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THE INSPIRATION
AND AUTHORITY OF
HOLY SCRIPTURE

HANDBOOKS OF CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

A STUDY IN THE LITERATURE OF THE
FIRST FIVE CENTURIES

BY

GEORGE DUNCAN BARRY, B.D.

“Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost.”
2 St Peter i. 21.

LONDON:
SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING
CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE
NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1919

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
RICHARD CLAY & SONS, LIMITED,
BRUNSWICK ST., STAMFORD ST., S.E. 1,
AND BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.

TO MY CHILDREN

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THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE

I. INTRODUCTION.

A CHRISTIAN finds in Holy Scripture the classical documents of his religion: its Books are the title-deeds of his faith. He believes that in them is contained a record of Divine Revelation made by men under the impulse of the Spirit of God. His belief is enshrined in the words of the Nicene Creed, "I believe in the Holy Ghost . . . Who spake by the prophets." To the Church, for the first century and a half of its existence, the Law and the Prophets were still the only Canonical Scriptures; later on, when the Gospels came to be received as the Christian Canon, they were "welcomed as a further instalment of the Holy Spirit's work," Who spake (to quote the words of the Cappadocian Creed) "in the Law and in the Prophets and in the Gospels";¹ the Church believed that the Spirit Who inspired the Prophets is identical with the Paraclete Who descended on the Apostles.² Thus both the Jewish and the Christian

¹ Hort, *Dissertations*, p. 146.

² Ambrose: Migne, *P. L.* xvi. 747.

Canons came to be accepted by the Church as part of the one Revelation of God: and the fact that for fifteen centuries no attempt was made to formulate a definition of the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible, testifies to the universal belief of the Church that the Scriptures were the handiwork of the Holy Ghost. For this freedom from definition we may indeed be thankful, since it is far more important to feel the inspiration of the Books than to construct an authoritative dogma in which that belief can be expressed. It was, to our modern judgement, a mechanical and erroneous view of inspiration that was accepted and taught by the Church of the first centuries, seeing that it ruled out all possibility of error in matters either of history or of doctrine. Men expressed their belief in the inspiration and authority of the Bible in language which startles us by its strange want of reserve. The Scriptures were regarded as writings of the Holy Spirit, no room at all being left for the play of the human agent in the Divine Hands. The writers were used by Him as a workman uses his tools; in a word, the Books, the *actual words*, rather than the writers, were inspired. We have come to look at the facts from a different angle of vision, and to recognise that as the *Personal Word* is Divine and Human, so, in the *Written Word*, whose authors were inspired by the Holy Spirit, there is a large human element: "*men*¹ spake from God."

It may be stated at once that the central word² in

¹ ἄνθρωποι.

² θεόπνευστος, 2 Tim. iii. 16.

which the belief in the paramount authority of Holy Scripture is expressed, occurs only once in the New Testament: and in that passage St Paul is simply giving a definition of the purpose which "Inspired Scripture" may rightly be expected to fulfil; he is not telling us which Books, in his judgement, are Inspired Scriptures and which are not. One other statement tells us the originating source which gave birth to the Books of the Bible: "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."¹ In these words lies the key to the deeper meaning of inspiration: the writers wrote because they were under the influence and teaching of the Holy Ghost, but it is distinctly implied that their human powers were not suspended: they delivered their message each in his own characteristic way. The inspired writer absorbs into himself what has been given to him from above, and then gives it out with his own lips and in his own language.² "The supernatural fertilises and does not annihilate the natural,"³ the individuality of the author is allowed full expression.

2. THE INSPIRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT.

The purpose of this essay is to examine the primitive doctrine of the authority and inspiration of Holy Scripture. It will aim at recording the views held by the chief schools of Biblical exegesis during the first

¹ 2 St Peter i. 21. Cp. St Luke ii. 25.

² Cp. Ezek. ii.

³ Gore.

five Christian centuries, and presenting them in historical sequence. The materials are so ample that it will not be possible to follow in detail the various lines of argument which lead to the unquestioned position of the Canonical Books: all that is here attempted is an examination of the writings of the more prominent theological teachers, as typical of the general mind of the Church. It has been already stated that the Scriptures of the O.T. were the first to acquire canonical rank, and to be accepted as of Divine authority. The writings of the N.T. were, afterwards, held in the same reverence, as they came gradually to be placed on an equality with the canon of the older covenant. In their case the type, the mould, was ready to hand: it needed only that the material should be run into it, and the newer Books take their place side by side with those which had already won an acknowledged position as Canonical Scriptures. Our first task, therefore, will be to examine the authority ascribed to the Scriptures of the O.T., and to investigate the nature of the inspiration which was held to constitute their unique title to universal reverence, both by the Jewish and by the Christian Church. The sources from which we can draw are peculiarly rich and fruitful; for no less than three separate streams of knowledge pour their waters into the full river of Biblical interpretation. We possess the witness of Philo, of Josephus, and of the Books of the N.T.: we must examine each of them in turn.

THE WITNESS OF (I) PHILO

Philo Iudaeus occupies an altogether unique position, whether he be judged by his own personal contribution to the interpretation of the O.T., or by the effect afterwards produced on the Church by his methods of Biblical exegesis. He was the best and fullest exponent of Hellenism, of which the distinguishing characteristic was the combination of Oriental civilisation with the civilisation of Greece. The Jew of the Diaspora could not possibly be untouched by the claims of Greek philosophy: it was unthinkable that he should live in the midst of the intellectual culture of Alexandria, the city in which Hellenism reached its most complete development, and yet remain satisfied with the Palestinian standpoint of his forefathers.

It was at Alexandria that the Jews first embarked on a study of Greek philosophy, and transplanted that philosophy to the soil of Judaism. Their object was to find a meeting-point between the faith of the synagogue and the thought of the Greek world, to recommend Judaism to the respectful consideration of the Greek, and if possible to his acceptance as a religious system. To this end Philo devoted himself and consecrated his great gifts. He had entered into the speculations of Greek philosophy, and been fascinated by the wider outlook which he had gained, so that while on one side he is quite a Jew, on the other he is quite a Greek.¹ Following the lines

¹ "The perfect Greek: the sincere Jew," Harnack.

marked out by teachers who had preceded him,¹ Philo was yet the first to combine into a system what before was fragmentary, and to teach that "the true servant of the Law is necessarily the true citizen of the world." Stung by the attacks on the Bible made by the Greeks, he was convinced that every lesson which he had learnt from Greek thought was implicitly contained in the Pentateuch, both Jew and Greek alike resting upon truth; but whereas Greek thought contained but partial truth, the teaching of the Books of Moses, and the knowledge of God revealed in them, constituted the true and highest wisdom. The position of the Pentateuch was for him unique: the holy laws of Moses are his supreme court of appeal, both because "all that they contain is true, and because all truth is contained in them." Everything which Greek philosophers had taught had been already said, and said better, by Moses. To make this position intelligible, he adopted a system of allegorical interpretation of Scripture, which was identical with that of the Palestinian scribes. He was convinced that the Books were best regarded as allegory, this being the soul of the text, as the literal explanation was its body; and in the allegorical commentary on Genesis he assumes that the characters of the Book represent states of the soul. Abel² is pure piety,

¹ *e.g.* Aristobulus. A Jewish philosopher: lived in middle of second century B.C. Author of a commentary on the Pentateuch, fragments of which have been preserved by Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius.

² *Qu. det. pot. ins.* i. 197. Ed. Mangey, 2 vols. 1742.

without intellectual culture; Cain¹ the egoist; Seth² the virtue which is imbued with wisdom. Sarah³ represents virtue coupled with wisdom. Joseph⁴ is the type of the statesman, and the coat⁵ of many colours indicates that his political policy is intricate, and difficult to unravel. The object of his allegorical interpretation⁶ is to discern, in each person and in his actions, the symbol of some phase either in the fall or restoration of the soul.⁷ Philo's reverence for the letter of the Holy Scripture was extraordinary, and inevitably coloured his theory of inspiration. Moses was exalted above all the sacred writers. He is "The Prophet above all others," "The Chief Prophet," "Inspired by Divine Love," "The most holy and beloved by God of all who had up to that time been born," "The hierophant of religious mysteries, and teacher of truths divine." "The Prophets and Psalmists are disciples or followers of Moses." His words are "oracles,"⁸ that is, they are divinely true. But while Moses was *par excellence* the prophet of God, Philo recognises even in the Mosaic Books a threefold distinction in the degrees of inspiration. (1) Oracles delivered in the person of God by His interpreter, the Divine prophet. (2) Oracles in the form of question and answer. (3) Oracles delivered by Moses in his character as

¹ *De sacrif. Abel*. i. 163.

² *De Post Caini*. i. 249.

³ *De Joseph*. ii. 41.

⁴ ἠρόνοια, *De Joseph*. ii. 46.

⁵ τρέποι τῆς ψυχῆς, *De post. Caini*. i. 259.

⁶ λόγια. Cp. Acts vii. 38; Rom. iii. 2; 1 St Pet. iv. 11; Heb. v. 12.

⁷ *De Cherub*. i. 139f.

⁸ *Qu. det. pot. ins.* i. 192.

a divinely prompted law-giver. In his theory of inspiration Philo draws a great distinction between interpretation and prophecy:¹ to the former he ascribes the more abundant dignity. But the distinction as a matter of fact breaks down, and we find the words used interchangeably. "The prophets are interpreters, God makes use of their organs to manifest His Will." *Propheteia* stands for Inspiration in Philo's system.² He laid down that the prophet's state, when he is under the influence of inspiration, is one of entire unconsciousness,³ "For it is impious for mortal to dwell together with immortal."⁴ To all the writers of the O.T. he ascribes the title of prophet, thereby recording his conviction that they all shared the gift of Divine inspiration. But he by no means stops with them; he includes as sharers in the prophetic gift of inspiration all the Greek philosophers, and indeed all good men, even himself.⁵ It seems clear that Philo borrowed his views of inspiration from the Greek "Mantic."⁶ His vocabulary leaves little doubt on this point; for he employs a great many words which were current in that system.⁷ But while he employs their phrases, he is careful to explain that for the ordinary class of soothsayers he has little respect: his point of contact with the oracles lies rather in the use of their terms, as employed by

¹ ἑρμηνεία δὲ καὶ προφητεία διαφέρουσιν.

² e. g. τις τῶν πάλαι προφητῶν εἶπεν ἐπιθειδίας.

³ *De Monarch.* i. 222.

⁴ *Quis rer. div. haeres*, i. 511.

⁵ *Lib. de Cher.* i. 143.

⁶ μαντική (art of Divination).

⁷ e. g. μανία, χρησμός, λόγιον, ἱεροφαντεῖν, θεοφόρητος, ἐνθουσιᾶν.

the philosophers, and specially by Plato. He was convinced that Moses was the true teacher of mankind, and that all the Greek philosophers, in whose writings Philo was thoroughly at home, had derived their wisdom from him. The method which he employed to force these views upon his contemporaries was allegorical interpretation. He found the method ready to his hand, and proceeded to reduce it to a system. By this means he was able "to read out of the primitive history of Genesis those profound philosophical theories which grew up in the soil of Greek philosophy. The most external occurrences of Scriptural history became in his hands mines of instruction concerning the supreme problems of human existence."¹ The Jews were really driven to adopt allegorism in self-defence in order to rescue their Sacred Books from the butt of Greek ridicule. Philo professed indeed to respect the literal sense of Holy Scripture, to which he refers as "the obvious rendering intended for ordinary readers";² yet he generally rationalised it, believing that, while the literal meaning was the "body" of the Scripture, its "soul" was revealed by the allegorical interpretation. Philo allegorised when he *could*, when the text admitted its possibility. He allegorised when he *must*, when the text would otherwise have seemed to him incongruous. From this starting-point he worked out three rules for his interpretation. (1) He allegorised when the literal explanation seemed to him

¹ Schürer, *Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, iii. 367.

² ἡ ἐν φανερῷ καὶ πρὸς τοὺς πολλοὺς ἀπόδοσις, contrasted with ἡ ἐν ἀποκρύφῳ καὶ πρὸς ὀλίγους ἀπόδοσις.

unworthy of God.¹ (2) When the text presented insurmountable difficulties. (3) When Scripture itself seemed to point to an allegory: *e.g.* to understand literally the statements about Paradise (Gen. ii. iii.) is folly.² Now it is just because the allegorical method which Philo found already in operation in the Rabbinical Schools of Palestine, and developed along his own lines, made so profound an impression on Christian thought, and exercised so deep an influence on Christian theology, that it has been necessary to devote so much space to a discussion of its main outlines. One very grave disqualification under which he laboured as an interpreter of the O.T. was his very scanty knowledge of the original language. All his interpretations are based on the LXX, which he regarded as inspired equally with the Hebrew text. He accepted the current theory of the miraculous origin of the Greek Translation, and indeed improved upon it.³ Naturally he held the LXX to be inspired; and not infrequently he founds his reasoning on the actual words or phrases of the Greek text; and yet he is content to quote the LXX from memory, and to paraphrase it, and emend it from the Hebrew. Moreover, it seems probable that at different times, and in writing his different works, he used different texts of the LXX.⁴ Now the central point of all the allegorical treatment is the sacred

¹ *Leg. alleg.* i. 44; *De Conf. Ling.* i. 425; *De Somn.* 634; *De Spec. Legg.* ii. 329; *De Agric.* i. 324; *De plant Noe*, i. 334.

² πολλή καὶ δυσθεράπευτος ἡ εὐθθεια.

³ *Vita Mosis*, ii. 40; Sanday, *Inspiration*, pp. 86-7.

⁴ F. C. Conybeare, *On the Philonian Text of the Septuagint*, J.Q.R. v. pp. 246-80, and viii. pp. 88-122.

character of the Text, which it necessarily takes for granted. "The use of allegory implies a sacred text."¹ An elaborate system by which meanings other than those which lay ready to hand were extracted from the Books of the Bible, is a convincing proof that the writings were acknowledged to be Divine. Thus the LXX acquired an extraordinary importance: it became the "first Apostle to the Gentiles." But the superstitious reverence which accepted the miraculous origin of the LXX, tended to emphasise and to deepen the mechanical view of verbal inspiration which assumed such disastrous proportions in the succeeding centuries.

(2) JOSEPHUS.

In Josephus we are dealing with a representative of the Palestinian stream of exegesis, and with an author who wrote more especially for Gentile readers. The high estimate which Josephus formed of the Sacred Books coincides closely with that of Philo: his reverence for them is based on his belief that their authors wrote under the influence of the Divine Spirit. Josephus is primarily a historian, Philo a philosopher and theologian; yet the underlying conception of the unique dignity of the Sacred Books is shared by both of them. The writers "hold converse with God." They are "possessed by God": "the Spirit of God takes hold of the prophet." The volume of the O.T. consists of "the Books of the

¹ Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 79.

Holy Writings." Both Josephus and Philo agree in teaching that the prophetic status of the writers constituted their claim to Divine inspiration. In speaking of Moses, Josephus describes him as a prophet in so exalted a sense that his words are to be regarded as the words of God Himself.¹ Of Isaiah he says that he was a prophet confessedly Divine, and unhesitatingly avers that all the prophecies of Isaiah and of the twelve Minor Prophets have been literally fulfilled; and thereby the Divine authority of the writers has been vindicated beyond all suspicion.² Daniel stands out among his fellow-prophets, because he not only foretold future events, but named the precise time at which they would happen. Other prophets foretold evil, Daniel prophesied good tidings, and was held by the people to be truly Divine. His writings are the complete vindication of the accuracy of his prophecy.³ The fullest statement of the views held by Josephus of the authority and inspiration of the Bible is to be found in a celebrated passage of his treatise *Contra Apionem*.⁴ The treatise was written in order to "vindicate the early origin and records of the Jewish nation against the objections drawn from the silence of the Greeks."⁵ The passage must be quoted at some length.

¹ προφήτης οἷος οὐκ ἄλλος, ὡς θ' ὅτι ἐν φθέγγαιτο δοκεῖν αὐτοῦ λέγοντος, ἀκροῦσθαι τοῦ Θεοῦ, *Αντίqq.* IV. 8. 49.

² *Αντίqq.* X. 2. 2. Cp. Deut. viii. 22.

³ τὸ τῆς προφητείας αὐτοῦ ἀκριβὲς καὶ ἀπαράλλακτον, *Αντίqq.* X. 11. 7.

⁴ I. §§ 6-8.

⁵ Westcott, *Bible in the Church*, p. 25.

“I shall try briefly to show that our forefathers bestowed the same care as the peoples already mentioned [the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Phoenicians] upon our national records. I do not pause to maintain that they even surpassed them in accuracy, for they committed this duty to the high priests and the prophets. I shall moreover show how this custom has been handed down with the utmost exactitude, and I venture to assert that the same accuracy will be maintained in days yet to come. Care was taken from the first to make choice of the best men, and of those who were devoted to the service of God: and further provision was made to keep the priestly race pure and untainted, for no man is qualified for the office of priesthood, whose mother is not of priestly extraction. Therefore, without regard to wealth or any honour whatsoever, he who aspires to the priesthood is bound to prove his descent in a right line, and confirm it by the testimony of many witnesses. We adopt this practice not only in Judaea, but wherever any members of the priestly stock are scattered. . . . Our accuracy in this matter is conclusively proved by the fact that the names of all our priests, in uninterrupted succession from father to son, are preserved for two thousand years. If any of them should prevaricate, he is debarred from ministry at the altar, and forbidden to exercise any sacred function. Naturally therefore—or rather, of necessity—we can assert the accuracy of the records, because their compilation did not depend on the simple will of any man, nor is there any discrepancy in the facts recorded. The composition of the records

is due to the prophets alone, who by the inspiration of God narrated the earliest and most ancient events, and compiled an exact history of their own time. For we have not a multitude of Books, that disagree with or contradict one another, but only twenty-two, which contain the record of all time, and have justly been accepted as Divine. Of these, five are Books of Moses, containing the Laws, and the tradition of the creation of man, up to the time of his [Moses'] death. This period falls little short of three thousand years. From the death of Moses to the reign of Artaxerxes who succeeded Xerxes, King of Persia, the prophets who came after Moses compiled the history of the times in which they lived, in thirteen Books. The remaining four Books contain hymns addressed to God, and practical directions for the conduct of men. From the time of Artaxerxes to our own day there has been a continuation of the record of events; but these later records have not attained the same level of authority as those of earlier date, because there has not been an exact succession of prophets since that time. Our conduct vouches for our implicit faith in our own writings: for; during all the ages that have already gone by, no one has ventured either to add to them, or to take anything from them, or to make in them any alteration. It is an instinctive belief of all Jews from their earliest childhood to regard the records as decrees of God, to abide by them, and (if need be) gladly to die in their defence."—Josephus, *Contra Apionem.*, i. §§ 6–8.

From this extract we are able to form a completely accurate estimate of the position taken by Josephus with regard to the Canon of the O.T. Eusebius quotes the passage, as giving the number of the Canonical Books of the Old Testament which are officially acknowledged by the Hebrews.¹ The following points may be emphasised: (1) *The accuracy of the Jewish nation in the preservation of their Sacred Books.* While other nations were careful to transmit a true record of their history, the Jews excelled them all, because they committed to the high priests and prophets the duty of compiling and preserving from father to son the annals of two thousand years. Thus there is no discrepancy in the facts recorded. (2) *The unique authority and sanctity of the Books in the eyes of the Jews, who regarded them as "Oracles of God."*² The prophets learnt their message "by reason of the inspiration which they received from God": they compiled accurately the history of their own time. The Law, as Josephus asserts elsewhere, contains "nothing whatever that is unreasonable, or unbecoming the majesty and goodness of God." The Jews were incapable of making any alteration in the Books of the Bible, whether by addition or by subtraction; and were ready to make the sacrifice of their own life in their defence. (3) *The list given of the Books by Josephus is most important, and corresponds exactly with the Hebrew Canon, although he employs*

¹ Eus. *Eccles. Hist.* III. ix.

² Θεοῦ ὀργματα.

an unusual division of its contents.¹ He enumerates five Books of the Law, thirteen of the Prophets—with whose writings he includes the Historical Books—and four Hagiographa [Psalms, Canticles, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes], which he describes as “containing Hymns to God and counsels of life for men.” The inferior time-limit of Divine History is fixed at 450 B.C., and all three divisions of the Canon are placed on the same level as divinely-inspired writings,² for Daniel, whose Book is classed by the Jews among the Kethubim, is considered by Josephus as “one of the greatest of the prophets.”

Speaking of the origin of the LXX Josephus states the view which was then current about the patronage given to the translation by Ptolemy Philadelphus, who “desired to understand our Laws, and to read our Books of sacred writings.”³ He commits himself definitely to the phrase “Books of sacred writings” as descriptive of the entire O.T.: and he explained to Ptolemy, in answer to his inquiry why such a wonderful version as the Greek translation had been passed over in silence by the historians of the day, that Divine judgement had fallen on all who ever dared to discuss these Divine records.⁴ Further, he felt himself precluded from divulging to the Gentiles the words of the Decalogue, on account of their extreme sanctity.⁵ Once more, Josephus and

¹ Westcott, *Bible in the Church*, pp. 28–9, and Sanday, *Inspiration*, p. 100.

² ἱερὰ γράμματα.

³ *C. Apion*. ii.

⁴ *Antiqq.* XII. ii.

⁵ οὗς λόγους οὐ θεμιτὸν ἔστιν ἡμῖν λέγειν φανερώς πρὸς λέξιν *Antiqq.* III. v.

Philo both regard the prophet as the Interpreter of God. When Moses was going to give the Ten Words to the people he explained that it was God Himself from Whom they came. "He graciously gives you the words aright as His interpreter." The two writers are in exact agreement about the manner of inspiration, and the effect on the person inspired of the Divine afflatus. To illustrate their teaching, we may refer to the narrative of Balaam, whom Josephus describes as prophesying "not as master of himself, but moved by the Divine Spirit. . . . For those who fancy that of themselves they can foretell the fortunes of men are all too weak to help saying what God suggests to them, or to resist His Will: for when He has entered into us, nothing that is in us is any longer our own."¹ It may be added that Josephus quotes (with the exception of four)² all the Books in his list as (1) divinely inspired or (2) authoritative sources of truth. And he definitely excludes 1 Maccabees from the list of Sacred Books by the chronological limit within which he confines those writings "which have been justly believed to be Divine."

(3) THE NEW TESTAMENT.

From the examination of the doctrine of the inspiration and authority of the O.T. as taught by two representative Jewish writers, who were almost contemporaries with our Lord's life on earth, we turn to the doctrine of the Christian Church as expressed by its first teachers in the Books of the N.T. There is no

¹ *Antiqq.* IV. vi.

² Job, Prov., Eccles., Cant.

doubt whatever that the O.T. was accepted as divinely inspired by all the N.T. writers, and by the Jewish teachers of the first Christian century. The existence of a fixed body of "Scriptures" known to and recognised by the authors of the N.T. is patent throughout their writings. It is not confined to any one group of Books, but is found in every part of the volume, so that the combined testimony of the sacred writers multiplies the independent evidence of each separate group. Everywhere we read of "The Scriptures," of "The Writings" which are assumed (*a*) to be divinely inspired, and (*b*) to form a definite source of authoritative doctrine. Further, we find a threefold division of these "Scriptures," under the names of the Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, to which our Lord and His Apostles make definite reference.¹

The collection of the Scriptures was fixed, and its contents were definitely recognised by those who wrote the Books of the N.T., and by those to whom the Books were written. Now the exact content of the collection is guaranteed by the fact that the study of the Hebrew text was jealously kept alive in Palestine by an influential body of teachers, by whom the original limits of the O.T. were carefully preserved.² The Canon as accepted by Josephus vouches for this. But the threefold division is found as early as 130 B.C. The "Law" and the "Prophets" are mentioned expressly in the Prologue to Ecclesiasticus, while the third group is there described in three

¹ St Luke xxiv. 44; cp. xvi. 16, 29, 31; xxiv. 27. Acts xxviii. 23.

