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ARTICLE III.

REVELATION AND INSPIRATION.

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IN ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

No. X.

INSPIRATION CONSIDERED IN ITS MODE.

It was shown in the preceding article that the *end* which the inspiration of the record has in view is that of giving to men, under the sanction of divine authority, a sure rule of faith and practice; and that this end is accomplished in the writings of the New Testament (to which the present inquiry has special reference), they coming to us with the two attributes of infallibility and sufficiency, both of which are included in their divine authority. The reader may naturally ask: Why, then, pursue the investigation any further? If the scriptures come to us with the sanction of divine authority, and contain an infallible rule of faith and practice, what more do we need? We answer: Nothing more, if men would only be content to rest here. But they are not thus content. From the consideration of the end of inspiration they have proceeded to that of its mode. They have propounded untenable theories concerning it; and some of them have identified with these theories the very essence of inspiration, denouncing in unmeasured terms those who dissent from their conclusions. It becomes necessary, therefore, to inquire, in a reverential spirit, what light we have from scripture, from the constitution of the human mind, and from the nature of language, respecting the *mode* of the Spirit's operation when "holy men of God *spoke* as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," or *wrote* under a like guidance for the instruction of the church in all coming ages.

Different Forms of Revelation.

We begin with the distinction already noticed in a cursory way,¹ between that form of revelation which is purely *outward* (objective), and that which is wholly *inward* (subjective); between which lie some forms of an intermediate character. The purely objective form, addressed to men through the medium of their outward senses, they being awake and their minds in a normal state, is manifestly the very highest mode of revelation. A notable example of this we have in the giving of the law from Mount Sinai. "All the people," we are told, "saw the thunders and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking."² "These words," says Moses, "the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice."³ Such also was the entire revelation made to men by Jesus Christ. He was more than a prophet speaking by inspiration of God. He was himself God clothed with humanity, and speaking to men through this humanity. It is true that his human nature was the recipient of the Holy Ghost, given to him without measure;⁴ but it is no less true that he, as the eternal Son of God, is, in conjunction with the Father, the divine Sender, and not merely the receiver, of the Spirit.⁵ His communications of truth to men are never prefaced with the words: "Thus saith the Lord," but always with his own authority — "Verily, verily, I say unto you." They are therefore eminently objective in their form.

It is to be understood, of course, that such purely outward revelations might be accompanied by the inward operation of the Divine Spirit on the hearts of the hearers, a condition indispensable, indeed, to their saving efficacy. To

¹ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xxiv. pp. 596, 597.

² Ex. xx. 18.

³ Dent. v. 22.

⁴ Matt. iii. 16; Mark i. 10-12; Luke iii. 22; iv. 1; John iii. 34; Acts x. 38.

⁵ Luke xxiv. 49; John xv. 26; xvi. 7; xx. 22.

such an inward operation Moses alludes, in a mournful tone, when he says: "Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs and those great miracles" — here we have, in part, the outward revelation; "yet the Lord hath not given you," he adds, "a heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day"¹ — a thing to be accomplished by the inward work of the Spirit in the hearts of those who had witnessed all these outward signs. So, again, when the Saviour says to Peter: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father, who is in heaven,"² he refers, here as he does elsewhere,³ to the inward illumination of the Spirit, common to all believers, and which should be carefully distinguished from inspiration in the proper sense of the word.⁴ This inward operation, however necessary and precious, is not itself the revelation, but rather the application of the revelation to the souls of those to whom it is made. The revelation itself, in the form which we are now considering, is purely objective; that is, addressed to the outward senses. It is not given by inspiration, though inspiration is necessary to make the *record* of it divinely authoritative.

At the other extreme, in respect to form, stand those revelations which are purely *subjective* — made inwardly to the mind of the recipient, and not outwardly through the medium of the senses. We give two examples, one from the Old Testament, the other from the New. When Gehazi, Elisha's servant, ran after Naaman's chariot, and obtained from him by falsehood two talents of silver, and two changes of raiment, the prophet received from God an inward knowledge of the whole transaction. "Went not my heart with thee," says he to Gehazi, "when the man turned again from

¹ Deut. xxix. 2-4.

² Matt. xvi. 17.

³ Matt. xi. 25-27; John vi. 44, 45-65.

⁴ See Bibliotheca Sacra, Vol. xxiv. pp. 595, 596.

his chariot to meet thee?"¹ When, again, "Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, and kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet," Peter knew by an inward revelation of the Spirit the falsehood and hypocrisy of the transaction. "Ananias," said he, "why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?"² In these two instances the knowledge seems to have been given by a sort of supernatural intuition, without the help of any inward vision or voice addressed to the internal sense. *How* the knowledge thus received was certified to the recipients as coming from God it would be vain to inquire. Equally vain would be the attempt to disprove the possibility of such a certification. It must be assumed as an axiom of revealed religion that God could and did reveal his presence to the consciousness of the prophets in such a way as to remove all doubt as to the reality of the revelation received by them.³

Intermediate between the two forms of revelation that have been considered—the purely outward and objective, and the immediate inward intuition—there are several others. Thus we have the record of visions in dreams and in trance, with and without the accompaniment of spoken words; voices from heaven and from the inner sanctuary of the tabernacle; appearances of angels; and the like. In respect to some of these it would be difficult to determine whether they are to be regarded as objective or subjective. Nor is the question one of importance, since, either way, the end proposed was the communication of divine truth.

Proper Application of the Term Inspiration.

The term *inspiration* does not once occur in the Bible, and the adjective *inspired of God* (θεόπνευστος) appears only once. But the *idea* expressed by these terms is found abundantly in both the Old and the New Testament. In theological usage they have become household words, be-

¹ 2 Kings v. 20-27.

² Acts v. 1-5.

³ See Appendix, Note A.

cause they were needed to express a definite scriptural idea ; and to this they ought to be restricted. The supernatural illumination and guidance enjoyed by all believers is an exceedingly precious gift of God. But to call it inspiration would be to confound things that differ ; and to bridge over, also, the gulf that exists between the evangelical faith and rationalism. For if worldly men were to hear Christians, who give, alas ! convincing evidence of their fallibility, continually spoken of as inspired of God, what inference could they draw but that inspiration is not such a gift as raises its possessor above error, so as to impart to his words the sanction of divine authority ? Thus, while the intention was to exalt in human apprehension the gift of the Holy Spirit, the practical effect would be to bring men upon the rationalistic ground that the writings of scripture contain a mixture of truth and error, which each one is to separate for himself by the light of his own reason. Let then the term be restricted to that plenary illumination of the Holy Spirit which gives to the words and writings of inspired men the sanction of divine authority.

