

Word of God! To this question no precise answer can be given, at least by any individuals. Luther and his fellow-protestants in Germany set themselves up as the judges of what was or was not inspired, Erasmus had previously said that it was not necessary to suppose the Apostles miraculously endowed. Even after the descent of the Paraclete they had been suffered by Christ to make mistakes, but not so as to endanger the faith. Other Reformers, like Calvin, following St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, maintained what is called a plenary, if not a verbal, inspiration of Scripture, some going even so far as to hold that the sacred writers simply wrote from dictation of the Holy Ghost! In point of fact, true Christian men have held various opinions on the subject, taking some higher and some lower views—but all concurring that the essential articles of the Christian faith are not affected.

"Even if we were driven to take the lowest view of inspiration, we are not bound to give up our faith. External evidence must almost of necessity begin by taking low ground. It must treat nothing as certain until it is proved. It must not, therefore, even presume that witnesses are honest until it has found reason to think them so; and of course, it cannot treat them as inspired till it meets with something which compels an acknowledgment of their inspiration. This is taking the extremest case, one in which we altogether doubt the inspiration of the Apostles. *A fortiori*, we need not throw away all faith, if we should be led to think that some books of the Old Testament are only historical records, collected by Jewish antiquarians, and bound up with the writings of prophets, as venerable and valuable memorials of the peculiar people of God. All this might be, and yet God may have spoken by holy men of old and afterwards more fully by His Son."

Again:

"It seems pretty generally agreed among thoughtful men at present, that definite theories of inspiration are doubtful and dangerous. The existence of a human element and the existence of a Divine element are generally acknowledged; but the exact relation of the one to the other it may be difficult to define."

Again:

"Let us take a few facts, and see what they seem to teach us. We have a number of different books written in different styles, indicating the different character of the writers. At times, too, there appear slight diversities of statements in trifling matters of detail. Here we mark a human element. If God spoke, it is plain that He spoke through man; if God inspired, He inspired man. . . . The difference of style—perhaps the slight discrepancies—seem to satisfy us that some portions at least of the Bible were not simply dictated by God; there was not what is called mere mechanical or organic inspiration. We must not forget the benefit we derive from these differences between writers of the same narrative. The discrepancies convince us that the different Evangelists, for instance, were independent witnesses and that the whole story did not arise from some well-concerted plan to deceive the world; the homely and even barbarous style of some of the writers proves to us that they were really fishermen and not philosophers. . . . Whilst we see the benefit of all this and admire the wisdom which so ordered it, we learn from it that there must have been a human element in Scripture."

Again:

"Most Christians are ready to believe that the passages of the Old Testament to which our Lord and His Apostles appealed . . . were really predictions and not guesses. It matters little whether all the books of the Old Testament were written by those whose names they bear; whether, for instance, the last chapters of Isaiah were Isaiah's or some other's; whether the book of Daniel was written at the time of the captivity or not collected till some centuries later. . . . But with all the human elements in it, 'there is surely such a Divine element as to make the books emphatically the 'Oracles of God.' . . . We have abundant evidence that they (the Prophets) would not be permitted to err in things pertaining to God.' . . . 'This is what we really want. We want to be assured that we have an infallible depository of religious truth.' . . . 'We need not be perplexed or disquieted so we can be agreed that the divine element was ever such as to secure the infallible truth of Scripture in all things divine.'"

So much, sir, for one high authority. I shall be content with one more quotation from another:—

"We have no theory of inspiration. . . . We have no means of settling definitely whether a *posse peccare* in minor matters may or may not be compatible with a divine revelation communicated through human media. . . . If positively forced to state our opinion, we will express what we believe, to be the true doctrine of inspiration in this particular by an example and a simile. As in the case of the Incarnate Word, we fully recognise in the Lord's humanity all essentially human limitations and weaknesses, the hunger, the thirst, and the weariness on

the side of the body, and the gradual development on the side of the human mind . . . even so in the case of the written Word, viewed on its purely human side, and in its reference to matters previously admitted to have no bearing on Divine truth, we may admit therein the existence of such incompleteness, such limitations, and such imperfections as belong even to the highest forms of purely truthful human testimony, but consistently deny the existence of mistaken views, perversion, misrepresentation, or any form whatever of consciously committed error or inaccuracy."

