

PASTOR AND PEOPLE.

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(Concluded.)

2. The apostolic authorship of the greater part of the books of the New Testament proves their inspiration. All the writers of the New Testament, except Mark and Luke, were apostles. And the writings of these evangelists were unquestionably received into the canon while the Church was under the superintendence of the apostles and at a period when it was richly endowed with miraculous gifts, and, among others, with "the discerning of spirits" (*vide* 1 Cor. xii. 10, and 1 Cor. xiv. 37), and we cannot believe that, if the other books of the New Testament were inspired, these could have been accepted as canonical unless the Church had regarded them as clothed with the same authority. Indeed, the placing of them by common consent in the canon is itself evidence that they were viewed as of equal authority with the other sacred writings.

What is the authority due to the writings of the Apostles? As in the case of prophets, this depends on their gifts. What were the gifts of an apostle? We believe that the New Testament warrants us in answering, infallibility in teaching and ruling, and the power of conferring the Holy Ghost in his miraculous bestowments. These were the gifts essential to the office, without which a man could no more be an apostle than he could be a prophet without inspiration. The very name, apostles, by which Jesus designated the twelve, indicates that they bore a very special commission from Him. And when we associate this, as has been done by Christ Himself, with His own title as "the sent of God," or, as Paul expresses it, "the apostle and high priest of our profession," it indicates an analogy between the relation they sustain to him as his duly qualified and accredited representatives in the world, and that which he sustained to the Father. Hence he could say, "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," John xx. 21. In the first commission which He gave to His apostles He assured them of the miraculous aid of the Holy Spirit to qualify them for their work. "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you," Matt. x. 17, 20. And in John's Gospel, 16th chapter, where we have the fullest intimations of the endowments to be granted to the Apostles, we find that the Spirit is promised to them as a spirit of truth, to bring Christ's words to remembrance, to teach them all things, to lead them into all truth, and to show them things to come. And these remarkable gifts were promised not for a special reason, but to abide with them permanently. And as peculiar gifts were necessary for their work, they were strictly forbidden attempting to discharge the special functions of their office until these promises were fulfilled. They were commanded to tarry in Jerusalem until they were "endued with power from on high," Luke xxiv. 49. Perhaps, however, the nature of the gifts promised can be best seen in the actual history of the Apostles, and in the claims which they themselves put forth. To these claims we must now pass.

The claims which the Apostles put forth imply inspiration. Here it should be noted, at the outset, that the Apostles claim, as might be expected, equal authority for their spoken and written words, and for both they demand the right which infallible truth and divine authority alone possess to control, without reserve, the faith and life of Christians. "Therefore, brethren," Paul writes, "stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by Word or our epistle."—2 Thess. ii. 15. See also 1 Cor. xv. 1, and John xx. 31. Accepting the writers of the New Testament as credible witnesses of divine revelation, what idea do we gain of the guidance under which they wrote, and of the authority due to their words? Paul writing of the truths which he made known to men says, "But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."—1 Cor. ii. 10, 13. Would it not be well for Morell and those who affirm that Apostles made no pretensions to any inspiration, save that which sprang from their spiritual development and intimate acquaintance with Christ, to inform us what terms Paul could have employed to

set forth his plenary inspiration more clear and precise than he has used when he declares that he spoke what God has revealed to him by His Spirit, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth?" Again, in the same epistle, Paul writes, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."—1 Cor. xiv. 37. So confident is Paul of his inspiration that he makes the acceptance of it the virtual test by which a professed prophet is to be tried. The apostle John does the same: "He that knoweth God he loveth us; he that is not of God heareth not us."—1 John iv. 6. No one in reading these passages with unbiased mind, can fail to admit that these apostles regarded their words as clothed with infallible truth and divine authority. In writing to the Thessalonians, Paul employs language which throws no uncertain light upon his inspiration: "For this cause, also, thank we God, without ceasing, because when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe."—1 Thess. ii. 13; *vide* also Gal. i. 6-12; 1 Thess. iv. 1, 2, 8, 15. Peter represents himself and his fellow-apostles as preaching the gospel under the guidance of the same Spirit which animated the ancient prophets when they foretold the coming and the work of Christ. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things that are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven."—(1 Peter i. 10-13; *vide* also 2 Peter iii. 2, 15-16). The Book of Revelation which closes the New Testament canon was not only written by an apostle, possessed as such of the gift of infallibility as a teacher, but the contents of the book give clear indications that John regarded it as an inspired production. The apostle was "in the Spirit" when the record opens.—(Chap. i. 10). He had a special commission from the Lord to write the book. "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter."—(Chap. i. 19). It is repeatedly styled prophecy, and the respect and reverence due to an inspired production—to a work which is at once perfect and divine—are claimed for it. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear, the words of this prophecy and keep those things that are written therein."—(Chap. i. 3). "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book."—(Chap. xxii. 10). The closing sanctions with which the integrity of the book is guarded harmonize alone with the idea of its infallible truth and divine authority: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto these things God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."—(Chap. xxii. 18-19).

