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The Inspiration of The Bible

by A.A. Hodge (1823-1886)



Originally published in 1860, A.A. Hodge's *Outlines of Theology* is still regarded as a great introduction to classical Protestant theology. . This electronic edition (which is an unedited reproduction of chapter four of Hodge's book) was made available by Shane Rosenthal for *Reformation Ink*. It is in the public domain and may be freely copied and distributed.

1. What are the necessary presuppositions, as to principles, and matters of fact, which must be admitted before the possibility of inspiration, or the inspiration of any particular book can be affirmed?

1st. The existence of a personal God, possessing the attributes of power, intelligence, and moral excellence in absolute perfection.

2nd. That in his relation to the universe he is at once immanent and transcendent. Above all, and freely acting upon all from without. Within all, and acting through the whole and every part from within in the exercise of all his perfections, and according to the laws and modes of action he has established for his creatures, sustaining and governing them, and all their actions.

3rd. His moral government over mankind and other intelligent creatures, whereby he governs them by truth and motives addressed to their reason and will, rewards and punishes them according to their moral characters and actions, and benevolently educates them for their high destiny in his communion and service.

4th. The fact that mankind instead of advancing along a line of natural development from a lower to a higher moral condition, have fallen from their original state and relation, and are now lost in a condition involving corruption and guilt, and incapable of recovery without supernatural intervention.

5th. The historical integrity of the Christian Scriptures, their veracity as history, and the genuineness and authenticity of the several books.

6th. The truth of Christianity in the sense in which it is set forth in the sacred record.

All of these necessary presuppositions, the truth of which is involved in the doctrine that the Scriptures are inspired, fall under one of two classes--

(1.) Those which rest upon intuition and the moral spiritual evidences of divine truth, such as the being and attributes of God, and his relations to world and to mankind, such as the testimony of conscience and the moral consciousness of men as sinners justly condemned, and impotent.

(2.) Those which rest upon matters of fact, depending upon historical and critical evidence as to the true origin and contents of the sacred books.

If any of these principles or facts is doubted, the evidence substantiating them should be sought in their appropriate sources, e. g., the department of Apologetics--the Theistic argument and Natural Theology, the evidences of Christianity, the Historic Origin of the Scriptures, the Canon, and Criticism and Exegesis of the Sacred Text.

STATEMENT OF THE CHURCH DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION.

2. In what sense and to what extent has the Church universally held the Bible to be inspired?

That the sacred writers were so influenced by the Holy spirit that their writings are, as a whole and in every part, God's word to us--an authoritative revelation to us from God, endorsed by him, and sent to us as a rule of faith and practice, the original autographs of which are absolutely infallible when interpreted in the sense intended, and hence are clothed with absolute divine authority.

3. What is meant by "plenary inspiration"?

A divine influence full and sufficient to secure its end. The end in this case secured is the perfect infallibility of the Scriptures in every part, as a record of fact and doctrine both in thought and verbal expression. So that although they come to us through the instrumentality of the minds, hearts, imaginations, consciences, and wills of men, they are nevertheless in the strictest sense the word of God.

4. What is meant by the phrase "verbal inspiration," and how can it be proved that the words of the Bible were inspired?

It is meant that the divine influence, of whatever kind it may have been, which accompanied the sacred writers in what they wrote, extends to their expression of their thoughts in language, as well as to the thoughts themselves. The effect being that in the original autograph copies the language expresses the thought God intended to convey with infallible accuracy, so that the words as well as the thoughts are God's revelation to us.

That this influence did extend to the words appears--1st, from the very design of inspiration, which is, not to secure the infallible correctness of the opinions of the inspired men themselves (Paul and Peter differed, Gal. 2:11, and sometimes the prophet knew not what he wrote), but to secure an infallible record of the truth. But a record consists of language.

2nd. Men think in words, and the more definitely they think the more are their thoughts immediately associated with an exactly appropriate verbal expression. Infallibility of thought cannot be secured or preserved independently of an infallible verbal rendering.

3rd. The Scriptures affirm this fact, 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13.