² See Acts xv. 21.

different ways, as though the title of "Writings" [Kethubim, Hagiographa] had not yet been definitely decided.¹ The writer speaks of the teaching delivered by "the Law and the Prophets and the others who have followed them." Again, he makes reference to the "Law and the Prophets and the other Books of the Fathers": and, when mentioning the translation of the original into Greek, he again repeats the first two divisions of the Canon and adds to them the phrase "The rest of the Books." The impression left on the mind by these passages is that the range of the third group of O.T. writings was not yet definitely fixed, while that of the first two was not only fixed, but generally accepted. It has been pointed out that the same method of citation is adopted in the N.T. when quotation is made from any one of the three divisions of the O.T., whether it is our Lord Himself, or His Apostles, or the Jews, who make the quotation.² The authority of the Books was admitted, and the extent of the Canonical Scriptures jealously confined within the narrowest limits, as is plainly indicated by the statement of Josephus. "There is not the slightest evidence to show that the Hebrew Bible ever included any more Books than are now contained in it." It is, however, true that in places where the influence of Palestine was not paramount, there was a tendency to obliterate the very clear dividing line between the Books of

¹ Prolog. to Ecclus. See *Plummer on St Luke* xxiv. 44, p. 562 (4th ed. 1913).

² Westcott, *Bible in the Church*, p. 41.

Holy Scripture, and the ordinary religious literature of the day. And it is necessary to remember that at least one quotation from an "Apocryphal" Book is actually made by a N.T. writer,¹ while it is possible that reference is also made to non-Canonical Books in a few other passages of the N.T.² This does not, however, in the slightest degree lead to the belief that these Books were placed by the writers of the N.T. on the same level as the O.T. Scriptures of the Hebrew Church. Indeed, the very opposite is the truth, as illustrated by the free use made by Josephus of 1 Maccabees, as the basis of historical facts, although he expressly excludes the Book from the sacred canon. Such Books are never quoted, nor is reference made to any of them, *as Scripture*.

The attitude of our Lord to the O.T. is of course of primary importance. It is impossible to conceive language which could assign a higher authority to the Bible than that which He used.³ The witness to His Life and work was embedded in each of the divisions of the O.T. The teaching contained in the Books was the inspiration of His own incarnate life, as witnessed, *e. g.* by the Temptation and the Passion; the appeal which He made about His own credentials and ministry was confirmed—as He taught the Jews—by the Scriptures which they diligently searched.⁴ We must, however, recognise that while Jesus Christ

¹ St Jude 14.

² Hastings, *D. B.* i. p. 120 (art. "Apocrypha").

³ St Luke xxiv. 44; xxii. 37, where our Lord quotes Isa. liii., and applies the words to Himself. Cp. St Matt. xx. 28 (Isa. liii. 12).

⁴ St John v. 39 (see Sanday, *Inspiration*, pp. 407 and 433).

does appear to assign an absolutely unique and abiding value to the O.T.,¹ He does at the same time demand for Himself the right to revise its teaching and to substitute His own "I say unto you" for the previously accepted standard of authority, "It was said to those of old time." As examples of His attitude to fundamental questions, we may instance His teaching (*a*) on anger,² (*b*) on divorce,³ (*c*) on the Sabbath,⁴ (*d*) on ceremonial cleanness.⁵

All the writers of the N.T. are saturated with the Scriptures of the O.T., and refer to them as an authority which was beyond dispute. Nowhere in the N.T. is a book outside the O.T. called "Scripture."⁶ The phrase employed by St Paul as indicating the O.T. passages which pointed to the Messiah, "the Oracles of God,"⁷ plainly recognises the authority and Divine inspiration of those Scriptures, in his own judgement as well as in that of those to whom he was writing. The commonest form of citation is that which ascribes a Divine origin to the prophetic words of the O.T. writers, "That which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet," and so hails the prophet as the mouth-piece of God. Not uncommonly is reference made to Scripture by the use of a verb without defining its

¹ St John. x. 35.

² St Matt. v. 21 ff.

³ St Matt. v. 31; and xix. 9, and ||s in St Mark and St Luke.

⁴ Gospels, *passim*.

⁵ καθαρῶν πάντα βρώματα, St. Mark vii. 19.

⁶ αἱ γραφαὶ in the Gospels = the O.T. Canon.

The most frequent titles for the Books are γραφαί, and γράμματα, while the combinations of ἱερὰ γράμματα, γραφαὶ ἁγίαί, γραφαὶ προφητικαὶ are also found.

⁷ Rom. iii. 3.

subject,¹ which leaves it an open question whether the N.T. writer conceives the speaker to have been God Himself, or whether he is personifying the Scripture, a use which is actually found in St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians.² The same question from the Ten Words is ascribed by St Matthew to "God" and by St Mark to "Moses."³

Still stronger evidence of the source of the O.T. teaching which invested it with special and inviolable sanctity is the statement of St Peter (quoted in Acts i. 16), where he ascribes to the Holy Spirit Himself the prophecy in the O.T. concerning the traitor Judas.⁴ Indeed, "in the early Church it was a leading conception, particularly marked in the first and fourth Gospels, that the events of Christ's life were divinely ordered for the express purpose of fulfilling the O.T."⁵

It is necessary to bear in mind how very largely the N.T. writers were influenced by the LXX, and that their quotations are generally made from the Greek translation, and not from the original Hebrew. Specially is this true of St Paul, who not only uses the Greek translation, but even makes his argument turn on renderings which are not found in the original, and on language which in the Hebrew could not bear the sense which he assigns to it.⁶ St Paul had deeply assimilated the methods of allegorical interpretation

¹ e.g. λέγει, φησίν, εἶπεν.

² Gal. iii. 8. See Lightfoot's note *ad loc.*, also note on iii. 22.

³ St Matt. xv. 4; St Mark vii. 10.

⁴ Cp. also St Matt. xxii. 43; Acts xxviii. 25; Heb. iii. 7 ff. and x. 15. See Westcott, *Hebrews*, pp. 474 ff.

⁵ McNeile, *Comm. on St Matt.* i. 22 note.

⁶ Cp. Gal. iii. 16.

which had been brought into such prominence by Philo, and were destined to assume a predominant position in the Christian Church. Yet, unlike Philo, St Paul usually adopts the literal sense of the passage he is quoting; although in some of his letters—specially those in which he is dealing mainly with Jewish opponents¹—the Apostle explains the passages which he cites, in a sense as far as possible removed from that which they bear in their original setting. The use of this allegorical interpretation is most conspicuous in the Epistle to the Galatians,² where St Paul introduces a secondary meaning which could not have been contemplated by the writer. Dealing with the history of Abraham's two sons—"one by the bondmaid, the other by the free woman"—the Apostle uses the narrative to prove, by means of an allegory, that Christians are no longer slaves but free, not sons of the bondmaid but of the lawful wife, not children of Jerusalem that now is, but of Jerusalem that is above, which is free. It is reasonable to suppose that this method of interpretation by St Paul—confined as it is almost entirely to those letters which were addressed to Jews—was adopted by him as one with which his hearers were already familiar, and in the hope that they would be more likely to respond to this recognised interpretation of the Jewish schools. We must remember also that St Paul's mind was so saturated with the teaching of the O.T., which he and the other N.T. writers held

¹ *e. g.* Rom. x. 5 f.; 1 Cor. ix. 9; 2 Cor. iii. 7—end.

² Gal. iv. 21 f.

in unique reverence, that he very often strung together, as if in one long quotation, several passages which illustrate his point, but are not found in any single chapter of the O.T. Scriptures. Probably, for the most part, he quoted from memory, for the wording is often inexact, and can hardly be explained on any other principle. Now the allegorical method of interpretation, and the use of words in a sense which the original context will not bear, both point to the fact that the Books quoted had attained a position of unassailable authority. They had passed beyond the region of dispute; their place in the Canon was secure. We are, then, on certain ground when we say that for the writers of the N.T. the authority of the O.T. was unquestioned and supreme, though that is not, of course, to say that the Canon of the O.T. was actually complete when the N.T. Books were written. There was certainly no formal and authoritative acceptance of the Hagiographa till the second century A.D. was already some twenty years old. But it is true to say that the normative value of the O.T. was thoroughly established by the close of the first century. The position we are seeking to establish may be summed up by saying that "for the writers of the N.T. the Scripture was the one thesaurus of truth. They had almost no other books. The words of the O.T. had become a part of their mental furniture, and they used them to a certain extent with the freedom with which they used their own ideas."¹ For example, the Apocalypse of St John is so steeped in O.T. language that it is

¹ Toy: quoted by Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 304.

largely a cento of sentences and phrases from the various Books. The seer "writes his Messianic visions in Old Testament Words."¹ Now, it is clear that though there is a large latitude in quoting Holy Scripture, and the quotations are often made from memory, the writers do attach extraordinary importance to the actual words, and regard the writings as verbally inspired. Yet it is no mechanical inspiration that the authors postulate: they grasp in a way that we must recognise to be itself inspired the spiritual lessons which lie at the very root of the O.T. preparation for Christ. "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."² When we come to ask the question "What does the N.T. tell us *explicitly* about the inspiration of the older Scriptures?" we must admit that there is a strange absence of statement, and an entire silence as regards *definition* of the inspiration which was universally accepted. There are three or four passages which do bear upon the problem, but they do not carry us very far. The fact is that men were only beginning to study the Books from the view point of their inspiration; they accepted them as authoritative and Divine, but they had not made up their minds to what exactly this committed them. The process went on, and men thought more and more deeply about the problem which, when the N.T. Books took their place by the side of the Old, and on a level with them, as authoritative Scripture, had to be faced for the whole Sacred Canon. Provi-

¹ McNeile, *Old Testament in the Christian Church*, p. 14.

² 2 St Peter i. 21.

dentially, as we believe, no authoritative definition of inspiration was ever made, to which the Church stands committed: nowhere are we required to believe in the inerrancy of the inspired writings. The inspiration of the Bible, and the Presence of our Lord in the Holy Communion, are alike the unshaken faith of the Church; but, in either case the Church has been divinely guided, as one must certainly believe, not to define the mode of the Divine working. The invasion of the Divine upon the human in the writers of the Sacred Canon is assured, but nowhere are we committed to the belief that it was always at the same level, or that those who wrote the Books were all equally fitted to receive the Divine teaching. The actual word "inspiration" is not found till the time of Tertullian the Montanist, who was most certainly committed to that view of it connected with the unconscious state of trance or ecstasy to which Montanists attached such extreme importance. It is somewhat an irony that this should be the history of the word as applied to the sacred writings; but at least it does connect the Divine afflatus with the author rather than with his book. The nearest approach in the N.T. to the term inspiration is found in St Paul's second letter to Timothy;¹ but—as has already been shown—this does not solve the question, or even attempt to grapple with its difficulties. In an earlier epistle,² the Apostle speaks of the Books of the Old Testament as written for our instruction—written in the technical sense of the word as "Scripture"—and

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

² Rom. xv. 4.

he lays down clearly his belief in the permanent value of the O.T. Its great moral and spiritual truths never lose their power, and its witness to Christ is central and continuous.¹ Probably we cannot better express the fact which gives to the Bible its unique authority, than in some such words as these. By inspiration God comes into human life, and in an altogether exceptional way stamps His mark on the men whom He chooses as His "prophets." The Spirit of God flows into the spirit of man, and illuminates it; but, though the bush burns with fire, it is not consumed.

3. THE INSPIRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT AND OF THE NEW.

THE WITNESS OF (1) THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS.

The period covered by these writers lies too close to the dates at which the Books of the N.T. were themselves written to make it possible for us to discover in them any reasoned or clearly expressed philosophy of inspiration. What we actually find is a unique reverence paid to the Scriptures of the O. and N. Testaments, which were commonly accounted canonical; and included with them we find a distinct reverence for "Scripture"² which never obtained admission to the canon. The use of the various passages quoted by the Apostolic Fathers is practical, not doctrinal. Scriptural language is introduced for purposes of exhortation and not of controversy; but,

¹ See Sanday and Headlam, *Romans*, p. 396.

² γραφή, Clem. 1 Cor. xxiii. xlv. Cp. "Clem." 2 Cor. xi.: ὁ προφητικὸς λόγος.

while the fact of the inspiration which gives to these Scriptures a value altogether unique is everywhere implicit, it is impossible to construct from the writings of these Fathers any formulated theory of inspiration, for the simple reason that no such theory had yet taken shape in their mind.

CLEMENT OF ROME.

Clement adopts various formulae of citation from the O.T. in his First Epistle to the Corinthians.¹ One of the most striking facts about the Epistle, considered for this purpose, is the great exactitude with which Clement introduces quotations from the O.T., and the extremely loose manner in which he handles the words of the N.T. Books. The inevitable conclusion is that, in dealing with the N.T., he quotes from memory, and does not verify the language. He introduces a quotation from Ezekiel with the words, "The ministers of the grace of God spake concerning repentance, through the Holy Spirit."² So also referring to words in Jeremiah Clement says, "Let us do that which is written, for it is the Holy Spirit Who is speaking."³ Once again, speaking of our Lord we find "The Holy Spirit spake concerning Him" in Isaiah liii.⁴ He uses the phrase "The Oracles of God" of the O.T. Scriptures; and states that the spirit of humility and awe which either now or in past generations leads to acceptance of the in-

¹ *ε. γ. γέγραπται, τὸ γεγραμμένον, ἡ γραφή, τὸ γραφεῖον.*

² Ezek. xxxiii. 11, quoted Clem. I Cor. viii.

³ Jer. ix. 23, quoted Clem. I Cor. xiii.

⁴ Clem. I Cor. xvi.

spired word, has a beneficent influence on character.¹ We find, moreover, such expressions as (1) "You have carefully studied the Sacred Scriptures, which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit. You know that in them there hath not been written anything that is unrighteous or counterfeit."² (2) "You know, you know well the Sacred Writings, and have carefully studied the Oracles of God."³ (3) "Thus saith the Holy Word."⁴ Stronger still is the language in which he describes the authority of the Apostles. They are from Christ; they were confirmed by the Resurrection of our Lord, and put in trust with the Word of God; they went forth to declare the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, "with full assurance of the Holy Spirit."⁵ Clement thinks habitually of the Holy Spirit as the Inspirer of Scripture,⁶ specially of the O.T. "Give diligent heed to the Scriptures, the true sayings of the Holy Ghost"; and he attributes the fullest Divine Inspiration to St Paul, of whom he says "Under the inspiration of the Spirit he gave you charge about himself."⁷ To these passages should be added a remarkable reference to Psalm xxxiv. 11, where Clement says, "Christ Himself, through the Holy Spirit, thus addresses us. Come, ye children, listen to Me."⁸ It is of interest to note that the Second Epistle of Clement (wrongly so called) uses the phrase "writing" of the N.T. writings. "Another 'writing' saith, I come not to call

¹ Clem. I Cor. xix.

² Clem. I Cor. xlv.

³ Clem. I Cor. liii.

⁴ Clem. I Cor. lvi.

⁵ Clem. I Cor. xlii.

⁶ See Clem. I Cor. xlv. quoted *supra*.

⁷ Clem. I Cor. xlvii.

⁸ Clem. I Cor. xxii.

righteous men, but sinners."¹ And there is a further expression that calls for notice, in which the writer speaks of the O. and N. Testaments as "The Books and the Apostles."² The title of "The Books" is not yet actually accorded to the writings of the N.T.

IGNATIUS.

There is no direct quotation in this author from the N.T., though he does occasionally cite the O.T. Apparently he always quotes from memory, and is "inexact even as compared with his contemporaries."³ To the Magnesians Ignatius says, "The most holy prophets lived according to (the teaching of) Christ Jesus; wherefore also they suffered persecution, being inspired by His gracious Spirit."⁴ And again, "The prophets were, through the Spirit, disciples of Christ, for Whom they waited as their Teacher."⁵ The prophets were heralds of the Gospel,⁶ and were saved through unity with Jesus Christ.⁷ He tells the Philadelphians that he fled to the "Gospel" as to the "flesh of Jesus, and to the Apostles as to the presbytery of the Church." There is a remarkable reference in the same letter to the O. and N. Testaments which are contrasted by the phrases "The Original Documents" and "The Gospel";⁸ and to the former, following in this the usage of the N.T., is applied the term "It is written."⁹ To Ignatius the

¹ "Clem." 2 Cor. ii.

² "Clem." 2 Cor. xiv. Cp. *Ignat. Ad Philad.* v.

³ *Ad Smyrn.* iii. 2; ? = St Luke xxiv. 39. See Euseb. *H. E.* iii. 36; Jer. *Vir. Illust.* 2.

⁴ *Ad Magn.* viii.

⁵ *Ibid.* ix.

⁶ *Ad Philad.* v.

⁷ *Ibid.* v.

⁸ τὰ ἀρχαία, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.

⁹ γέγραπται.

Gospel is the "completion of immortality." The veneration in which he holds the Apostles St Peter and St Paul, and the extraordinary difference existing between himself and them, are defined in the letter to the Romans. "They are Apostles: I am a man under condemnation."¹ And yet Ignatius does not hesitate to ascribe to his own teaching some degree of inspiration. "I cried while I was yet among them," he writes to the Philadelphians, "I spake with loud voice, the very voice of God."² He received his message by the direct communication of the Holy Spirit.³

PAPIAS.

From the few fragmentary statements about Papias, who was contemporary with Polycarp, we glean that he wrote an exposition of "Oracles of the Lord,"⁴ and that he bore testimony to the Apocalypse of St John.⁵ A further fragment records the fact that Philo the philosopher, and contemporary of the Apostles, and Papias the companion of John the Evangelist, interpreted the story of Paradise in a spiritual sense, referring it "to the Church of Christ."

¹ Ign. *ad Rom.* iv. Cp. *Ad Ephes.* xii.

² *Ad Philad.* vii.

³ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκήρυσσεν.

⁴ *Fragm.* ii. ; Euseb. *H. E.* iii. 39. Oracles of the Lord, *i. e.* (probably) the Apostolic written collection of "Oracles," as Papias conceived the Gospel according to St Matthew to be, the one directly Apostolic document of this character. Papias "preferred to cite Matthew where he could, as being to him a work of direct Apostolic authorship, while Luke's Gospel was not even, like Mark's, only one remove from an Apostle's witness." See art. "Papias," *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, i. 309 ff.

⁵ Andreas in *praef.* in *Apoc. Fragm.* vii.

POLYCARP.

Polycarp applies the phrase "Sacred Literature" to both Testaments;¹ in them he trusts his hearers are thoroughly at home. The exalted reverence in which he holds "The Oracles of the Lord" is revealed by his statement that he who perverts them is "first-born of Satan."² Like Ignatius he describes the gulf that separates himself and others from "St Paul the blessed and glorious to whose wisdom none can attain."³

THE EPISTLE TO DIOGNETUS.

The anonymous letter *Ad Diognetum* is inaccurately placed among the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, the mistake being due to an erroneous rendering of the words "I became a pupil of the Apostles"⁴ referring to the writer of the letter. There are few more perfect gems extant than the description of Christian life, and the relation of Christians to the world, which are found in this document; but for our present purpose the soil is unfruitful, and there is little that bears on the subject of Inspiration. The Scriptures are referred to as "The Books that were written"; and a passage from St Paul is introduced with the words "The Apostle saith."⁵ Both these phrases occur in an appendix to the original letter (which is broken off in the middle of c. x.) as does also the illuminating description of the spread of the Christian faith through the written records of the Bible, and

¹ Ep. xii. [Ps. iv. 5. Eph. iv. 26.]

³ c. iii.

⁴ *Ad Diogn.* xi.

² c. vii.

⁵ *Ibid.* xii.

the living witness of the Church. "The terror of the Law is chanted, and the grace of the prophets made known; the Faith of the Gospels is established, and the grace of the Church triumphs."¹

BARNABAS.

The Letter of Barnabas was probably written by a Gentile Christian of the school of Alexandria in the time of Hadrian, with the object of guarding his fellow-Christians from a Judaic type of Christianity. The author is at home in all the sacred writings, from which he makes copious quotations; at the same time, his language is in many ways most inaccurate, and in not a few instances it is quite impossible to identify the passage from which he appears to be making an extract.² He possesses great reverence for the Books of the Bible, and introduces quotations from them with formulae such as these: "The Lord saith in the prophet." "The Spirit of the Lord prophesieth." "Moses spake in the Spirit." "God hath revealed to us by all the prophets." "The Scripture saith." "The prophet saith" (speaking of a Psalmist). "The Spirit speaks to the heart of Moses." In the ten words God spake on Mount Sinai to "Moses face to face." "He Himself prophesieth in us" (in the spiritual temple of our life).³

"Barnabas" quotes from all three divisions of the

¹ Ad Diogn. xi.

² Barn. ii. 10 (? = Ps. 51); v. 4 (? = Prov. i. 17).

³ ix. 1; ix. 2; xvi. 2, 3; x. 2; xvi. 5; vi. 4; xii. 2; xv. 1; xvi. 9.

O.T. and twice also from the New.¹ He is saturated with the methods of allegorical interpretation, and introduces into the text a medley of mystical explanations, *e.g.* concerning the goat, the ordinance of circumcision, the various animals which were permitted to be eaten.² The Sacrament of Baptism, and the sufferings of Christ were made known in the Books of the Prophets.³ The writers received grace from our Lord, and prophesied unto Him.⁴ Through them the Lord made known things past and present, and gave to them the first-fruits of the taste of things yet to come.⁵ Things which were veiled from the Jews because they knew not the voice of the Lord are clear to us. In the writings of Moses we have "the glory of Jesus, because in Him and unto Him are all things." Throughout there breathes the greatest reverence for the Books, and the conviction that all the Scriptures point forward to, and are fulfilled in, the Christian dispensation. Abraham in the Spirit looked forward to Jesus.⁶ Jacob by the Spirit saw a type of the Christian Church.⁷ "Barnabas" shows a keen appreciation of the Spirit's work under the New Covenant. "I rejoice in your happy and glorious spirits—so innate is the grace of the spiritual gift which you have received."⁸ No theory of inspiration is attempted, but there is no doubt that the Books constituted for

¹ iv. v. St Matt. xxii. 14; ix. 13.

² vii.; ix.; x.

³ vi.

⁴ xi.; xii.; v.

⁵ i.

⁶ ix.

⁷ xiii.

⁸ Reading (with Lightfoot, *Apost. Fathers*, and Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the Church*) the conjectural emendation *οὐτως ἐμψυρον*.

the author a final court of appeal; and that their teaching was uniquely authoritative.

(2) THE APOLOGISTS.

The Apostolic Fathers did not attempt any definite explanation of the manner of Inspiration; it was not necessary for them to formulate a hard-and-fast doctrine. But as we pass from their writings to those of the Apologists, we find that the belief in inspiration is carried a step further. These writers were feeling about for a working definition; they saw clearly a good many sides of the question, but they did not co-ordinate the separate issues, nor were the statements made in one place always consistent with others from the same pen.

