Inspiration, the infallible truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures

by

James Bannerman

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INSPIRATION:

THE INFALLIBLE TRUTH AND DIVINE AUTHORITY

OF

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.
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THE INFALLIBLE TRUTH AND DIVINE AUTHORITY

OF

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

BY

JAMES BANNERMAN, D.D.

PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY, NEW COLLEGE, EDINBURGH.

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PREFACE.

At a time like the present, when we are so frequently taught that the Bible cannot be believed in the same way that words spoken by God are to be believed, the following treatise, as an attempt to vindicate the ancient and catholic faith of the Church of Christ on the subject, can require no introduction or apology.

The doctrine of the infallibility of the one record which we have of a supernatural revelation from Heaven, is so vitally connected with the grounds of a Christian's faith, and affects, in a manner so fundamental, the certainty of all that we believe and hope in reference to God, that the importance of it can hardly be over-estimated, viewed whether in its theological or practical bearings. Beyond even its strictly doctrinal and religious aspects, the controversy about the inspiration of the Bible opens up the inquiry as to whether or not we have any objective standard of truth for man, apart from the revelation or the inspiration proper to his own rational and spiritual nature; and this, in turn, leads directly to the questions both of the supernatural character and of the historical veracity of the Scripture volume.

The extent to which doubts as to the infallibility of the Bible mingle with the discussions, and underlie the controversies, both religious and scientific, of the present day, is due not altogether either to the alleged incredibility of the
doctrine of inspiration in itself, or to the difficulty in regard to the proof of it. These doubts have often a deeper source. They are frequently, and perhaps, in many cases, unconsciously connected with a feeling of the incredibility of the supernatural in general; they are mingled and allied with difficulties felt as to the historical veracity of Scripture; they are sometimes strengthened if not originated by an unwillingness to acknowledge any law or standard of opinion and belief beyond a man's own feelings or convictions. The controversy as to the authority to be conceded to the record of God's revelation, and the unsettled state of feeling in regard to it both within and beyond the Church, are connected with wider and more fundamental questions than that of the infallibility of the Bible; and it is hardly possible to discuss it aright without adverting to these questions, and endeavouring to separate between them and that of inspiration. Hence the earlier portion of this work is devoted to what the author cannot but regard as indispensable to a satisfactory discussion of the inspiration of Scripture,—namely, a right adjustment of the point in debate between the friends and opponents of the doctrine, and an accurate exhibition of the state of the question. Preliminary controversies settled or set aside, it will be found that the question as to the inspiration of Scripture admits of a far easier adjustment.

But while recent controversies have brought into view other and wider questions that must first be disposed of before it is possible to deal justly with that of inspiration, they have served also, in no small degree, to narrow the field of discussion as regards both its real nature and its proper evidence. The number and variety of theories that have been offered to explain its nature, and the searching criticism to which each in its turn has been subjected, mark a period in the discus-
sion so far advanced, as to enable us, better than before, to form an accurate estimate of the doctrine, and rightly to define both its extent and limits. The ordeal of controversy through which it has passed, has contributed to a separation between what is and what is not essential to it, and caused it to reappear in its original and scriptural simplicity; and the multitude of theories invented to explain it, have served only to bring out more distinctly the truth, that inspiration, as a fact supernatural, can be explained by no theory at all. The progress of the discussion in recent times has led to the same result that controversy as to other cardinal articles of the faith in the former history of the Church has brought about; —it has served to define more clearly what belongs to the substance, as contradistinguished from the form, of the doctrine which the Church of Christ is interested and bound to maintain, and to place on its proper foundation as to evidence the truth in dispute. It is useless to contend for human theories of a scriptural doctrine, when the doctrine itself is to be defended against the enemy; and it is worse than useless—it is fatal—to mistake and to substitute the one for the other. Without seeking to know more of inspiration than the result accomplished by the supernatural agency of God through means of it, we ought to be contented when we can establish by its proper evidence the twofold fact of the infallible truth and of the divine authority of the inspired word.