4th. The New Testament writers, while quoting from the Old Testament for purposes of argument, often base their argument upon the very words used, thus ascribing authority to the word as well as the thought.--Matt. 22:32, and Ex. 3:6,16; Matt. 22:45, and Psalms 110:1 ; Gal. 3:16, and Gen. 17:7.

5. By what means does the Church hold that God has effected the result above defined?

The Church doctrine recognizes the fact that every part of Scripture is at once a product of God's and of man's agency. The human writers have produced each his part in the free and natural exercise of his personal faculties under his historical conditions. God has also so acted concurrently in and through them that the whole organism of Scripture and every part thereof is his word to us, infallibly true in the sense intended and absolutely authoritative

God's agency includes the three following elements:

1st. His PROVIDENTIAL agency in producing the Scriptures. The whole course of redemption, of which revelation and inspiration are special functions, was a special providence directing the evolution of a specially providential history. Here the natural and the supernatural continually interpenetrate. But as is of necessity the case, the natural was

always the rule and the supernatural the exception; yet as little subject to accident, and as much the subject of rational design as the natural itself. Thus God providentially produced the very man for the precise occasion, with the faculties, qualities, education, and gracious experience needed for the production of the intended writing, Moses, David, Isaiah, Paul, or John, genius and character, nature and grace, peasant, philosopher, or prince, the man, and with him each subtle personal accident, was providentially prepared at the proper moment as the necessary instrumental precondition of the work to be done.

2nd. REVELATION of truth not otherwise attainable. Whenever the writer was not possessed, or could not naturally become possessed, of the knowledge God intended to communicate, it was supernaturally revealed to him by vision or language. This revelation was supernatural, objective to the recipient, and assured to him to be truth of divine origin by appropriate evidence. This direct revelation applies to a large element of the sacred Scriptures, such as prophecies of future events, the peculiar doctrines of Christianity, the promises and threatenings of God's word, etc., but it applies by no means to all the contents of Scripture.

3rd. INSPIRATION. The writers were the subjects of a plenary divine influence called inspiration, which acted upon and through their natural faculties in all they wrote directing them in the choice of subject and the whole course of thought and verbal expression, so as while not interfering with the natural exercise of their faculties, they freely and spontaneously, produced the very writing which God designed, and which thus possesses the attributes of infallibility and authority as above defined.

This inspiration differs, therefore, from revelation--(1.) In that it was a constant experience of the sacred writers in all they wrote and it affects the equal infallibility of all the elements of the writings they produced, while, as before said, revelation was supernaturally vouchsafed only when it was needed. (2.) In that revelation communicated objectively to the mind of the writer truth otherwise unknown. While inspiration was a divine influence flowing into the sacred writer subjectively, communicating nothing, but guiding their faculties in their natural exercise to the producing an infallible record of the matters of history, doctrine, prophecy, etc., which God designed to send through them to his Church.

It differs from spiritual illumination, in that spiritual illumination is an essential element in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit common to all true Christians. It never leads to the knowledge of new truth, but only to the personal discernment of the spiritual beauty and power of truth already revealed in the Scriptures.

Inspiration is a special influence of the Holy Spirit peculiar to the prophets and apostles, and attending them only in the exercise of their functions as accredited teachers. Most of them were the subjects both of inspiration and spiritual illumination. Some, as Balaam, being unregenerate were inspired, though destitute of spiritual illumination.

THE PROOF OF THE CHURCH DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION.

6. From what sources of evidence is the question as to the nature and extent of the Inspiration of the Scriptures to be determined?

1st. From the statements of the Scriptures themselves.

2nd. From the phenomena of Scripture when critically examined.

THE STATEMENTS OF THE SCRIPTURES AS TO THE MATTER OF THEIR OWN INSPIRATION.