The attempt has been made, in the interest of a certain theory (to be considered hereafter), to transfer the seat of inspiration, so far as the sacred writings are concerned, from the mind of the writer to the words recorded by him. Thus Haldane says : "The word 'inspire' signifies to breathe into, and literally corresponds to the original in 2 Tim. iii. 16, all *scripture is inspired of God, or breathed into the writers by God*. It is, therefore, of the *writing* that the inspiration is asserted."¹ Carson everywhere insists upon making a distinction between the inspiration of persons and the inspiration of scripture. "It is," says he, "a fundamental error with our opponents, that they confound inspiration, as it respects the enlightening of the minds of the inspired persons, with inspiration as an attribute of scripture. Now, while it is very proper to speak of the writers as inspired, it must be borne in mind that the

¹ Haldane on Inspiration, p. 113. Edinburgh, 1845.

passage which speaks of inspiration, speaks of it solely as it concerns what is written.”¹ Again: “I have again and again shown my antagonists that inspiration is asserted, 2 Tim. iii. 16 not as it respects the minds of the writers, but as it respects their writings.”² The same distinction is also made by Lord: “Moreover,” he says, “in the discussion of the subject, it has been taken for granted, that it was the writers personally, instead of that which they wrote, which was alleged to be inspired.”³ Again: “The difficulty, we apprehend, arises altogether from an erroneous view of the nature and subject of inspiration; as if it were the writers, instead of what they wrote, that was inspired.”⁴ Accordingly, throughout a volume of more than three hundred pages, he carefully avoids the term “inspired writers,” but speaks abundantly of the inspired writings of scripture. This he does because he maintains that inspiration consists not in the divine illumination and guidance enjoyed by the sacred writers, but, as we shall see, in the direct communication to them of the contents of scripture; as well those contents which were already known to them, as those that were received by a new revelation. The office of the writer, according to this view, is simply to record the things which he receives from the Holy Ghost, and the *communication or breathing into him*, of these things is inspiration.

We cannot assent to this distinction between the inspiration of the writer and that of the record as either natural or tenable. All Christians are, indeed, accustomed to speak of the *inspired writings*; but they rightly regard the writings as inspired because they proceeded from the pen of *inspired men*; a metonymy so simple and natural that it need not stumble any one. We do not affirm that the Holy Ghost never communicated directly the identical words to be spoken or written (as in the gift of tongues and other cases to be considered hereafter), but we say that the ordinary representation of scripture is that the men themselves were

¹ Refutation of Dr. Henderson's doctrine in his late work on Inspiration, etc., p. 33. 1837.

² Ibid. p. 43.

³ Plenary Inspiration, p. 10. New York. 1858.

⁴ Ibid. p. 108.

inspired; and that what they spoke or wrote was the fruit of this inspiration. Of Peter, for example, when arraigned with the other apostles before the Jewish council, it is said: "Then Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, said unto them, Ye rulers of the people, and elders of Israel," etc.¹ We suppose it will be conceded by all that it was not primarily the words which Peter uttered, but Peter himself, that was filled with the Holy Ghost. And if the man Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost, undoubtedly he was plenary inspired. How now about the address which followed? shall we assume for this a second and distinct inspiration, or shall we say that the address flowed directly out of the inspiration that filled Peter's soul? The latter supposition alone is simple and natural. It would be an exceedingly awkward as well as gratuitous assumption to suppose that the plenary inspiration which dwelt in the apostle's spirit helped him not one jot or tittle in the address which followed; but that, by a new and different sort of inspiration, this address was *inspired into him*. The case was not essentially different when Peter *wrote* his two epistles; since there is no warrant for assuming one kind of inspiration for spoken, and another for written words. Could not the man who *spoke* with divine authority because he was full of the Holy Ghost, *write* with divine authority for the same reason? We adhere, therefore, to the common view which represents the seat of inspiration to be in the souls of the sacred writers.

As to the *extent of application* which is given, in common usage, to the term "inspiration," it may be remarked that it is applied in a general way to all those modes of revelation which were made to the prophets and apostles in a subjective form, that is, to their inward sense; dreams and visions included. Thus it might be said that the revelation made in the form of a vision to Abraham, concerning the future bondage of his seed in Egypt and their deliverance thence;² in a dream to Joseph of Herod's intention to

¹ Acts iv. 8.

² Gen. xv.

destroy the infant Jesus ;¹ and in a trance to Peter respecting the abolition of the middle wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles²—that these and similar revelations were given by inspiration of God. But the term “inspiration” is especially appropriate to that immediate inward illumination of the Holy Spirit by which the knowledge of new truth was communicated, or the proper significance and use of old truth ; so that, in either case, the subjects of inspiration spoke or wrote according to the mind of the Spirit, and consequently without error. This may be made plain by a few illustrations.

Pharaoh’s two dreams contained an important revelation respecting the future of Egypt ; but it was a revelation that needed an inspired interpreter, such as it found in Joseph.³ We are not to conceive of Joseph as giving the interpretation by shrewd conjecture, nor according to any principles which he had learned from the magicians and wise men of Egypt. He spoke by the immediate inward illumination of the Holy Ghost ; that is, he spoke by inspiration, as he had previously done in the case of the dreams of Pharaoh’s two officers.⁴ When, again, Elisha said to the false Gehazi : “Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee ?”⁵ he spoke from the immediate knowledge which the Holy Ghost had imparted to him ; and when he further added : “The leprosy, therefore, of Naaman shall cleave unto thee and unto thy seed forever,” he uttered this sentence in the full consciousness that the Divine Spirit from whom he had received it would carry it, as he did, into immediate execution. So Peter, looking upon Ananias received by immediate revelation from God the knowledge of his falsehood and hypocrisy. By the same immediate knowledge, so far as we have any means of judging, the apostle Paul wrote : “Behold, I show you a mystery : we shall not all sleep ; but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump ; for the

¹ Matt. ii. 13.² Acts x.³ Gen. xli.⁴ Gen. xl.⁵ 2 Kings v. 26 sq.

trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”¹

As an example of the illumination of the mind in respect to truth already known, we may specify the case of Daniel, who writes: “I, Daniel, understood by the books² the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.”³ For, though Daniel understood by means of the writings of a previous prophet, it was under the illumination and guidance of the Holy Ghost. Another notable example is furnished in the opening words of Peter’s address on the day of Pentecost: “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh,”⁴ etc. Peter saw, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that here was the fulfilment of the words of Joel. Many like examples might be added; but these are sufficient for our purpose.