This is all that the author has endeavoured to accomplish, after laying down the proper state of the question as between the friends and opponents of the doctrine in debate. He ventures to think that it is all that is desirable to attempt, in seeking to establish the scriptural fact of the plenary inspiration of the record in which God has embodied His supernatural revelation.
PREFACE.

In handling a subject which has been so largely discussed, and from such opposite points of view, and around which have been gathering the thoughts and efforts of so many earnest inquirers, especially of late, any claims to originality would be out of place, and incompatible with the author's object. His aim has been to set forth fully and distinctly the doctrine of Scripture on the subject, and to exhibit the evidences we have for it in their proper order and connection. In doing so, he is not conscious of having spoken in any other interest than that of truth, or of being influenced by any other authority than that of the Word of God; and his desire is, that what he has written may contribute, in however humble a measure, to the edification of the Church of Christ.

EDINBURGH, January 1865.
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THE EXACT position which the question of Inspiration occupies among the evidences of Christianity, is a point of some importance both for the order and for the understanding of the argument. In receiving the Bible in the sense in which the Church of Christ has uniformly received it, as the word of God, and the only infallible standard of belief and duty, there are various truths, besides that of its inspiration, implied or presupposed in the reception of it. It is desirable to separate between these, and especially to discriminate between the inspiration of Scripture and other characters that belong to the sacred volume, in order that we may understand what inspiration is, and what are the proper evidences by which it is established.

I. If the Bible contains a Revelation in the ordinary and proper sense of the word, or a communication of truth and knowledge from the Most High God to His human creatures, then the very first element involved in the notion of it is the idea of the Supernatural. In whatever manner the communication has been made, and in whatever shape it is recorded in Scripture, it must imply a supernatural act on the part of God. The revelation from Heaven which is embodied in the Bible is itself a miracle, over and above the
many miracles which it has recorded. It takes for granted the possibility of the supernatural, and is itself an example of it; apart altogether from those special instances of the supernatural by which it is accredited and illustrated.

In making such a statement, it is not necessary to enter into any discussion as to hypothetical cases which might or might not be possible. It is of no practical importance to argue whether or not a divine message could have been conveyed to man, and accredited to his belief, by any other means than those actually employed, and by methods not involving the use of the supernatural. Whether the truths of a revelation from God like Christianity could have been introduced into the world by means of some inward light given to all men, and recommended to their acceptance by natural evidence that had no miraculous attestation from above, is a question the solution of which is not necessary to the argument. To most minds it will appear all but certain, that when God breaks the silence of heaven, and speaks to men a message of eternal truth; when He departs from the ordinary course of His providence, and imparts the knowledge of Himself, not through His works, but through His word; when He makes discoveries to them of things which reason and conscience could never themselves have discovered,—the revelation itself must, in the proper sense of the term, be supernatural. But it is not needful to enter into such a discussion. There is no room for it in the case of that revelation which the Bible embodies and records. Christianity claims to be itself a supernatural communication from God, much of which reason could never have discovered, and all of which, whether reason could have discovered it or not, professes to have come as a direct message from heaven. It is God-given, and not man-given. The claim to be supernatural, made by Christianity, cannot be separated from Christianity itself. Whatever other revelations are or profess to be, the revelation of the Bible is itself a sign from heaven.

But apart from the supernatural element involved in the very idea of a revelation, the records of Christianity embody
a multitude of miraculous events so interwoven with its doctrines and histories, and so many and marked, that it is impossible to divide between the miracle of the revelation and the miracle recorded in it—accepting of the one as true, while the other is rejected as false. Not only with the possibility of the miraculous, but also with the fact of numberless miracles, Christianity as a religion must stand or fall.

The Bible professes to exhibit the history of this world for a period of four thousand years, beginning with that one miracle of creation which forms the representative and precedent for all the rest, and extending onward until the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, in which all the supernatural works done in the earth were summed up. Between these two dates it represents the world as a theatre on which God has been gradually but progressively working out, both through His ordinary providence and through His supernatural intervention, the great plan of grace. Although His miraculous interferences are not evenly spread over the whole course of the history, yet they are grouped around certain eras in it, marked as turning-points in the development of the divine scheme, and are essential to its progress. At each crisis when they occurred they were steps in the movement of God onward through the ages, until they found their fulness in the coming of Christ. As represented in the Scripture history, miracles form parts of the great plan unfolding upon the earth, necessary to its completeness, and elements in its success. Taking the Bible for what it pretends to be, namely, a view or record of God’s doings upon the earth in the way both of providence and grace, it is impossible not to confess the intimate and essential union between the miraculous element and Scripture history, from its commencement to its close.