7. How can the propriety of proving the Inspiration of the Scriptures from their own assertions be vindicated?

We do not reason in a circle when we rest the truth of the inspiration of the Scriptures on their own assertions. We come to this question already believing in their credibility as histories, and in that of their writers as witnesses of facts, and in the truth of Christianity and in the divinity of Christ. Whatever Christ affirms of the Old Testament, and whatever he promises to the Apostles, and whatever they assert as to the divine influence acting in and through themselves, or as to the infallibility and authority of their writings, must be true. Especially as all their claims were endorsed by God working with them by signs and wonders and gifts of the Holy Ghost. It is evident that if their claims to inspiration and to the infallibility and authority of their writings are denied, they are consequently charged with fanatical presumption and gross misrepresentation, and the validity of their testimony on all points is denied. When plenary inspiration is denied all Christian faith is undermined.

8. How may the inspiration of the apostles be fairly inferred from the fact that they wrought miracles?

A miracle is a divine sign (saymeion) accrediting the person to whom the power is delegated as a divinely commissioned agent, Matt. 16:1,4; Acts 14:3; Heb. 2:4. This divine testimony not only encourages, but absolutely renders belief obligatory. Where the sign is, God commands us to believe. But he could not unconditionally command us to believe any other than unmixed truth infallibly conveyed.

9. How may it be shown that the gift of Inspiration was promised to the apostles?

Matt. 10:19; Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 15:26,27; 16:13; Matt. 28:19,20; John 13:20.

10. In what several ways did they claim to have possession of the Spirit?

They claimed--

1st. To have the Spirit in fulfillment of the promise of Christ. Acts 2:33; 4:8; 13:2-4; 15:28; 21:11; 1 Thess. 4:8.

2nd. To speak as the prophets of God.--1 Cor. 4:1; 9:17; 2 Cor. 5:19; 1 Thess. 4:8.

3rd. To speak with plenary authority.--1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 John 4:6; Gal.1:8,9; 2 Cor. 13:2,3,4. They class their writings on a level with the Old Testament Scriptures.--2 Pet. 3:16; 1 Thess. 5:27; Col. 4:16; Rev. 2:7.--Dr. Hodge.

11. How was their claim confirmed?

1st. By their holy, simple, temperate, yet heroic lives.

2nd. By the holiness of the doctrine they taught, and its spiritual power, as attested by its effect upon communities and individuals.

3rd. By the miracles they wrought.--Heb. 2:4; Acts 14:3; Mark 16:20.

4th. All these testimonies are accredited to us not only by their own writings, but also by the uniform testimony of the early Christians, their contemporaries, and their immediate successors.

12. Show that the writers of the Old Testament claim to be inspired.

1st. Moses claimed that he wrote a part at least of the Pentateuch by divine command.--Deut. 31:19-22; 34:10; Num. 16:28,29. David claimed it.--2 Sam. 23:2.

2nd. As a characteristic fact, the Old Testament writers speak not in their own name, but preface their messages with, "Thus saith the Lord," "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," etc.--Jer. 9:12; 13:13; 30:4; Isa. 8:1; 33:10; Mic. 4:4; Amos 3:1; Deut. 18:21,22; 1 Kings 21:28; 1 Chron. 17:3.--Dr. Hodge.

13. How was their claim confirmed?

1st. Their claim was confirmed to their contemporaries by the miracles they wrought by the fulfillment of many of their predictions (Num. 16:28,29), by the holiness of their lives, the moral and spiritual perfection of their doctrine, and the practical adaptation of the religious system they revealed to the urgent wants of men.

2nd. Their claim is confirmed to us principally--(1.) By the remarkable fulfillment, in far subsequent ages, of many of their prophecies. (2.) By the evident relation of the symbolical religion which they promulgated to the facts and doctrines of Christianity, proving a divine preadjustment of the type to the antitype. (3.) By the endorsement of Christ and his apostles.

14. What are the formulas by which quotations from the Old Testament are introduced into the New, and how do these forms of expression prove the inspiration of the ancient Scriptures?