If the Apocalypse was written under such supernatural guidance that God is truly its author, responsible for its entire contents, if any alteration must necessarily mar its divine beauty and destroy its perfection, then we can see a fitness in these tremendous sanctions. But if the book, however excellent, is a mere human production, compassed about with the imperfections of all purely human work, could John, or any sane man with a remnant of a moral nature in him, believe that the Most High will make bare his arm to blot out of the book of life the man who shall take away some of its deformities, or that He will add to him the plagues written in this book should he venture to remove from it real defects? We have only touched very slightly on the evidence which the Scriptures supply of their own inspiration. We have not referred to what is, in some respects, the most valuable of all the evidences—to those marks of divinity everywhere stamped on the sacred volume, "whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God." Enough, however, has been adduced to show that the prevailing view of the authority, inspiration, and infallibility of the Bible has not been

superstitiously attached to it, but that on the contrary a fair examination of the statements and phenomena of Scriptures leads legitimately to the conviction, in which the Christian Church has rested from the beginning, that in these books we have a supernatural record of a supernatural revelation.

Before discussing either inspiration or the objections to it we require to determine our theological whereabouts, in order that we may attend to one thing at a time. Inspiration, as we have already shown, does not come legitimately before us, nor has it, indeed, any meaning for us, until we have reached the conviction not only that there is a personal God, but that he has made a supernatural revelation of himself to mankind of which we have a record in the Bible which is historically trustworthy. We should not, therefore, at this stage be required to examine any objection based on a denial of the possibility of the supernatural or involving a rejection of the credibility of the sacred writers. These points are supposed to be settled before we take up the precise degree of authority due to the Holy Scriptures. Time will not suffice to discuss in detail all the objections which come more legitimately under our consideration. It is, however, of importance to observe that a careful consideration of the doctrine of inspiration which we have endeavored to state and defend obviates completely a large portion of them. We have presented it as involving a twofold authorship throughout of the sacred books. The Scriptures are at once all of man and all of God. When God gave us a revelation, what he employed was not a human hand to write down his words or a scribe to transfer mechanically to paper what was given him. He employed a man—a man in all the fulness of his powers of memory, imagination, conscience, desires, and affections, with all his acquired literary polish, or native rudeness and vigour, as the case might be—to write in all the freedom of ordinary authorship. This human authorship was no mere fiction; it was as real as the divine. The books, therefore, are at once all human and all divine. It is evident that all the objections urged so commonly against the inspiration of Scripture, drawn from the individuality of the writers, fall to the ground as soon as this view is understood. In like manner, all objections springing from the expression, on the part of the sacred writers, of personal feelings or beliefs, or from appeals to their own knowledge or veracity, disappear the moment it is seen that the book is at once perfectly human and perfectly divine. And certainly no one who understood this view could gravely bring forward, as has been done by Guizot (*Vide* *Mémoires* on Christianity, p. 175) mere grammatical or literary defects as inconsistent with the plenary inspiration of the writers of the Bible. We are satisfied that these defects have been greatly multiplied and magnified by certain writers according to their preconceived notions, but we have no special interest in denying their existence. A man's literary culture, be it less or more, is just as much a part of himself as his memory, imagination, or reason. When God selected a channel through which His revelation might be given to the race He took a whole man that he might speak as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. Inspiration was not designed to secure men a model of literary excellence, but to assure them of an unerring exhibition of truth. And no defect which is not inconsistent with the infallible truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures can impinge on their inspiration. The view presented anticipates all the objections arising from the variety of expression employed by different historians in narrating the same facts, and from the diversity of conception under which the writers of Scripture exhibit the same truths. These are necessary manifestations of the human element. And so long as the variations are not such as would trench upon truth in an ordinary writer they are not inconsistent with inspiration. A discourse may be reported *verbatim*, or it may be condensed and embodied in other words. But so long as the truth, which is not to be identified with the words in which it is set forth, is not interfered with, neither historical nor inspired truth is marred by the change. If a writer professed to report the exact words of a speaker and failed to do so, it would be inconsistent with truth, but where no such profession is made, all we have a right to expect is the substance of what was said.

It is surprising to find a writer at once so learned and candid as Alford, decrying what he calls "verbal inspiration," under the idea that it implies "that every word and phrase was absolutely and separately true."