Inspiration in the examples above adduced had reference to special ends. The mind of the speaker or writer was illuminated by the Holy Spirit in respect to particular truths, new or old. But we must assume, as has been shown in a previous number,⁵ a general illumination and guidance — a constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost — by which the writers of the historical books of the New Testament, not less than the authors of the Epistles, were enabled continuously to see and express the mind of the Spirit without error. The Apostle John, for example, takes up his pen in his old age (as is commonly believed) to write a narrative of our Lord’s life. He has been for many years a preacher of the gospel, under the full inspiration of the Spirit. Into that narrative he introduces many sublime doctrines concerning our Lord’s

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

² In Heb. ספריים, *in* or *by* the books. The expression is naturally understood of a collection of sacred writings, among which were found those of Jeremiah. See Delitzsch in loco.

³ Dan. ix. 2.

⁴ Acts ii. 16 seq.

⁵ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xxviii. pp. 642, 643.

person and offices, alongside of many plain statements of what he has himself witnessed. So far as the authority of his writings is concerned, it is to us a matter of indifference whether he then for the first time received new revelations concerning his Master's person and offices, and the true import of the events which he recorded, or whether (as is most probable) these were all truths with which he had long been familiar. In either case, he writes as one who is conscious of enjoying, not casually and at intervals, but as a permanent gift, the plenary illumination of the Holy Spirit ; so that all his statements, whether they relate to doctrines or to matters of history, come to us alike with the sanction of God.

The same view we take of the inspiration of the apostles when writing their Epistles. We are far from denying that they may have received, in the progress of their work, special revelations from God. On this point, affirmation and negation would be alike out of place. We can only say, that, if such special revelations were needed to make their writings complete according to the mind of the Spirit, they were given. But we must assume that when the apostle Paul (to take a particular case) sat down to write his Epistle to the Romans, he had, under the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost in connection with the revelations made to him by Christ,¹ a clear and full view of the great doctrines of grace which he proceeded to unfold, as well as of the practical duties which cluster around them. He certainly did not need a special revelation that he might come to the conclusion, from the premises which he employed, "that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law"²; or might lay down the principle: "There is no power but of God; the powers that be are ordained of God."³ His inspiration was not doled out to him, moment by moment, as he proceeded; but he had it as a permanent gift, bestowed upon him in connection with his apostolic office, and it covered fully the whole ground traversed by him. We are

¹ Gal. i. 11, 12.² Rom. iii. 28.³ Rom. xiii. 1.

not to infer that, when he says: "To the rest speak I, not the Lord,"¹ he is less inspired than when he says: "Unto the married I command — yet not I, but the Lord."² We have shown, in a previous number,³ that the difference lies not in his inspiration, but in the matter under consideration. In the one case, Christ had given a positive command; in the other, he had left the believer free to act according to his own judgment. The apostle, accordingly, gives, in the one case, his advice; in the other, the positive command of the Lord; and both alike under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Surely, an apostle might give advice by inspiration, as well as enjoin obedience to Christ's positive legislation.

A large part of the sacred volume consists of narratives of events well known to the writers, or drawn from authentic sources accessible to them. We suppose that here the inspiration of the writers consisted largely — we say largely, not exclusively — in such a full illumination and guidance of the Holy Spirit as gave them a right view of the end proposed to be accomplished, and enabled them to select the right materials, to give to them the right form, and to present them in the right spirit, free from passion, prejudice, and error. We attempt not here to discriminate nicely between different kinds of inspiration. We remark, summarily, that the inspired writers were *men, not machines*, and that they had whatever help they needed, both in kind and degree, that they might write according to the mind of the Spirit.

Meaning of the Term Plenary Inspiration.

The word "plenary" means "full." "Full, entire, complete," is the definition given by Webster. An inspiration, then, that is "full, entire, complete," is plenary, whatever be its mode. To assume that no inspiration can be full, except that in which the very words, in their number and order, are infused into the writer's mind, is to beg the question at issue, and to limit the Holy Spirit in a most unwarrantable manner. Here the prophet's question is very

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 12. ² 1 Cor. vii. 10. ³ See *Bibliotheca Sacra*, Vol. xxviii. p. 644.

pertinent: "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? With whom took he counsel, and who instructed him, and taught him in the path of judgment, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding?"¹ Shall man, in his ignorance, presume to affirm that the Spirit of God was shut up to one method of securing from the pen of the sacred writer a record of the revelation made to him that should be "full, entire, complete," according to his mind? Or that, when he recorded well-known facts, the narrative could not be made, in form, matter, and spirit, agreeable to the will of the Holy Ghost, unless the sentences were given him, one by one, as he proceeded? Let it be remembered, then, that the term "plenary," as applied to inspiration, respects the *result secured*, not the mode of securing it, and that it is not to be restricted to one particular theory.

The Question of Verbal Inspiration.

It is acknowledged on all hands that a large part of the revelations made by God to men was given directly, in human language. This is true not only of those revelations which were objective in their form, but also of many, at least, that were given subjectively, that is, by an inward revelation to the mind of the recipient. We might adduce, as instances from the Old Testament, Jacob's dream, in which he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven, and heard the Lord, who stood above it, saying: "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed,"² etc.; Isaiah's vision, in which he saw the Lord sitting in the temple on a throne high and lifted up, and heard the words not only of the seraphim who stood by, but of God himself;³ and many more like examples. From the New Testament, also, we might specify the words addressed to Peter in his vision on the house-top;⁴ to Paul in a vision

¹ Isa. xl. 13, 14.

² Isa. vi.

³ Gen. xxviii. 12 seq.

⁴ Acts x. 10 seq.

at Corinth;¹ to the revelator on Patmos,² etc. How much of the revelations made to the prophets was given directly in the form of words, and how much by inward vision or intuition, is a question which need not trouble us; since, in either case, the prophecy came from God, and the prefatory words, "Thus saith the Lord," were alike appropriate.

But our present inquiry is directed to another point; namely, whether that theory of verbal inspiration which teaches that the identical words of scripture, in their order and number, were everywhere infused into the minds of the sacred writers, either formally or virtually, so that their office was simply to make a faithful record of them—whether this theory of inspiration is necessary or tenable. We have introduced into the above statement of the theory the clause, "either formally or virtually," for the purpose of indicating the two forms under which it is advocated.