The first definite doctrinal exposition of inspiration is found in the "Appeal to the Greeks," 8.¹ We are told that the writers "received from God the knowledge which they taught." This knowledge was too great to have been acquired otherwise than by the Divine Gift which descended on men, whose sole function was "to present themselves pure to the energy of the Divine Spirit, in order that the Divine plectrum itself, descending from Heaven and using righteous men as an instrument, like a harp or lyre, might reveal the knowledge of things Divine." We meet here for the first time an illustration—suggested no doubt by the etymology of the word itself—which was employed again and again in connexion with

¹ *Cohort. Ad Graecos*, 8. The passage should be carefully studied.

the psychology of inspiration. What is the exact intention of this and kindred passages? Do the writers mean to teach pure passivity in the subjects of Divine Inspiration, or do they assume that the structure of the instruments, by which the tone is determined, is always to be taken into account? It is reasonable to remember that it is not the hand alone as it sweeps over the keys which determines the quality of the note; the result must always depend also upon the instrument itself.¹ The "Inspired" was the recipient of the Divine and prophetic gift, which was vouchsafed first to Moses, and after him to all the prophets who taught "not from human imagination," but "from the gift vouchsafed to them by God from above." Moses, says the writer of the *Cohortatio*, wrote by the Divine Inspiration.² It is almost impossible to suppose that the author intended to teach that the "human" was annihilated by the illapse of the "Divine," for he expressly states that the Holy Spirit Who descended on them, taught the true religion through them to others *who were desirous to learn*.³ The writer sums up the whole argument with the statement that it is only from the prophets who teach us by Divine Inspiration⁴ that we can really learn about God and the true religion. Clearly he believes in the verbal inspiration of the Books, and he makes it quite plain that the writers are inspired only for the purpose of

¹ *Cohort.* 10.² *Ibid.* 12.³ *Ibid.* 35.⁴ *Ibid.* 38. It should be added that the views of the *Cohortatio* have been identified with Montanism by Schwegler, *Montanism*, p. 101, and by Neander, *Dogmengesch.*, p. 99.

imparting religious truths—such as are necessary for the salvation of men.

JUSTIN MARTYR.

From the two treatises of Justin Martyr which have come down to us, it is evident that he rests his whole case as an Apologist on the teaching of Holy Scripture. The authority of the Sacred Books is beyond question. His opponent Trypho describes him as "holding fast by the Scriptures,"¹ a phrase which is abundantly illustrated from his writings. His interest—so far as can be gathered from his extant works—is more emphatically centred in the O.T. than in the New: yet he frequently quotes the teaching of our Lord as of final authority, and he appears to place the Gospels on a level with the O.T. prophets.² Further, Justin claims that the Jews do not appreciate the spirit and teaching of their scriptures; they fail to realise that the Spirit of prophecy spake of Christ, and foretold His coming. So, he adds, the scriptures have become "ours" rather than "yours." "For *we* believe them; while *you*, though you read them, fail to catch their spirit."³ For Justin, as for Philo, Moses is the supreme example of Divine Inspiration. He was "the first prophet";⁴ from him, who was of greater antiquity than the Greek writers, Plato borrowed. Through him, the "Spirit of prophecy" spake. This is the title which

¹ *Trypho*, 80: ταῖς γραφαῖς προσπλεκόμενος.

² *Apol.* i. 15 sqq. and i. 67.

³ *Trypho*, 29. Cp. *Cohort.* 13.

⁴ *Apol.* i. 59.

Justin usually assigns to the Holy Spirit.¹ The work of the prophets, through whom He spoke, is clearly of Divine authority. But while the prophets are the primary recipients of inspiration, the gift did not cease with them, but passed to teachers in the Christian Church.² "Abraham believed the voice of God. In the same way we believe the voice of God spoken to us by the Apostles of Christ, and preached by the prophets." The worship of the Christians on the Lord's Day includes the reading of "The Memoirs of the Apostles which are called Gospels" as well as "The Books of the Prophets."³ The Apostles were commissioned by Christ to teach the word of God to all men. And, indeed, the same inspiration which is characteristic of the teachers of old time is the inheritance of their successors in the Christian Church. "With us, even to the present time, the gifts of prophetic inspiration remain,"⁴ *i. e.* they are the gifts of the Spirit of prophecy, Who also points out to the ordinary Christian "how he ought to live."⁵ The Scriptures do not contradict each other, and are of undisputed authority, being the teaching of God through inspired men.⁶ He makes it clear beyond doubt that the

¹ *e. g.* *Apol.* i. 6, 13, 32, 44.

² *Trypho*, 7, 119.

³ *Apol.* i. 66, 67. It should be stated that there is a difference of opinion among scholars as to the actual content of the phrase "memoirs of the Apostles," *e. g.* (1) Does it necessarily include the Fourth Gospel as on the same level as the first three? (2) does it perhaps include any "memoir of the Apostles," or "by an Apostle," which is not admitted into our Canon? There is further the question whether the reading in the public assemblies of the Church of the "memoirs of the Apostles" and of the "Books of the Prophets" does *necessarily* involve equality of rank.

⁴ *Trypho*, 82.

⁵ *Apol.* i. 40.

⁶ *Trypho*, 65, 115.

words of the prophet were not his own, but were uttered by the Divine Logos, Who moved him. "When you hear the words of the prophets spoken as though in their own persons, you are not to think that they are uttered by the inspired men themselves, but by the Divine Word who moves them."¹ The prophets did not, however, all possess the same powers: these varied according to the gift of God.² They veiled their teaching in parables and types, so that it was not easy for all to understand the greater part of what they said; for they concealed the truth, that those who were anxious to find and to learn it might do so with diligent search.³ Here Justin is closely in line with Philo; and Origen was soon to add the weight of his authority, and to develop the argument by his explanation of the threefold meaning of Holy Scripture. All the O.T.—Pentateuch, Psalms and Prophets, were to Justin full of types and symbols of the Christ, but while he draws out the symbolic character of many passages of the O.T., he clearly acknowledges that the events in which he traced a mystic meaning were at the same time historically and literally true. Beyond all doubt Justin held the plenary inspiration of the O.T., and accepted its teaching as guaranteed by Divine authority. In his writings we see that an advance has been made towards the formation of a N.T. Canon, and the recognition of the Books of the Christian Church as being of equal authority with those of the O.T., though there is no express mention

¹ *Apol.* i. 36. ² *Trypho*, 87. Cp. *Rom.* xii. 6 ff. ³ *Ibid.* 90.

by name of any of the Books except the "Memoirs of the Apostles," and a single reference to 1 St Peter and to the Apocalypse of St John "who was one of the Apostles of Christ."¹

ATHENAGORAS.

It is less easy to gauge, with any definite certainty, the view of Inspiration which was held by Athenagoras. In his "Defence of the Christian Faith"² addressed to the Emperors Aurelian and Commodus, a work of much power and singular beauty of phrase, Athenagoras speaks of the doctrines held by Christians as "not human but *uttered* and *taught* by God": and he cites as witnesses for the Christian faith the prophets who "guided by the Spirit of God, have lifted up their voice to teach about God, and those things which concern Him,"³ and he argues that it would be unreasonable to expect Christians to cease to believe the Spirit Who moved the mouths of the prophets "like musical instruments."⁴ This particular expression does not go beyond what we have already seen in the "Appeal to the Greeks," and shall have occasion to mention in authors of later date. Nor, again, is there any discrepancy between the teaching of Justin which we have just considered and the statement of Athenagoras when, referring to the famous passage in Prov. viii. 22, he ascribes it to the Prophetic Spirit Who "acts in concert with the Logos,"⁵ of Whom the writer was speaking. The

¹ *Τγγρηο*, 72, 81.

³ *πρεσβεία*, c. 7.

⁵ *συνᾶδει τῷ Λόγῳ*, c. 10.

² *πρεσβεία περὶ χριστιανῶν*.

⁴ *ὡς ὄργανα*.

“Holy Spirit we assert to be an effluence from God, flowing from Him and returning to Him again, like a ray from the sun.”¹ But when we read that Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest of the prophets gave their message, “lifted in ecstasy above the natural actions of their minds, by the impulse of the Divine Spirit, as a flute-player might put wind into his flute,”² we are breathing an atmosphere which is entirely absent from all the other Fathers of the Christian Church, except Tertullian, whose Montanist proclivities led him to make strangely extravagant statements.³ This phrase of Athenagoras, taken as it stands, and unqualified by any other passages in his writings, commits him to the belief that Divine Inspiration caused an entire suppression of intellectual energy, and an abdication from the exercise of reason, in those whom the Spirit used as His instruments. It is difficult to believe that Athenagoras intended the words to bear their literal interpretation, for he would thus be striking a discordant note, and be strangely out of harmony with other Christian Apologists. He is, however, committed to the view that the human instrument is practically passive in the hands of the Player to Whom all the praise is due.⁴ In the same language Athenagoras speaks of the World as an instrument in tune, and he adores the Being Who harmonises the strain and leads the melody—and not the instrument. For at musical

¹ c. 10.² c. 9.³ e. g. *Tert. Adv. Marc.* iv. 22 ; *De Anima*, xxi.⁴ *πρεσβεία*, c. 16.

competitions the judges do not pass by the lute-players and crown the lutes. Does the teaching of Athenagoras necessarily mean more than that, just as a musician would choose the instrument which is best adapted for his purpose, while he rejects one which is cracked or out of tune, so the Spirit of God selected the most "sympathetic organs of inspiration"? We have similar examples of Divine selection in the call of Abraham, and in the choice of the Twelve Apostles, whom our Lord deliberately selected from the larger body of Disciples, as best fitted for His own purpose.¹ Athenagoras quotes not only from the O.T. but from the Sermon on the Mount, and St Paul's Epistles to the Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Timothy.² For him there appears to be no distinction as regards the authority of the Old and New Testaments. Both are Scripture, though he does not ever use the actual expression of either. It is to be remembered that there are cases in which the Fathers do ascribe unconsciousness to those who are the mouthpieces of God, but that this is a punishment for their unworthiness. This fact may be illustrated by the comment of St Ambrose upon the utterances of Balaam whom he describes as "a lifeless instrument" in the Hand of God. "Thou shalt say, not what thou wouldest, but what thou art made to say."³

¹ Gen. xviii. 19; St Mark iii. 13: οὗς αὐτὸς ἤθελεν; St Luke vi. 12.

² Rom. xii. 1; 1 Cor. xv. 55; 1 Tim. i. 17.

³ Ambrose, *Ad Chromat. Ep.* 50.

TATIAN.

There are only two passages in the treatise of Justin's pupil Tatian, *An Admonition to the Greeks*, which throw light on the author's views about Holy Scripture. It is, however, plain that to him it is the men rather than the Books which are inspired, and that he was impressed by the modesty of the written words and by the *naïveté* of those who uttered them,¹ while the argument from the exact fulfilment of prophecy² attracted him greatly and disposed him to accept the teaching of the Books.³ Through his studies of them his mind was divinely taught, and his understanding enlightened. The gift of the Spirit is not universally bestowed, but it is dependent on a righteous life:⁴ through those who thus receive Him, He reveals to other men, by means of prophetic teaching, that which is hidden, and they themselves are rewarded by the acquirement of a spirit responsive to the Spirit of God. From both these extracts it is plain that Tatian had a clear grasp of the fact that the Books of the Bible attain a supreme standard of authority, because the writers are men whom the Spirit of God found responsive to His teaching: they are inspired.

THEOPHILUS OF ANTIOCH.

The doctrine of inspiration which is taught in the treatise addressed to Autolyclus by Theophilus,

¹ πρὸς Ἕλληνας, 29: τῶν εἰπόντων τὸ ἀνεπιτήδευτον.

² τῶν μελλόντων τὸ προγνωστικόν.

³ Cp. Justin M. *passim*.

⁴ πρὸς Ἕλληνας, 13.

Bishop of Antioch, in defence of the Christian Faith, is explicitly moral and dynamic. There is a complete absence of the mechanical explanation which we have been discussing. The O.T. and N.T. alike are "Scripture." The Books are described as "The Divine Writing," "The Holy Writings," "The Divine Word."¹ With the last phrase he introduces two quotations from St Paul (1 Tim. ii. 1; Rom. xiii. 7 f.); and the prologue to the Fourth Gospel is quoted with the introductory phrase, "We are instructed by the holy writings and by all the authors inspired by the Spirit; one of whom, John, saith."² Again, "Isaiah the prophet," and "the Gospel" are mentioned in one paragraph as Scriptures which teach the doctrine of love to our enemies.³ The writers of the Bible who were "found worthy to become instruments of God" were morally fitted for this honour. "The men of God, enlightened by the Holy Spirit, inspired and endowed with wisdom by God Himself, were divinely taught and made holy and righteous."⁴ Theophilus insists in several passages that the writers never contradict one another. "The statements of the Prophets and of the Gospels are found to be consistent, because all were inspired by the One Spirit of God."⁵ They were preserved from error in their description of events which preceded their own time, by reason of the "Wisdom of God" and "His Divine Logos," through Whom Solomon and Moses spoke. "Moses says, or rather

¹ *Theoph. Ad Autol.* iii. 14.

³ iii. 14.

⁵ ii. 9; ii. 35; iii. 17. Cp. Justin M.

² ii. 22.

⁴ ii. 9.

the Word of God says through him, as His instrument."¹ And it was reserved to Christians to apprehend the whole truth of God, inasmuch as "We are taught by the Holy Spirit, Who spake in the holy prophets, and made known everything that was to come to pass."²

(3) IRENAEUS.

Irenaeus has been called the "first constructive theologian of historical Christianity after the Apostolic age." His testimony to the authority and inspiration of Holy Scripture is clear and unequivocal. It pervades the whole of his writings; and this testimony is more than ordinarily valuable because it must be regarded as directly representing three churches at least, those of Lyons, Asia Minor, and Rome. The authoritative use of both Testaments is clearly laid down;³ in them is contained the Rule of Truth to which the Church makes continual appeal. God's plan of salvation⁴ has been made known to us through the first preachers of the Gospel, who then handed on their teaching in the Scriptures.⁵ These Scriptures are designed to be "the pillar and groundwork of our faith:"⁶ the knowledge of the writers is perfect; nor may any presume to correct their words. This knowledge was a supernatural gift: for after the Resurrection the power of the Holy Spirit came upon them from

¹ ii. 10. Cp. iii. 23.

² *Adv. Haer.* iv. 35 (Massuet).

³ *Adv. Haer.* iii. 1 f.

⁴ ii. 33.

⁵ *dispositio salutis nostrae.*

⁶ Cp. 1 Tim. iii. 15.

on high, and they "were filled with perfect knowledge on every subject."¹ The Evangelists have declared one God, Maker of heaven and earth, announced by the Law and the Prophets, and one Christ, the Son of God. It is with these Scriptures that Irenaeus challenges the heretics of his day. He shows how they accuse the Scriptures when confronted with their teaching, and try to prove them incorrect and written without authority.² They shelter themselves under tradition; yet when confronted with the tradition, "which, starting from the Apostles, is safeguarded in the Church by the unbroken succession of the Ministry," they profess to be wiser than the Church, and to have found out the genuine truth: and they accuse the Apostolic writers of "mingling with the Saviour's words the things of the Law."³ It is, then, with the tradition of the Apostles, by which Irenaeus means the Rule of Faith⁴ (St Paul's "form of sound words") that he invariably challenges false teachers: for, as he is at pains to explain, this tradition is fixed and invariable, guaranteed by those "who were consecrated Bishops in the various Churches by the Apostles: the names of those who succeeded them being known even to our own time." Outside this source of truth it is useless to argue, for the Church is "a rich storehouse," in which the Apostles have most abundantly stored up all that appertains to the

¹ *Adv. Haer.* iii. 1. Cp. iii. 22.

² quasi non recte habeant, neque sint ex auctoritate, *Ibid.* iii. 2.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 2.

⁴ See *The Early History of the Church and the Ministry*, pp. 334, 358 and n.

truth: "Everyone who wills may drink therefrom the draught of life."¹

The "Canon" of Holy Scripture is the chief weapon with which Irenaeus fights his battles. He quotes most of the Canonical Scriptures, but also Books which have not canonical authority, and to them he appears to ascribe an equal degree of inspiration.² He accepts the fable of Aristeas concerning the origin of the LXX, and regards that work, so far as it was a translation of the Hebrew text, as divinely inspired.³ The whole of the O.T. Books lost through the Captivity, Irenaeus believed to have been restored by Ezra, who was "inspired by God to arrange all the sayings of the prophets who had lived in former days, and to restore to the people the code given by Moses."⁴ Irenaeus expressly testifies to the authenticity of the four Gospels, and states the circumstances under which each of the writers compiled his Book. He sternly condemns those who teach that the Apostles framed the substance of their teaching according to the prejudices of those who heard them⁵—a charge which they dare to bring even against our Lord.⁶ The Apostles, being disciples of the Truth, "were incapable of false statement." In consequence of the Divine authority of the Books, no light punish-

¹ *Adv. Haer.* iii. 4. Cp. Rev. xxii. 7.

² iv. 5; iv. 20; iv. 26; v. 35. He includes as Scripture the Shepherd (iv. 20), as Clement of Alexandria also does (*Strom.* i. xxix). See, however, i. 20, where Irenaeus uses Apocrypha as a term of reproach: "Multitudinem apocryphorum et perperum Scripturarum."

³ *Adv. Haer.* iii. 21: ποιήσαντος τοῦ Θεοῦ ὑπερ βουλήτο.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.* iii. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*

ment awaits the man who adds to, or takes from, the Scripture.¹

On the *Inspiration* of the Bible he insists most strongly. The Spirit of God spoke through the writers.² The Scriptures are the words of the Spirit; ³ they are perfect, "for they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit." The prophets, "as recipients of the prophetic gift,"⁴ foretold the coming of our Lord in the flesh, for the Spirit of God showed through them things that would afterwards come to pass. The Bible is the joint product of the Spirit of God and of men of God who taught "in accordance with the actual suggestions of the Spirit."⁵ Great stress is laid upon the work of the Holy Spirit as the "Spirit of Prophecy," "Who proclaimed through the prophets the dispensations and the comings."⁶ The Spirit is primarily given to the Church, and through the Church to individuals, for God "provided prophets on earth that men might grow accustomed to carry about with them His Spirit, and to hold communion with God."⁷ Irenaeus goes so far as to say that the very phrases of the Gospels were due to the prevision of the Holy Spirit.⁸ This inspiration did not cease with the Apostles, but was continued to his own time, for he had heard many brethren in the Church, possessed of the prophetic Spirit,⁹ speaking through the Spirit with all kinds

¹ *Adv. Haer.* v. 30.

² ἔλων τῶν γραφῶν πνευματικῶν οὐσῶν, *Ibid.* ii. 28.

³ *Ibid.* iv. 20 and 34.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. 10.

⁵ *Ibid.* iii. 16.

² *Ibid.* i. 10.

³ *Ibid.* ii. 28.

⁶ *Ibid.* iv. 20.

⁷ *Ibid.* iv. 14.

⁹ *Ibid.* v. 16.

of tongues: spiritual men inasmuch as they partake of the Spirit. There is indeed no numbering of the gifts which the Church has received from God, and exercises daily for the benefit of the nations.¹ Irenaeus recognises that there are degrees in the gift of inspiration.² The writers do not always speak with the same absolute authority. He illustrates this by citing the case of Moses and of St Paul, both of whom gave commands which were conditioned by the state of mind in those to whom they were given. Their authority was relative, not absolute. The "hardness of men's hearts" required the precepts. Yet, while he insists so strongly on the Divine element in the composition of the Scriptures, he is equally conscious of the human side of the Bible. He wrote an essay on the peculiarities of St Paul's literary style, which require careful attention from the reader,³ if he would avoid disastrous misinterpretations. The Apostle frequently uses transpositions of words⁴ "due to the rapidity of his utterance and the vehemence of the Spirit within him"; and therefore it is inevitable that syntactical errors should find a place in his writings. Thus, Irenaeus shows that inspiration does not at all do away with the individuality, or the literary style, of the writers of the Bible. He sets himself at some length to prove the identity of teaching in the O. and N. Testaments. For in his day, the doctrine of inspiration which had placed the Books of the

¹ *Adv. Haer.* ii. 32.

² *Ibid.* iv. 15.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 7.

⁴ *Hyperbata, e. g.* 2 Cor. iv. 4; Gal. iii. 19; 2 Thess. ii. 8.

O.T. in a position of supreme authority had been transferred to the New Testament writings also. Commenting on the words of our Lord concerning the "Scribe instructed unto the Kingdom of Heaven,"¹ he explains that the things new and old which he brings forth from his treasure are the two Testaments, both of which are the revelation of one and the same Householder. So he teaches that the Scriptures, if studied attentively, will lead men to the "Word concerning Christ and the prefiguring of the new Calling." For Christ is the treasure hid in the field—indicated long before His Incarnation by types and parables which could not be understood until the time of fulfilment had arrived. All prophecies, he adds, must be enigmatic before their fulfilment; so that even now the Law to a Jew "is like a riddle," while to a Christian it is as "treasure hid in a field."² He means that the full interpretation of the words used by the prophet lies, from the nature of the case, beyond his own mental vision.³ Heretics, says Irenaeus, describe the inspired volume as obscure and of uncertain meaning, to whom he replies that many truths are contained therein which are plain beyond all doubt or controversy;⁴ and that such passages as are undoubtedly obscure should be interpreted by others which are not ambiguous.⁵ Following this line of teaching he draws a beautiful comparison between our knowledge of the operations

¹ St Matt. xiii. 52; *Adv. Haer.* iv. 9.

² *Adv. Haer.* iv. 26.

⁴ *Adv. Haer.* ii. 27.

³ Cp. I St Peter i. 12.

⁵ *Ibid.* ii. 10.

of nature, and of the working of the Spirit of God in the writers of the Bible.¹ In each case it is partial: and if so much in the world of sense is hidden from us, what wonder is it if there always remain questions concerning the Scriptures which we cannot solve? In both cases all we can say is that many problems "are secrets known only to God Himself";² it being the Divine Will that God should be always teaching, and man always learning from Him. Irenaeus recognises strongly the literal truth of the narratives of the Bible, yet he clearly teaches that much of the O.T. contains figures of heavenly things,³ "for it would not have been possible in any other way to frame a description of things spiritual." Some of the types which he mentions are strange and weird, as, *e.g.*, when he sees in Balaam's ass a type of the Body of Christ,⁴ and in the lad who led Samson by the hand a figure of St John Baptist;⁵ while the two pillars of the house on which Samson rested, are the two Testaments, and the fact that he leaned upon them represents the people, when taught, acknowledging the Mystery of Christ. Irenaeus describes the uncertainty of Biblical interpretation employed by heretics,⁶ who are on this account perpetually refuting themselves, and he contrasts with their methods the teaching of the Church. "But we who follow the One true God as our Teacher, and hold His words to be our rule of truth,

¹ *Adv. Haer.* ii. 28.

³ *Doctrine of ὑπόνοια*: iv. 19.

⁵ *Ibid.* xxv.

² ἀνακείραι τῷ Θεῷ.

⁴ *Fragm.* xxi.

⁶ *Ibid.* iv. 35.

never waver in our interpretation of the Books and their contents." The Faith, received by the Church, we guard. Coming from the Spirit of God, "it is like some noble treasure in a precious vessel, continually reviving its youth¹ and causing the vessel in which it is held to revive in like manner."

(4) TERTULLIAN.

It would be difficult to overstate the reverence paid by Tertullian to the Scriptures of both the O. and N. Testaments, or to imagine any language to describe the authority of the Books, stronger or more definite than that which he actually employs. The Books are "voices of God," "our Sacred Literature";² he dwells on the "majesty of the Scriptures"; he "adores their richness,"³ and warns the heretics of the woe laid up for those who add to, or take from, the things written in the Book. Again, the Books are "letters of the Faith," "Divine Scripture," "Divine Literature," "the Divine Testament";⁴ the writers were "inspired penmen." In this category are included all the contents of both Testaments; for him "The Rule of Faith," is synonymous with "The Ecclesiastical Canon," and he exults in the happiness of that Church (the Roman) in which "the genuine literature is read: the Church which combines the Law and the Prophets with the Book of the Gospels, and from them derives her faith. That faith she signs

¹ *Adv. Haer.* iii. 24. *iuuenescens.*

² *Apol.* 31. ³ *Ibid.* 20: *adoro Scripturae plenitudinem.*

⁴ *diuinum instrumentum.*

with water at the Font, clothes it with the Holy Spirit, feeds it with the Eucharist.”¹ He is careful to co-ordinate the authority of both the O. and N. Testaments against the “antitheses”² of Marcion; and to show that the writers of both covenants were actuated by the same Spirit.³ The Bible is God’s gift to man, whereby he may more fully understand the Divine Will; for God “added (to His other gifts) a written Record, and whoso wills may therein search for God, and after searching find Him; he may believe on Him Whom he has found, and render service to Him on Whom he has believed.”⁴ The Scriptures are the joint product of the Holy Spirit and the men inspired by Him. “The Majesty of the Holy Spirit suggests the form of utterance.”⁵ From the very beginning God revealed His Will to the world by men “filled to overflowing with the Divine Spirit”; men, who were worthy by reason of their righteousness and innocency, to know God and to make Him known. He is careful to teach that Holy Scripture has always a wide bearing:⁶ everywhere there is, after the sense of the immediate subject, a rule of duty also taken into account by which the sacred writings are brought into touch with the abiding needs of men.