"The Holy Ghost saith,"Heb. 3:7. "The Holy Ghost this signifying,"Heb. 9:8. "God saith,"Acts 2:17, and Isa. 44:3; 1 Cor. 9:9,10, and Deut. 25:4. "The Scriptures saith.,"Rom. 4:3; Gal. 4:30. "It is written,"Luke 18:31; 21:22; John 2:17; 20:31. "The Lord by the mouth of his servant David says,"Acts 4:25, and Ps. 2:1,2. "The Lord limiteth in David a certain day, saying,"Heb. 4:7; Ps. 95:7. "David in spirit says,"Matt. 22:43, and Ps. 110:1.

Thus these Old Testament writings are what God saith, what God saith by David, etc., and are quoted as the authoritative basis for conclusive argumentation; therefore they must have been inspired.

15. How may the Inspiration of the Old Testament writers be proved by the express declarations of the New Testament?

Luke 1:70; Heb. 1:1; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:21.

16. What is the argument on this subject drawn from the manner in which Christ and his apostles argue from the Old Testament as of final authority?

Christ constantly quotes the Old Testament, Matt. 21:13; 22:43. He declares that it cannot be falsified, John 7:23; 10:35; that the whole law must be fulfilled, Matt. 5:18; and all things also foretold concerning himself "in Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms,"Luke 24:44. The apostles habitually quote the Old Testament in the same manner, "That it might

be fulfilled which was written," is with them a characteristic formula, Matt. 1:22; 2:15,17,23; John 12:38; 15:25; etc. They all appeal to the words of Scripture as of final authority. This certainly proves infallibility.

THE PHENOMENA OF SCRIPTURE CONSIDERED AS EVIDENCE OF THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF ITS INSPIRATION.

17. What evidence do the Phenomena of the Scriptures afford as to nature and extent of the human causes conspiring to produce them?

Every part of Scripture alike bears evidence of a human origin. the writers of all the books were men, and the process of composition through which they originated was characteristically human. The personal characteristics of thought and feeling of these writers have acted spontaneously in their literary activity, and have given character to their writings in a manner precisely similar to the effect of character upon writing in the case of other men. They wrote from human impulses, on special occasions, with definite design. Each views his subject from an individual standpoint. They gather their material from all sources--personal experience and observation, ancient documents, and contemporary testimony. They arrange their material with reference to their special purpose, and draw inferences from principles and facts according to the more or less logical habits of their own minds. Their emotions and imaginations are spontaneously exercised, and follow as co-factors with their reasoning into their compositions. The limitations of their personal knowledge and general mental condition, and the defects of their habits of thought and style, are as obvious in their writings as any other personal characteristics. They use the language and idiom proper to their nation and class. They adopt the *usus loquendi* of terms current among their people, without committing themselves to the philosophical ideas in which the usage originated. Their mental habits and methods were those of their nation and generation. They were for the most part Orientals, and hence their writings abound with metaphor and symbol; and although always reliable in statement as far as required for their purpose they never aimed at the definiteness of enumeration, or chronological or circumstantial narration, which characterizes the statistics of modern western nations. Like all purely literary men of every age, they describe the order and the facts of nature according to their appearances, and not as related to their abstract law or cause.

Some of these facts have, by many careless thinkers, been supposed to be inconsistent with the asserted fact of divine guidance. But it is evident, upon reflection, that if God is to reveal himself at all, it must be under all the limits of human modes of thought and speech. And if he inspires human agents to communicate his revelation in writing, he must use them in a manner consistent with their nature as rational and spontaneous agents. And it is evident that all the distinctions between the different degrees of perfection in human knowledge, and elegance in human dialect and style, are nothing when viewed in the light of the common relations of man to God. He obviously could as well reveal himself through a peasant as through a philosopher; and all the better when the personal characteristics of

the peasant were providentially and graciously preadjusted to the special end designed.

18. What evidence do the Phenomena of the Scriptures afford as to the nature and extent of the divine agency exercised in their production?