The first, or purely mechanical, form represents every word of scripture as given to the writers immediately by God; so that they are simply the amanuenses of the Holy Spirit, not only when he communicates to them new truths, but also when they relate facts of which they already had full knowledge in a natural way. If we rightly understand Carson, this is the form of verbal inspiration which he advocates. Endeavoring to meet the objection, urged by Henderson, that "it is an incontrovertible fact that those by whom the sacred books were written possessed, to a greater or less extent, a previous acquaintance with many of the subjects of which they treat, he says:

"He has not the perspicacity to distinguish between infusing knowledge into the mind for the information of the person into whom it is infused, and infusing a communication for the information of others. It is, indeed, absurd to speak of giving a man knowledge which he has already; but it is not absurd to speak of communicating to him known truths in order to be recorded. Even among men, there is nothing more common. A person says to his servant: "Tell my friend that my son is dead." Is not this a communication from the master? Was not the fact as well known to the servant? Is it impossible to dictate the words of a discourse to an

¹ Acts xviii. 9, 10:

² Rev. ii. seq.

amanuensis on a doctrine with which the writer is as well acquainted as the author? The previous knowledge of the writers of scripture had nothing to do with the divine communications given to them to be recorded. They wrote, not as they personally knew, but as it was dictated to them by the Spirit. Our confidence in what they relate is not from a conviction of their previous knowledge of the subject, and their ability to express their own meaning, but from the conviction that they spake as the Holy Ghost gave them utterance."¹

"We do not say that the Holy Spirit infused into the writers of scripture that style which they previously possessed, and which they received in their constitution; and we have no need of so absurd an assertion. We say that he uttered his thoughts, reasonings, and words through the writers of scripture, in the style of those writers. If so, the style must be his, as style is the result of words and the collocation of words."²

"I believe the inspiration of both words and letters, on the same ground. An inspired speaker might have every word suggested by God, while he did not know a single letter of the alphabet. But, if a writing is inspired, the letters must be inspired, as well as the words, because the writing consists in the letters written, as well as in the words written. My argument for the inspiration of words is not that a writing is made up of words, but that a writing is made up of *the words written*."³

We waive a separate discussion of the theory in this simple form; since all we have to say concerning it will come up naturally in connection with the modification of it to be next considered. This modification is that propounded and advocated at length by Eleazer Lord, in his treatise on Plenary Inspiration, and in other writings of his. He agrees with Carson, as we have seen, in maintaining that it was not the writers personally, but that which they wrote, that was inspired. In other words, he holds that the apostolic declaration, "All scripture is inspired of God" (*θεόπνευστος*), means not that all scripture was written by inspired men, but that all scripture was inspired into the sacred writers. We have already shown how untenable is this distinction. The word *θεόπνευστος* occurs but once in the whole compass of the New Testament. To erect, as does Carson, upon the grammatical rendering of this word, "inspired of God," a whole theory concerning the *mode* of inspiration, is to build on a sandy foundation. Our translators, with great good

¹ Refutation of Dr. Henderson, pp. 29, 30. ² Ibid. p. 70. ³ Ibid. pp. 80, 81.

sense have rendered, "given by inspiration of God." This is the idea that most readers who have not a theory to maintain will get from the declaration that "all scripture is inspired of God." It is manifestly the same as if the apostle had said, according to another way of indicating inspiration: All the writers of scripture wrote "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,"¹ the particular form of the inspiration being left an open question.

Lord further agrees with Carson that the identical words of scripture were given to the sacred writers in their exact order and number, and this theory he attempts to maintain *from the inherent nature of language.*

"It is according to man's constitution—a law of his mind—that he should be conscious of thoughts only as he is conscious of the words which express them."²

Having said that inspiration is "a divine act by which thoughts are breathed—transmitted—conveyed to the intelligent consciousness of those who were to write them," he adds: "There is no apparent reason why the inspiring act should not convey the thoughts in the words in which they were to be written, so that the recipient should be conscious at once of the thoughts in the words which it behooved him to write."³

"To suppose them [the sacred writers], after receiving the thoughts by inspiration, to select the words under the guidance of a divine influence, is to suppose a joint agency in the selection; in which case, the words would not be exclusively the words of God."⁴

"Our consciousness and experience wholly forbid the supposition that the choice of words succeeds, instead of being identical with, the conception of thought. We have no consciousness of thought separately from words, or independently of them. . . . We therefore conclude that without a proper miracle the divine thoughts conveyed into the minds of the prophets by inspiration were of necessity conveyed in the very words which they wrote, that they were conscious of those thoughts in those words, and that they no more selected those words than the readers select the words in which they receive the thoughts which are expressed in scripture."⁵

"If they [the words] were selected by men—if man's agency was in any degree exerted in their selection, how are they the exclusive and infallible words of God? It is not a conclusive or satisfactory answer to this question to say that they were infallibly guided: For, supposing them to

¹ 2 Peter i. 21.

² Plenary Inspiration, p. 20.

³ Ibid. p. 20.

⁴ Ibid. p. 21.

⁵ Ibid. pp. 35 36.

have been so guided, if the act of selecting the words was their act, then the words selected were their words."¹

"He thinks organically in that orderly, grammatical succession which is exhibited in spoken and written sentences. He thinks organically in the words which constitute such sentences. He is conscious of his thoughts in those words, and not otherwise."²

The writer further maintains (what is, indeed, implied in the statements above quoted) that "words necessarily and perfectly represent and express the thoughts conceived in them"; that, "as the vehicle and representative of thought, they are its perfect counterpart and correlate"; and that, "if the vehicle of thought were not necessarily, uniformly, and perfectly commensurate with the thoughts conceived, we could have no certainty as to what our thoughts were."³ The reader is requested to note the words, "necessarily, uniformly, and perfectly commensurate with the thoughts conceived." This is affirmed to be the character of language, without limitation or exception, that we may either know our own thoughts with certainty, or communicate them with certainty to others.

We are at one with the writer in holding the inspiration of every part of scripture, and its absolute authority as a divine rule of faith and practice. But we cannot assent to all that he says respecting the particular method of inspiration. We preface what we have to say on this point with some general remarks:

1. In affirming that "we have no consciousness of thought separately from words, or independently of them," etc., he unwarrantably limits the use of the term "thought." None of our primary ideas and judgments are received in or through language. They come to us partly through the medium of the outward senses, and partly through our higher, supersensuous intuitions. A little child, for example, gets the idea of such a thing as a lump of sugar through his senses. He applies it to his tongue, and has the sensation

¹ Plenary Inspiration, pp. 39, 40.

² *Ibid.* p. 164.