For the Christian, says Tertullian, there is one

¹ *Praescriptio*, 30. Cp. *De Orat.* 9. See *The Early History of the Church and the Ministry*, pp. 334 and 358 n.

² *contrariae opiniones.*

³ *Ad Marc.* i. 19; *De Orat.* 21.

⁴ *Apol.* 18.

⁵ *De Resurr. Carn.* 24; *De Patient.* 7; *Adv. Marc.* v. 7.

⁶ *De Spectac.* iii.

supreme authority to which he makes appeal. "To God Scripture belongs. Its nature is of God. Of God is its teaching. Whatever is at issue with these is not of God."¹ These Scriptures are the possession of the Church. "Christians alone have right to possession of the Christian Scriptures."² The true faith and the genuine Scriptures will always be found together. Tertullian argues at some length in the *Praescriptio* that the heretics have no right to the Scriptures at all; they add to them or expurgate them, to suit their own teaching: or, if they are ready to accept them in their entirety, they pervert them by heterodox interpretations—an offence quite as heinous as the rejection of the Sacred Text.³ He will not allow the heretics the right to bring forward the Scriptures as the ground of their plea: the consequences of such a course are disastrous to the faithful, and likely to undermine their faith:⁴ nay, he avers that the heretic will not scruple falsely to rearrange the text, or to accept a passage just because of the antiquity of its language which he can twist to serve his own ends;⁵ while at the same time he is obliged, in order to save his face, to accuse the orthodox Christian of condescending to his own unworthy tactics. "You Christians, not we, are guilty of adulterating the Scriptures and expounding them falsely."⁶ Tertullian teaches that all believers have the guidance

¹ *De Virg.* Vol. 16.

² *Praescript.* 19.

³ *Ibid.* 17, 'tantum ueritati obstrepit adulter sensus quantum est corruptor stilus.'

⁴ *Ibid.* 15.

⁵ *Ibid.* 17.

⁶ *Ibid.* 18.

of the Holy Spirit,¹ but the inspired writers, the Apostles, knew everything.² "What man of balanced mind can believe that those whom the Lord gave to the Church as its Masters were left in ignorance on any matter whatsoever?" No wonder, then, that their writings are of supreme authority! In this connexion it is important to emphasise the position adopted by Tertullian against the heretics. The retention of Apostolic doctrine, as contained in the Scriptures, is the one point on which his teaching centres; to this point he deliberately narrows the issue³ between them and the Church.⁴ That doctrine was first in the field,⁵ and all subsequent teaching must be measured by that standard. Tertullian rests the authority of Scripture on two facts: (1) its antiquity, (2) its truth.

(1) "Their priority in time claims for the Old and New Testaments a position that transcends all other."⁶ He shows that no historical or literary remains of any ancient kingdom will bear comparison with the volume of Holy Scripture, and he lays down as fundamental, and not to be refuted, the Canon "that that which is first in time must be the seed of that which is to come."⁷ He works out the same argument elsewhere, saying in effect that the testimonies of the soul are earlier than any literature, and have not been derived from books. If they had, they must needs have come from the Scriptures originally, for they are the oldest writings in the world.

¹ credentes agit.

⁶ *Praescript.* 35.

⁶ *Apol.* 28.

² *Praescript.* 22.

³ nostra res omnibus prior est.

⁷ *De Anima.* 5.

³ "*Praescriptio.*"

(2) Then, passing from the authority conferred by the antiquity of the writings, he turns to their truth, which rests on internal evidence.¹ The words of the prophets are evidently being fulfilled day by day: and on this he builds the doctrine that we may reasonably expect the verification of those prophecies which as yet remain unfulfilled. In a word, Tertullian asserts that even his opponents involuntarily recognise the Being Whom Christians worship. "His will has been declared to men by prophets, and is contained in a volume of demonstrable antiquity and self-evident truth." "The Christian, at any rate, is sure that Christ always spoke in the prophets."² Two further points need to be noticed. (1) Tertullian does not hesitate to say that the very phrases of Holy Scripture are the result of Inspiration; and that the foresight of the Holy Spirit cut away the ground from heretics.³ This is verbal inspiration in its most naked form. (2) He admits that there are degrees of Inspiration in the Sacred Authors: and discusses the question in its bearing on St Paul's teaching in 1 Cor. vii.⁴ "This say I, not the Lord."

Tertullian's conversion to the principles of Montanism in no way caused him to retire from the position he had adopted towards the inspiration and authority of the Sacred Volume. The attraction of Montanism for him lay in the assurance, on which the new prophecy laid such stress, that the Holy Spirit was still teaching the Church. The whole

¹ *Apol.* 20.

² *Ibid.* v. 7; *De Ieiun.* 15.

³ *Adv. Marc.* iii. 6.

⁴ *De Castit.* 4.; *De Monog.* 3.

movement was due to the Paraclete Whom Christ had promised : and the manifestations of His presence and working "in the last days" were reasonably to be regarded as greater than all that preceded them.¹ The pronouncement of a Roman Bishop that Montanism was a heresy not to be tolerated was in the eyes of Tertullian a fatal error, of the result of which he wrote bitterly : "Prophecy was expelled from Rome. The Paraclete was turned to flight."² Yet, while Tertullian remained unshaken in his attitude towards the supremacy of Holy Scripture, he was so far led astray by the doctrines of Montanus as to accept and to justify the error that their prophets received the Holy Spirit in a state of ecstasy. Unfortunately his own defence of the new prophecy, which was contained in his great work "on Ecstasy" has perished ; but he has sufficiently stated elsewhere what he believed to be the effect of this special inspiration. A prophet lost all self-control when he was under the spell of the Holy Spirit ; "unintelligence"³—the lack of intelligence and reason—is, according to Montanist doctrine, the spiritual force of which prophecy consists. The Divine completely overshadows and obliterates the human ; the prophet, when God is speaking through him, "loses his consciousness," for he is "overshadowed by the power of God." Tertullian illustrates his theory by the example of St Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, who "knew not what he said" : by which we are to understand not an

¹ *Pass. Perpet.* 1.

² *Adv. Prax.* 1.

³ *Adv. Marc.* iv. 22 : "amentia."

ordinary aberration, but a suspension of the mental faculties, directly due to the inspired state of his soul. Such erroneous teaching was strongly condemned by the Church generally: and there are not a few passages extant in which "ecstasy" is described as the distinct mark of a false prophet.¹ Of course Tertullian in his Montanist days contradicted the view he had previously upheld of the interaction of the Divine and the human in the composition of the Sacred Volume:² but he never receded from his belief in the unique authority of both the Old Testament and the New as inspired by God. He insisted, moreover, on a truth which is never without need of emphasis—the progressive revelation of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit brings in nothing that is new: that which He had already hinted He makes plain: and claims what He has kept in abeyance: so that we should look on the Paraclete as a Restorer rather than as an Originator."³ For "Righteousness advanced through the Law and the Prophets to its infancy: then through the Gospel it blossomed into the fervour of youth: and now through the Paraclete it is settling down into mature life."⁴

(5) CYPRIAN.

Cyprian follows closely in the footsteps of his master, Tertullian, and attaches the most profound importance to the study of Holy Scripture. "The

¹ e. g. *Clem. Al. Strom.* i. 17; *Orig. C. Celsum*, vii. 4; *Chrys. Homil.* xxviii. on I Cor. and *supra*, p. 50.

² e. g. *De Res. Carnis.* 24; *De Patient.* 7; *Adv. Marc.* v. 7.

³ *De Monog.* 3.

⁴ *De Virg Vel.* 1.

faithful Christian should lean upon the Sacred Scriptures"¹—a phrase which indicates sufficiently the attitude of mind which Cyprian counselled towards the Bible, and his estimate of the authority of its teaching. The names which he gives to the Scriptures testify to his reverence for them. They are "Divine Scripture," "precepts of the Gospel," "Divine commands,"² "Sacred Scriptures," "Scriptures from heaven," "precepts of Divine Law," "wells of Divine fulness," "voices of the Lord." The unique effect and influence of the Bible on the lives of men are expressed in noble phrases. The Gospel precepts are "foundations of our hope, bulwarks of our faith, food of our hearts"; "pilots to guide our course," "safeguards of our salvation."³ God designed through the Bible to educate and instruct us. The spiritual strength and progress which mark the life of him who reads and weighs the Scriptures are set forth in glowing words.⁴ "Greater power shall be granted to him—and the faculties of his mind shall work more and more clearly—who examines fully the Scriptures of the Old Testament and of the New, and studies the whole volume of the inspired Books." The formulae of quotation are varied, and the several phrases are used apparently with entire impartiality. "The Lord Himself saith in the twelve Prophets." "The Holy Spirit declares and saith through Isaiah." "The Divine Scripture saith." "The Holy Spirit declares in the Psalms." "Solomon, inspired by the Holy Spirit,

¹ *De Spectac.*

² *Orat. Dom. I.*

³ *divina magisteria.*

⁴ *Test. Book I, Introdn.*

testifies." "Paul, filled with the grace of the Master's inspiration." "The words which God speaks." We have thus a distinct recognition of the human and Divine elements in the composition of the Bible, an approximation to the classic phrase of the N.T., "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."¹ The "suggestion" of the prophet's teaching is due to the action of the Spirit Himself. "Through Jeremiah the Holy Spirit thus suggests and teaches."²

In the summary of the discussion at the Council of Carthage "Concerning the Baptism of Heretics," one of the Bishops gives his decision "based on the authority of the Holy Scriptures," and another complains of the blasphemous treatment by heretics of "the Sacred and ever-to-be-revered words of the Scriptures." To both men, as to Cyprian, the Scriptures are the final court of appeal. There is, indeed, hardly a page to be found in the entire range of Cyprian's extant writings which has not a quotation from some part of the Bible. His three books of Testimonies are a remarkable monument of his knowledge of the Sacred Text. The quotations are generally made from memory,³ and naturally are not always verbally accurate. There is one passage,⁴ to which attention must be drawn, in which Cyprian seems to draw a distinction between the authority of the O.T. and that of the Words of Christ: "God willed that a great part of His revelation should be spoken through the agency of the prophets, and that

¹ 2 St Peter i. 21.

² *Orat. Dom.* 1.

³ The product of "mediocris memoria" and "memoriosa mens."

⁴ *Orat. Dom.* 1.

we should hear it through them. Consider, then, how much greater is the revelation which comes from the spoken utterances of the Son, which the Word of God, Who inspired the prophets, testifies with His own Voice." It is a distinct recognition of *degree* in the inspiration and authority of the several parts of the Bible.

(6) CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA.

Clement, who succeeded Pantaenus as head of the Catechetical school at Alexandria, was "heir to the large-hearted traditions of Philo." His great contribution to theology was the attempted reconciliation of the Faith of Palestine with the Reason of Greece. For both of these he felt great reverence, and he laboured to show that they were capable of being held in combination, and were in no wise mutually contradictory. The point from which he started was his belief that the Gospel was not a new departure. In it the converging lines of Hellenic progress and Jewish belief met: and he proceeded to work out his argument by stating that all history is one, because all truth is one. No one sect possesses the whole truth; each of them seizes on a portion of the whole, and believes itself to possess all. But all are illuminated by the dawn of light.¹

Philosophy has a distinct contribution to make to the discovery of truth, and in various ways it reaches out towards the truth which Christians possess;

¹ *Stromateis*, I. c. 13.

which is "alone authentic and unassailable, for in it we are instructed by the Son of God." The truth of Greece falls far short of the Christian Revelation for "we have been taught by God, receiving our instruction in the Holy Scriptures from the Son of God."¹ God, he teaches, is the cause of all good things, but of some *primarily*, as of the O. and N. Testaments.²

Now Clement was entirely right when he taught that philosophy had been to the Greeks what the Law was to the Jews, a tutor³ to bring them to Christ, and His perfection. And he was equally right in acknowledging that while the Greek conception of God was wholly defective, it was yet of use as a handmaid for the highest wisdom, for it prepared the soul to receive the faith. And, while he was justified in his assumption of the universal working of the Spirit, this doctrine in no way prejudiced his attitude to the Sacred Scriptures. In his eyes, the Revelation contained in them was of greater value than all other wisdom in the world: for they recorded "the things which have been spoken for our salvation by the Holy Spirit."⁴ What, then, does "Scripture" imply to Clement? It included the Law and the Prophets, the Gospel and the

¹ *Strom.* I. cc. 5 and 20.

² It is, indeed, open to question whether by *διαθήκη* Clement meant "Testament" or "Covenant"—the content of the two dispensations, or the written documents in which God's Will was enshrined; but for our present purpose this does not greatly matter. See Sanday, *Inspiration*, Lect. i, Note D.

³ *Strom.* VI. c. 17.

⁴ *Strom.* VI. c. 15.

Apostles. The "ecclesiastical canon"¹ by which he means his rule of Scriptural interpretation, consists in the perfect combination of all the notes and harmonies of the Law and the Prophets with the Testament delivered at the Presence of the Lord.² The Lord is Himself the source of teaching, both by the Prophets, the Gospel, and the Blessed Apostles, "in many fashions and in many parts,"³ leading from the beginning of knowledge to the end.⁴ He who of himself obeys the Lord's written word and voice is rightly to be considered worthy of credit; and the Christian is recommended to prove the truth of his belief by an independent examination of the sacred records, for in them is preserved the tradition of the blessed doctrine derived directly from the holy Apostles Peter, James, John and Paul.⁵ The O.T. Scriptures, the Scriptures of the Law and the Prophets, were to Clement the Books of LXX.⁶ From his infancy he had been taught to reverence every letter of the Greek Bible, and he felt no difficulty in believing that He who inspired the prophecy had inspired the translation also: it was in fact "the counsel of God accommodated to the ears of the Greeks." Thus LXX became "the first Apostle to the Gentiles." The Scriptures of both covenants were to Clement "of paramount authority, and by going over them consecutively he is prepared to prove in the face of all heresies, that one God

¹ *Strom.* VII. c. 16. Cp. *Paed.* III. c. 12.

² *Strom.* VI. c. 15.

³ πολυτρόπως καὶ πολυμερῶς.

⁴ *Strom.* I. c. i.

⁵ *Strom.* VII. c. 16.

⁶ *Strom.* I. cc. 7 and 22

and Lord Omnipotent is preached by the Law and the Prophets, and by the blessed Gospel besides."¹ Any possibility of conflicting teaching between the Scriptures of the two covenants Clement emphatically rules out:² "The Law does not conflict with the Gospel, but is in harmony with it. How could it be otherwise, seeing that One Lord is Author of both?" Faith in Christ and the knowledge of the Gospel are the explanation and fulfilment of the Law. The O.T. received its proper exposition when our Lord came.

Clement's view of the plenary authority of the O. and N. Testaments is unequivocal: he admits the doctrine of verbal inspiration, but finds himself sorely tried by the difficulty of reconciling his reason with his faith, the philosophy of Greece with the teaching of the Law and the Prophets.³ The solution which he proposed to himself was found in the doctrine that everything in Scripture was allegorical, and that nothing was to be accepted in its literal meaning.⁴ To him the most far-fetched interpretations were the most probable. As specimens of his method as applied to the O.T. may be cited his treatment of the Ten Laws and of the Tabernacle.⁵ Examples of his allegorical treatment of the N.T. are found in the explanation of (*a*) the Ten Virgins, (*β*) the Rich Man and Lazarus, (*γ*) the Fish with the Stater, (*δ*) St Paul's phrase, "I fed you with milk."⁶ He was of course by no means the first to apply the allegorical

¹ *Strom.* IV. c. i.

² *Strom.* VI. c. 15; II. c. 23.

³ *Paed.* I. c. 7. ⁴ *Strom.* V. c. 6. ⁵ *Strom.* VI. c. 16; V. c. 6.

⁶ *Strom.* V. c. 3; *Paed.* II. c. 10; II. c. 1; I. c. 6.

method to the O.T. St Paul—as we have noticed—had freely adopted it: and it had been used also by the author of the Epistle of Barnabas and by Irenaeus. The new use to which Clement put the method was that by its means he might introduce ideas which might otherwise be viewed with suspicion. We must remember that the “use of allegory implies a sacred text”: it presupposes the unique authority of the Books so interpreted. In this connexion Clement laid it down that the obscurity of Scripture was due to two causes: (i) to stimulate curiosity and watchfulness, (ii) lest we should suffer harm by taking the Scriptures in a wrong sense.¹ The allegorism he adopted was fantastic, for he disregarded all recognised methods of interpretation; but the point which we need here to emphasise is that by his allegorism Clement exhibited his implicit belief in the Divine origin of Scripture, and in the certainty that the Scriptures will render up their real secrets as the result of reverent and patient study. No finer passage exists in his writings, on the subject of the Inspiration of the Bible, than the following extract² in which he states that “the Word of God, disregarding the lyre and harp, which are but lifeless instruments, and having tuned by the Holy Spirit the universe, and that microcosm of the universe, man,³ both in body and soul, makes harmony to God on this instrument of many tones. Thou, says He, art my harp, and lyre, and shrine.

¹ *Strom.* VI. c. 15.

² *Protrept.* c. i.

³ τὸν μικρὸν κόσμον, τὸν ἄνθρωπον.

A harp, by reason of many notes, a lyre by reason of the Spirit, a shrine by reason of the Word. So that the first may sound, the second breathe, and the third contain the Lord." Again, "The Divine writings form a short road to salvation":¹ and, "I could name ten thousand Scriptures of which not one tittle shall pass away, without having received fulfilment," for "The mouth of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, spake these things."² In the same chapter Clement quotes 2 Tim. iii. 15: and, in a comment on the passage, adds "for truly holy are those writings which make us holy and like God"; and he cordially endorses St Paul's epithet "inspired by God."³ The Scriptures are "of rich variety, and never lose their lustre, oracles of the Lord, flashing with rays of truth."⁴ In the interpretation of Holy Scripture Clement proceeds along clearly defined lines: and he lays down certain restrictions which he regards as essential. The interpretation must be worthy of the nature of God; it must agree with the whole content of Revelation, must not depart from the tradition which was the property of the Church; and must agree with the ecclesiastical Canon, *i. e.* The Rule of the Church.⁵ The Canon of the O.T. was already closed when Clement taught: and for him as an Alexandrian, the LXX contained (as we have seen) the Canonical Scriptures. Was the N.T. Canon also already closed? There is considerable divergence of opinion on this point. The way in which

¹ *Protrept.* c. 8.² *Protrept.* c. 9.³ *Θεόπνευστος.*⁴ *Paed.* II. c. 10.⁵ *Strom.* VII. c. 16.

Clement quotes Apocryphal Books (*e. g.*¹ the Shepherd, which he clearly recognised as Canonical, and the various writings which circulated in the name of St Peter, all of which he admits as authoritative) seems to suggest that the conception of a N.T. Canon was not yet definitely settled, nor the principles of its formation formulated. Harnack has argued that the Four Gospels which Clement calls "The Gospel" were alone considered by him as on a level with the O.T. Books; yet it seems far more likely that he looked upon the Acts of the Apostles as possessing a unique and distinctive place among the inspired Books:² and when he regards as impossible any conflict between St Paul and the O.T.,³ and further, applies to the Apostle with prodigal emphasis all the titles of honour by which he describes Moses, it is natural to conclude that to Clement the Pauline Epistles were "canonical" in the fullest sense of that term. These Epistles are "The Holy Scriptures." The methods of citation employed by Clement imply the fullest inspiration and authority of the words which he quotes. The Scriptures are "holy, given by the Lord, inspired by God." He seems to draw attention quite indiscriminately to the human author and to the Divine Inspirer. We find, *e. g.* "The all-wise Moses saith," or "the Blessed David," or "the Psalmist," or "John speaks by God's power, inspired by Him."⁴

¹ *Strom.* II. c. 12; IV. c. 9; VI. c. 6.

² *Paed.* II. c. i. ³ *Paed.* III. c. 12; *Strom.* VII. c. 16.

⁴ *Quis diues saluetur?* Cp. *Paed.* III. c. 12.

And, side by side, we note "The Holy Spirit saith in Jeremiah"; and again, "The Law was given by Moses. Rather, not by Moses, but by the Word, and through the mouth of Moses, His servant." And again, "The Holy Spirit saith in the poem."¹ There are a good many cases in which Clement indicates only by a word or a phrase that some particular passage of Scripture was in his mind. His knowledge of the Bible was extraordinary, yet there are not a few instances of inaccurate citation, which is not to be wondered at when we remember that he is quoting from memory. Occasionally, he assigns a passage to a wrong author; and he mentions passages from Scripture which are not to be found there.² We may close this examination of Clement's teaching on the Inspiration of Holy Scripture with the quotation of a passage which shows that he advocates no bald mechanical theory which leaves no room for the exercise of men's faculties, but that the human side of inspiration must be allowed due recognition. "Such are the spiritual laws, the words of consolation, inscribed not in tables of stone, written by the finger of the Lord, but on the hearts of men, where alone they are imperishable."³ This proves that the effects produced by the study of the Bible depend on the susceptibility of the human mind. And once more, Clement teaches that the man who believes the Divine Scriptures with sure

¹ *Paed.* I. c. 7.

² *e. g.* Amos iv. 13 is attributed to Hosea. *Protrept.* c. 8 and *Strom.* V. c. 14.

³ *Paed.* III. c. 12.

judgement receives in the Voice of God, Who bestowed the Scripture, a demonstration which cannot be impugned.¹

(7) ORIGEN.

Clement was succeeded at Alexandria by Origen, who may truly be considered the Father of Biblical criticism. It was he who first laid down the lines of a systematic study of the Bible; "both in criticism and interpretation his labours marked an epoch."² His power of work was absolutely colossal, and his patient investigation both of the text and the teaching of Holy Scripture laid a foundation on which those who followed him, whether in early or in modern days, gladly built up the fabric of Biblical interpretation. To Origen, the Holy Scriptures and the teaching of the Spirit were the final and absolute spring of Divine truth. Indeed, even Jerome, who strongly dissented from the position of Origen, was constrained to say that he was "confessed by all competent to judge, to be the Master of the Churches after the Apostles. I could wish to have his knowledge of the Scriptures."³ To him is due the developement of the *principles* of allegorical interpretation. The system had taken root, as we have seen, in the soil of Alexandria, and had been adopted by both Jewish and Christian apologists. To Clement, his immediate predecessor, allegorism

¹ ἀπόδειξιν ἀναντιρρήτων, *Strom.* II. c. 2.

² Westcott. ³ *Praef. in Orig. opp.*

was an acknowledged fact, guaranteed by tradition. Clement accepted it, and employed it in his teaching. But with Origen the principles of allegorism were systematised; he saw in it a manifestation of the sacramental mystery of Nature; the inward and the outward, the seen and the unseen, are so linked up by God that the world we see is, as it were, a great staircase by which the mind of man must climb upwards to spiritual intelligence.¹ Thus by patient study, if combined with a reverent attitude of mind, those who laboured at the Bible would find in it hidden depths of spiritual meaning, which were withheld from the casual reader, for "the Church teaches that the Scriptures were written by the Spirit of God, and possess a meaning in addition to that which lies on their surface—a meaning which is undiscoverable by the general reader."² After the first introduction the student can easily endeavour to get a hold on the deeper truths hidden in the Scriptures. And even an ordinary reader soon discovers that many passages have a deeper significance³ . . . which is revealed to devoted students⁴ and revealed in proportion to the time they spend upon the Word, and their zeal in translating it into practice. The Scriptures, as Origen explains in his letter to Gregory, need great attention, lest we should speak or form notions about them rashly. To those who read the sacred writings with a faithful anticipation of understanding their treasures,

¹ *In Cant. Cantic.* iii. ² *Dē Princ.* i. *Praef.* ³ *Philoc.* c. xv..