It is needless, then, to speak of separating the supernatural in Christianity from Christianity itself, and accepting the Bible without its miracles. Were there no other reason against such a step, it were reason enough that the traces of the supernatural—whether miracles of power or of knowledge—
PRELIMINARY TRUTHS.

are so numerous in its pages, and so thickly interspersed through the record, that to cut out every passage that directly or indirectly involves the reality of it, would leave the Bible itself but a mutilated fraction of what it presently is.

But it is not alone the number of the miracles that forbids it. Their connection with the Scripture record is of a kind that makes them inseparable from it. They are not, like the supernatural events of profane history, embellishments that can be spared from the narrative without injury to its continuity and completeness; or excrescences that can be cut off; or a foreign element that can be sorted out from its proper teaching, and set aside as no part of it. On the contrary, the shape and movement of events in the Bible are dependent on the supernatural action; and the results of the human history which it records, are ruled, and coloured by the superhuman influences that predominate in the midst of them. The natural and the supernatural in the narratives of the sacred volume are blended, so as to form one organic whole, which cannot be analyzed into its component parts, but must be accepted or rejected in its integrity and as it stands.

Even were it possible to separate between what has been intimately joined together in Scripture, without destroying the substance of the text, it could not be done without fatally destroying the moral character of the religion. Christianity bears upon its front a profession that it comes from God, and is attested by His miraculous attestations; the Author of Christianity pointedly and frequently appealed to the works that He did, as evidence that He bore the commission of His Father; and He was contented to abide the decision which such an appeal involved, when He claimed from His enemies to be believed, if not for His own, yet at least for His works' sake. To answer this appeal by the denial or rejection of the miracles of the Bible, is to destroy at one blow both the outward evidences to which it points, and the moral character of the religion which it records. The claim made to the power of working miracles, and the appeal to them as the test and witness of His authority, leave no alternative but either
to receive the teaching as a revelation from Heaven, or to reject the teacher as one that has untruly said that he comes from God. Either the works on which He built His doctrine were supernatural, or that doctrine has wrongfully claimed a divine authority over the conscience.

It is indeed impossible to deal with the miracles of the Bible as if they were mere external accessories or superfluous accompaniments of Christianity, which may be accepted or rejected without affecting the truth or spiritual value of Christian doctrine. They are not rare facts in the long course of the world’s experience as God’s world, few in number, and exceptional in character—scattered at distant intervals over the sacred narrative. They are not works foreign to the footsteps of the Divine Agent as He advances onward from age to age in the history of human salvation, and makes both the things in heaven and the things in earth contribute to that end for which Christ in the fulness of time came. They are not occurrences that, whether true or false, can be separated from the moral character of Christ or Christianity; and which, when put aside, make it easier for the understanding and the conscience to accept of both. Christianity is itself the great miracle, and embraces manifold others within its bosom. Without any trace of the supernatural in itself, or accompanying its teaching, it would not be possible, or indeed worth while, to believe it at all.

But to speak of the intimate and inseparable connection between the supernatural element and the religion of the Bible, is much to understate the case. The Christian revelation has been not so much connected with miracles, as constituted by them. The supernatural facts of Christianity, rightly viewed and interpreted, are to a large extent the doctrines of Christianity. The central truths of that spiritual system taught in Scripture have been embodied in outward and sensible facts of a supernatural kind; and these facts are themselves the great revelation which God has vouchsafed of the truths. Perhaps a better and more accurate view of the miracles of Scripture than is commonly taken, would bring
out the lesson in regard to them all, that it is God's method to reveal Himself by facts rather than by propositions; and that in those supernatural events which have been wrought on the earth, and recorded in the Bible, there is a spiritual meaning as deep and true as is found even in its words. The doctrines of creation and a Creator, as against Pantheism and emanation on the one hand, and Materialism on the other, could never have been taught by any series of abstract propositions as they have been taught by that first miracle on record, the fact of creation.

