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INAUGURAL LECTURE OF THE VICE-RECTOR, THE VERY REV. DR. LEAHY.

The Very Rev. Dr. Leahy, Vice-Rector, and Professor of the Sacred Scriptures, delivered his inaugural lecture on the Scriptures, on Thursday night, November 30, at the University, before a crowded assemblage of Dignitaries, Clergy, members of the learned professions, gentry, students, &c. The importance and extent of the subject, and the known learning and ability of the Very Rev. lecturer, had the effect not merely of attracting a numerous attendance; but of exciting the greatest possible interest amongst all present. The lecture, no less remarkable for the amount of research and the talent it evinced than for its beauty and eloquence as a piece of composition, was listened to with the deepest attention, and commanded the highest admiration. The great and suggestive theme selected was dealt with in a masterly and comprehensive style, reflecting additional lustre upon the name of the Very Reverend gentleman as a profound theologian and an accomplished scholar. He was repeatedly interrupted with loud bursts of applause.

[We (*Tablet*) quote the leading passage of this exceedingly eloquent and learned discourse. After some introductory remarks with reference to the founding of the university, the Very Reverend gentleman turned to the immediate subject of his lecture. He said:]—

The subject of this evening's lecture is the Holy Scripture, the Written Word of God. The Word of God, according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, consists of two parts—Scripture, or the written Word, and divine tradition, or the unwritten Word—both having the same Divine origin, and co-equal in authority. Taken together they complete the body of revelation. To them nothing is to be added in the way of revelation till the Day of Judgment. Not even if an Angel came from Heaven to announce a new revelation should you believe him. Not an iota to be added, not an iota to be taken away. The work is finished: the vision is shut up, and the testimony is sealed, and the Word of the Lord is ended. This palmary doctrine of the Catholic Church is set forth in the clearest terms by the Council of Trent in its fourth session. At present we have to do only with the written Word of God denominated the Bible, the Scripture, the Holy Bible, the Holy Scripture. Justly has it been called the Bible—that is, the book, the Scripture—that is, the writing, by way of eminence; for whether you consider its contents or its origin, never did book or writing issue from the hand of man at all comparable to it. What are its contents? A Divine revelation. What its origin? Divine inspiration. Its contents are true: not only true but Divine; not only true and Divine, but also written under Divine inspiration. Therefore is it called by way of eminence the Bible, the Scripture; the Holy Bible, the Holy Scripture. The title of the sacred volume to our veneration rests upon the strong ground that it is the inspired Word of God. Were we to claim for it no higher degree of respect than what we might attach to a merely human composition, even so could it justly challenge a higher degree of respect than any other book could lay claim to. It is the oldest, or rather it contains the oldest book in the world—the Pentateuch, or Five Books of Moses. Written three thousand three hundred years ago, the Pentateuch of Moses claims an antiquity higher by nearly a thousand years than any other authentic history we possess; and, on the other hand, the time of Esdras and Nehemias, the authors of the most recent historical books of the Old Testament, touches the time of Herodotus, "the father of history," as he has been called, and of Thucydides. No book has been so much read and studied as the Bible—none so fiercely assailed. Its deadly foes, the Pagan sophist and the modern infidel, have, with a malignant industry, ransacked every department of knowledge for objections; and have, as it were, put nature to the torture, in order, if possible, to elicit some answer adverse to the claims of the Bible. No other book ever passed through such an ordeal, and it has come out of it unscathed "as silver tried by fire, and gold in the furnace." The acuteness of ancient and the vaunted discoveries of modern times notwithstanding, there has been found nothing either within the range of man's observation over the wide earth, or in its depths, which have been scrutinised by the geologist or throughout the vast field of view rendered visible by the telescope—nowhere has there been discovered any one thing to shake a single title of the Bible. The very researches undertaken in a spirit of hostility have resulted in its favor; for it is found that between it and the discoveries of science there exists not contradiction, but perfect harmony. Every new fact, come to light—every "cosmical" or organic law

