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I. LITERARY.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE "NEW INSPIRATION."

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There are some among us who first turned the pages of the Bible to see the color and pictured form of men and things whose story was already familiar from parental lips. From picture to print we passed and found the narrative there recorded in exact agreement with the stories told us in childhood. Again and again we sought the printed pages only to find all these stories linked together in one great history. The "Father in Heaven" of our daily prayer was found to be the speaker, in his own Divine Person, on many pages of the sacred book. Character by character the nature of His Personality was unfolded to us. The Creator of the opening chapter was declared to be the Moral Governor in the chapters immediately following; then, by degrees, he was set forth as the Father, the Redeemer and the Comforter of those people whom He had before selected. Yet in all these varying manifestations of His character, He was declared to be 'the same, yesterday, today and forever.'

Closely interwoven with the web of these statements concerning the character of God, we found also a history of human character. Nations and individuals were described with reference to the relationship existing between them and the Invisible God. The character of men was always measured by our infallible standard—the character of God. Hence,

men played their part in the narrative either as godly or as ungodly subjects of the Divine Governor and Redeemer. Further than this, we found a continuity in the history of the relationship between man and God. The story of Abel as a type of godliness was continued and expanded in the story of Noah and of Abraham and of the later prophets and apostles. In short, we soon found in the Bible a great system of teaching concerning God and man, and this system was imbedded in the narrative history of races and individuals extending through a period of sixteen hundred years. To this system we were taught to apply the term Revelation, connoting the fact that God opens the mysteries of the supernatural world to the knowledge of men through the teaching agency of material facts; that He communicates divine ideas unto finite minds through the medium of visions, voices, symbols, angels and the Son of God Himself. These were simply the means of the Divine Revelation. The object of Revelation was not far to seek. Through the agency of the moral and spiritual ideas revealed, God sought and still seeks to make men like unto Himself. While the aim of God in Revelation is the ultimate redemption of a part of mankind, it still remains that Revelation itself is that great system of supernatural truth which men could not reach unless God had broken through the bonds of the unseen and spoken it in unmistakable terms.

After this stage of knowledge, we passed onward to examine the relationship existing between the various parts of the written record of this system of Revelation. We found it divided into a series of separate books, written by different authors at different times and dealing with different conditions of men and things. Yet the Revelation was continuous and progressive, binding all these books into a consistent system. Each one of the separate books was found to have the marks of truth fastened upon it. We were led to look upon each book as a true history of real events. The author's name, when attached to the book, was accepted as a historical fact; where the writer was not mentioned distinctly by name, we often found him by following those methods used in the examination of all historical documents. *Testimony* from credible witnesses, whether from the book itself or from other sources, was sought—and the whole testimony decided the author's name as a purely historical question. The historical statements of the books themselves, their own internal character

and the personal testimony of our Lord were the chief witnesses called up to establish the name of the author of the Pentateuch—and we found it to be Moses. Further than this, we accepted as worthy of full credit, all the books along with their authors. This historical credibility we accepted, again, upon the testimony of those competent to judge. At face value we took the books constituting the Old Testament, upon the testimony of our Lord. He received them as worthy of credence and therefore do we receive them. The first century church, under the tutorship of the Apostles, set its sanction upon the books of the New Testament. Their judgment decides the matter and we receive them as a true and unimpeachable record of facts. Then these facts, apart from the record of them, became the basis of our spiritual life. The circle of supernatural events that cluster about the great central fact of supernatural Revelation, viz., the Death and Resurrection of our Lord, all these were accepted as real events and we began more and more to found our thought and action upon the system of spiritual truth revealed in them. Let it be remembered that this Christian faith, resting upon the Divine personality of Jesus Christ, was the outgrowth of certain truths deposited as seed in our hearts by the Spirit of God. Those truths were used as seedlings by the spirit apart from the mere written record of them. Perhaps the faith began before we could read the record—perhaps it began aside from our reading and was based upon our hearing of the word, and the later search in its pages only confirmed what we already believed. We simply accepted the book as a credible history of God's Revelation unto men—a Revelation made throughout by God's own Son.

After all this, some of us entered upon another stage of spiritual knowledge. We began to examine the question of the origin of the *written record* of Revelation. We had already accepted as historical facts the truths of Revelation, many of these being such facts long before their history was committed to writing. The manner and the means of that *writing* now came up for investigation. We knew that God revealed himself by means of a voice in the midst of the burning bush and in the midst of the thunder and lightning at Sinai. All that Moses did in these two cases was to hear and understand—and this he did by virtue of the *illuminating* power of the previous training received at the hands of God.