⁴ τοῖς ἀνατιθεῖσιν ἑαυτοὺς τῇ ἐξετάσει τοῦ λόγου.

the doors shall be opened by the Porter. The Scriptures are their own best key, and those who not only seek and knock, but also ask, shall know of the doctrine. The Books of the Bible are writings in which the word of God actually dwells.¹ Origen considered the doctrine of inspiration so completely settled that he did not think it needful to argue the question at any length. In the opening passage of the *Philocalia* he says that he had not before discussed the Scriptures on the side of their inspiration,² and then proceeds shortly to state the grounds on which he held them to be Divine; but he is eager, so soon as he has glanced at the fact of the Divine inspiration of the Books, to pass on and expound the right way to read and understand them.³ Origen states categorically his reasons for accepting the plenary inspiration of the Bible; and is careful to explain both the O. and N. Testaments as an organic whole. "He Who has given the Law has given the Gospel also."⁴ "The sacred volumes are fully inspired by the Holy Spirit, and there is no passage either in the Law or the Gospel, or the writings of an Apostle, which does not proceed from the inspired source of Divine Truth."⁵ Indeed, so strongly does he acknowledge the Divine afflatus as operating on the writers of the Bible⁶ that he states his belief that in the words of his Master Christ, whether they are found in the Law or the Prophets, not one

¹ *Philoc.* c. xiii (*Ep. ad Greg.*).

⁴ *Philoc.* c. i. *ad fin.*

⁶ *Hom. in Exod.* I. c. iv.

² *Philoc.* c. i.

³ *Philoc.* c. viii.

⁵ *Hom. in Jerem.* xxi.

iota lacks a spiritual meaning, nor shall one of them pass away until all things are accomplished. The spiritual effect of the Holy Scriptures will be, to each reader, according to his faith which teaches him that "all scripture, because it is God-inspired, is also profitable."¹ For two roads only are open to us: either we must consider the Scriptures not to be inspired because they are not profitable, or we must admit that because they are inspired they are really profitable. So complete is Origen's acceptance of each and every statement in the Bible that he does not hesitate to say that "every letter, how strange so ever, which stands written in the Oracles of God, does its work."²

Now the reasons which led Origen to believe in the inspiration of the Bible may be stated under two heads:—

(1) The real test of the Inspiration of the O.T. was not possible before the coming of Christ. The prophets had indeed foretold His Incarnation, but they were not vindicated until their words were proved to be true. What could this vindication signify but that the prophecies were inspired?³ The difficulties which had beset the interpretation of the O.T. were all done away at the Incarnation, for the coming of Jesus brought those who might suspect that the Law and the Prophets were not Divine to realise that they were written with heavenly assistance; and the diligent and attentive student of the words of

¹ *Philoc.* c. xii.

² *Philoc.* c. x.

³ θεοπνεύστους εἶναι τὰς προφητείας περὶ αὐτοῦ γραφάς, *Philoc.* c. 1.

the prophets will feel from reading them the traces of their inspiration, and from that feeling will be persuaded that what are believed to be the words of God are no mere human compositions.¹ All the darkness in which the O.T. had been shrouded melted away when our Lord came. The light of the Law of Moses, hidden by a veil, shone forth at the advent of Jesus; the good things foreshadowed in the Scriptures came gradually to be realised when the veil was taken away. "Their manifest Divinity is stamped upon the Books of the Bible."²

(2) The fulfilment of our Lord's Words recorded in the N.T., in which He taught with unchallenged authority that His Faith should prevail, proves their Author to have come from God; and the extraordinary success of the preaching of the Word— notwithstanding the small number of the preachers, and the persecution which inevitably overtook those who professed Christianity—forbids any hesitation in the admission that the result is superhuman.³ The language of these and similar passages from Origen's writings suggests at first sight that he regarded the Books of the prophets, and not their authors, as inspired; but there are other statements of a different kind which must in fairness be balanced against them: such as "The Holy Spirit suggested the words through the ministers of the Word"; or, the belief that St Paul was enabled by God to be a minister

¹ πεισθήσεται οὐκ ἀνθρώπων εἶναι συγγράμματα τοὺς πεπιστευμένους Θεοῦ λόγους, *Philoc.* c. i. (= *De Princíp.* iv. §6). ² *Philoc.* c. xv.

³ μείζον ἢ κατὰ ἄνθρωπον τὸ πρᾶγμα εἶναι λέγειν οὐ διατάξομεν, *Philoc.* c. i. (= *De Princíp.* iv. §2).

of the N.T.¹ Or, again, as we believe God to be immanent in each part of the inanimate creation,² so we conceive of all that has been recorded *by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost* that the sacred foreknowledge has given to men a superhuman wisdom. Speaking about the hardening of Pharaoh's heart Origen asks whether or not the words were truly spoken by God through the mouth of Moses acting under His inspiration?³ In the Scriptures "The Holy Spirit speaks as God."⁴

The Books are writings of the Holy Spirit. They vibrate, for those who have ears to hear, with the harmony of God; indeed, the whole Scripture is His one perfect harmonious instrument.⁵ Again, "the prophecies, if men carefully study the foreknowledge displayed in them, seem to be sufficient to persuade him who reads them with intelligence and judgement that the Spirit of God was in those men."⁶ "Christ was in Moses and the prophets. For, without the inspiration of the Word of God, how could they have prophesied about Christ? They were filled with the Spirit of Christ, as the source of all their words and actions."

From these carefully balanced statements we are justified in inferring that Origen believed the Bible

¹ *Philoc.* c. ii. ; c. iv. *ἰκάνωτο ὑπὸ Θεοῦ.* Cp. *Comm. in St John*, Brooke, i. 311.

² *ἐκάστω ἐνυπάρχοντος τοῦ τεχνικοῦ.*

³ *Philoc.* c. xxvii. *ταῦτα λέγεσθαι ὑπὸ τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ Μωϋσεως ἐνθουσιῶντος.*

⁴ *ἐκ προσώπου τοῦ Θεοῦ λαλεῖ.*

⁵ *Hom. in Numb.* xxvii. ; *Philoc.* c. vi.

⁶ Cp. *Contr. Celsum*, vii. c. 10 ; *De Princip.* i. c. 1.

to be the joint product of the Holy Spirit and human authors. He would have none of the erroneous teaching of the heathen "Mantic."¹ Inspiration he regarded not as the pouring into the mind of man, by the Divine illapse, of a series of thoughts which would, apart from it, be foreign to his mental outlook, but as an exaltation of the soul whereby prophets and apostles were elevated to the knowledge of the Truth,² The Divine Messengers, "by the contact of the Holy Spirit with their soul, gained a keener and a clearer intuition of spiritual truth."³ This made them both more perfect men and wiser seers. This teaching is illustrated by Origen's treatment of St Luke's preface to his Gospel. Laying stress on the phrase "they attempted,"⁴ Origen argues that the attempt was made by others "without the gift of inspiration"⁵ and therefore failed; while the Evangelists, whose writings we receive on the authority of the Church "wrote under the guidance of the Holy Spirit,"⁶ and their work was not simply an "attempt" but true history.

Origen's own particular theory of interpretation was that of a threefold sense of Holy Scripture, corresponding with the tripartite division of man. In this he was following in the steps of Clement, who taught that the sense of the law is to be taken in three ways, either as exhibiting a symbol or laying down a precept for right conduct, or as uttering a prophecy.⁷

¹ See p. 16 *supra*.

² *De Princip. Praef.* i.

³ *C. Celsum.* vii. c. 4.

⁴ *Hom. i. in Luc.*: ἐπεχείρησαν.

⁵ χωρὶς χαρίσματος.

⁶ Cp. 2 St Peter i. 21.

⁷ ὡς σημεῖον ἐμφαίνουσιν. ὡς ἐντολὴν κύρουσαν. θεσπίζουσιν ὡς προφητείας. Cp. *Clem. Strom.* i. c. 28.

These three senses are mystic, moral, prophetic. So too, speaking of our Lord as a teacher, Clement says, "The Saviour taught the Apostles first of all in type and mystery; next in parables and enigmas; and, thirdly, when He and they were alone, openly and without disguise."¹ This served as groundwork for Origen, who built upon it his own development of Clement's teaching. There was first the grammatical (or perhaps the historical) sense corresponding with man's body; next the moral (anagogic) or psychic sense corresponding with the soul; and, thirdly, the mystical or allegorical sense corresponding with man's spirit. "As man consists of body, soul and spirit, so too does Scripture which has been granted by God for the salvation of men."² "A man ought to record in his own soul in three ways³ the purposes of the Holy Writings." Thus each will receive instruction according to his spiritual capacity. The simple will be edified by the "*flesh*" of the Scripture, *i. e.* the primary sense.⁴ The more advanced by the "*soul*" of the Books; the perfect by the "*spiritual law*," which has a shadow of good things to come. Origen's meaning may be illustrated by the parable of the mustard seed, which represents first, the literal seed; then, faith; and, thirdly, the Kingdom of Heaven. He defends his explanation by an extract from the "Shepherd" in which Hermas is ordered to write two books for Grapte and Clement: while he himself, "the disciple of the Spirit," having

¹ *Clem. Fragm.* 66.

³ τριχῶς.

² *Philoc.* c. 1.

⁴ τῆν πρόχειρον ἐκδοχὴν.

got beyond the letter is bidden to "read" to the elders of the whole Church of God.¹ The same meaning is to be extracted from Origen's weird explanation of the water-pots that contained "two or three firkins apiece"—the numbers corresponding with the senses of Scripture.² The two firkins, soul and spirit, are always found in the Divine Word; and sometimes also the third, corresponding with the flesh, or bodily sense. But it is never safe to assume that any particular Scripture possesses the corporeal sense as well as the other two. He is driven by his theory to an allegorical explanation of the whole Bible. Certain passages, he teaches, do not instruct or edify: therefore their primary obvious meaning cannot be the true explanation. Passages which are morally repulsive, and those which have no religious meaning, must be explained by the use of allegory. In the same way we must deal with statements which appear to be "unworthy of God," or are in conflict with the law of nature and of reason. Origen quite fairly adduced the allegorical explanations of St Paul, and of the writer to the Hebrews,³ in defence of his own treatment of the Bible; but he is fantastic in his enlargement of the teaching employed by the N.T. writers—so fantastic, indeed, that his explanations have suggested that he was a master of "Biblical alchemy." The three methods of Interpretation which Origen laid down (corresponding, as we have seen, with the triple division of man's nature), are

¹ *Herm. Vis.* ii. 4 (*Philoc.* c. 1).

² *Philoc.* c. i.

³ Cp. McNeile, *O.T. in the Christian Church*, c. i. 7 ff.

suitable to various stages of spiritual development.¹ Thus, the "body" of Scripture is for those who went before us;² the "soul" is for us, and the "spirit" for those who in the coming age shall inherit life eternal.³ This is God's gift to the world. Origen teaches that the O.T. has frequently been misunderstood by those who would follow the bare letter of the text,⁴ yet even the vesture of things spiritual (*i. e.* the corporeal sense of Holy Scripture) is productive of good to the majority of readers—to each according to his capacity.⁵ Such indeed is the purpose of the Spirit. So the Book of Destiny was written "in front" and "on the back-side"⁶—by which Origen understands the easy, obvious interpretation, and the more remote spiritual sense.⁷ While holding fast to the literal truth of the Books of the Bible even to the acceptance of the most remarkable of the O.T. miracles,⁸ he roundly asserts that the creation narratives, and the details of the life in Eden, and of our Lord's temptation, are not to be taken literally; we are to recognise that, "with historical events literally true different ones are interwoven which never occurred."⁹ He admits freely the discrepancies which exist in the four Gospels, and explains that the truth does not lie in their corporeal forms,¹⁰ but is enshrined in their spiritual teaching.¹¹ He give examples of statements in the Bible¹² which

¹ *De Princip.* iv. 11 (= *Philoc.* c. i.).

² *Hom. in Levit.* v.

³ *Hom. in Levit.* v. (= *Philoc.* c. i.).

⁴ *Philoc.* c. i. (see sections 9 and 15).

⁵ ὡς χωροῦσι.

⁶ *Rev.* v.

⁷ *Philoc.* c. v.

⁸ *e. g.* Balaam, *Hom. in Numb.* xiii., and Aaron's rod.

⁹ *Philoc.* c. 1.

¹⁰ ἐν τοῖς σωματικοῖς χαρακτῆρσι.

¹¹ ἀποκείται ἐν τοῖς νοητοῖς.

¹² *Philoc.* c. i.

he held to be *literally* impossible. The discrepancy¹ is, however, due to the fact that it is *impossible* at times to express in human language both the spiritual and the historical aspect of events. Now the object of those who read Holy Scripture with intelligence should be, in face of distracting passages,² to try and discover a worthy conception of the energy of the Holy Spirit. And Origen expounds his theory of the reasons for the undoubted difficulties with which the Bible abounds: he boldly claims that these difficulties are divinely arranged.³

i. Speaking generally, the purpose of the Spirit in the prophets, and of the Word in the Apostles, was to conceal the truth. This leads to confusion; but the Divine object must be clearly grasped, which was to save the unworthy from discovering to the judgement of their own souls things which are, for their good, concealed from them.

ii. The Word of God "arranged"⁴ stumbling-blocks and offences and impossibilities, and embedded them in the Law and the historical portions of the Bible, lest we should be engrossed by the mere attractiveness of the literary style, and thus be led, either to forsake the doctrinal teaching,⁵ or, by cleaving to the letter, to receive no Divine instruction. For, as has already been said, even a casual reader soon discovers a deeper meaning in many passages than appears on the surface.⁶

¹ ἀσυμφωνία.

² *Philos.* c. ix.

³ ἀποστῶμεν τῶν δογμάτων.

⁴ τὰ περισπῶντα ῥητά, *Philos.* c. xxvi.

⁵ ἀκονόμησε, *Philos.* c. i.

⁶ *Philos.* c. xv.

Origen insisted most strongly upon the co-ordination of the Old Testament and the New as one authority. Although he does hint occasionally at degrees of inspiration in the sacred narratives, he also asserts generally that the Books are unconditionally inspired.¹ He states that the teaching of the Church lays down "that the Spirit of God inspired each of the Saints, Prophets and Apostles alike; it was One and the same Spirit Who inspired the writers who lived before, and those who came after, the Advent of Christ."² Similarly, "Those who say that the Spirit Who dwelt in the prophets was One, and the Spirit Who dwelt in the Apostles of our Lord was another, are guilty of precisely the same error as those who—if it were possible—would divide the Nature of the Godhead, and rend in twain the One God of the Law and the Gospels." Once more, "The Spirit Who taught Moses historical facts of old time, also taught those who wrote the Gospel."³ The same thought finds expression in his Commentary on St Matthew, where he likens those who do not understand how to listen to the harmony of God in the Sacred Scriptures, but suppose that the Old Testament does not harmonise with the New, . . . or the Apostle with the Gospel . . . to those unmusical souls who, because of their ignorance of the principles of harmony, fail to recognise the subtle blending of the varied chords of orchestral music.⁴ Yet, for all this unqualified teaching, Origen does see that the Scriptures contain, if

¹ *De Princip. Praef.*

² *Contr. Celsum. i. c. 44.*

³ *In Titum. iii. 10.*

⁴ *Philoc. c. v.*

not uninspired portions, at any rate degrees of inspiration in their several parts, though he does not follow out this admission at any length. The Gospel is, in his judgement, the firstfruits of all Scripture. And the Apostolic utterances in the Epistles, though "full of wisdom, worthy of credence, and successfully expressed" are not on an equality with the utterances of the Almighty Himself. Further, he shows from St Paul's writings that the Apostle clearly distinguishes between his own statements and those of the Lord ("I say, not the Lord,")¹ and asks whether St Paul looked upon both of them as inspired? Origen gives his own interpretation of the distinction that existed between the two sets of passages by stating that where St Paul speaks in his own person he is employing his apostolic authority, yet not exhibiting "the perfect standard of language spoken by Divine Inspiration."² Or, as he explains in another passage, "The Apostle appears in this Epistle to have attained a higher standard than in his other writings,"³ and then proceeds to quote I Cor. ix. 27, and Philippians iii. 10, 13.⁴

The unlimited developement of allegorical interpretation was bound to provoke controversy, *e.g.* a difficult statement exists, it was said, only to be disposed of by secondary explanation; the "crannies in the wall multiply and widen till the wall itself disappears."⁵

¹ I Cor. vii. 12.

² τὸ εἰλικρινὲς τῶν ἐκ θεοῦ ἐπιπνοίας λόγων.

³ *Praef. in Ep. ad Rom.*

⁴ See further, Sanday, *Inspiration*, Lect. vii, Note D.

⁵ Bigg, *Christian Platonists*, pp. 145 *sqq.* Cp. also p. 130, note 1.

Indeed, Origen himself is profoundly conscious of the attitude of contemporaries to his Biblical exegesis, as we learn from his own words, "Some one who hears me will perhaps say, 'What does this babbler mean?'"¹ Yet we can see how passionately Origen clung to his methods of interpretation, because while Celsus could argue that both Jews and Christians were ashamed of their own Scriptures, judging by their (to him) extraordinary treatment of the Books, Origen gloried in the effort—which was the special rôle of Alexandrian Christianity—to hold out one hand towards the school of wild anti-Christian speculation, and the other towards the school of fanatical literalism; and to point both of them to the real reconciliation of their views, if they would concentrate on a scholarly study of Holy Scripture. For he taught that God revealed Himself and His Will in the Bible on principles of historic developement, and that He made allowance for the "hardness of men's hearts." Along these lines, so familiar to ourselves in our own day, Origen laboured and taught; and we can see plainly enough that to a very large extent his theories of interpretation were right, if his application of them was not seldom fantastic and wrong. And we must acknowledge that his work has provided a foundation on which all subsequent Biblical interpretation has been built; and that he has laid us under an obligation that is never lightly to be forgotten. What were the obvious defects in his application of his own methods to the interpretation of Holy Scripture?

¹ *Hom. in Levit. xvi.*

They must be classified under two heads. (1) Origen and other Alexandrian teachers "found in the O.T. what they already possessed, what they could not have found, unless they had possessed it."¹ They saw clearly that God was speaking to men of old time "in many parts and in many fashions," and that the O.T. was a record of the progressive preparation of the world for the Incarnation; but they saw too much. They found types where there was no type, and they used passages of the O.T. to prove Christian doctrine which were not held by the Jews to be predictions of the Messiah at all. So they disregarded the "bodily characters" and concentrated on the spiritual sense. The interpretations were wild and fantastic, due to the "hair-splitting and over-subtlety which are the nemesis of allegorism."² (2) Origen failed to assign to each of the three senses of Holy Scripture its due weight; and he did not keep before his mind the relation of each of them to the other two. The body and spirit form the living man. "The *spirit* of man confers its vital power upon the material substance into which it has been infused, while the soul, the product (as it were) of this union of the spiritual and corporeal, is that in which consists the *real* existence of the living man. . . . If we grasp the full idea of the living man his material substance becomes the outward, but necessary, garb of the spiritual essence: the union of both being expressed by the soul, which derives its vital principle from what is spiritual, and the *condition* of

¹ Bigg, *Christian Platonists*, pp. 148-9.

² Bigg, p. 123.

its existence from the bodily organisation.”¹ Origen seems to have lacked the sense of this inter-relationship between the several parts: he seldom spoke of the “soul” of Holy Scripture: and its “body” is sacrificed to the “spirit.” Yet there were two restraining influences by which this great scholar and critic was saved from the worst excesses of Biblical interpretation. (a) He possessed a most reverent spirit, and used this great gift in the highest service—assured that the Scriptures yield their deepest treasures only to those who study them in a right spirit. How great was the value which he set on the inspired words of the Bible we gather from such a passage as this,² “Each word of Divine Scripture appears to me like a seed, whose nature is such that when it has been cast upon the soil, and has come to life again in the ear, there results a manifold increase: which is developed ever more and more by the skill and labour of the farmer, and by the contributory richness of the soil.” (b) He was always careful to keep within the limits of the authorised teaching of the Church,³ and to hold fast to the “Rule of Jesus Christ received by order of succession from the Apostles of the heavenly Church.” That alone, he states, ought to be believed to be truth which differs in no respect from the ecclesiastical and apostolical tradition.⁴ In our search for wisdom we Christians use the old Jewish Scriptures: and also those which were written after

¹ *Lee, Inspiration*, Appendix G.

² *De Princip.* i. c. 10.

³ *Hom. in Exod.* i. c. 1.

⁴ *De Princip.* i.

Jesus came, and are believed in the Churches to be Divine.

(8) ATHANASIUS.

The writings of Athanasius bear unqualified witness to the supreme authority of Holy Scripture, as the following extracts clearly show. "Divine Scripture is of all things most sufficient." "The Holy Scriptures are sufficient of themselves for the preaching of the Truth."¹ "The Sacred Scripture is mightier than all the synods."² He glories in the Faith confessed at a synod of the Church, seeing that it was handed down from the Fathers, and in strict agreement with the Holy Scriptures.³ "The whole of our Scriptures, the O.T. and the N.T., are profitable for instruction, as it is written."⁴ The Bible is to Athanasius "A Book wholly inspired by God from beginning to end."⁵ The Scriptures are the test by which all doctrine must stand or fall.⁶ The Jews are confuted by their own sacred Books. We ought, says the orthodox believer, not to despise the reading of the Divine Oracles; to which even the heretic replies, "Who is so wretched as to neglect his own salvation?"⁷—a passage which bears unmistakable witness to the importance of reading the Bible. "The true and holy faith in the Lord is made plain to all men, being both known and read from the holy Scriptures."⁸ Athanasius in a fine passage expounds the doctrine which was fully

¹ *c. Gentes. ad init.*² *Ep. de Synod. Arim. et Seleu.*³ *Ep. ad Epict.*⁴ *Ep. ad Marcell.*⁵ 2 Tim. iii. 15. πᾶσα ἀπλῶς θεόπνευστος βίβλος.⁶ *De Incarn. 33.*⁷ *Dial. ii.*⁸ *Ep. ad Iovian.*

appreciated by all the Fathers of the Church, that the Divine Word is the Eternal Person Who reveals, and the Holy Spirit the Eternal Person Who inspires.¹ "When the Scripture says the Holy Spirit spake in the prophets; and elsewhere Blessed Paul says the Father spake in the prophets, and elsewhere again that the Son speaks: while the Son says it is the Spirit Who speaks in the Apostles²—you see that the works of the Father are ascribed in the Scriptures to the Son and to the Holy Spirit." A good life is an indispensable requisite for searching and learning the Scriptures.³ Thus only can a man learn, so far as is possible for human nature, about the Logos.

Fortunately, we are the possessors of a detailed list of the Canonical Books as received by Athanasius, set forth in one of the Pastoral Letters issued to the Province of Alexandria.⁴ He was led to this particular subject from a grave sense of responsibility to his people, lest they should be tempted to read the Apocryphal Books, "being misled by the identity of *their* titles with those of the genuine Books." Making use of the Preface to St Luke's Gospel, and taking it as a model for his own Pastoral, Athanasius drew up a list of the inspired Scriptures which we most surely believe, as they were delivered to our fathers by those who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and

¹ *De Incarn.* 14.

² Hebr. i. 1; 2 Cor. xiii. 3; St Matt. x. 20.