discovered—the manipulation and nice analysis of nature by the philosopher, his calculations, his demonstrations—all harmonise in a wonderful manner with the views of nature presented in the pages of the Bible. Thus it happens that science, which fifty years ago and later still was in a manner given over to infidelity, is now, as it ever ought to be, the handmaid of religion; and, thank God, who knows how to turn evil to good, men are now to be found in every part of Europe in good number (and their number is increasing every day) distinguished for their scientific attainments, who are at the same time dutiful sons of the Church. Apart altogether from the conclusive arguments brought to establish the authenticity, integrity, and truth of the Bible, with which we have not to do at present, ought not this marvellous coincidence (for marvellous it is) between the Bible on the one hand and science on the other—ought not this coincidence go far to produce in the candid mind a conviction, I will not say of the truth only, but of the Divine original of the Bible, for, without a Divine original, how possibly could writers living in those primitive times have enjoyed a total exemption from error? How could they have touched upon almost every imaginable subject without dropping a sentence or a word that the utmost ingenuity of the cleverest men of modern times can prove to be at variance with any one truth or fact in the whole range of human knowledge? This subject of itself invites us to consider the course of action of the Catholic Church in reference to the Bible—what care she has taken of it; what respect she pays to it.—Ecclesiastical history is full of proofs of the extreme vigilance with which the Church has ever guarded the deposit of the Faith, of which the Holy Scripture is a part. In the very first age of Christianity, strange as it may appear, the purity—nay, the existence of the books of genuine Scripture, was endangered. As the value of genuine coin sets people to substitute a base counterfeit, so was it in the first ages with the sacred book. Bold heresiarchs and disciples of heresy, seeking to force their false doctrines into circulation, sent them abroad in writing under the name of the Apostles. And with many the delusion succeeded. As once the father of lies quoted Scripture to the Son of God, so now he sought to put a lie in the place of God's Word. Others, again, less bold in their attempts to debase the genuine Word of God, mutilated the writings of the Apostles, or added passages here and there, as suited their particular purpose; and those corrupted Scriptures were in circulation for a time. There was also a class of writings which with some passed for inspired—books in themselves unobjectionable, or really good, such as the Epistles of Barnabas and the Epistles of Clement. Add to this, that the authority of some of the books of genuine Scripture was then called in question by many pious Christians, by learned Bishops, and even by whole Churches. Thus doubts were for a time and by some entertained of the Epistles of James and Jude, the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Second of Peter, the Second and Third of John, and the Apocalypse. From these circumstances the obscurity that hung over the origin of the genuine Scriptures, the circulation of spurious and adulterated Scriptures, the claims to inspiration of books that were inspired, and of others that were not, from all these circumstances, I say, it is easy to say how difficult a problem it must have been in those early times to say what books were inspired and what not, and how utterly hopeless the attempt would be in our day, at least without the Church's guidance. But the Church settled the question at once and forever. From the beginning she guarded the sacred books as a treasure of inestimable value, and now that, from the causes assigned, doubts arose concerning some of them, she asked the Bishops collected or dispersed of the Apostolic and other Churches, and, above all, of the Bishop of Bishops sitting in the see of Rome, the mother and mistress of all Churches, "What is the faith of your Church with respect to these books?" and "What is the faith of your Church, and what of yours?" And so the rays of truth, converging from the different Churches, she collated into one body of evidence so luminous that, when it was proposed to the world in the form of her authoritative decision, all previous doubts disappeared, and the question was settled for ever.—Had it not been so, who could now say what books were inspired—what not? In the early ages there came a trial of another sort to test the Church's fidelity in guarding the Scriptures. In the attempts of the Pagans to root out Christianity, they waged war against the sacred books, requiring the Christians to deliver them into their hands to be burned, and putting them to the torture for refusing to do so.—What was the conduct of the Church? Did she permit her children to purchase life at the price of giving up the sacred books? No. With the maternal tenderness and the fortitude of the mother mentioned in the book of Machabees, who, joining a man's