Perhaps it would not be pressing the meaning of the word too far to say that these communications to Moses were a continuous *miracle*. But when those same revelations were communicated to parchment and when that writing was afterward continued and expanded by other writings until the Bible was completed, was this the same general process? Was this writing done in such manner that Divine sanction rested upon the *record* in addition to the sanction accorded the facts revealed? These questions led us to a minute study of every portion of the Bible. Some of us spent several years in this special examination. We found certain claims advanced in the Bible concerning its own character. The terms, "Book of the Law," "Scripture" and "The Scripture" are applied to the Bible by some of its own writers. 1. In one place "Scripture" is spoken of as "God-breathed." In another passage, the prophets who wrote a portion of the Old Testament are called mouth-pieces of God 2—and again these same scripture-writers are said to have been "moved by the Holy-Ghost." 3 Then again, the written record is called the mouth-piece of God 4 by many of its writers. These claims can mean nothing less than this, that the written record of Revelation is The Word of God, inscribed by penmen under His direction to such extent that the writing was God's and not man's. The process of literary composition was Divine and not human. This conclusion is sustained by other testimony than the claims of the sacred penmen. The quality of the Bible as prophecy in addition to its quality as true history bespeaks the finger of God in its literary composition. Its self-consistency throughout, its freedom from error in every part, even in those sections where questions of chronology, natural science and contemporary history are dealt with, distinguishes the Bible from all other books. In these respects, all merely human historians make mistakes, and contradict themselves in their own writings. No contradiction of the facts of nature or of science—no self-contradiction between its parts has yet been pointed out in the Bible, with the sole exception of those errors in the text which have resulted from human mismanagement in the handling of the books since their composition. These qualities extend to the minutest part of the Biblical record and even permeate the very words used to communicate the supernatural truth. This overwhelming testimony brings

1—2 Tim., 3:16. 2—Luke, 1:70. 3—2 Peter, 1:21. 4—Joshua, 1:7-9.

the conviction that even in the matter of giving literary permanence to His Revelation, God has wrought a miracle. As a written record, the entire Bible is just as clearly the result of miracle as a part of its contents are the result of miraculous visions. If we call the sudden appearance of the risen Lord unto Saul at Damascus by the term miracle, so do we apply the same term *miracle* to Paul's continuous work of writing down on parchment all of God's revelations to him. In the first case, the Son of God was the Revealer of new truths to Saul himself; in the second case the Spirit of God was the continual guide in such manner as to make the writing a series of Divine messages unto all ages. Using the terms found in the Bible itself, we agree to call the Bible record "inspired," denoting the fact that it is the very word of God and not of man. Likewise we say that the writers were "inspired" authors—that is, under the complete guidance of God's Spirit. Then we use the general term "Inspiration" to express the fact that God's Spirit so superintended the process of writing, that God's thoughts and plans stood transcribed upon the pages in a literary form of absolute inerrancy. When the Scripture speaks, it is God that speaks. God's authority is clad in the garments of human language and dwells among men as the only infallible rule of faith and practice.

It must not be supposed that we hold up the letter of God's word as a worker of miracle. The Book is itself the result of miraculous agencies, but the mere printed page is not, in turn, competent to work further miracles. The paper leaves will not turn a rifle ball nor will the touch of them avert the contagion of disease. The language is altogether of the speech common to mankind and can be turned into many vernaculars. The text itself has been surrendered to human agencies for transmission and it is a fact that the copyist's pen has sometimes slipped and the wrong word has been substituted for the original term. The copyist is not inspired—but the Book is inspired because the Spirit of Truth dwelleth therein, even as our spirits dwell in these houses of clay. It was just this work of making God's law current in the speech of men that the Spirit superintended. When the canon was closed and the sacred writing was complete, the spirit of God's message was fixed fast forever in its linguistic tabernacle, even though the parchment of the original human penman might wax old and decay after the manner of all things material.

✓ This is the view we have reached in the course of our spiritual education. With some it has been a gradual increase in learning from the time of infancy. With others it has dated from the sudden enlightenment, like the lightning-flash that struck down Saul at Damascus. Yet, so far as it is possible in thought to outline the method of a common experience, the growth of our knowledge of supernatural things takes place in the order already given in this article. This is not at all an evolution—but it is the assimilation of Divine truth by the human soul. It will be noticed that the method of our spiritual education consists in the natural and legitimate use of those mental and spiritual faculties with which God has endowed us. The powers of human reason have a right to use scholarship and to draw inferences concerning all Biblical questions. The Bible appeals to human souls through the medium of human reason. God wrought a miracle in producing the inspired Book; but where it stood complete the record was then subject to the ordinary laws that govern all human records, just as the life of the risen Lazarus was again subject to the ordinary conditions of human existence. From this point of view the Bible is a bundle of Divine *testimony* and, as such, it acts in accordance with the laws concerning evidence. Human scholarship and human reason have a right to sit in the jury-box and pass their decision upon the testimony furnished by the Bible. But these jury-men must not sit as the advocates of spiritual or metaphysical theories that have intimate connection with the statements of the Bible. Their own individual reason must not be bound hand and foot by conjectural views. Human statutes demand that men governed by healthy reason and not by insanity shall sit in juries—that minds entirely open to conviction and not trammelled by erratic notions concerning modes of legal punishment and the functions of human law, shall pass judgment upon the testimony involved in every case. We concede to human reason the right of individual judgment concerning the Holy Scripture, but we demand from her an *unbiased* decision. Now, it seems very clear that this just and equitable demand has not been acceded to by certain jurymen who may here be introduced by a capital initial as Critics.

“The supernatural is impossible” said a teacher who has recently passed away. Renan had a school of disciples who accepted his utterances concerning the character of the Bible.