1st. Every part of Scripture affords moral and spiritual evidence of its divine origin. This is, of course, more conspicuous in some portions than in others. There are transcendent truths revealed, a perfect morality, an unveiling of the absolute perfections of the Godhead, a foresight of future events, a heart searching and rein-trying knowledge of the secrets of the human soul, a light informing the reason and an authority binding the conscience, a practical grasp of all the springs of human experience and life, all of which can only have originated in a divine source. These are characteristics of a large portion of the Scriptures, and of the Scriptures alone in all literature, and together with the accompanying witness of the Holy Ghost, these are practically the evidences upon which the faith of a majority of believers rests.

2nd. But another characteristic of the Scriptures, taken in connection with the foregoing, proves incontestably their divine origin as a whole and in every part. The sacred Scriptures are an organism, that is a whole composed of many parts, the parts all differing in matter, form, and structure from each other, like the several members of the human body, yet each adjusted to each other and to the whole, through the most intricate and delicate correlations mediating a common end. Scripture is the record and interpretation of redemption. Redemption is a work which God has prepared and wrought out by many actions in succession through an historical process occupying centuries. A supernatural providence has flowed forward evolving a system of divine interventions, accompanied and interpreted by a supernaturally informed and guided order of prophets. Each writer has his own special and temporary occasion, theme, and audience. And yet each contributed to build up the common organism, as the providential history has advanced, each special writing beyond its temporary purpose taking permanent place as a member of the whole, the gospel fulfilling the law, antitype has answered to type and fulfillment to prophecy, history has been interpreted by doctrine, and doctrine has given law to duty and to life. The more minutely the contents of each book are studied in the light of its special purpose, the more wonderfully various and exact will its articulations in the general system and ordered structure of the whole be discovered to be. This is the highest conceivable evidence of design, which in the present case is the proof of a divine supernatural influence comprehending the whole, and reaching to every part, through sixteen centuries, sixty-six distinct writings, and about forty cooperating human agents. Thus the divine agency in the genesis of every part of Scripture is as clearly and certainly determined as it is in the older genesis of the heavens and the earth.

19. What is the objection to this doctrine drawn from the free manner in which the

New Testament writers quote those of the Old Testament, and the answer to that objection?

In a majority of instances the New Testament writers quote those of the Old Testament with perfect verbal accuracy. Sometimes they quote the Septuagint version, when it conforms to the Hebrew; at others they substitute a new version; and at other times again they adhere to the Septuagint, when it differs from the Hebrew. In a number of instances, which however are comparatively few, their quotations from the Old Testament are made very freely, and in apparent accommodation of the literal sense.

Rationalistic interpreters have argued from this last class of quotations that it is impossible that both the Old Testament writer quoted from, and the New Testament writer quoting, could have been the subjects of plenary inspiration, because, say they, if the ipsissima verba were infallible in the first instance, an infallible writer would have transferred them unchanged. But surely if a human author may quote himself freely, changing the expression, and giving a new turn to his thought in order to adapt it the more perspicuously to his present purpose, the Holy Spirit may take the same liberty with his own. The same Spirit that rendered the Old Testament writers infallible in writing only pure truth, in the very form that suited his purpose then, has rendered the New Testament writers infallible in so using the old materials, that while they elicit a new sense, they teach only the truth, the very truth moreover contemplated in the mind of God from the beginning, and they teach it with divine authority.--See Fairbairn's "Herm. Manual," Part 3. Each instance of such quotation should be examined in detail, as Dr. Fairbairn has done.

20. What objection to the doctrine of Plenary Inspiration is drawn from the alleged fact that "Discrepancies" exist in the Scriptural Text? and how is this objection to be answered?

It is objected that the sacred text contains numerous statements which are inconsistent with other statements made in some part of Scripture itself, or with some certainly ascertained facts of history or of science.

It is obvious that such a state of facts, even if it could be proved to exist, would not, in opposition to the abundant positive evidence above adduced, avail to disprove the claim that the Scriptures are to some extent and in some degree the product of divine inspiration. The force of the objection would depend essentially upon the number and character of the instances of discrepancy actually proved to exist, and would bear not upon the fact of Inspiration, but upon its nature and degree and extent.