³ *Ibid.* chap. viii. p. 135 seq.

of sweetness. Immediately there exists in his mind, in a concrete form, independently of language, the judgment which, when put into words, is expressed in the proposition: "Sugar is sweet." The same is true of all our original supersensuous and spiritual ideas, such as those of right and wrong, moral freedom and responsibility, causes efficient and final, etc., and of all the simple judgments which they involve. They neither are, nor can be, given by language. This we understand the author fully to admit. But in his view, if we rightly understand him, they are not *thoughts*, but *things* about which thoughts may be employed. This is employing the word "thoughts" in a very narrow and technical way. In common usage our simple, primitive judgments are classed among thoughts as really as our discursive judgments. And they must exist from the beginning as knowledge of which we are conscious; else we could never put them into language, and reason concerning them. Our emotions and feelings, again, which involve so many simple judgments, and with the account of which the scriptures are so largely occupied, come to us originally, as the writer admits, independently of language. These, also, he excludes from the domain of thoughts, as the word is employed by him. We infer, therefore, that he restricts the application of the term to what may be called "discursive thought," that is, that form of thought in which the mind proposes to itself its ideas, beliefs, judgments, feelings, etc., as objects of consideration, for the purpose of examining them and reasoning concerning them, or of communicating them to others.

2. To discursive thought, in the sense just defined, language of some kind is necessary; and the progress of the human mind depends mainly upon the greater or less degree of perfection which belongs to it. This we see strikingly illustrated in the case of the uneducated deaf and dumb, who have only the imperfect language of natural signs. For all the higher forms of knowledge it is hardly possible to exaggerate the importance of spoken and written language.

We cannot even analyze into its constituent parts the simple proposition, "God is good," without its help. Much less can we gain for ourselves, impart to others, or receive from them knowledge which involves the processes of abstraction, generalization, and deduction.

3. The office of language, then, as already remarked, is to make our thoughts objective to ourselves, for the purpose of examining them, reasoning concerning them, and communicating them to others. We begin with our primary ideas, beliefs, feelings, etc. These must, from the nature of the case, exist independently of language, since they are not given by or with language, but are the very materials about which language is employed. They must also exist as conscious knowledge; otherwise, we could not propose them to ourselves as objects of thought and discourse. In language we take this primitive stock of elemental thought, and, by the processes of analysis, generalization, etc., we deduce from it new thoughts, which, in their turn, are made by the help of language the objects of further examination. So we proceed both in gaining knowledge for ourselves and in imparting knowledge to others. To say, then, that we cannot be conscious of thought except as embodied in language of some kind, is an unwarrantable assertion. But it is true that we cannot make thought an object of consideration or communication to others without language.

4. We have seen the office of language. The question now arises concerning its essential nature. Is it the express image of thought, in such a sense that when a certain thought is given — we mean, of course, given as an object of the mind's consideration — it is necessarily and always given in just so many particular words, expressed or easily understood, and in just such a particular order? Here the natural language of signs may afford a pertinent illustration. When the French woman, coming out from the revolutionary tribunal, indicated to her anxious friends the result of the trial by a significant movement of her hand across the back of her neck, a certain thought was given, and by a sign, too,

that was "perfectly commensurate" with the thought conveyed, in the sense that it was a perfectly adequate declaration of it. But it was not connected, in her mind or theirs,—at least, not certainly and necessarily,—with a given number of words arranged in a given order, but might have been put into spoken or written language in half a dozen different ways, all of them equally appropriate.

But let us take some examples directly from the language of words. The Latin says: "*Est mihi liber, there is to me a book; Est mihi dominus, there is to me a master; Est mihi servus, there is to me a servant,*" etc. Here we have an example of extreme generalization. The material idea of "approach to" contained in the dative case is taken to indicate figuratively, not any definite relation, but a relation in the widest sense; for it would puzzle any man living to enumerate all the relations that can be included in the formula "*est mihi.*" The hearer or reader gathers for himself the particular character of the relation that is meant from the known nature of the subject. But this is not all. The speaker can express the same thought, lying consciously in his mind, by an entirely different artifice. He can say: "*Habeo librum, dominum, servum; I have a book, master, servant,*" etc., when the same extreme generalization is contained in the verb "*habeo, I have.*" Here the *mode of indication* is different, and therefore the words used; but the *matter* is in both cases identical. The same thought, then, can be embodied in more than one form of words. And, if this is true of simple sentences, how much more of connected discourse. Here the variations that can be introduced without changing the substance of the thought are very numerous. We can, for example, connect a clause with the preceding by the simple conjunction "*and,*" or give it a relative or participial form. Into how many forms clauses which express design can be put, all understand. The capacity of employing this variety in the expression of thought comes from the essential nature of language. It is not "the perfect counterpart and correlate" of thought in

such a sense that if a certain thought be given, it must necessarily be given in a certain form of words, and no other. Language is rather an *outline-system of signs* for indicating thought, in which, oftentimes, various expedients may be employed to accomplish the same end. In proof of this, we need only refer to the well-known fact that several different translators of equal ability, in rendering into one and the same language a passage equally well understood by all of them, will not necessarily use the same turns of expression any more than the same words. And if this is true of several different translators, how much more of several independent narrators, who all give, with equal clearness and fidelity, an account of the same transaction? If it be said that every variation in the words or turn of expression implies a like variation in the thought, the answer is, that in many cases the variation respects only the mode of indicating the thought, and not the thought itself. Our Saviour says, according to Luke's narrative: "There was a certain rich man, and he was clothed (*καὶ ἐνεδιδύσκετο*) in purple and fine linen, enjoying himself day by day splendidly" (*εὐφραϊνόμενος καθ' ἡμέραν λαμπρῶς*). Suppose, now, he had said: "There was a certain rich man, who was clothed (*ὃς ἐνεδιδύσκετο*) in purple and fine linen, and enjoyed himself (*καὶ εὐφραίνετο*) day by day splendidly," what would have been the difference? About the same as the difference between receiving a check for a thousand dollars in a white or a brown envelope. The questions respecting the solvency of the drawer and the genuineness of the signature are of primary importance; but the form and color of the envelope are of little account.

5. The *end* which the Holy Ghost proposes to accomplish by inspiration, namely, the revelation to men of an infallible rule of faith and practice, is the main thing, not the particular method or methods by which it shall be accomplished. To limit him who made the human mind, and has immediate access to it in its first springs of thought and feeling, is an act of irreverence, and a needless act, too; for, if the revela-

tion be made and recorded according to the mind of the Spirit, why insist upon the particular method as one of the essential things? The writer whose theory we are considering asks, if the words of scripture were in any case selected by men—"if men's agency was in any degree exerted in their selection, how are they the exclusive and infallible words of God?" The answer is at hand: They were the infallible words of God, because they contained an infallible revelation from God, in a form agreeable to his will. And as to their being the exclusive words of God, that was not necessary, since his plan was to exert his agency through human agency. But the writer proceeds to say: "It is not a conclusive or satisfactory answer to this question to say that they were infallibly guided. For, supposing them to have been so guided, if the act of selecting the words was their act, then the words selected were their words." Well, supposing that the words selected were their words, what is the difference? They were the words of the Holy Spirit, too; for they contained an infallible revelation from him, in a form altogether agreeable to his will. What else was needed? Did not men thus receive the same saving truth as if he had spoken from heaven, or had pronounced the words of the revelation, syllable by syllable, in the ear of the speaker or writer? The error here consists in magnifying the *mode* of the revelation above its *contents*. It is bringing into the sphere of inspiration the spirit of formalism; for the essence of formalism consists in the undue exaltation of the outward mode, by which men's thoughts and interest are diverted from the essential to the non-essential.