³ *χρεία βίου καλοῦ καὶ ψυχῆς καθαρῶς καὶ τῆς κατὰ Χριστὸν ἀρετῆς*, *De Incarn.* c. 57.

⁴ *Ep. Fest.* xxxix.

ministers of the Word. Having learnt the Truth from the first, he publishes the Books which are admitted in the Canon, and have been delivered unto us, and are believed to be Divine. The Canon of the O.T. includes twenty-two Books corresponding with the number of the Hebrew letters.¹ Substantially the list agrees with the Books accepted by our own Church, with two exceptions. It includes Baruch and the Letter of Jeremy, and excludes Esther, which is placed among the ecclesiastical Books not admitted in the Canon, but framed by the Fathers to be read by Catechumens. In this list are found the Shepherd and the Didache. To the Shepherd he makes reference elsewhere, as Champion of the Orthodox Faith against false doctrine. "It is written, they say, in the Shepherd: for they do not scruple to quote from the Book, although it is not included in the Canon."² The New Testament list given in the Pastoral is identical with the Scriptures received as Canonical by the Church of England. The inspired Scriptures are "founts of salvation." He who thirsts may satisfy himself with the oracles which they contain. In them alone the lesson of piety is proclaimed. To them we may not add anything, nor may anything be subtracted from them. Finally, he adds that the Apocryphal Books are a device of heretics,³ who write them at their own pleasure. Heretics wrest the Scriptures. Of the Arians Athanasius says that they allege the Divine Oracles,

¹ Athanasius was entirely ignorant of Hebrew, as his language, ὡς ἠκουσα, clearly shows.

² *De Decret. Nic. Syn.*

³ αἰρετικῶν ἐπινοια.

and force upon them an interpretation according to their private views.¹ Laying down their own irreligion as a sort of canon of impiety, they wrest the whole of the Divine Oracles in accordance with it.² He upbraids the Arians as wiser than the Apostles, more learned in mysteries than the Prophets, claiming higher authority than the Evangelists, yes, even superior to the Lord Himself.³ Of the Pneumatomachi he writes as "enemies of the Spirit," because they explained words of Scripture which went against their view as figures of speech, and imported into them an unnatural sense.⁴ He joins issue with simple souls who believe the words of Scripture to be divinely inspired, and yet imagine that the language is chosen solely with the object of giving pleasure by its beauty of phrase. This is, he says, far from the truth. "For Scripture did not strain after attractive or seductive language; its words have been fashioned for the spiritual good of mankind."⁵

There is a wonderful passage in the same letter, in which Athanasius speaks of the Psalter as a mirror in which we see reflected the emotions of our souls. "Each Psalm has been spoken and composed by the Spirit"—with this special object and intention. He insists on the necessity of Church doctrine being stated with proofs, not with mere affirmation,⁶ by which he means to teach that Scripture is the verifying authority for oral Church teaching.

¹ *Or. Contr. Arian.* i. c. 37.

² *Or. Contr. Arian.* i. c. 52.

³ *C. Apollin.* ii. c. 14; i. c. 1.

⁴ *Ep. ad Serap.* 10.

⁵ *Ep. ad Marcell.* c. 27.

⁶ ἀποδεικτικῶς οὐκ ἀποφαντικῶς, *Dial.* iii. *Impassibilis.*

(9) CYRIL OF JERUSALEM.

The teaching of Cyril is peculiarly lucid and definite. In opposition to the Montanist doctrine of the suppression of consciousness in those who were under the influence of the Spirit, he speaks of the actual effect of His Presence. "Gentle is His coming: fragrant His help: most light His burden: rays of light and of knowledge flash forth to herald His approach."¹ Nay more, "The soul of the man who is counted worthy to receive the Holy Spirit is illuminated: he sees things that he knew not, and are beyond man's power to see. Though his body remains on earth, his soul reflects the glory of the heavens."² The Spirit, "wrought" and "spake" in the Law and the Prophets.³ He writes beforehand in the O.T. in the Person of Christ.⁴ One is the most Holy and Divine Spirit Who spake in the Law, the Prophets, and the N.T. Not even the most trivial detail concerning the Faith is handed down without the statements of the Holy Scriptures.⁵ For all the teaching that he gives Cyril promises "proof drawn from the Scriptures."⁶ If I fail to give this proof do not believe me, for our salvation comes "not by ingenious reasoning, but by demonstration from the holy Scriptures."⁷ The God of both Testaments is One.⁸ In the Old He makes known the Christ Who was

¹ *Catech.* xvi. 16.² *Ibid.* xvi. 16.³ *Ibid.* xvii. 3.⁴ *Ibid.* xiii. 13.⁵ *Ibid.* iv. 17.⁶ *Ibid.*⁷ οὐκ ἐξ εὐρεσιλογίας ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀποδείξεως τῶν θείων Γραφῶν.⁸ *Catech.* iv. 33-36.

manifested in the New: through the Law and the Prophets He acts as a tutor unto Christ.¹ The Christian may not sever the O.T. from the New. The Spirit Who spake in both is One and the Same.² The duty of a Christian who is faced with disparagement of the Law and the Prophets by the teachers of heresy is to utter the saving voice "Jesus came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfil." Cyril gives a detailed list of the Canonical Books: stating that in the O.T. there are twenty-two—the actual enumeration of the LXX. [Pentateuch five, 4 Books of Kings two, Joshua Judges + Ruth two, 2 Chron. one, 1 and 2 Esdras one, Esther one, poetry³ five, Prophetical Books five (the Twelve Minor Prophets = one Book).] In the N.T. he includes four Gospels; other Books so called are counterfeit,⁴ positively harmful, and pervert the souls of the simple. Then follow "The Acts of the *Twelve* Apostles," the Catholic Epistles, and the fourteen Epistles of St Paul.⁵ The Apocalypse is omitted from the list. Cyril most vigorously repudiates the Apocryphal Books. He warns his Catechumens not to read them. "For if you do not know those Books which are universally acknowledged to be canonical, why spend trouble to no purpose in reading those whose claims are not established?" Cyril apparently accepted as actual fact the fable of the origin of the LXX. The translation was divinely inspired. "By

¹ παιδαγωγῆσας.

² *Catech.* xvi. 4; cp. iv. 33.

³ τὰ στιχηρὰ.

⁴ e.g. The Gospel of Thomas.

⁵ These he styles ἐπισφράγισμα πάντων καὶ μαθητῶν τὸ τελευταῖον.

the guidance of the Holy Spirit was completed the interpretation of those Divine Scriptures which were spoken by Himself.”¹ It is the Spirit Who enables men to interpret the Bible. The Books have been bequeathed to the Church by Apostles and Bishops ; to the Catechumen therefore Cyril speaks of his duty towards them. “Do thou, then, because thou art a child of the Church, beware of falsifying the Divine records.” All other writings are to be relegated to a second place.

In another of the Instructions Cyril explains that the Catholic Faith rests on the sole authority of the Bible, as interpreted by the Church.² “Win the Faith and guard it with jealous care ; for it alone hath been delivered unto thee by the Church, and it is established by every Book of Scripture.”³ The Creed provides a brief summary of truth for those who cannot read the Scriptures. To this Faith Cyril would have his Catechumens hold fast as “a provision⁴ for every time of life,” and besides this to receive no other. The Creed is to be committed to memory, and the student is at the present time to learn from the Holy Scriptures the proof⁵ of each several part. Cyril warns his hearers of the danger of misinterpreting the Scriptures:⁶ and urges that this should fill us with reverence and fear. Many questions are raised in the Sacred Books. Even that which is written we do not understand. “Why do we meddle with that which has not been written ?”⁷

¹ *Catech.* xvi. 12.

² *Ibid.* v. 12.

³ *Ibid.* v. 12.

⁴ ἐφόδιον.

⁵ σύντασις.

⁶ *Catech.* xvi. i.

⁷ *Ibid.* xi. 12.

He sees that all the O.T. points forward to the Christ. All the facts of His Life "have been compiled in the records of the prophets, not on tables of stone. They have been plainly written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."¹

(10) THE SCHOOL OF CAPPADOCIA.

Gregory, Bp. of Nyssa, died A.D. 395.

Gregory, Bp. of Nazianzus, died A.D. 389.

Basil, Bp. of Caesarea, died A.D. 379.

The School of Cappadocia, with its famous triad of great teachers, was raised up by God to do a distinctive work for the Church, by commending in the terms of scientific theology, which appealed to the Greek understanding, the great truths of the Catholic faith. Its teachers acted as "a mediating influence between Alexandria and Antioch." Their task was to interpret to their own generation the same truths which Origen had explained to his; and it was inevitable that, alike from purpose and tradition, as well as from sympathy, they should look back to the great teacher who still dominated the horizon. The *Philocalia*, which was compiled by Basil and his lifelong friend Gregory of Nazianzus, is a standing witness to their admiration for the methods of Scriptural exegesis adopted by Origen: and the writings of Gregory of Nyssa abound in teaching which shows that he used the same keys which Origen had used to unlock the doors of difficult problems which the Church had not solved, and the same great weapon of allegory in

¹ *Catech.* xiii. 8.

making the letter of Scripture yield its spiritual treasures.

These teachers were speculative theologians first and foremost: men who held themselves free to speculate where the Church had not pronounced judgement: and only in a secondary sense were they students and expounders of the Sacred Scriptures. Yet it is comparatively easy to indicate the lines of their teaching on the inspiration and authority of the Bible.

GREGORY OF NYSSA.

Gregory of Nyssa was, of the three Fathers, the closest follower of Origen, although he is not always in agreement with his Master: yet what "Origen had been to the theology of the third century, Gregory of Nyssa became, after his measure, to the theology of the fourth."¹ He taught that every utterance and action in the Gospel was on a higher than human plane: and that "there is an admixture of the Divine with the human. The voice or action proceeds after a human manner: while the hidden meaning demonstrates the Divine element."² This is to co-ordinate the Divine with the human element in the composition of the Books, and to teach the doctrine of dynamic inspiration. Gregory was a thorough allegorist in his interpretation of the Bible, and defends the method at length in his writings. In the preface to his Homilies on the Song of Songs he set himself to reply to

¹ "Gregory of Nyssa was perhaps less of the Saint and guide of souls than his brother Basil and his namesake of Nazianzus, but more of the philosopher and scientific theologian."—Swete, *Holy Spirit in the Ancient Church*, p. 247.

² *Orat. Catech.* c. 32.

those who blamed him for his allegorical tendencies, and themselves taught the necessity of following, under all circumstances, the literal sense of Holy Scripture, refusing to acknowledge that any passages in the sacred writings were written in the form of allegory or enigma or with a secret meaning. He defends himself by saying, "It is in no way unreasonable that I should set my mind to track out, by every possible method, profitable interpretations of Divine and God-inspired Scripture. For, while many will find that the obvious meaning of a passage yields all that they desire, there are other portions of Scripture which are spoken with a hidden meaning and in enigmatical language, which refuse to yield a satisfactory meaning if they be literally interpreted; and must therefore be understood as the teaching of one who instructs by means of proverbs.¹ Call this method 'anagoge,' allegory, tropology, or what you like. I care nothing for the name adopted. All I do care for is an interpretation of the words which shall be of use as teaching the sure doctrine." Gregory then cites St Paul's line of teaching in Gal. iii. in defence of his own position.

On the same principles he explains the scriptural language about the Three Persons in the Godhead. It is employed "because it is the ordinary usage: the accepted popular idiom would be familiar."² But

¹ καθὼς ὑφηγείται ὁ διὰ τῶν παροιμιῶν ἡμᾶς παιδεύων λόγος. Migne, P.G.-L. xlv. 757.

² *De Comm. Not.*, Migne, P.G.-L. xlv. 181. διὰ συνηθείαν, ἵνα μὴ ξενίσῃ τὸ κοινὸν καὶ ἐν χρήσει τῶν πολλῶν ὑπάρχον. τὸ κοινὸν = the normal popular (and inexact) way of speaking.

great care is needful lest we should hold anthropomorphic conceptions of God. "The first case I consider a concession to help those who are still children in faith. The second I define as a doctrine stated for the confirmation of more advanced believers, who in their turn must hand down the faith to others."¹ At the same time Gregory sets himself to expound the order of the creation by careful attention to the actual words of the narrative as it stands. "I hope it may be possible for me, by the help of God, allowing the words of the story to retain their own significance, to interpret the scheme of creation on an ordered and consecutive plan."² Gregory is, then, careful to state his desire, where it is possible, to adhere to the literal sense of Holy Scripture. The earlier chapters of Genesis he explains on allegorical principles; dealing with the creation he speaks of "those statements which Moses makes after the manner of history, setting forth doctrines in the form of narrative." The "coats of skin"³ are an illustration of the veiled language which was employed by Moses. ["Doctrine is expressed in veiled language."] They represent the capacity of dying: death being a temporary provision, a "coat" with which man is invested for a time. He follows Origen in his explanation of Scripture mystically⁴—the process of "ascent" from the literal to the spiritual meaning of difficult passages. The allegorical treatment, as we have already noticed, always implies the "greatest reverence paid to" the

¹ Cp. σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις. I Cor. ii. 6.

² In *Hexaem.* Migne, *P. G.-L.* xlv. 68.

³ *Orat. Catech.* 8.

⁴ ἀναγωγικῶς, *Ibid.* 2.

Books so interpreted ; only those writings which had obtained an assured position were ever allegorised : and so common had this method of interpretation become, and so widely was it used by all parties within the Church, that many of the mystical interpretations had passed into current ecclesiastical tradition.¹ Gregory tells us he received them "by tradition": "They have come down to us by tradition." An additional and striking illustration of his allegorical methods is found in his books on the superscriptions of the Psalms. To take one further example, he adds to his own allegorical explanation of the Cross the statement that other interpretations would be known by those "versed in mystical teaching."²

Two remarkable passages deserve to be quoted at greater length, as showing Gregory's profound appreciation of the "spiritual" in Holy Scripture. "By the might of the Spirit are the inspired saints possessed. This is the reason why every Scripture is called God-inspired, because its teaching is the result of the Divine inspiration. If the Word were stripped bare of its outward veil, that which remains is the Lord and Life and Spirit—as testified by the Blessed Paul, and by the words of the Gospel."³ And again, "all the words of the Divine Scripture are voices of the Holy Spirit." To illustrate this, Gregory quotes Acts xxviii. 25, and Hebrews iii. 7 ; and speaks of the utterances of the Psalter as "the words spoken in

¹ *Orat. Catech.* 32.

² εἰδέναι ἂν οἱ τῶν κρυπτῶν ἐπι λόγους. *Ibid.* 32.

³ *In Eunom.* *Orat.* vii. Migne, *P.G.-L.* xlv. 744.

detail by men in the Person of God." And then, commenting on our Lord's reference in the Gospels to Psalm cx., Gregory says that the words were spoken by David, who declared heavenly mysteries, "being no longer master of himself, that is, uttering words beyond the power of man to frame." One more extract must suffice: it shall be the passage in which the teacher (Basil's sister) asks the question, "Who would gainsay the fact that absolute truth can be claimed for that alone on which is stamped the seal of the witness of Scripture?"¹

GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS.

Gregory of Nazianzus possesses a most real reverence for every detail and every phrase of Holy Scripture, and yet utters very vigorous warning against the slavish adherence to the "letter" of the Word. It is as though he were feeling that the allegorical explanation of the text was not, after all, entirely satisfactory; and he were standing at the parting of the ways, a reconciling influence between the schools of Cappadocia and Antioch. He tells us plainly that he sought in the interpretation of Holy Scripture a *via media* between those who were "dull of mind" and "those who were over-speculative" (*i.e.* the Allegorists).² Nothing, he tells us, is without design in Scripture: every stroke and every letter has its special significance. "We trace the accuracy of the Spirit in detail to each separate stroke and letter; for

¹ *De Anim. et Resurr.*, Migne, P.G.-L. xlv. 64.

² *Orat.* xlv. 12.

it is blasphemous to suppose that exact pains were bestowed by the compilers of the Books, on even the smallest matters, without design." Yet Gregory is stern in his condemnation of those who carry literalism too far. "You are overmuch concerned with the letter which holds you as its slave. . . . You track out each separate syllable." He states that "reverence for the letter" is to those of whom he is thinking "a cloak for profanity."¹ And he goes on to say that he would not scruple to teach truth which he believed to be implicit in Holy Scripture, although it were not explicitly stated; and he expounds the Divine method of presenting truth to men "in many parts and in many fashions" by tentative and progressive advances in the revelation of Himself and His Will. "Adopting the methods of the tutor or physician, in part He cuts away, and in part He carries on the teaching of the past."² So again he speaks of an order in the revelation of God³ and applies this to the development of our Lord's teaching by the Holy Spirit, Who brings all things to the remembrance of the Apostles.⁴ In an interesting passage Gregory points out that the Spirit of God claimed men for their inspired work, not only according to their individual character or education, but also with special reference to the circumstances in which they had received the Divine revelation.⁵ Thus the permanence of their personal

¹ *Or. Theol.* v. 3, cp. *Orat.* xxxi. 3. Contrast Basil, *De Spir. Sancto*, i. § 1.

² *Ibid.* v. 25.

⁴ *Or. Theol.* v. 26.

³ τάξις θεολογίας.

⁵ *Orat.* xli. 14.

characteristics is secured, and is in no way obliterated by the inspiration of the Spirit. "The Holy Spirit, Who is most wise and a true lover of men, when He calls a shepherd makes of him a poet; when He calls a herdsman dressing figs, He turns him into a prophet. If He find fishermen at their work, He sweeps them into the net of Christ to bring the whole world within the meshes of the Word. If He finds men enthusiastic for persecution, He transforms their energy, and out of a Saul He fashions a Paul."¹ In the same Oration Gregory explains the nature of inspiration as possessed by the writers of both Testaments, and teaches that the Spirit wrought in the fathers and in the prophets and in the disciples of Christ. "Their master-part was moulded by the Spirit."² To the disciples He revealed Himself as they were able to bear His teaching, and that in three marked stages: (1) before the Passion, (2) after the Resurrection, (3) from the time of the Ascension. There is a beautiful passage in which Gregory describes the reward of reverent investigation of the meaning of Holy Scripture "for those who do not handle the Scriptures carelessly or without due heed, but part asunder the 'letter' and direct their gaze within. Such souls are counted worthy to behold their hidden beauty, and are irradiated by the illumination of spiritual knowledge."³ We have also the assurance of Gregory's

¹ Ps. lxxviii. 70; Amos vii. 14 f.; St Mark i. and parallels; Acts ix. and parallels.

² *Orat.* xli. 11. τυποῦμενοι τῷ πνεύματι τὸ ἡγεμονικόν.

³ *Orat. Theol.* v. 21.

acceptance of the belief of the Church in the continuity of both the Old and the New Testaments.¹

BASIL.

Basil's attitude was much more reserved than that of his brother, and approached somewhat closely to the teaching of the School of Antioch. His views on the authority and inspiration of the Bible were clearly expressed, and his explanation of the epithet "God-inspired" as applied to Scripture is of more than common interest. "All Scripture is God-inspired and profitable because it has been composed by the Holy Spirit with this particular object, that all of us men, coming to it as to a public surgery for souls, may severally select from it the cure that is best suited to our disease."² The words of Scripture were dictated by the Holy Spirit. Their end was the salvation of those who were instructed by them.³ No single syllable of the sacred writings is to be neglected. Nothing may be added to Scripture, or subtracted from it. "The Apostle, driving home his argument by means of a human illustration, vigorously forbids us to add to, or take from, the inspired Scriptures."⁴

¹ *Carmen*, xii.

² Ὅροι παχυμερεῖς.

Χάρισμα δ' οἶδα Πνεύματος θεῖαν δόσον
Κήρυγμα' ἀδήλων, τὴν προφητείαν λέγω.
Εὐαγγέλιον δὲ, τῆς νέας σωτηρίας.
'Αποστόλην δὲ, συμμαχίαν κηρύγματος.
Λόγου δὲ γνώσιν, τὴν κατήχησιν, νέοις.

And there is a complete list of the Canon of Holy Scripture in the poem
περὶ τῶν γνησίων βιβλίων τῆς θεοπνεύστου γραφῆς.

² *Hom. in Psalm* i. 1.

³ *Hexaem. Hom.* i. 1.

⁴ *Hom. De Fide*, i. Illustrated by Galat. iii. 15.

Many things taught by God-inspired Scripture are binding upon those who are anxious to please God. To Scripture Basil appeals as deciding the questions at issue between heretics and himself. "Let the inspired Scripture be final arbiter."¹ It is to be studied—specially the N.T.—because very frequently mischief comes of reading the O.T., not because what is written is harmful, "but because the minds of the injured are weak."² The Scriptures are "Oracles of the Spirit."³ "The Spirit inspires the prophets, and makes lawgivers wise."⁴ The testimony of the written Word is a court of final appeal. "Every word or action must be accepted on the testimony of inspired Scripture." And again, "Believe the written words: to that which is not written pay no regard."⁵ Commenting on 2 Tim. iii. 16, Basil argues thus: Christ, we are told, spoke through the Apostles; the Spirit is said to speak through the men of God. The prophets used to proclaim "Thus saith the Lord." So St Paul is combining the utterances of the Three Divine Persons when he speaks of all Scripture as God-inspired:⁶ and from this Basil rightly deduces the Godhead of the Holy Spirit.

What can be gathered from his writings about the effect of the Divine afflatus on the human subject of inspiration? The explanation and effect of the Spirit's illapse are beyond man's power to describe. "It is impossible for man to present an account of

¹ Letter xxii.² Letter xlii.³ *De Spir. Sanc.* ix.⁴ *Hom. de Fide*, 2.⁵ *Hom. ad Calumn. S. Trinit.* 4.⁶ *In Eunom.* v. Migne, *P. G. - L.* xxix. 721.

the varied gifts of power that are granted by the Holy Spirit to those who are worthy of them."¹

Expanding the need of "worthiness" in those whom the Spirit uses as His instruments, Basil says, "Great is the initial gift of God, needing for its developement a soul that is wholly purified from sin, that man should give free play to the Divine Inspiration, and thus tell forth his message from God."² The power to reflect God³ is granted only to pure and transparent souls. The Spirit's energy is not for all, but He works in those who are "free from crookedness." To the soul wholly possessed by the love of God, God grants Divine power, and opens the eyes of his mind to discern the vision that He wills him to see.⁴ The comparison of the musical instrument, which we have had occasion so often already to notice, reappears in St Basil: yet he teaches that the power of becoming an instrument in the Hand of the Divine Spirit rests with the human will. "He who offers himself as a worthy instrument for the influence of the Spirit is a prophet."⁵ And most emphatically does he repudiate the teaching that the prophets gave their inspired message in an ecstatic condition. "Some tell us that men prophesy when bereft of their natural powers, while the human reason is obscured by the Divine Spirit. Yet it plainly contradicts the promised conditions of the Divine Visit, to affirm that the subject

¹ *In Esai.* Prooem. 2. Migne, *P.G.-L.* xxx. 121.

² *Ibid.* 1. Migne, *P.G.-L.* xxx. 120.

³ *κάτοπτρον τῆς θείας ἐνεργείας.*

⁴ *In Esai.* Prooem. 3.

⁵ *In Esai.* Prooem. 1.

of inspiration is beside himself, or that when he is filled with the teaching of God he is then unable to exercise the power of his own mind.”¹

In vigorous language Basil pleads for unstinted recognition of Christian tradition, written or unwritten, as well as of actual Scripture.² He upbraids those who would refuse the right to use a single phrase that claims the authority of the Fathers only: and he defends at length the use of ordinances, and subjects of preaching, which have been carefully guarded and accepted by the Church, even though they cannot claim express authority from Holy Scripture. For both written doctrine and apostolic tradition are of equal value to piety. It would be disastrous, in Basil’s judgement, to reject Church customs on the score that they have not the authority of Scripture, for it would deal a deadly blow at the Gospel, and reduce preaching to a bare name. In illustration he instances the sign of the Cross, the custom of standing at prayer on the Lord’s Day, turning to the East during prayer, trine immersion at Baptism, the “Invocation” at the Eucharist. All these come “to us from secret and mystical tradition.” Further, we ought to feel thankful that this secrecy has been practised by our Fathers in the faith, who adopted this system because they had learnt that it was the best method of preserving a reverent regard for mysteries. In this they were following the lines of the Mosaic legislation which forbade the mass of the people to witness the

¹ *In Esai.* Prooem. 5.