The fact of the actual existence of any such "discrepancies," it is evident, can be determined only by the careful examination of each alleged case separately. This examination belongs to the departments of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis. The following considerations, however, are evidently well-grounded, and sufficient to allay all

apprehension on the subject.

1st. The Church has never held the verbal infallibility of our translations, nor the perfect accuracy of the copies of the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures now possessed by us. These copies confessedly contain many "discrepancies" resulting from frequent transcription. It is, nevertheless, the unanimous testimony of Christian scholars, that while these variations embarrass the interpretation of many details, they neither involve the loss nor abate the evidence of a single essential fact or doctrine of Christianity. And it is moreover reassuring to know that believing criticism, by the discovery and collation of more ancient and accurate copies, is constantly advancing the Church to the possession of a more perfect text of the original Scriptures than she has enjoyed since the apostolic age.

2nd. The Church has asserted absolute infallibility only of the original autograph copies of the Scriptures as they came from the hands of their inspired writers. And even of these she has not asserted infinite knowledge, but only absolute infallibility in stating the matters designed to be asserted. A "discrepancy," therefore, in the sense in which the new critics affirm and the Church denies its existence, is a form of statement existing in the original text of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures evidently designed to assert as true that which is in plain irreconcilable contradiction to other statements existing in some other portions of the same original text of Scripture, or to some other certainly ascertained element of human knowledge. A "discrepancy" fulfilling in every particular this definition must be proved to exist, or the Church's doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration remains unaffected.

3rd. It is beyond question, that, in the light of all that the Scriptures themselves assert or disclose as to the nature and the extent of the divine influence controlling their genesis, and as to their authority over man's conscience and life as the voice of God, the existence of any such "discrepancies" as above defined is a violent improbability. Those who assert the existence of one or more of them must bring them out, and prove to the community of competent judges, that all the elements of the above definition meet in each alleged instance, not merely probably, but beyond the possibility of doubt. The burden of proof rests exclusively on them.

4th. But observe that this is for them a very difficult task to perform, one in any instance indeed hardly possible. For to make good their point against the vast presumptions opposed to it, they must prove over and over again in the case of each alleged discrepancy each of the following points:(1.) That the alleged discrepant statement certainly occurred in the veritable autograph copy of the inspired writing containing it. (2.) That their interpretation of the statement, which occasions the discrepancy, is the only possible one, the one it was certainly intended to bear. The difficulty of this will be apprehended when we estimate the inherent obscurity of ancient narratives, unchronological, and fragmentary, with a background and surroundings of almost unrelieved darkness. This condition of things which so often puzzles the interpreter, and prevents the apologist from proving the harmony of the narrative, with equal force baffles all the ingenious efforts of the rationalistic critic to demonstrate the "discrepancy." Yet this he must do, or the

presumption will remain that it does not exist. (3.) He must also prove that the facts of science or of history, or the Scriptural statements, with which the statement in question is asserted to be inconsistent, are real fact or real parts of the autograph text of canonical Scripture, and that the sense in which they are found to be inconsistent with the statement in question is the only sense they can rationally bear. (4.) When the reality of the opposing facts or statements is determined, and their true interpretation is ascertained, then it must, in conclusion, be shown not only that they appear inconsistent, nor merely that their reconciliation is impossible in our present state of knowledge, but that they are in themselves essentially incapable of being reconciled.

5th. Finally it is sufficient for the present purpose, to point to the fact that no single case of "discrepancy," as above defined, has been so proved to exist as to secure the recognition of the community of believing scholars. Difficulties in interpretation and apparently irreconcilable statements exist, but no "discrepancy" has been proved. Advancing knowledge removes some difficulties and discovers others. It is in the highest degree probable that perfect knowledge would remove all.

21. Explain the meaning of such passages as 1 Cor. 7:6 and 12 and 40, Rom. 3:5 and 6:19, and Gal. 3:15, and show their perfect consistency with the fact of the plenary inspiration of the whole Bible.

"I speak as a man," is a phrase occurring frequently, and its sense is determined by the context. In Romans 3:5, it signifies that Paul was, for argument's sake, using the language common to men; it was the Jews' opinion, not his own. In Rom. 6:19, it signifies "in a manner adapted to human comprehension," and in Gal. 3:15, it signifies, "I use an illustration drawn from human affairs," etc.