The bearing of the above principles on the question of verbal inspiration is obvious. Let us apply them, first, to the case of *new revelations* received by inspiration of the Spirit. Many of these were given immediately in human language. In the case of the gift of tongues, the words seem to have been directly suggested by the Spirit. But we must remember that this gift belonged essentially to the

class of miracles. It was of the nature of a sign, designed not so much for instruction and edification, as for the conviction of unbelievers.¹ It by no means follows that such direct verbal suggestion was the exclusive or common mode of inspiration. Revelations were often made in the form of images addressed to the internal sense, or of immediate inward illumination, or by a combination of these modes with language. Isaiah's vision of Jehovah enthroned in the temple will furnish a good illustration.² He heard the words of the seraphim and of God himself, and these he has faithfully recorded. But what he *saw* was a part of the revelation, as well as what he *heard*. The seraph that applied to his lips a live coal from the altar explained to him the meaning of the transaction; but the transaction itself, with all the rest of the vision, was described by him from what he saw, not from words which he heard. He chose his own words, under the illumination of the Holy Ghost, so that in spirit, form, and matter they were agreeable to his will; and why need we go any further? God had endowed his servant with the capacity of describing clearly and faithfully what he saw, as well as what he heard. There can be no reasonable objection to supposing that the Spirit now made use of this endowment, not in vain show, but in reality; so that the prophet's words were properly his own, and at the same time the words of the Spirit, as containing the record of a revelation made by him which was in all respects according to his mind. As a second illustration, we may take Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams.³ The dreams themselves contained a revelation from God; but their contents needed to be interpreted. So far as appears from the narrative, Joseph received from the Holy Spirit, the moment he heard the dreams, a divine illumination as to their meaning, which he proceeded to unfold in words which were as really his own as were Pharaoh's; only that Pharaoh spoke without, and he with, the illumination and guidance of the Spirit.

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 22. See further in Appendix, Note B.

² Isa. vi.

³ Gen. xli.

The words of Elisha to Gehazi: "Went not my heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee,"¹ imply that he received the knowledge of the transaction not by an inward suggestion of the Spirit in the form of language, but by an inward vision. The Spirit showed Elisha, not only what Gehazi had done, but how he ought to be treated; and under his illumination he addressed to his servant words which were properly his own, — chosen and arranged by himself, — and, at the same time, the words of the Spirit in the sense above explained.

Let us consider, secondly, the very common case of *emotions; purposes, etc.*, expressed by the sacred writers under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Here all are agreed that the inward exercises described belong, in the full and proper sense of the words, to the writers themselves, else they would want reality. Why, then, should they not be allowed to express them, each in his own way and manner? When the Psalmist, in the fulness of his soul, exclaims: "Oh, how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day," there is no valid reason for denying that in the selection of these words "his agency was in any degree exerted," as if God, who had endowed him with the gift of speech, could not trust him to use it, even under his plenary illumination and guidance — as if the chief concern of the Holy Ghost were not that the right thing should be said in the right way, but that men should understand that he gave the writer the words in their exact order and number.

It remains to consider, thirdly, those sacred writings which are occupied mainly with the narratives of events previously known to the authors through the ordinary channels of knowledge. The inspiration of these, as has been shown in previous Articles, is included in the inspiration of the writers. We do not think it profitable to raise any abstract questions concerning the different degrees and modes of divine influence that were needed. That Paul might make to the Galatians a statement of his visits to Jerusalem and the dis-

¹ 2 Kings v. 26.

cussions connected with them, it was obviously not necessary that he should receive the same kind and measure of help as when he unfolded to the Corinthians the doctrine of the resurrection. It is sufficient to say of him and the other inspired penmen, that whatever assistance each needed he received. If his judgment needed divine illumination for the selection of his materials, it was given. If he needed to be raised above narrowness and prejudice, or to have the meaning of the facts which he recorded unfolded to his understanding, and thus to the understanding of those for whom he wrote—in a word, whatever kind and measure of divine aid was needed, it was granted. Thus the historical books of scripture, not less than the others, being written under the illumination and guidance of the Holy Ghost, become a part of the infallible rule of faith and practice contained in the Bible; not less so than if God himself had spoken them from heaven, as he did the ten commandments.

Thus far we have considered the theory of verbal inspiration on the side of its alleged necessity. There are some *objections* to it, two of which will now be briefly noticed.

First, the objection from the diversity of style and manner in the writings of scripture has often been urged, and never fairly met. It is obvious to all that the peculiar genius of each author had full scope—that he thought and wrote like himself as perfectly as if he had not been under the influence of God's Spirit. We may compare the books of the Bible to a grove consisting of different kinds of trees, all green and beautiful, but each unlike the rest in form and texture. Here is an oak standing by the side of a pine. The former is oak throughout—oak in the form and texture of its leaves, in its bark, in its wood, in its juices, in the form of its limbs, in the spread of its roots; and, just so, its neighbor is pine throughout. To apply the figure: The Epistles of Paul are throughout Pauline—Pauline in the choice and collocation of the words, in the structure and connection of the sentences, in the shape and course of the argument. He writes

and reasons like himself, and like no other man; and in all these particulars he is exceedingly unlike the bosom disciple. Yet Paul and John alike write as they are moved by the Holy Ghost, and their writings are alike the word of God. The problem before us is to explain this blending together, in the case of each writer, of the divine with the human element, without detriment to either.

It is no real explanation to say, with Carson: "If it is possible for the Almighty to utter his own thoughts, reasonings, and words in the style of the writers whom he employs, and through the operation of their faculties, the objection is nugatory."¹ This is confounding *possibility* with *probability*. It is reasoning after the fashion of some writers in respect to the various organic relics of past geological ages. It was possible, they tell us, for the Almighty, when he created the earth, to sprinkle all these things into the different layers of its crust. Undoubtedly. So it is possible for him to make a tree half-way cut down (to human appearance), with the chips lying near it, and an axe lying by with a nick in its edge, and the marks of the nick impressed on the tree and on the chips. But to assume that he ever did so would be to overturn the foundations of all reasoning from the analogy of his works. Our inquiry is not what Almighty power could do, but what we have reasonable ground for believing that he has done. And here, at least in cases where we have not the clear authority of scripture, the general laws of his procedure, as revealed to us in nature and in revelation, must be our guide.