² *De Spir. Sanct.* xxvii.

deepest mysteries of religious observance, *e.g.* the ritual of the Day of Atonement. In the same way, unwritten tradition saves the mass of mankind from neglecting and despising through undue familiarity the knowledge of Christian ordinances.

(11) THE SCHOOL OF ANTIOCH.

Diodorus, Bp. of Tarsus, died A.D. 394.

Theodore, Bp. of Mopsuestia, died A.D. 429.

Theodoret, Bp. of Cyrrhus, died A.D. 457.

Chrysostom, Bp. of Constantinople, died A.D. 407.

The great contribution to the understanding of Holy Scripture which we owe to the Teachers of the School of Antioch centres in their revolt against the undue use of allegorical interpretation, and their assertion of the importance of grammatical and historical methods of Scriptural exegesis. A link between Cappadocia and Antioch is found in Diodorus, Bishop of Tarsus, at once the intimate friend of Basil, and the teacher of Chrysostom and Theodore. Only fragments of the voluminous writings of Diodorus have survived; but from them we are able to trace in him "a typical Antiochene, clear-sighted, practical, averse to mysticism and allegory."¹ His principles were expounded in a treatise to which he gave the title, "The Difference between contemplation of Pure Truth² and Allegorism"; and while he was fully conscious of the spiritual teaching of

¹ Swete, *Patristic Study*, p. 99.

² Θεωρία.

the Scriptures, he laid himself out to expound them, primarily, on the lines of actual grammar and history.

THEODORE.

The most original thinker of the School of Antioch was unquestionably Theodore of Mopsuestia. He was a man of independent judgement, and great critical acumen. The titles by which he came to be known are a guarantee of the importance which was attached to his teaching. He is "The Interpreter of the Scriptures *par excellence*," "A Sea of Wisdom," "Doctor of the Church universal." He goes further than any Father of the Church in his fearless acknowledgment of the existence of degrees of inspiration in the sacred writers, and in the rigorous method of subjective criticism which he applies to the several Books. This attitude brought Theodore under censure from the Fifth General Council; but, if he was a heretic, he was an unconscious heretic.¹ The line of interpretation that he followed was due to an "excessive jealousy for the literal truth" of the Scriptures.² Above all the Fathers of Antioch, Theodore is an uncompromising opponent of the allegorist school. From this point of view Origen and Theodore represent the extreme poles of Scriptural exegesis. The system of interpretation which Theodore laid down was a development from the teaching of his master, Diodorus, of whom we are told that his principles

¹ "His errors are mainly due to an imperfect realisation of the nature and extent of human sin. With Theodore, sin is a weakness rather than a disease, a negative rather than a positive evil."—Swete.

² Swete, *Theod. Comm. on Minor Epp. of St Paul*, i. lxxxvii.

emphasised the need of dwelling on the mere letter of Scripture.¹ Theodore's commentary on the Minor Prophets was written with the express intention of counteracting the allegorical standpoint of interpretation. "To refute those who, without examining them, lay themselves out to attack the words of the prophets." He held very strongly that the entire history of Israel was ordained with a view to the fuller revelation of God in Christ. "To prepare for the revelation and coming of the Master, Christ." The unity of purpose which underlies both Old and New Testaments is expressly taught in the commentary on the Book of Nahum.² One and the Same Spirit inspired all the writers. "It was the same grace of the Holy Spirit that was granted to men of old time and to those who serve the mystery of the new Covenant." Everything both in the Old Testament and the New was ordained by the same God, Who had one end in view.³ The events which happened to those of old time were "types" of those which were to come. "In the same way the events of old time were found to be a type of those that happened later, and to possess a likeness to them." Thus Theodore substituted the "typical" for the "allegorical." That is to say, he insisted on the historical character of O.T. narratives; e.g. the deliverance of the Israelites, while the Egyptians were slain, denoted *by types* that Christ would so deliver us from the greater bondage of sin. The fullest

¹ Soer. *Hist. Eccles.* vi. 3.

² *In Nahum.* I. i.

³ Prooem *in Ionam*, πρὸς ἕνα σκοπὸν δρῶν.

exposition of Theodore's views about allegorism is found in the *locus classicus* of his commentary on St Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. In common with Chrysostom and Theodoret he states that St Paul uses allegory¹ as equivalent to the more strictly accurate type,² this latter being generally used to denote a true, the former a fictitious, narrative. The definition of *Chrysostom* is as follows: "By conventional use of the term did the Apostle call a type an allegory. What he means is this: Such is the history. It does not only tell us what lies on the surface, but definitely rules out certain other explanations, so it can be called an Allegory." *Theodoret's* explanation is in these terms: "St Paul calls the passage an Allegory. He might equally have said it bears a further interpretation (than that which meets the eye). For he was not confuting the historical truth of the narrative, but only explaining the historical facts which were set forth beforehand in type."³ The actual words in which *Theodore* explains that the allegorist abuses St Paul's use of allegory are these: "The Apostle did not destroy the historic sense, nor did he make light of past events. He did, however, first describe the facts as they had actually happened, and then applied the history according to his own understanding of the facts." And again, "He admitted the historic truth of all the narratives."⁴ So also Theodore argues

¹ ἀλληγορεῖσθαι.

² τύπος.

³ Both are quoted in Swete's *Comm.* i. 73, note.

⁴ *In Galat.* iv. 24, 29.

from the word "like as" (in the Latin translation) that the very phrase postulates resemblance, and that resemblance demands that both sets of events must actually exist in history. He gives the allegorist no quarter, and accuses him of a desire to make all the history of the Divine Scriptures in no way differ from dreams of night.¹ In a word, we may explain Theodore's position on this question by saying that the histories of the Bible contain spiritual lessons; only, these must be capable of being deduced from the histories, and not be arbitrarily imposed upon them.²

It would be difficult to express more fully his belief in the Divine Inspiration of the writers of the Bible than in the words used by Theodore in his commentary on Hosea, where he teaches the deep meaning of the phrase "The Word of the Lord came."³ It everywhere denotes the Divine energy that is granted to a man; and by "Divine energy" he means the state in which the prophet receives a revelation of the future. From this revelation is given to him the power to speak, and to declare things that are to be. Like other writers of his school, Theodore held LXX in high estimation;⁴ and his ignorance of Hebrew not infrequently hindered his application of

¹ *In Gal.* iv. 24. τῶν ἐνυπνίων οὐδὲν διαφέρειν.

² His own definition of allegory is this: ἀλληγορίαν ἐκάλεσεν τὴν ἐκ παραθέσεως τῶν ἤδη γεγονότων πρὸς τὰ παρόντα σύγκρισιν.

Cp. "A type presupposes a purpose in history wrought out from age to age. An allegory rests finally in the imagination, though the thoughts which it expresses may be justified by the harmonies which connect the many elements of life."—Westcott, *Hebr.*, p. 200.

³ Hos. i. 1. Migne, *P.G.-L.* lxxvi. 125.

⁴ Swete, *Comm.* i. 6, note.

critical methods to the Books of the O.T.—a limitation which he shared with the other Antiochenes, and indeed with almost all the Fathers of the Church. The subjective criticism applied by Theodore to the Books, all of which he judged from a purely human point of view, resulted in his attempt to lay down a criterion which all inspired writings must satisfy, if they were to be accepted as genuine Scripture. In the O.T. Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Chronicles, Job, and Ezra; and in the N.T. the Catholic Epistles, failed to make good their claim. The test was this. "Among the Books which were written for the instruction of mankind must be reckoned the Books of Solomon, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. These he compiled on his own initiative, that they might prove of use to others, for he had not been granted the gift of prophetic insight, but only the gift of wisdom; and these are clearly distinct from each other, according to the teaching of the Blessed Paul."¹ It was his exalted sense of the Divine character of the Bible which led Theodore to reject these Books which failed to satisfy his test of inspiration; and so brought him into conflict with the judgement of the Church.

The principles adopted by him for the interpretation of prophecy are luminous and original. He teaches that, in almost every case it is only *by way of accommodation* that the words of Psalmist and Prophet can be applied to the Christian dispensation.² The

¹ *Constant. Concil. Art.* lxxiii.

² See *Theod. Comm. in Zach.* ix. Migne, *P.G.-L.* lxxvi. 558 and 676, and on *Psalm* liv.

full truth of a good many O.T. prophecies is indeed to be found only in our Lord; they are an outline picture¹ of His sufferings; but they have an immediate and direct relation to the time at which they were spoken, independent of their Christian content. Theodore will allow only four Psalms to be directly and primarily Messianic;² and he considers that many of the prophecies refer only to the O.T. dispensation, and have not (like those already mentioned) any Messianic significance whatever; while those which are quoted in the N.T. refer only in a typical sense to the Christian order. This may be illustrated by his treatment of Isaiah liv. 1, or by his remarks on Rom. iii. 12, and Ephes. iv. 8. St Paul, says Theodore, "used the witness (of the O.T.) not as indicating that it was spoken in a prophetic sense, but because it fitted his argument. Just in the same way, in our ecclesiastical arguments we frequently make use of the witness of the Bible, so far as its meaning is capable of being adapted to our discussion."³ The spiritual interpretation of O.T. narratives is clearly admitted, *e.g.* in the explanation of Ephes. v. 31: "The words spoken at the beginning of creation about men and women are mystically fulfilled in the relationship of Christ and His Church": or in the commentary on Joel ii. 28. Chrysostom saw in these words directly and primarily a prophecy of the Day of Pentecost. To Theodore they pointed to a great deliverance of God's people in the days near at hand;

¹ *σκιαγραφία*.

² Ps. ii. viii. xlv. cx.

³ *In Rom.* iii. 12. Migne, *P.G.-L.* lxi. 793.

and he accepts St Peter's use of the prophecy on the Day of Pentecost by pointing out that the language of Joel was, so to say, an over-statement of the events he was describing; and that the full content of the passage was disclosed in the story of Pentecost.

CHRYSOSTOM.

Chrysostom has bequeathed to the Church an unusually large output of Scriptural exegesis from which we can accurately gauge his particular standpoint. He is far from being a critical student or an exact theologian; his strength lies rather in the interpretation of the Scriptures, and in his wonderful power as a preacher and expositor. The circumstances of his time made it possible to insist less on the defence of the Christian faith than on the interpretation of its title-deeds, for Christianity had become the recognised religion of the Empire. So it came about that "the Apologist became the Interpreter of Holy Scripture."¹ Chrysostom was apparently the first to use the phrase "The Books," or, "The Book," of the Bible, thereby recognising the Books as a separate literature. His love for the Scriptures is extraordinary, and his appeal to their teaching is final—a statement which is, of course, equally true of all the writers of Antioch.

"Let us closely follow the rule of Holy Scripture"—a "line of conduct in which he assures us we need fear no mistake, seeing that the Holy Scripture, when it wishes to be our teacher is its own interpreter, and

¹ Chase, *Chrysostom*, p. 9.

does not suffer the hearer to go astray.”¹ [Whether this phrase refers to the “Canon” of the Scriptures is at least doubtful.]² The words of the Apostle, in the Fourth Gospel, are called by Chrysostom not his own but the words of the Holy Spirit or of God. His reverence for Scripture breathes through his entire writings, *e. g.* (1) “The reading of Holy Scripture is companionship with God.”³ (2) “The Scriptures are like clouds charged with spiritual blessing.”⁴ (3) “The Sacred Book of the Gospels exceeds in grandeur the highest teaching found elsewhere, for it is filled with decrees of the most High King.”⁵ (4) “More effectual than the action of fire to melt the hardened heart and to render it useful for every good purpose, are the words taught by the Sacred Scriptures.”⁶ (5) “The man who is in agreement with the Scriptures is a Christian. He who gainsays them is far from this standard.”⁷ (6) “Let us give reverent heed to the Evangelist Matthew, for all the words [in his Gospel] are not spoken by him, but by Christ, The Lawgiver of the Christian Commonwealth.”⁸ (7) “It is not utterances that proceed from our own brain, but the very words of the Master which were appointed for our instruction in the Holy Scriptures, that we propose for discussion.”⁹

To the Apostles belong pre-eminently all spiritual gifts: “A rich profusion of spiritual gifts is laid up in the Apostolate, as in a fountain head.”¹⁰ In those

¹ Tom. iv. 123. Ed. Paris, 1835.

³ iii. 88.

⁴ iii. 89.

⁷ ix. 286.

⁸ vii. 15.

¹⁰ *Hom. de util. Lect. Script.* iii. 93.

² See Chase, *Chrysostom*, p. 59.

⁶ iii. 31.

⁶ vii. 36.

⁹ iv. 103.

of them therefore who are authors of the Books of the N.T. these spiritual gifts are stored. Again, bearing witness to the fact that "the Four Gospels are one Gospel," Chrysostom teaches that "The grace of the Spirit which moved the soul of each of them is one." There is divergence in the historical narratives of the Gospel—a fact which disarms the suggestion of collusion which might be made by the enemy, if the agreement between the Four Evangelists were too minute—but there is no contradiction.¹ "Divergence is one thing: contradiction another."² Like most of the Fathers, Chrysostom possessed no knowledge of Hebrew; his O.T. was the LXX, to which version he appears to assign a final authority, although he is candid enough to admit that the obscurity of many passages in the O.T. was due to the fact that they were read in a translation.³ The history of the O.T. is to Chrysostom an object-lesson in God's providential care, watching over the Books of the Bible. "God inspired . . . Ezra so that from the fragments which remained he re-wrote the Books (which had been burnt)." Their translation in the LXX was part and parcel of God's providential scheme. Theodoret goes further than this. "Ezra compiled the Books. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he wrote them, without any duplicates to assist him." To Chrysostom the O.T. is God's revelation of Himself. It was propaedeutic. Christianity was not an afterthought of later growth. The prophets knew Christ, else how could they have

¹ vii. 6.

² iv. 10, ἕτερόν ἐστι διαφόρως εἰπεῖν καὶ μαχομένως εἰπεῖν.

³ vi. 210.

written about Him? The key which unlocks the O.T. mysteries is the doctrine of the condescension of God.¹ God spoke to man, but He spoke in man's words. His revelation of Himself was conditioned by the instruments whom He used, and by the spiritual capacity of those to whom the message was sent. Then, as in the days of Christ, God spoke to men as they were able to hear. "He spoke to them through the Spirit, adapting His teaching to the capacity of those who heard it."² And, as Chrysostom points out in his exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord explicitly states that there were Divine stages in the education of the world; so that the "morality commanded by God, if tried by an absolute standard, may be defective, yet relatively it will always be perfect."³ He clearly recognises that while the writers of the Books are inspired, their message is given in their own words, and their individuality is always preserved. The effect of the inspiration of the Spirit was in no sense to dull the mental faculties of those whom He used as His interpreters. "The prophet utters his message, not in an ecstatic trance, but with his mental faculties unclouded, and in a state of complete self-control. He knows what he is saying."⁴ He definitely contrasts with this the false doctrine of heathen "Mantic." "The peculiar badge of the diviner is ecstasy." Coupled, however, with this statement, we do find extravagant language applied to the

¹ συγκατάβασις.

² iv. 15; cp. St Mark iv. 33; St John xvi. 12.

³ Chase, p. 45.

⁴ x. 303. *Hom. (in 1 Cor. xii.)* xxxix.

inspired writers, which—taken by itself, and not balanced by other teaching—would seem to imply that the Divine Teacher obliterated the personal equation in those whom He inspired. St Chrysostom employs the simile of the musical instrument, which we have already considered at some length; and calls St Paul “The mouth-piece of Christ, the lyre of the Spirit.”¹ Then, stating that the words spoken are not ours, but due to the grace which the Spirit inspires, he warns that we must not disregard even those passages which we might imagine to be of least importance. Again, “The heart of Paul was the heart of Christ, and the tablet of the Holy Spirit.” Of the teaching of the inspired writings in general Chrysostom states that just as there are various strings in a lyre, which all combine in one symphony, so the Holy Spirit moved the hearts of all the writers, and made them teach the same truth.² His reverence for the Bible may be gathered from his illustration of the silence in which a message from the Roman Emperor was always received in the theatre. If *his* words were worthy of so much respect, how much greater attention was due from those who listened in the Scriptures to the words not of a mortal man, but of the Lord of Angels?³ Nothing, says Chrysostom, speaking of the frequent reiteration of salutations in the Epistles of St Paul, is without significance in Holy Scripture. [“In the Holy Scriptures there is

¹ i. 963 (*De Lazaro Concio*, vi.).

² ii. 708 (*Hom. in Ignat. M.*).

³ vii. 20 (*In Matt. Hom.* i. .

no superfluous statement, nor any needless detail ; each separate letter has its use.”]

We have considered the doctrine of Divine condescension or accommodation, as explained by the writers of the School of Antioch. It is time to turn to the attitude adopted by them towards the interpretation of the Divine Library. What did Chrysostom teach about the *historical* character of the O.T.? how far did he permit the use of allegorical interpretation? to what extent did the old narratives contain types of Christian truth? He is, generally, content to extract the obvious meaning from the words, teaching that the literal sense has an educational value. He dwells on the most trivial details, and deprecates the reckless mysticism which had lost sight of the historicity of Biblical narratives in its passion for allegorical exegesis. The Bible presents to us true history ; but it has always a higher aim than that of ordinary human literature ; it is moral and spiritual ; there is in it that which yields to the seeker after higher wisdom.¹ The histories, Chrysostom insists, are genuine histories ; and unless this principle be honestly recognised, it is useless to teach doctrinal and spiritual lessons as contained in the words, for that is to build a superstructure on a precarious and crazy foundation. Yet Chrysostom does not wholly abandon allegorical interpretation. For example, he states : “ The words of the prophets are like riddles ; difficulties abound in the Old Testament, and the Books are hard to understand. But

¹ Chase, p. 50.

the New Testament is plainer and easier to grasp.”¹ Again, “Some passages must be interpreted literally; others in a sense different from that which lies on the surface”² (illustrating the statement by Isaiah xi. 6, wolves and sheep): “for we shall understand the passages to speak not of actual wolves or lambs, but of the character of men. Yet others in a two-fold sense. We must understand the actual and historic scene; we must interpret the spiritual meaning, as in the figurative history of Isaac.” The offering of Isaac, that is to say, was a historic fact, but the wording of the story prefigured the Offering of the Divine Son on the Cross. So, too, following the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Chrysostom interprets the person and office of Melchisedek as typical of our Lord, and sees in the Bread and Wine a reference to the sacramental mysteries: an instance, he adds, of the “foresight of Holy Scripture.” This method of handling the narratives of the O.T. is most clearly marked in the exposition of the Proverbs, *e.g.* the slain beasts are the interpretations of Scripture: the mingled wine suggests the combination of the figurative and the historical; since no man can receive Divine things when they are unmingled.³

The leech is the devil.⁴ He squeezes out the vital power (the blood) of souls. He is represented as the parent of daughters, not of sons, because he has nothing in his character that is brave, but only pleasure that is effeminate. In his comments on the

¹ vi. 197.

³ Prov. ix. 2.

² v. 225. *Hom. in Ps. xlvi.*

⁴ Prov. xxx. 15.

parable of the vineyard in Isaiah v., Chrysostom explains the limits within which allegory is permissible.¹ The passage speaks of a vineyard and a hedge, and goes on to interpret the phrases: "The vineyard of the Lord of Hosts . . ." ² "Scripture, when it employs allegories, always supplies the interpretation of them, so that the uncontrolled passion of those who are bent on allegories may not be free to wander without system or principle." It must be added that he steps outside the limits thus laid down, for he incorporates in his commentary on the "Songs of Degrees" both the historic and the figurative explanations; yet his main exposition is founded on the historical interpretation. Further examples of the mystical treatment of Holy Scripture may be found in Chrysostom's theory of the birth of Phares and Zara.³ Zara represents the East, *i.e.* the Church; and Phares is to be understood as the Law. The narrative is a mystical riddle, teaching that the Law was a preparatory discipline leading up to the advent of the Church in Christ. "Such," he adds, "is the opinion of those who have accurately examined these things."

As examples of typical explanations in the Gospels, may be instanced (*a*) the reason given by Chrysostom for the Baptism of our Lord being delayed till He was thirty years old,⁴ and his interpretation (*b*) of the triumphal entry,⁵ (*c*) of the pool of Bethesda.⁶ In

¹ vi. 63. *Comm. in Isa. v.*

² Isa. v. 7.

³ iv. 687 ff. St Matt. i.; Gen. xxxviii.; *Hom. in Gen. lxii.*

⁴ See on St Matt. iii. 13 ff.

⁵ St Matt. xxi. 1-8.

⁶ St John v. 2-9.

his explanation of the parables he admits that we must not press the interpretation to fit every detail of expression ; else many are the absurdities that will follow. To teach us this, Christ Himself explained the Parable of the Tares.

THEODORET.

The third great writer of this School is Theodoret. He belongs to a younger generation than the other two. Like them, he is a true exponent of Antiochene theology, and approaches the study of the Bible from the side of grammar and history ; but he preserves a distinct independence of judgement on all questions of Scriptural exegesis, and does not shrink from considerable modification of the principles of his master Theodore when dealing with the interpretation of O.T. prophecy. Theodore regarded the primary application of the prophecies to contemporary events as their sole and complete meaning, in almost all cases. Theodoret vindicated the more usually accepted view that the prophecies were spoken with direct reference to the Messiah and to Messianic times. "The prophets frequently foretell the Passion and the Resurrection of the Lord Christ: and their words give great pleasure to all who are ready to pay heed to the rich variety of their teaching."¹ Speaking generally, the position adopted by Theodoret in his explanation of the Books of the Bible is a compromise between the allegorical system of Alexandria and the strictly historical interpretation which had

¹ *Protheoria in Psalmos*, Migne, *P.G.-L.* lxxx. 861.

been developed by Theodore. Both of these systems, as they stand, were rejected by Theodoret. His formulæ for describing the inspiration of the Sacred Books are such as we have often considered already. He speaks of "The Holy Scripture," of "God speaking through the prophet," of St Paul as "inspired";¹ and he claims that "we follow the Divine oracles, and helped by the grace of the Spirit we penetrate the depths of the inspired Scripture." We find the familiar figure of the musical instrument in his commentary on St Paul's words in 1 Cor. vii. 40, where "I think that I too have the Spirit of God" is thus explained by Theodoret: "The words—such is St Paul's meaning—are not mine, but the gracious utterances of the most Holy Spirit. For I am an instrument in His hands."² And again, "I say, not the Lord," "That is, I do not find this Law written down in the sacred Gospels: but I now enact it." Now, the Laws of the Apostle are clearly seen by those who have been instructed in the ways of God to be the Laws of Christ. *For the Apostle is His Voice.*³ Once more, it is the peculiar function of a prophet "to employ his tongue as a willing servant of the grace of the Spirit."⁴ Discussing the authorship of the various Psalms, Theodoret dismisses the question as of no real importance.⁵ "What advantage do I derive from knowing whether all were composed by one particular poet, or some of them were the work of other writers? It is enough for

¹ θεσπέσιος.² ὄργανον ἐκείνης ἐγώ.³ 1 Cor. vii. 12.⁴ προφήτου ἰδίου. *Comm. on Psalm xlv. 1.*⁵ *Erotheoria in Psalmos.*

me to know that one and all are the handiwork of the Holy Spirit." In the same strain, he teaches that the source of a quotation made by St Paul is of no account: its witness is, however, beyond controversy. "I am content with the statement of the Blessed Apostle when he says 'It is written.'"¹

In controversy with heretics, both they and Theodoret stand on common ground in their recognition of the Divine influence exercised in the composition of the Sacred Books. "I obey the sacred Scripture, and that only," is the phrase which he puts into the mouth of the representative of heresy: and the orthodox position is expressed in the assurance that the prophet's words are true, because they are "utterances of the Holy Spirit."² Theodoret dwells on the great distinction between treatises of human wisdom and that product of spiritual teaching which the Apostle names God-inspired Scripture.³ For the grace of the Divine Spirit spake through the prophets and apostles: wherefore the Holy Spirit is Himself God, seeing that the Scripture of the Spirit is, according to the Apostle, truly inspired by God.