"I speak this by permission, not of commandment."--1 Cor. 7:6, refers to verse 2. Marriage was always permitted, but under certain circumstances inexpedient.

"And unto the married I command, yet not I but the Lord." "But to the rest speak: I, not the Lord."--1 Cor. 7:10 and 12. Reference is here made to what the "Lord," that is Christ, taught in person while on earth. The distinction is made between what Christ taught while on earth, and what Paul teaches. As Paul puts his word here on an equal basis of authority with Christ's word, it of course implies that Paul claims an inspiration which makes his word equal to that of Christ in infallibility and authority.

"And I think also that I have the Spirit of God."--1 Cor. 7:40. "I think (dokw) I have, is only, agreeably to Greek usage, an urbane way of saying, I have (cf. Gal. 2:6, 1 Cor. 12:22). Paul was in no doubt of his being an organ of the Holy Ghost." Hodge, "Comm. on First Corinthians."

DEFECTIVE STATEMENT OF THE DOCTRINE.

22. State what is meant by theological writers by the inspiration "of superintendence," "of elevation," "of direction," and "of suggestion."

Certain writers on this subject, confounding the distinction between inspiration and revelation, and using the former term to express the whole divine influence of which the sacred writers were the subjects, first, in knowing the truth, second, in writing it, necessarily distinguish between different degrees of inspiration in order to accommodate their theory to the facts of the case. Because, first, some of the contents of Scripture evidently might be known without supernatural aid, while much more as evidently could not; second, the different writers exercised their natural faculties, and carried their individual peculiarities of thought, feeling, and manner into their writings.

By the "inspiration of superintendence," these writers meant precisely what we have above given as the definition of inspiration. By the "inspiration of elevation," they meant that divine influence which exalted their natural faculties to a degree of energy otherwise unattainable.

By the "inspiration of direction," they meant that divine influence which guided the writers in the selection and disposition of their material.

By the "inspiration of suggestion," they meant that divine influence which directly suggested to their minds new and otherwise unattainable truth.

23. What objections may be fairly made to these distinctions?

1st. These distinctions spring from a prior failure to distinguish between revelation the frequent, and inspiration the constant, phenomenon presented by Scripture; the one furnishing the material when not otherwise attainable, the other guiding the writer at every point, (1) in securing the infallible truth of all he writes; and (2) in the selection and distribution of his material.

2nd. It is injurious to distinguish between different degrees of inspiration, as if the several portions of the Scriptures were in different degrees God's word, while in truth the whole is equally and absolutely so.

FALSE DOCTRINES OF INSPIRATION.

24. What Principles necessarily lead to the denial of any super- Inspiration?

All philosophical principles or tendencies of thought which exclude the distinction between the natural and the supernatural necessarily lead to the denial of Inspiration in the sense affirmed by the Church. These are, for example, all Pantheistic, Materialistic, and Naturalistic principles, and of course Rationalistic principles in all their forms.

25. In what several forms has the doctrine of a Partial Inspiration of the Scriptures been held?

1st. It has been maintained that certain books were the subjects of plenary inspiration, while others were produced with only a natural providential and gracious assistance of God. S. T. Coleridge admitted the plenary inspiration of "the law and the prophets, no jot or tittle of which can pass unfulfilled," while he denied it of the rest of the canon.

2nd. Many have admitted that the moral and spiritual elements of the Scriptures, and their doctrines as far as these relate to the nature and purposes of God not otherwise ascertainable, are products of inspiration, but deny it of the historical and biographical elements, and of all its allusions to scientific facts or laws.

3rd. Others admit that the inspiration of the writers controlled their thoughts, but deny that it extended to its verbal expression.

In one, or in all of these senses, different men have held that the Scriptures are only "partially" inspired. All such deny that they "ARE the word of God," as affirmed by the Scriptures themselves and by all the historical Churches, and admit merely that they "contain the word of God."