These quotations, sir, and the writings from which they are taken, settled thirty years ago once for all my own convictions on the question of Inspiration which underlies all Biblical Criticism. Knowing how readily almost any form of words may be perverted to attribute a meaning not intended, I prefer to state my opinion in the well weighed language of these quotations. Brought up in a very conservative and Calvinistic school of thought, from which, thank God, I had become emancipated under the great leaders of the "Oxford Movement," I, in common with many other young men, was not a little disturbed by the discussions of 1857-60, culminating in "Essays and Reviews." On January 23, 1862, was published "Aids to Faith," edited by the late Archbishop Thomson, then Bishop of Gloucester, and Bristol. The above quotations, I may now say, are made from two essays in that volume—the work of theological giants—by the late Bishop of Winchester, Dr. Harold Browne, and the still living Dr. Ellicott, Dr. Thomson's successor in the See. Let me just add, that the effect of knowing that there is a human as well as a divine element in the Bible, has been to concentrate my faith not on the Book, but on the Person, Who may be reverently called the Heavenly Hero of the Book, Jesus, the Christ of God. The fallible writers of the Book may have made mistakes in many morally unessential matters of fact or history; fallible transcribers may have interpolated or mutilated the text; fallible men may go on for all time disputing about the genuineness and authenticity of this record or that occurrence; it is a most blessed reflection that the Gospel which God's prophets foretold, and which the Apostles were commissioned to preach, is not the Gospel of a Book, but the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ—true God and true Man, the Brother and Saviour of humanity. Oh, let us beware how we make a fetish of even this best of books, and let us be gratefully content to believe that it bears within its pages a divine testimony to Him, Who is for us Christians, our *All in All*.

T. BEDFORD-JONES, LL.D.,
Archdeacon.

Brockville, March 16, 1892.

Notes and Queries.

SIR.—1. In the admission of Dissenters to confirmation which would you recommend—(1) Re-baptising the candidates, or (2) Receiving them into the Church, or (3) Presenting them without going through any ceremony at all? The last gives least trouble, whereas compelling the others may cause a difficulty with some.

2. Ought not the giving of the elements in Holy Communion to the laity be begun at the south side? Is it because in former days the assistant priests sat at the south side, that this custom holds? When there are a number of clergy robed, ought not they to take their places at the south side during the celebration, or is there any rule in the matter? C.

Ans.—1. The first question to be asked is, as to whether the person has been baptised or not, and by whom. If the person is duly baptised, let him be presented for confirmation. If you examine the second baptismal office you will see that "Receiving into the Church" is often impracticable, and hypothetical baptism would be the only remedy. But confirmation is accepted as supplying all previous defects, short of want of baptism.

2. It is usual for the clergy to take the south side where the *sedilia* are, and the priest begins at the south side to administer. But the real cause is probably his own convenience, as he then proceeds from left to right. At a celebration the *sacramentum* should only have the celebrant and his assistant or assistants, as others come in the way, and detract from the dignity of the holy rite. There is no good reason why the clergy, though robed and vested, should cluster round the altar or in any part of the *sacramentum*, if they are to be in the way. The Church's interest and the beauty of her services are usually best secured by the application of a little common-sense, and this is seen at once to be better than all the rules in Christendom, but trouble and difficulty should not be calculated in our doing the Church's work.

—No man ever offended his own conscience but first or last it was revenged upon him for it.—South.

Sunday School Lesson.

4th Sunday in Lent.

March 27th, 1892.

"HE SUFFERED UNDER PONTIUS PILATE."