In common with the other Antiochenes, Theodoret excluded from the Canon of the N.T. the Apocalypse, 2 St Peter, 2 and 3 St John and St Jude. To these Books he added the Epistle of St James, which he rejected as uncanonical.

¹ *Comm. in 1 Cor.* ii. 9. Migne, *P.G.-L.* lxxxii. 243.

² *Erasmistes, Dial.* i.

³ *Comm. in 2 Tim.*

(12) JEROME.

St Jerome, the "great representative of Western learning," "the rich source from whom almost all critical knowledge of Holy Scripture in the Latin Churches was drawn for ten centuries,"¹ is almost the only Father who was able to bring to the study of the Bible a deep and unrivalled knowledge of the original Hebrew. No Biblical scholar, since the time of Origen, has placed the Church under so great a debt as Jerome, and it redounds to his credit that he bears generous testimony to the extraordinary power and influence of his great predecessor. Though he differed from Origen profoundly in his methods of interpretation, he was sufficiently magnanimous to say: "Gladly would I have his knowledge of the Scriptures, even if accompanied by all the ill-will which clings to his name."² Jerome's devotion to the Bible cannot be exaggerated, "Read and re-read the Divine Scriptures: let the sacred volume be always ready to thy hands."³ He states his conviction that in Holy Scripture even the order of the words has a secret meaning.⁴ No single syllable lacks its own special force: "Every phrase or syllable or point in Holy Scripture is full of meaning."⁵ To understand the Books a guide is needful: those who without knowledge of Scripture presume to explain it, adapt conflicting passages to their own meaning, and force

¹ Westcott, *Bible in the Church*, p. 181.

² Pref. to *Bk. of Hebr. Questions*.

³ *Ep.* lii. *Ad Nepotian*. Cp. "nunquam de manu tua et oculis tuis recedat liber." *Ep. Ad Rust.*

⁴ *mysterium.* ⁵ *Ep. ad Pammach. Comm. in Ephes.* iii. 6.

the Scriptures reluctantly to do their will.¹ Further, the guide must be personally holy. "When you are doubtful of the meaning of any passage of Scripture, consult a man of unblemished life."² Moreover, he lays down the thoroughly sound rule that in expounding the Scriptures what we need is not a polished style and oratorical flourishes, but learning and simple truth.³ The Books are not all equally inspired. In the Preface to the Epistle to Philemon, Jerome explicitly admits this to be true, in the face of those who thought the subject of the letter beneath the dignity of inspiration. "With the one exception of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ there is no one whom the Holy Spirit has permanently indwelt."⁴ Of our Lord he says again, "I am not so ignorant as to suppose that any of His Words is either in need of correction, or is not divinely inspired."⁵

When Jerome made his new translation of the O.T. from the original Hebrew, by the express limitation of his work to the Canonical Scriptures of the Hebrew Text, he exposed himself to many assaults from those who pinned their faith to the LXX. As an introduction to his great work, he wrote what he calls "a helmed introduction to all the Books," stating his readiness to answer all his critics, and to do battle with those who impugned his design and methods.⁶ We

¹ *Ep. ad Paulin*: ad voluntatem suam Scripturam trahunt repugnantem.

² *Ep.* xxii.

³ *Praef. in Amos.*

⁴ *Praef. in Philem.*

⁵ *Ep.* xxvii.

⁶ "The exact meaning of this remarkable phrase has been variously given. . . . At its close, following out the image, he prays those to whom it was addressed 'to oppose the shields of their words against the detraction' of his enemies."—Westcott, *Bible in the Church*, pp. 181, 182.

find a complete enumeration of the Books of the Hebrew Canon: together with the principal lessons to be learnt from each of them. "As there are twenty-two elementary characters by means of which we write in Hebrew all we say, and the compass of the human voice is contained within their limits, so we reckon twenty-two Books by which, as by the alphabet of the doctrine of God, the tender infancy of the righteous is instructed."¹ All books which are not found in the Hebrew Bible are reckoned by Jerome among the Apocrypha. He draws the clearest distinction between "canonical" and "ecclesiastical" Books: stating that as the Church reads Judith, Tobit, and the Books of the Maccabees, but does not admit them among canonical Scriptures, so let it read Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, for edification of the people, not to give authority to the doctrines of the Church.² Jerome did not, however, deny to the Apocrypha the title of "Scripture." He gives short shrift to heretics, and their handling of Scripture: "The heretics produce their witness from the most pure fount of the Scriptures, but they do not interpret them in the sense in which they were written. They are set upon reading their own meaning into the simple words of the Church's Books."³ And again, "The heretics, though formerly they trusted in the Scriptures, which were written by the Holy Spirit, are now giving themselves over to

¹ *Praef. in Sam.*

² *Praef.* to Bks. of Prov., Eccles., Song of Songs.

³ *Ep.* li.

strange doctrines.”¹ The quotations are of interest, not only because they show that for heretics and for orthodox alike Holy Scripture was the final court of appeal, but also from the singularly clear testimony which they contain to the authority and inspiration of the Books, as taught by Jerome. The Scriptures are the “most pure fount” from which knowledge is derived: they are “written and edited by the Holy Spirit.”

Following the line of teaching which we have had occasion to notice several times already, Jerome stoutly attacks the doctrine of “ecstasy” as the psychical foundation of prophetic utterance. “The prophet does not speak in a state of ecstasy, as Montanus and Prisca madly say; but in his book of prophecy he unfolds his vision, and clearly understands the meaning of all his words.”² The prophets did not speak in ecstasy, so that they knew not what they spoke: or while they would instruct others were themselves quite unconscious what they were saying. He returns to the question in his commentary upon the Epistle to the Ephesians, and tries to meet an objection that might be raised. If the prophets of the O.T. did thoroughly grasp the meaning of their own message, it was difficult to reconcile with this view St Paul’s statement that the mystery of Christ had not in other ages been revealed to the prophets as it was in later days made known to the Apostles. To which Jerome

¹ *Comm. in Mich.* ii. 7.

² *Praef. in Naum*, cp. *Praef. in Abacuc*.

replies, "It is one thing to grasp an object with your hands, another to foresee future history in the spirit."¹ Elsewhere he draws attention to that characteristic of Hebrew prophecy, by which the seer describes future events as though they were actually present: instancing the prophecy "concerning the Cross of the Lord," "They pierced My Hands and My Feet."² Jerome insists strongly on the unity of the entire Bible. "Whatever we read in the O.T. we find also in the Gospel: and what we read in the Gospel is deduced from the O.T. There is no discord between them, no disagreement: in both Testaments the Trinity is preached."³ This view is further illustrated by a reference to the opening of the Seals by the Lion of the tribe of Judah, Who revealed the secrets not of one of the Psalms (as many supposed) but of all the Scriptures, which are all written by the Holy Spirit, and are therefore called One Book.⁴ Referring to this volume Ezekiel testifies "in mystic meaning" that the Book was written "within and without," *i. e.* "in a spiritual as well as in a literal sense."⁵ In like manner the Saviour speaks in the Psalms. "In the volume of the Book it is written of Me": not alone in the Scripture of Isaiah or Jeremiah but in all Holy Scripture, which is called one Book. The explanation which Jerome gives of the leading ideas in the several Books of the O.T. bears out his vivid sense of a deeper spiritual meaning, in addition to the plain

¹ *Comm. in Ephes.* II. 3.

² *Ibid.* I. 2.

³ *Ep.* xviii.

⁴ *Rev.* v. 2. *Comm. in Isai.* ix. 29.

⁵ *in sensu et in litera.*

literal sense of the words of Holy Scripture.¹ “We see the real meaning of Exodus, with the history of the Plagues and the giving of the Law, and those mystical commandments which God ordained. The teaching of Leviticus is revealed, wherein each separate sacrifice, yes, each syllable of the Book, and the garments of Aaron, and the order of the priesthood, have the fragrance of heavenly mysteries. In the historic Books, if you look at the hidden meaning beneath the surface, you will find a description of the small number of the Church, and of the wars which the heretics wage against it.” In the commentary on St Matthew Jerome teaches that in the words of the Evangelists “the spiritual is inseparably linked with the spiritual”: so that while he spares no pains to expound the literal and historic meaning of the Books, he is also equally conscious of a deeper teaching in which he recognises the Hand of the Spirit of God. Of the Apocalypse he writes that “depths of hidden meaning are found in each separate word.” There is no lack of mystical interpretation in his commentaries. For example, he says, “I explained the Book of Obadiah in an allegorical sense, for I knew nothing of its history.” And he lays down rules for allegorical explanation.² Leah he interprets as Judaism, and Rachel as Christianity.³ Or again, “a man who could read the story of Judah and Tamar the harlot and of the two sons born to her—if he were guided only by the squalor

¹ *Ep ad Paulin.* liii.

² See *Comm. in Ep. Galat.* II. iv. 24.

³ *Ep.* 123.

of the literal facts, and failed to rise to the dignity of a spiritual interpretation, might be guilty of burning the bones of the King of Edom.”¹ He gives a quaint explanation of the story of Abishag the Shunamite, which he allegorises with the help of Prov. iv. 5-9.² “Let Wisdom embrace me, and let my own Abishag, who ever retains her youth, rest in my bosom.” Or again, the city delivered by the poor man really describes the individual delivered from Satan by the better man within him: or, the Church delivered from the hosts of darkness by Christ.³ Once more, the Seraphim represent the O. and N. Testaments.⁴ Jerome is, however, careful to strike a warning note, lest this method of interpretation should run riot. “The rule to follow in handling Scripture is this: In passages where the prophet’s message most plainly refers to future events, we must not weaken the written statement by adopting an uncertain allegorical explanation.”⁵ To the Gospels he assigns a pre-eminent position. The writers “move whithersoever the breath of the Holy Spirit leads them.”⁶ They are “The chariot of God,” “The true Cherubim.” Both they and the Apostles—as Hebrews of the Hebrews—expressed in their own language what they read in the Hebrew Bible. The Apostles, at any rate St Peter and St John, were spared the daily study needed by others, because the Holy Spirit suggested the answers that they

¹ *Ad Am. Lib.* i. 2, 1 ff. [? comburat].

³ *Comm. in Eccles.*

⁵ *Comm. in Malach.* i. 10.

² *Ep.* lii.

⁴ *Isai.* vi.

⁶ *Ep. ad Paulin.* liii.

ought to give.¹ They were—as it is written—taught of God. Of St Paul we are told that he learnt at the feet of Gamaliel the Law of the Lord and of the Prophets, and thus became “furnished with spiritual weapons”²—“A very armoury of the Law and of the Holy Scriptures.” Jerome recognised the existence of human faults (*e.g.* grammatical errors) in the writers of the Bible; yet he is careful to guard himself against any dangerous inferences that might be drawn from this admission. “For myself, whenever I notice a solecism or any such irregularity, I do not find fault with the Apostle, but constitute myself his champion.”³ His theory was that the Divine power of the Word destroyed these apparent blemishes, or caused believing Christians to overlook them. In a word, he taught “that the external phenomena do not preclude the reality of the highest influences of Divine Grace.”

(13) AUGUSTINE.

We close this study of patristic teaching on the inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture, with a brief examination of the views held by St Augustine. Unlike Jerome he brought no critical ability or historical learning to bear upon his exposition of the Bible. Of Greek he had little knowledge: of Hebrew none at all. He was, in a word, a man of action, not a student. His position, however, is substantially that of his contemporary, St Jerome, from whom he seems to differ only on the subject

¹ *Ep. ad Paulin.* liii.

² *Ibid.*

³ *In Ephes.* II. iii.

of the exact contents of the Canon. His language on this matter is indeed varying and uncertain; but it appears that to his authority may be traced the claim of the Apocrypha to be ranked as Canonical. In a long list of Books contained in the Canon, he certainly does include the O.T. Apocrypha,¹ without drawing any clear distinction between their authority and that of the Hebrew Canon; though it must be admitted that he does differentiate between them, in other passages.² The question of canonicity is, he explains, dependent on the reception of a Book by "as many Catholic Churches as possible." His position is that the authority of the Bible is derived from the authority of the Church. "I could not pin my faith upon the Gospel, if I did not acknowledge the authority of the Catholic Church."³ The distinction between "controverted" and "acknowledged" books of the O.T. would appear to have troubled Augustine less than his desire to mark off both of them as entirely separate from the pernicious writings which had been used for the undermining of the Catholic Faith. And his statements on the contents of the Canon are, as we have said, not always consistent. We may contrast with the passage just quoted, a statement from another treatise, in which he is dealing with "lost Books" of the O.T. and trying to find an explanation of their non-survival, and of their absence from "the Canon which the people of

¹ *De Doctr. Christ.* ii. 8.

² *C. Gaudent*, i. 38; *De Civ. Dei.* xviii. 33.

³ *Contra Epist. Manichaei*, 5, cp. *De Util. Cred.* 31.

God acknowledged.”¹ The exact reason baffles Augustine, but he hazards a suggestion: “I suppose that the very men to whom the Holy Spirit revealed those truths that ought to be considered authoritative in matters of religion, were capable of writing certain passages like ordinary men, by the aid of historical research, while they must have written others as prophets acting under the inspiration of God. Then, these two types of literature were so plainly distinct from each other, that one came to be accepted as composed by their own unaided wisdom, the other as inspired by God Himself, Who spoke by their lips.” The Holy Spirit, he teaches, revealed what Books He willed should possess special authority, in matters of religion: such Books were written by direct inspiration from Him and were not—as other Books—the product of ordinary human work: these last would enrich the sum of useful knowledge: the others would possess authority in the sphere of religion. It is the recognition of this authority that jealously guards the “Canon.” So, the fact that the last writings were not preserved by the Jews proves that they did not regard them as authoritative and sacred. But the Books which the Jews admitted to Canonical rank did not include the Apocrypha of the O.T., and Augustine frequently speaks of the Jews as our librarians and our witnesses, and is prepared to limit the term “Canonical” to those Scriptures which the Jews received.²

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 38.

² *Ibid.* xviii. 36.

The Council of Carthage,¹ at which Augustine was present, recognised the enlarged Canon of the LXX, including the Books of O.T. Apocrypha : and, though the intention of the decree was simply to limit the ecclesiastical use of Books, in actual fact it created the popular belief that all the Books included under the name of Canonical Scriptures were of equal authority : and thus canonised the Apocrypha. To sum up, while Jerome definitely excluded the Apocrypha, Augustine apparently acquiesced in their inclusion : and it is undoubtedly due in great measure to his influence that the Apocrypha holds the position which it has secured in the Western Church.

Augustine appears definitely to consider the Hebrew and LXX Texts as equally inspired, despite their great differences and manifest inconsistencies. "The LXX Translators enjoyed so much of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their work that among the number of men there was but one voice . . . even if anything is found in the original Hebrew in a different form from that in which these men have expressed it, I think we must give way to the dispensation of Providence, which used these men to bring it about that Books which the Jewish race were . . . unwilling to make known to other nations, were . . . made known so long beforehand to the nations which in the future were to believe on the Lord. Thus it is possible that they translated in such a way as the Holy Spirit, Who had worked in them and given them all one voice, thought most suitable

¹ A.D. 397.

for the Gentiles.”¹ In other words, Augustine attributed the defects of the Greek translation to a Divine Inspiration, which had guided the translators to suit the circumstances of the times.

The reverence in which the Scriptures were held by Augustine is reflected in the language which he employs to describe the Books and their writers. The Scriptures are “venerable writings,” “The inspired pen of the Holy Spirit.” “The Faith will totter if the authority of the Holy Scriptures loses its hold on men.”² We must surrender ourselves to the authority of Holy Scripture, for it can neither mislead nor be misled.”³ “Holy Scripture brings a remedy for the terrible diseases of the human will.”⁴ “Scripture asserts nothing but the Catholic Faith . . . it is a narrative of the past, a prophecy of the future, a description of the present.”⁵ “Men are nurtured and educated in the study of Holy Scripture.”⁶

The question “Why Christ Himself did not write any Book” is answered by Augustine in these remarkable words. “His members gave out the knowledge which they had received, *through the dictation of the Head*; whatever He willed us to read concerning His own words and acts, He bade them write, *as though they were His own very hands.*”⁷ More unguardedly still, Augustine teaches that we see in the Gospels the very Hand of the Lord which He wore in His own Body. The Evangelists are “The Sacred Chariots of

¹ *De Doctr. Christ.* ii. 15.

² *De Peccat. merit.* i. 22.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 15.

⁷ *De Cons. Evang.* i. 35.

² *Ibid.* i. 37.

⁴ *De Doctr. Christ.* ii. 5.

⁶ *Ibid.* ii. 14.

God"—an expression used also as we have noticed by St Jerome. There are no contradictions of each others' writings in the Books of the Four Evangelists. "We must demonstrate that the Four Sacred Writers are not at variance with each other. For our opponents . . . frequently maintain that discrepancies are found in the Evangelists."¹

The very order in which events of our Lord's Life are mentioned in the Gospels is due to Divine prompting.² Though he teaches that the Evangelists wrote "entirely by the aid of their memory, and as seemed best to each of them,—either in a condensed or a detailed narrative,"³ he also states as a sort of corrective that each Evangelist made his selection from the materials at his disposal, "acting by the inspiration which each of them had received. They brought to bear on their work as authors the needful cöoperation of the Spirit of God."⁴

In the Scriptures the Spirit of God spake through men. The prophets of God speak what they hear from Him; a prophet is just one who declares the words of God to men.⁵ All useful knowledge gathered from the Books of the heathen is of no account when compared with the knowledge of Holy Scripture: from these inspired Books *with their wonderful sublimity and wonderful simplicity*⁶ is to be

¹ *De Cons. Evang.* i. 7.

² *Ibid.* ii. 19: *suggerebantur.*

³ *Ibid.* ii. 12.

⁴ *Ibid.* i. 2.

⁵ *De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 43; *Quaest. in Ex.* ii. 19.

⁶ *De Doctr. Christ.* ii. 42

learnt much that cannot be discovered in any other way.

The student of the Bible aims at finding out the thought and will of those by whom it was written; and through these he trusts to trace the will of God, in accordance with which he believes the writers to have spoken.¹ He has great need of humility, if he would study the Scriptures rightly.² *Love of an author* is necessary to interpret his work completely. He will prove to be the most skilful interpreter of the Bible who has read, and retained in his knowledge, all the Sacred Writings—those of them at least which are *canonical*.³ For his spiritual equipment the student of Scripture needs seven gifts of grace: fear, piety, knowledge, resolution, counsel, purification of heart, and wisdom.⁴ Augustine examines at length the Book of Rules of Tichonius, which are, so to say, keys to open the secrets of Holy Scripture.⁵

The very obscurities of Scripture are divinely arranged, in order "to subdue pride by toil, and to prevent satiety in the intellect, which generally holds of small account that which is discovered without difficulty. The Holy Spirit . . . has so arranged the Holy Scriptures as by the plainer passages to satisfy our hunger, and by the more obscure to stimulate our appetite."⁶ Augustine appears to have regarded all Scriptural narratives (*e.g.* Gen. iii. and vi.–vii.) as statements of actual fact, unless they

¹ *De Doctr. Christ.* ii. 5.

² *Ibid.* ii. 8.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 30 ff.

² *Ibid.* ii. 41.

⁴ *Ibid.* ii. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.* ii. 6.

were quite obviously allegorical. He defends the ark against mathematical and physical objections, though he teaches that the events recorded happened only "as types of the Church."¹ Thus he lays down the rule that "whatever there is in the Word of God that cannot, when taken literally, be referred either to purity of life or to soundness of doctrine, you may set down as figurative."² For further examples of allegorical interpretation we may refer to *De Doctr. Christ.* ii. 10-12; where Augustine deals with unknown and ambiguous signs which prevent Scripture from being understood, and veil its meaning. He explains that the great remedy for the ignorance of such signs is knowledge of languages. Those who speak the Latin tongue need two other languages for the knowledge of Scripture, Hebrew and Greek, that they may consult the original texts, if the endless diversity of the Latin translators throws them into doubt. A knowledge of the significance of *numbers* will also be of great value to those who would unravel figurative expressions. Again, "In the first place, great caution is needful, if we would be saved from explaining figurative expressions in a literal sense:"³ which Augustine illustrates by 2 Cor. iii. 6, "The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life." So long as the literal sense (where it obviously exists) be not sacrificed, he has no objection to our finding profit in additional explanations. Cp. his explanation of the Cherubim.⁴ "The two Cherubim spread the shadow of their wings over the mercy-seat, which signifies that they do it

¹ *De Civ. Dei*, xv. 27.

³ *Ibid.* iii. 5.

² *De Doctr. Christ.* iii. 10.

⁴ *Quaest. in Exod.* ii. 105.

reverence by veiling it from view. They are mystical figures ; they face towards, and match, each other : and in them are prefigured the two Testaments. Their faces are turned towards the mercy-seat, for they powerfully appeal to the mercy of God, in which lies our only hope." He mentions a fourfold interpretation of the O.T. : "on principles of history, of aetiology, of analogy, and of allegory." ¹

The student of the O.T. is encouraged to realise the depth and variety of teaching which the Books contain. "When we read any of the Sacred Books we must carefully discover what eternal truths are therein set forth, what historical facts are told us, what future events are prophesied, and what we are commanded to do." ² Augustine gives a by no means unnecessary caution to those who would dogmatise where Scripture leaves a question of interpretation wrapped in obscurity : lest we should be found contending not for the doctrine of Holy Scripture, but for our own ; endeavouring to make our doctrine to be that of the Scriptures, instead of taking the doctrine of the Scriptures to be ours. ³ Even misunderstanding of Scripture is not harmful, so long as the "rule of love" is observed. "One may err about a text, without being guilty of deception. He who with good intent, though with wrong exegesis, is steering loosely towards the one end of edification (the love of God) is like one who runs to the goal across the fields instead of in the beaten road." ⁴

We may fitly close with a quotation from a letter

¹ *De Util. Cred.* 3.

³ *De Genesi.* I. xviii.

² *De Genes. ad Litter.* I. i.

⁴ *De Doctr. Christ.* i. 36.

of Augustine to Jerome, in which he tells his correspondent his own theory of inspiration. In this letter it is to be noted that he draws a clear distinction between Canonical and Extra-Canonical Books: and differentiates between the authority which they severally command. He proceeds further to point out that there are limits even to Canonical authority, illustrating his statement by the dispute between St Peter and St Paul.¹ "Freely do I admit to you, my friend, that I have learnt to ascribe to those Books which are of Canonical rank, and only to them, such reverence and honour, that I firmly believe that no single error due to the author is found in any one of them. And when I am confronted in these Books with anything that seems to be at variance with truth, I do not hesitate to put it down either to the use of an incorrect text, or to the failure of a commentator rightly to explain the words, or to my own mistaken understanding of the passage. Other books I read, and, assuming that I find in them abundance of guidance in holiness and of doctrinal teaching, I am persuaded of their truth not because the authors have thus expressed their thoughts, but because they have succeeded in convincing me, either from my knowledge of the Canonical writers, or by the inference of my own reason, that they are not at issue with the truth."²

¹ Cp. *De Civ. Dei*, xviii. 41.

² *Epist.* 82.

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