But it was Renan's *theory* and not his untrammelled reason that gave judgment. In the jury-box where his mental and spiritual faculties were supposed to sit, there stood this destructive hypothesis to slay the witnesses and give forth a pre-arranged verdict.

Ewald's brilliant scholarship led many to say with him that Revelation has resulted entirely from human agencies—that the human mind has wrought out the Christian system without the intervention of supernatural causes.* Face to face with his unveiled reason the question of the Inspiration of the Scripture never came, for he denied the historical credibility of the sacred narrative. There is no common ground upon which we can meet these disciples of Mephistopheles when the authority of the Bible is involved. They deny the fact of a Divine Revelation, the very foundation stone upon which rests Inspiration as the spire of the finished structure.

Not these scholars of the past, but others in our own day we desire chiefly to mention. Let us examine the spirit of some recent utterances on these vital themes and determine what manner of men these latest critics be. There seems to be a certain growth or evolution in the promulgation of recent views concerning the meaning and extent of Inspiration. This evolution belongs not only to the ideas involved, but also to the boldness with which they are uttered. There seem to be two distinct stages in this growth of ideas.

1. *Historical credibility is denied to certain parts of Holy Scripture.*

Dr. T. K. Cheyne is the coryphaeus of the chorus of Critics. In his recent lectures on "The Origin and Religious Contents of The Psalter" he has occasion to refer to that statement in the revelation made to Nebuchadnezzar: 'There fell a voice from heaven' (Dan. 4:31).† Instead of accepting this as the true narrative of a historical fact, Dr. Cheyne declares that "this 'oracular echo' is itself a revival of an earlier belief." A plain historical statement is robbed of its truth. No voice fell from Heaven, but the human author's imagination inserted the pleasing fancy!

We find another author casting a shadow over the credibility of the narrative in the first pages of the Old Testament. "The earlier chapters of Genesis are a series of real poems,

*Ewald's History of Israel, vol. I, p. 4.

†Bampton Lectures, 1889; Whittaker, p. 332, Note Y.

which have passed through the hands of several editors in the earlier collections of the Elohist and Jehovist, until at last they were compacted by the redactor of the Hexateuch into their present form."* Are these stories here regarded as nothing more than popular legends handed down by tradition? The writer seems to say exactly this—and in so doing, destroys the historical value of the early Genesis narrative. Accepting such a supposition as fact, the Divine Revelation imbedded in the early story of the world and the race of men becomes merely the wild imagination of a few primitive tribes. Moreover, the testimony of our Lord concerning the historical truthfulness of the Old Testament is impeached. All these revolutionary statements of the writer just quoted are based upon alleged linguistic evidence in the narratives themselves. Whether linguistic conjecture in somewhat fragmentary and chaotic shape shall be allowed to outweigh the great burden of historical unity that binds all these earlier Genesis stories together—let this be determined by a scholarly examination. But meanwhile let it be remembered that this separation of Genesis and of the rest of the Old Testament into mythical fragments is a virtual denial of the facts of Divine Revelation. We should like to inquire, too, if this spirit of denial is not directing the publication, in inks of many colors, of the supposed fragments that make up the Old Testament? Perhaps the "Rainbow Bible," soon to be issued by Prof. Haupt, of Baltimore, is to be the token of the new covenant rapidly forming amongst the Critics that the flood and all other historical events recorded in the Old Testament are only parts of Jewish folk-lore!

2. *The authority of Holy Scripture is limited.*

We need illustrate this position by only one or two references, since the views of the Critics are well-known. "The Scriptures of themselves win the confidence of men by the authority of the divine truth that is in them."‡ The writer here seems, in the early pages of his volume, not to know how much *merely human* truth and how much absolute human error he intends to inject into the Scripture narrative. A little later, the same volume states concerning the Scriptures that "Inspiration did not make them inerrant in matters of science—of chronology—of astronomy."† That is to say, that God

*The Bible, The Church and The Reason, Appendix, p. 282.

‡The Bible, The Church and The Reason—p. 5. † pp. 116, 116.

stamped as His own word a collection of literary compositions full of mistakes. The authority of God is necessarily limited if His power is so far restricted that He must needs compromise with human inaccuracy and inefficiency in the matter of perpetuating His Revelation.

The source of this destructive view of Inspiration is clear to see. When the historical credibility of Divine Revelation is impaired or denied, no legitimate theory of Inspiration is possible. The natural result has followed the first step of the Critics. They have declared certain parts of the Bible not to be that which they claim and that which our Lord's own *dictum* declares them to be. Consequently, the Scripture record is a seat of Divine authority only in certain limited portions. What those portions are, the Critic may determine for himself. He may silence the voice of Scripture, and no longer call it God's speech, but man's. Then he may seek elsewhere for authoritative utterances concerning the Divine and the human. With Martineau he may ascribe authority to reason or with Newman to the church.

Such conclusions as these must needs convince us that the question of Inspiration is here beside the mark. Revelation—its reality, the truth of its historical statements—these are primarily involved in all the conjectures and theories of these nineteenth century 'spirits who deny.'