But whatever may be said of the spiritual meaning to be read in the many miracles to be found from first to last in Scripture, there can be but one opinion as to the proposition, that the peculiar and essential truths of Christianity have been both constituted and revealed in the fact of God manifested in the flesh. The gospel of Christ is made up of what Christ was, and what He did. His doctrine is identified with the fact of His supernatural history. The revelation of truth that He gave, was found, not so much in the words of His lips, as in the revelation of Himself,—in the discovery vouchsafed of the unseen God in the person of His incarnate Son, and in the declaration made of the Father's character and will, in the life and works and history on the earth of Immanuel. The incarnation of the second person of the adorable Godhead—His miraculous conception—the mysterious union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ Jesus—His superhuman life, and still more superhuman death for sin—His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of God,—these are the supernatural facts of Christianity, compared with which all other miracles of the Bible are as nothing; and these also are the facts that not only reveal, but contain, the sum and substance of the doctrine which Christianity teaches. The gospel of salvation is identified with those miraculous events, and embodied in them. Christianity is summed up in Christ. The supernatural is of the essence not only of Bible history, but of Bible doctrine. To reject the one, is no less than to reject the other.
SUPERNATURAL CHARACTER OF SCRIPTURE.

It is no true view, then, of the miracles of the Bible, to look upon them as insulated occurrences in the narrative of its events, or at least outward adjuncts, separable from the substance of Christianity itself. It is an imperfect view of the supernatural elements of the Christian faith, to regard them in no other or higher light than as credentials of a spiritual truth, which finds a better and stronger evidence in its adaptation to the nature and the need of man. It is impossible, in any proper estimate of their character and office, to divorce them from the system of which they form a part, and to which, in a degree not to be undervalued, they contribute not only their evidential, but their doctrinal support. If it were merely the occurrence, in the course of the Scripture narrative, of some marvellous event, singular in its position and unintelligible in its object, which had to be accounted for, it might come to be a mere question of the trustworthiness of the historian, or of his text in the particular instance. If it were even a series of such events, having in themselves no spiritual significance, and forming no integral portion of the doctrinal system of Christianity, however much they might serve to act the part of evidence in the way of supernatural witnesses to its reality, they might nevertheless be disjoined from its truths without the sacrifice of the latter. But it is impossible to look upon the history of the Son of God in such a light. His manifestation in the flesh was no singular or accidental accompaniment of Christianity, but the essence of it. His life and death were not only or chiefly the outward credentials of His doctrine, but rather the sum and substance of it. They were not the divine confirmations of a Christian's faith, but the object of his faith. A saving belief in the gospel of Jesus, is a belief in what Jesus was and did. If these were supernatural; if He was the Son of God, and if the life that He lived and the death He suffered in the flesh, were those of a divine person in our nature; then here we have an experimental evidence to show that the whole of Christianity must stand or fall with, not merely the possibility, but the fact, of the supernatural.
In approaching, then, the subject of the inspiration of the Bible, the very first idea which presents itself, is the supernatural character of the revelation which it contains; and without this idea implied and taken for granted as a confessed fact, it is impossible and useless to proceed with the argument.

When we say that the supernatural element is presupposed in the Christian revelation, we mean that it was given by God; not in the way in which He has given men reason, or the discoveries of truth which reason makes; but given by God, in the sense that He has communicated the revelation in a miraculous manner to the mind of the parties who received and recorded it in Scripture. The fact that the revelation is supernatural, is in no way dependent on the manner in which the miraculous message of truth and wisdom was conveyed to the parties receiving it, or on the shape in which they embodied the message in the book or books that transmit it to our hands. Whether it was by miraculous voice, or miraculous vision, or miraculous impress on the spirit,—whether the ear or the eye of the prophet, or, without its ordinary inlets of thought, the mind itself, was made directly cognizant of the God-given truth revealed, is a question that does not in the least affect the character of the revelation as supernatural. Whether, again, the communication so made by God to His servant was embodied in written speech for the benefit of others, or, unspoken, was hidden and retained within the heart that first received it; whether, if recorded and published to others, it was written down by the command and under the guidance of God, or left to be put in writing at the will and by the natural powers of the author; whether the record of the revelation was composed and completed by one man, at one time, and in one place, or by many men, in different countries, with various tongues, and separated from each other by hundreds of years;—these are points that do not touch the fundamental idea inseparable from any revelation, in the proper sense of the term, or at all events inseparable from the revelation embodied in Scripture, that it has
come in a miraculous manner from God, and that both itself and its contents are supernatural.

