same topic, in two prominent and widely circulated quarterlies, written by men (members of large, influential, and growing denominations) who, in all probability, knew nothing of each other's views on the subject, and who reached their conclusions by indepen-