heart to a woman's thought," exhorted her seven sons to die manfully for the law of their fathers—with the love and the courage of that noble mother the Church exhorted her children to die rather than give up the sacred books; and if any preferred life with the betrayal of God and His holy word to death with fidelity to Him and it, they she dealt with as all but apostates, for she deemed them guilty of treason to the King of Kings, which indeed their name (traitors) implied, though in strictness meaning not exactly that, but the surrender of the sacred books. In the middle ages there were other agencies at work that might have destroyed the then extant copies of the Scripture, if the Church were not there to guard them. There were the devastations of the barbarians who pulled down the Roman empire; there were, at a later period the ravages of the Scandinavian hordes of the North; and there were the fierce struggles of Christians among themselves in those turbulent times, when the spoil of the victor would oftentimes be the Bible, with its covers plated with gold and silver, studded with precious stones. Here were agencies sufficient to accomplish the destruction of the Bible; and were not the Church the vigilant guardian of it that she was, we might not now have a single copy of it in our hands, nor those who impugn the Church's authority wherewithal to do so.—Thanks to her, it is not so. Thanks to God, whose spirit taught her to know the true value of the Bible, and, knowing it, to guard it as the apple of her eye from the daring heretic, the pagan prosecutor, the ruthless spoiler, the hand even of the destroyer, Time; so that faithful to the high trust, she has brought it down, whole and entire, to these our days when the grand invention of printing enables us to say (at least humanly speaking) that for all time to come the destruction of the Bible is an impossibility. So much for the Church's care of the Scripture.—Her respect for it has been equal to her care. Did she not respect it, would she have taken such care of it? Would she have regarded it, would she still regard it, as being, with the Holy Eucharist, the most precious treasure in her possession? Look to her doctrine, view her whole course of action in regard to the Scripture, and doubt, if you can, her respect for it. She believes it to be the inspired Word of God—inspired too in a high sense of the word—in- spiration far above the views of those who pretend to hold Scripture in higher respect; for while she ascribes to herself but that degree of Divine influence which is sufficient to preserve her from error and teach her the truth, she ascribes to the Scripture that higher degree of Divine influence called inspiration. The Catholic Church will not allow any man or men—neither Priests or Bishops, or any number of them, to take any liberty whatsoever with a single title of the Scripture; and should any dare to do so, them she forthwith denounces as corrupters of the Word of God. The Catholic Church preaches the Scripture from her pulpits—teaches it from her chairs of learning in her schools, her colleges, her universities—appeals to it in controversies regarding faith and morals—places it on a table in the midst of her councils, as was done in the Council of Calcedon, and relies upon it as a title-deed of her own authority: her Biblical scholars have piled up commentary upon commentary of learning for its elucidation; her theologians when marshalling their arguments place those from Scripture in the front rank, as a captain will put some of his best soldiers foremost; her noblest preachers draw from this fountain the purest streams of Christian eloquence, and her ascetic writers enrich their pages with gems of celestial wisdom from this storehouse of precious things. For the benefit of all classes of Christians the Catholic Church translated the Scriptures, first into Latin, when Latin was in general use, and afterwards, when it was less so, into the vernacular tongues prevailing throughout Europe; and she reproduced and multiplied it in thousands of copies by the hands of her Monks, and afterwards she printed it and circulated it in all lands under such conditions as at once provide for the use, and against the abuse, of the Word of God. Let me add that the Catholic Church it was who, through the great Cardinal Ximenes, gave to the world the first Polyglot Bible ever printed, the Complutensian—and that out of the four great Polyglots, we are indebted to Catholics for three. And then, see what respect the Catholic Church evinces for the Scripture in the most solemn acts.—When she renders to God the homage of public worship in that grandest of all her grand rites—the Mass—it is chiefly in words selected from the Holy Scripture that she offers up the tremendous Mysteries; in the solemn ceremony of the ordination of her Ministers, having clothed the Sub-Deacon and the Deacon in the Holy vestments, she then places the Book of the Epistles and of the Gospels in their hands respectively, and she empowers and charges them to read therein the Church of God; as well for the living as the dead, in the name of the Father and of the Son,