The order of the apologetical argument plainly requires, that before proceeding to deal with the matter of inspiration, this question as to the supernatural character of the revelation should be held as closed. Without this, it would be impossible to advance one step in the discussion, or if possible, it would be useless. If it is to be held that a miracle is a thing impossible in any sense and for any purpose, then a revelation from God, in the meaning in which the Church of Christ believes that it is contained in the Scriptures, is also impossible; and it were even worse than folly to attempt to show that it is inspired. If the possibility or the fact of the supernatural, as belonging to the contents of the Bible, is even regarded as a point in doubt, and to be left over as an open question for public consideration, it were a waste of time and strength, besides being an inversion of the proper order of the argument, to offer evidence of its inspiration. It is impossible, as we have seen, to separate between the Bible and the supernatural character of that message from God which it professes to declare. In one way or other the question must be settled, as to whether or not we have a proper and real communication of knowledge from heaven in Scripture, before we can be called on to try and determine whether the professed record of it is infallible or not. There are principles of evidence and methods of reasoning which it is easy to apply to the case of miracles, in order to judge whether they be true or fictitious. And not until these have cleared the ground, and settled the question that there is a supernatural communication from God to man, in one shape or other, embodied in the sacred volume, can it be a reason-able, or even a competent thing, to proceed to the ulterior question, as to what that shape is, and what are the kind and measure of authority or truth to be conceded to it. In proceeding, then, to open up the discussion on the inspiration of the Bible, we must take for granted as a preliminary truth, assumed in the argument, and not to be disputed on either
side, that the Bible, in one form or other, contains a divine and supernatural communication from God. Whatever is implied in this proposition must be held as conceded by both parties, and available for either, in the controversy on Inspiration.

II. Another preliminary position that must be assumed as proved in entering on the discussion as to the inspiration of Scripture, is the historical veracity of the authors of Scripture. On the one side, and because embodying a real and direct communication from God, the Bible immediately allies itself with the element of the supernatural, to deny the possibility or the reality of which would inevitably lead to the rejection of the Bible itself in the only sense in which the Christian Church receives it, or in which it is worth contending for. But, on the other side, and because it is the authorship of men, the Bible is connected with their ability and trustworthiness as writers, for the claims which it puts forth to be received as a credible account of the revelation which it professes to have embodied in its pages.

Neither the supernatural character of the ideas and facts which it pretends to record as a revelation from God, nor yet the historical veracity of the writers who profess truly to relate it, is a matter to be assumed without proof, or believed without sufficient warrant. But the evidence relevant and sufficient to establish both these propositions has often been adduced, and must be taken for granted as conclusive, before it is proper or even possible to pass onward to the different and ulterior question of whether or not the writings are inspired by God. To mix up these two questions would lead only to confusion and error as to both. The proper evidence to prove that the Scriptures contain a supernatural communication from God, is different from the proper evidence to prove that the authors of the Scriptures were honest and competent as authors; and, again, the evidence relevant and sufficient to prove the inspiration of their writings, is something widely different from both. However much, in his practical estimate of Bible truth, and in the
spiritual application of it to cases of belief or duty, a Christian man may be wont to conjoin or even identify the question of a supernatural message from God and the veracity of the sacred penmen with the further question of the inspiration of their writings, yet, to avoid confusion and injury to the argument, they must carefully be distinguished. In tracing out the proper grounds and reasons of the Christian's faith, we must deal apart with, and establish by different proofs, the two facts of the supernatural character of the system of truth and fact found in Scripture, and the historical veracity of the men who have recorded it there; and after having proved these two facts, but not till then, is it warrantable and proper to enter upon the further and hardly less important subject of the inspired authority that attaches to the written record. Following out such a course, we are entitled to lay down as a second position, of a preliminary kind, in the controversy on Inspiration, the historical veracity of the Scripture penmen.