I. "HE SUFFERED."

The Creed speaks particularly of our Lord's sufferings under Pontius Pilate; but let us first look at some of His earlier griefs. We are members of His Body: and His suffering must affect us deeply. "Is it nothing to you all ye that pass by? behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow?" (Lam. i. 12). The great God who ruleth all laid aside His glory and obeyed His creatures (St. Luke ii. 51; Phil. ii. 6-7); submitted to shame and dishonour; was "despised and rejected of men," and throughout His whole earthly life, was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He was wounded that we might be healed, and sorrowed that we might rejoice (Isa. lii. 3-5). He owned every beast of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills (Ps. l. 10), and with a word could provide food for thousands (St. John vi. 11); yet suffered hunger Himself (St. Matt. iv. 2). He humbled Himself to beg for water, when thirsty (St. John iv. 7), although He turned water into wine for the wants of others. He looked in vain for sympathy from His closest friends (St. Mark xiv. 37); was betrayed by one (v. 45); denied by another (v. 71); deserted by all (v. 50). The long-looked-for Messiah came and was received—how? (v. 65). What a marvellous sight that One so mighty, Who could destroy the persecutors with a breath (Isa. xi. 4), should hold His great power in check at such a time, and appear to be weak and helpless, as a lamb brought to the slaughter.

II. "UNDER PONTIUS PILATE."

Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea and Samaria, had probably come from his headquarters at Caesarea, to keep order in Jerusalem during the Passover. He was not a favourite with the Jews, having offended them on one occasion by bringing the Roman standards into Jerusalem; and again, by taking money laid up in the Temple, with which to build an aqueduct for supplying the city with water. See also how he had treated the Galileans (St. Luke xiii. 1). But now he was anxious to please the Jews, being afraid of their accusing him to Tiberius. The Jewish council declared their King to be guilty of blasphemy, for which the punishment was death (Lev. xxiv. 16), but the Romans no longer allowed the Jews to execute criminals (St. John xviii. 31). They were forced, therefore, to appeal to Pilate to ratify their sentence. This they seemed to have expected him to do without examination, and to have been unprepared for the question: "What accusation bring ye against this man?" A charge of blasphemy would be treated with contempt (Acts xviii. 14-15); so the question is evaded (St. John xviii. 30). This vague statement is treated with ridicule (31); so they try another accusation which he dare not treat lightly (St. Luke xxiii. 2). Then Pilate, after a private examination, declares the prisoner faultless (v. 4). The charge of sedition being repeated, he finds an excuse for sending Him to Herod the tetrarch of Galilee (vv. 6-7). But not so easily can he escape responsibility (v. 11). Then the judge, who should have pronounced the acquittal himself, appeals to the people, declaring that there is no fault to be found in this man (v. 15) and yet proposing to chastise Him (v. 16). This proposal, which was plainly unjust after the declaration of innocence, was unheeded. The terrible cry, "crucify Him" was raised (v. 21). Pilate again, for the third time, asserts Christ's innocence and says he intends to let Him go (v. 22). The tumult then became so great that the procurator gave way, although at the same time making his fourth declaration of the prisoner's guiltlessness (St. Matt. xxvii. 24). Then was inflicted the terrible scourging which preceded crucifixion; nails and pieces of bones were stuck into the scourge, and sometimes the sufferer died under the infliction. See the prophecy of this (Ps. cxxix. 3; Isa. liii. 5). The whole band of soldiers gathered in the common hall, mocked their patient Victim, covered His bleeding wounds with royal purple, gave Him a crown and sceptre, and offered Him mock homage. How meekly He bore it all, hiding not His face "from shame and spitting." (St. Matt. xxvii. 27-31; Isa. l. 6). He had submitted to the same treatment in the house of Caiaphas (St. Matt. xxvi. 67).

Then Pilate made another weak appeal to the mercy of the Jews (*weak* because he, not they, had the power to decide), presenting their king, still clothed in mock splendour, as though to ask if He had not suffered enough. "Crucify Him" was still the cry, and Pilate gives the indignant answer, "Take ye Him, and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him," pronouncing Him faultless for the fifth time (St. John xix. 5, 6). Soon the Jews took ano-