and of the Holy Ghost; and when she consecrates the Priest to the office of Bishops, or charges the Pastor with the cure of souls, or grants the doctor his diploma, or installs the professor in his chair, she makes them, each and all, lay his hand upon the Book of the Gospels and say, "So help me God, and these holy Gospels of God." And, then, are not all her ordained Clergy and all her Religious bound every day of their lives to recite the praises of God in the Divine Office, which consists almost entirely of the Psalms of David? In fact, what are they—spread as they are over the whole world—what are they but one great choir as vast as the earth, from whose tens of thousands of voices, day by day, and hour by hour, from the rising of the day star to the sweet Vesper hour, solemn psalmody ever ascends as incense in the sight of the Lord? The state of things in the middle ages, demands a special notice if we would form a just estimate of the Church's action in reference to the Bible, or do even small justice to those pioneers of Biblical literature, the Monks, to whom the Christian world owes deep obligations. There were then no metal types. No giant engines threw off hundreds of printed sheets by the hour. In place of the printing-house was the Scriptorium, or apartment for transcribing books in the monastic cloister; the pen was the engine for doing the work of our machinery; and the toiling hand of the Monk tracing letter after letter on the page of vellum, with a straining eye and an aching head, had to ply its weary task for many a long year before one single copy of the Bible was produced. And what added to the labor of manual transcription was the great pains they took to embellish their copies of the Bible with the beautiful art of illuminating or ornamenting with vignettes, miniatures, and other painting. "Books," says Gerbert, "were then so beautifully painted and embellished with emblems and miniatures, that the whole seemed to be the produce not of human but of angelic hands." That the labor of the Monks in transcribing and illuminating was prodigious is amply attested by the lists of works they produced, which give the idea of an amount of labor almost incredible, and make the toils of the indefatigable Monks as wonderful in their way as the productive powers of our modern giant machines, astonishing as they unquestionably are. Lemoine, in his *Typographical Antiquities* quoted by Horne in his *Introduction to Bibliography*, says—"Fifty years were sometimes employed to produce a single volume, an evidence of which occurred at the sale of the late Sir William Burrell's books in 1796. Among these was a MS. Bible, beautifully written on vellum and illuminated, which had taken the writer half a century to execute. The writer, Guido de Iars, began it in his fortieth year, and did not finish it until he had accomplished his ninetieth, A.D. 1294, in the reign of Philip the Fair, as appeared by the writer's own autograph in the front of the book." Surely these men loved the Bible? Look to the number of manuscripts, the works of the Monks scattered at this day through the libraries of Europe. Why, it is amazing, if you take into account the ravages of time, war, and accident. Only run your eye over the pages of Martene's very interesting "Literary Journey," and you will see what Biblical treasures he found in the archives of the monasteries visited by him—at La Grasse, in Languedoc, a copy of the Gospels, said to have been given to the monastery by the Emperor Charlemagne—at the Priory of St. Lupicin, a fine copy of the Gospels, written in silver, in uncial letters, upon purple vellum, about 900 years old—at Jouarre two copies of the Gospels, covered with plates of gold, the one 700 the other 800 years old, at St. Riquier a copy of the Gospels, written in letters of gold, given by the Emperor Charlemagne to St. Angilbert—at Hautvillers, St. Michael, St. Vincent at Metz, St. Medard at Soissons, St. Vaasts at Douay, St. Mary at Pont-a-Mouson, Malmidi, La Val Dieu, Grimberg, Elsterbach, and at other places enumerated by him, manuscripts of the Bible, or parts of it, of great antiquity, richness, and beauty. We may observe, in passing, how uncommonly rich were the materials of their Bibles in those times, as if the Word of God could not—and it could not—be shrined in a tabernacle gorgeous enough for it. Beside the manuscripts noted by Martene for their richness, we may add a few others out of many. Pope Leo III. presented to a church a copy of the Gospels bound in pure gold, and studded with precious gems; to another one, so heavy with decorative work, that it weighed more than seventeen pounds. Hincmar, of Reims, gave to his cathedral a copy of the Gospel written in letters of gold and silver, bound in plates of gold, studded with jewels. Benedict III., in like manner, gave to the Church of St. Calistus a copy of the Gospels bound in plates of gold and silver, and near seventeen pounds weight. Nor did they merely possess the Bible; they were also diligent readers of it. Even on the shelf of the poor scholar, as in the case of St. Edmund, might a copy of the Bible be