Nor is it, again, a satisfactory answer to say, with Lord, that not only must the thoughts "be inspired in words familiar to the writers, because they could receive, understand, and be conscious of the inspired thoughts only in words which were previously known and familiar to them," but also "in words which in style and idiom were natural and familiar to the writers."² He makes it alike necessary to the comprehension of the inspired thoughts—that is, the

¹ Refutation of Dr. Henderson, p. 68. ² Page 105 compared with pp. 101-103.

thoughts infused into the minds of the writers by inspiration — that they should be “in words familiar to the writers,” and that they should be in the “style and idiom” of each; or, as he elsewhere expresses it, “in words, idioms, and phrases suitable to his peculiar habit and style of thinking.”¹ But why this necessity? The Sermon on the Mount was not delivered in “the style and idiom” of each hearer present. Yet it was not for this reason unintelligible; and, if God could speak intelligibly, he could inspire thoughts intelligibly without copying each one’s style and idiom.

If we were defending this view of verbal inspiration, we should do it on the ground of *congruity*. We should maintain not the necessity, but the suitability, of God’s adapting the inspired thoughts to each one’s style and idiom. But neither would this be an adequate answer to the objection. For the theory in question takes from the individuality of the sacred writers in respect to style and manner all its substance, and leaves only an empty show. According to the canon of verbal inspiration already quoted: “If they [the words] were selected by men — if men’s agency was in any degree exerted in their selection, if the act of selecting the words was their act, then the words selected were their words,” — it follows that the style and idiom, not less than the individual words, were from the Holy Ghost. When he spake by Paul, he *imitated* Paul’s style and manner; and so when he spake by Peter, James, or John. If a friend dictates to me a discourse in my style, my writing it down at his dictation does not make it my style. The words and style are his, not mine. When we read the Epistle to the Romans, the impression is irresistible that the apostle’s individuality — his peculiar turn of mind and method of reasoning — has full scope; that he is, indeed, plenarily illuminated by the Divine Spirit, yet so that he continues to think and reason in his own way in reality, not in appearance only. We adopt, accordingly, what has been called the “dynamical” view of inspiration, or, to use the words of Lee, “that which

¹ Page 103.

implies such a divine influence as employs man's faculties according to their natural laws." "Man is not considered as being in any sense the cause or originator of the revelation of which God alone is the source, but human agency is regarded as the condition under which the revelation becomes known to others. . . . From this view, then, it results that that peculiar natural type according to which each sacred writer was moulded at his creation was assimilated, as it were, by the power of inspiration, and appropriated by the Spirit; while, at the same time, the spiritual influence is no more to be confounded with the tokens of individual character than it is to be identified with the essence of natural life. In short, the divine and human elements, mutually interpenetrating and combined, form one vital, organic whole — not mechanically, still less ideally, but, as it has been termed, dynamically, united."¹

Secondly, the objection from the various forms in which the same words of our Lord are recorded by different evangelists. The narrative of the storm on the Sea of Galilee furnishes a familiar illustration of this, and one which has been used with great effect by the opponents of the mechanical theory now under consideration. According to Matthew, the disciples awaken their Master with the words: "Lord, save us; we perish"; and he rebukes their unbelief with the words: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?"² According to Mark, the prayer is: "Master (*διδάσκαλε*), carest thou not that we perish?" and the reply is: "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have not faith?"³ According to Luke, they come to him with the cry: "Master, Master (*ἐπιστάτα, ἐπιστάτα*), we perish"; and he answers: "Where is your faith?"⁴ The hypothesis resorted to by some, of appeals to the Master by different disciples, receiving each of them different answers, is too unnatural and far-fetched to be received by a candid interpreter of God's word; and, moreover, if admitted here, it would not be

¹ The Inspiration of Scripture, p. 39.

² Matt. viii. 25, 26.

³ Mark iv. 38-40.

⁴ Luke viii. 24, 25.

available throughout the Gospels as a general principle of harmonizing. The advocates of verbal inspiration in the narrowest sense admit the *variety of record* here referred to, and vindicate it "from the practice of history, from the practice of witnesses in delivering evidence in courts of judicature, and from common practice in the hourly occurrences of social life."¹ But they ascribe it, of course, to the immediate dictation of the Divine Spirit. "The formulas," says Carson (with reference to another case), "certainly imply that God communicated in words; but they do not necessarily imply that the speaker's communication is verbally identical with the written account of it. The Holy Spirit, in recording the spoken communication, might use that variety of expression that truth permits to all human writers."² Very true. The Holy Spirit might do this; but on what ground? Obviously on the ground that the concern of the Divine Spirit is not about particular phrases and forms of words, but about the substance of the truth recorded. It is not, in his view, essential that a narrative should be expressed in just such words; consequently, it is not necessary that the words of the sacred penman should be inspired into his mind in such a sense that no liberty of choice, no agency of selection is left to him. If he be so illuminated from above as to comprehend fully the truth to be stated, he may then express it in the free exercise of his own faculties, and in his own style and manner. This view alone is in harmony with the universal law of the divine operations, and in it we find a reasonable explanation of the freedom and variety employed by the different evangelists in recording the words of our Lord. God had endowed each of them with peculiar gifts. The Holy Spirit did not supersede these, nor simply imitate them; but he used them in reality, not in empty show. Hence not only the variety of style and manner employed by the evangelists, but also the variety in their ways of looking at a given transaction and of making a record of it. This truth Augustine saw and clearly ex-

¹ Carson's Refutation of Dr. Henderson, p. 124.

² Ibid. p. 127.

pressed in his well-known remarks on the narrative of the storm on the sea of Galilee, giving, at the same time, the mechanical mode of harmonizing above referred to. "It is," says he, "one and the same thought on the part of those who awaken the Lord and desire to be saved. Nor is it necessary to inquire which of these expressions, rather than the other, was addressed to Christ. For, whether they uttered some one of these three, or other words which no one of the evangelists has recorded, but which, nevertheless, had the same purport so far as the truth of the thought is concerned, what difference does it make?"¹

Inspiration in its Relation to Versions.