26. State the doctrine of Gracious Inspiration.

Coleridge, in his "Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit," Letter 7., holds that the Scriptures, except the Law and the Prophets, were produced by their writers assisted by "the highest degree of that grace and communion with the Spirit which the Church under all circumstances, and every regenerate member of the Church of Christ, is permitted to hope and instructed to pray for." This is the doctrine of Maurice ("Theological Essays," p. 339) and virtually that of Morell ("Philosophy of Religion," p. 186) and of the Quakers. These admit an objective supernatural revelation, and that this is contained in the Scriptures, which are highly useful, and in such a sense an authoritative standard of faith and practice; that no pretended revelation which is inconsistent with Scripture can be true, and that they are a judge in all controversies between Christians. Nevertheless they hold that the Scriptures are only "a secondary rule, subordinate to the Spirit from whom they have all their excellency," which Spirit illumines every man in the world, and reveals to him either

with, or without the Scriptures, if they are unknown, all the knowledge of God and of his will which are necessary for his salvation and guidance, on condition of his rendering a constant obedience to that light as thus graciously communicated to him and to all men. "Barclay's Apology, Theses Theological," Propositions 1., 2., and 3.

AUTHORITATIVE STATEMENTS.

ROMAN CATHOLIC.--"Decrees of Council of Trent," Sess. 4. "Which gospel . . . our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first promulgated with his own mouth, and then commanded to be preached by his apostles to every creature, . . . and seeing clearly that this truth and discipline are contained in the written books, and the unwritten tradition, which received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us, transmitted as it were from hand to hand:the Synod following the example of the orthodox Fathers, receives and venerates with an equal affection of piety and reverence, all the books both of the Old and of the New Testament--seeing God is the author of both--as also the said traditions, as well those appertaining to faith as to morals, as having been dictated, either by Christ's own word of mouth, or by the Holy Ghost, and preserved in the Catholic Church by a continuous succession."

"Dogmatic Decrees of the Vatican Council," 1870, Sess. 3., Ch. 2. "Further this supernatural revelation, according to the universal belief of the Church, declared by the sacred Synod of Trent, is contained in the written books and unwritten traditions which have come down to us, having been received by the apostles from the mouth of Christ himself, or from the apostles themselves, by the dictation of the Holy Spirit, have been transmitted as it were from hand to hand. And these books of the Old and New Testament are to be received as sacred and canonical, in their integrity, with all their parts as they are enumerated in the decree of the said Council, and are contained in the ancient Edition of the Vulgate. These the Church holds to be sacred and canonical, not because having been carefully composed by mere human industry, they were afterwards approved by her authority, nor merely because they contain revelation with no admixture of error, but because, having been written by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, they have God for their author, and have been delivered as such to the Church herself."

LUTHERAN.--"Formula Concordia Epitome." 1. "We believe, confess, and teach that the only rule and norm, according to which all dogmas and all doctors ought to be esteemed and judged, is no other whatever than the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testament, as it is written, Ps. 119:105, and Gal. 1:8."

REFORMED.--"Second Helvetic Confession," Ch. 1. Concerning Holy Scripture, "We believe and confess, that the canonical Scriptures of the holy prophets and apostles of each Testament are the true word of God, and that they possess sufficient authority from themselves alone and not from man. For God himself spoke to the fathers, to the prophets and to the apostles, and continues to speak to us through the Holy Scriptures."

"The Belgic Confession," Art. 3. "We confess that this word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the

Holy Ghost, as the apostle Peter saith. And that afterwards God, from a special care which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing, and he himself wrote with his own finger the two tables of the law. Therefore we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures."

"Westminster Confession of Faith," Chap. 1. "Therefore it pleased the Lord, at sundry times and in divers manners, to reveal himself and to declare his will unto his Church; and afterwards, for the better preserving and propagating of the truth, and for the more sure establishment and comfort of the Church against the Corruption of the flesh and the malice of Satan and of the world, to commit the same wholly unto writing." "The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself) the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received because it is the word of God."

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