We have seen that inspiration lies not in the particular order and arrangement of the words, but in the substance of the thoughts which they express. It is a vital power, pervading and animating every part of scripture, as the blood does the human body. It follows that, just so far as versions express the true sense of the original text, its inspiration passes over into them. Versions are inferior in authority to the original Hebrew and Greek, simply because we cannot be certain that the men by whom they were executed always apprehended fully and expressed adequately the meaning of the original text. But we must not allow errors, or the suspicion of errors, in particular cases, to set aside their divine authority. The poorest version current in any Christian community gives all the doctrines and duties of revealed religion in clear and unambiguous terms. In this or that particular instance, we may doubt whether the translator has given the true meaning; but we are sure that the version presents to the view of its readers the same God and Father of all, the same Lord Jesus, the same Holy Spirit, the same way of salvation through the blood of atonement, the same conditions of faith and repentance, the same doctrine which is according to godliness, the same heaven, and the same hell. Its "Thus saith the Lord" comes to

¹ De Consensu Evv. ii. 24. See further in Appendix, Note C.

the consciences of its readers with divine authority; and he who rejects it, rejects not the word of man, but the word of God. If he who uses the version cannot know that every particular passage is correctly translated, so neither can he who reads the original be confident that in every particular passage he apprehends its true meaning. But in both cases the way of salvation by grace shines forth in all its parts with the clearness of the unclouded sun at noon. In this respect the vision is written so plainly "that he may run that readeth it."

General Remark.

In considering the question of the mode of inspiration, we have designedly avoided giving prominence to the distinctions of "divine excitement," "invigoration," "superintendence," and "guidance," etc., not because these have not, partly, at least, a foundation in reality; but because, like the colors of the rainbow, they blend together so intimately that the attempt to separate them into so many different and distinct forms of inspiration becomes a very difficult undertaking. Nor is this analysis necessary. It is enough to say that whatever revelations of new truth were needed, the Holy Spirit gave in such forms and modes as seemed good to him; that whatever help was required to secure a record of truths already known that should be true and faithful according to his will, this also was granted; and that in all cases the Divine Spirit worked in the minds of the inspired writers in perfect harmony with the constitution which they had by nature; so that, under his supernatural influence, they freely used all their faculties, not in appearance, but in reality.

APPENDIX

NOTE A.

The question of the possibility of such communications as we are considering "becoming matters of distinct consciousness on the part of those to whom they were made," is discussed by Henderson.¹ Its importance, he justly remarks, "will at once appear, when it is considered that in all

¹ Henderson on Divine Inspiration, pp. 65-70. Edition of 1847.

ages there have been those who have themselves been persuaded, and who have endeavored to persuade others, that they were subjects of immediate inspiration, while nothing can be more satisfactorily made out than the fact of their self-deception and the utter nullity of their pretended supernatural intercourse with the Deity." He further adds: "The modus, however, of that consciousness which they [the true prophets] possessed of inspiration is a psychological question, which is fraught with no small difficulty; and it may be anticipated that all who have given the subject a reasonable degree of attention will concur in considering it to be one of which the absolute determination lies entirely beyond the power of those who have never had any personal experience of such consciousness." We think that in this remark Henderson has truth and reason on his side. It is important, however, to notice, as he does, "the fact of the original legitimation of the prophets and apostles by the intervention of miraculous agency visibly and uncontrollably displayed." As examples of such "original legitimation," we may specify the cases of Moses,¹ of Samuel,² of Isaiah,³ of Jeremiah,⁴ of Ezekiel,⁵ and, in an emphatic sense, of all the apostles, who were directly called by Christ himself, and by him endowed with miraculous gifts, "by means of which a perfect assurance must have rested upon the minds of these holy men that they were actually employed by the Deity as the instruments of communicating to mankind the knowledge of truths otherwise undiscoverable by them." To the recipients themselves it was not necessary that this outward miraculous certification should be repeated in the case of each particular communication. They recognized God's presence, as already remarked, by a supernatural intuition. For those whom they addressed an outward supernatural attestation of their divine commission was necessary at the beginning — necessary, certainly, in all cases where new revelations were added to those previously made; and such an attestation was given by God in the case of even our Lord, to which he often referred his hearers.⁶ But when once clearly made, it needed not constant repetition. Moses, for example, having been miraculously attested at the beginning of his mission, could speak to the people ever afterwards with divine authority. So, too, it was unreasonable in the Scribes and Pharisees to ask of our Lord a sign from heaven as the seal of his commission, for this seal had already been given. It is not unreasonable, however, that we should demand of one who professes to come with new revelations from God, or to speak with divine authority as an interpreter of God's word, that he do what the prophets and apostles and Christ himself did — give us in an unmistakable form the credentials of his alleged divine commission. Otherwise, we open a wide door to the two twin vices of unconscious self-delusion and conscious imposture.

¹ Ex. iii. seq.

² 1 Sam. iii.

³ Isa. vi.; though there is some doubt whether the vision recorded in this chapter took place at the beginning of Isaiah's prophetic office.

⁴ Jer. i.

⁵ Ezek. i. and viii. sq.

⁶ John v. 36; x. 25, 38; xv. 24.

NOTE B.

The gift of tongues involves questions of difficult solution. The inquiry arises at once, whether it conferred upon its recipients as a *permanent possession*, a supernatural knowledge of languages foreign to them, so that they could use them as occasion required, as they did their native tongues; or whether they spoke only under the immediate impulse of the Spirit. When Paul says: "I thank my God that I speak with tongues more than you all,"¹ the natural inference is that he was able to use these tongues at his discretion. But, on the other hand, the general impression made by his somewhat extended remarks on this gift² is that those who possessed it spake only as they were moved by the Spirit, whether with or without the comprehension of what they uttered. But, whatever be our judgment on these points, the essential thing to be noticed is the *end* proposed by God in bestowing this gift. It was not designed so much for the instruction of believers as for a sign (*εἰς σημεῖον*) to unbelievers. It is not to be assumed as the normal mode of inspiration in general.

NOTE C.

After giving, as we have seen, a rational and satisfactory explanation of the diversity which appears in the three narratives, so far as the words of the disciples are concerned, Augustine adds, apparently in concession to the narrow views of many of his contemporaries: "Quamquam et hoc fieri potuit, ut pluribus eum simul excitantibus, omnia hæc, aliud ab alio, dicerentur," "Although it might also have happened that several aroused their Master at the same time, and that all these expressions were used by different disciples." The explanation is in itself unnatural, and does not account for the diversity in the form of our Lord's answer as given by the three evangelists. It will hardly be maintained, we think, that the Saviour administered three separate rebukes to those who awoke him. The attempt to carry this narrow principle of harmonizing through the four Gospels is an undertaking as hopeless as it is unnecessary. On this point we shall have more to say in our next Article.

¹ 1 Cor. xiv. 18.² 1 Cor. xiv.