By the historical veracity of the authors of Scripture, is meant that sufficient knowledge of what they record, and that complete disposition to speak truly, which, in the case of uninspired men, give to their writings the character of credibility, on which their readers are accustomed to rely. The truth of profane history, and our belief of the facts which it transmits, rest on no other foundation than this. Given the two requisites of perfect truthfulness and competent knowledge in the case of an ordinary historian, and we have no hesitation in accepting as trustworthy his statement of facts, however remote in point of time, or far removed from our own observation. Events at the distance of a thousand years from our day are in this way brought home to our conviction with as much certainty as contemporary occurrences; and although the evidence on which they rest is no more than moral evidence, it may in multitudes of cases amount to a degree of assurance that warrantably commands the belief and guides the conduct of every rational man.

The very same result is reached when the like principles of
historical evidence are applied to the case of the sacred volume. The fact that we claim for its authors an inspiration of a supernatural kind, does not destroy or diminish their trustworthiness as men, and their competency as ordinary witnesses. It does not rob their statements of the essential character of credible testimony, by impairing their veracity, or rendering their knowledge vain. It may give them an authority which ordinary witnesses do not possess. It may furnish them with a right to claim our belief, which uninspired historians cannot show. But viewing it apart from its inspiration, the historical veracity of the Bible rests upon the same footing of evidence and certainty as that of any other perfectly authenticated work.

In one important respect, the historians of a supernatural revelation possess an advantage over profane historians that ought to be duly understood and estimated, in judging of their testimony. In the case of uninspired writers, the facts that they relate, lying as they do to a large extent beyond the field of their own observation or immediate knowledge, must be accepted by them at the hands of others who have better opportunities of information than themselves, but yet may be mistaken or deceived in what they communicate. The human historian best qualified as to opportunities of knowledge and acquaintance with the facts he narrates, must of necessity take many of them at second hand, and from sources more or less distantly removed from the facts themselves. It cannot be so with the historians of a revelation given to them directly and immediately from God. Their acquaintance with what they are called upon to record, originates in a source near and not afar off; and the informations they convey are dependent on a knowledge never remote, but always personal to the informer. If the fact of a supernatural and direct communication from God to the writers of Scripture personally be admitted at all, it at once shuts out the possibility of second-hand information and knowledge drawn with difficulty through defective channels and from a remote source. If a revelation has been given, and is con-
tained in the sacred volume, there is plainly involved in such a fact the concession, that the mind of the prophet has been brought into immediate and direct contact with the everlasting fountain of knowledge, from which the facts and truths he records are derived; and that, unlike other historians, for all he relates, whether previously to the revelation he was acquainted with it or not, he is indebted to his own knowledge, given by God, and not to that of another and a distant witness.

There are, indeed, many portions of the Bible that embody facts of which the writers had certain knowledge, having been eye or ear witnesses of what they declare. In regard to these the authors stand, irrespective of their higher character as inspired men, exactly on the same footing of historical veracity as common authors, who may have had, in regard to their narratives, the same opportunities of knowledge. To a very large extent the Bible is historical in this sense; and may, like other books similarly circumstanced, claim the credit, over and above its inspiration, of that ordinary credibility which is conceded to the latter. But the prophetic books of the Old Testament, and the Apocalypse of the New, are examples of writings that cannot be regarded as historical in this strictest and highest sense. It cannot properly be said of these that their contents are derived from human witnesses, either at first or second hand. In like manner, there are numerous passages, even in the historical portions of Scripture, which record facts or truths which no natural sources of knowledge on the part of the writers, and no information derived from human testimony, near or remote, could possibly have made them acquainted with. The narrative of the six days' work of creation cannot be called historical in the sense of having come from the ordinary sources of human history, or been known to the writer either from his own eye-witness or from the information of other men. Shall we concede then to the disbeliever, that these books, and portions of books, have no credibility at all derived from the sufficient knowledge and perfect veracity of the men who wrote them?
Preliminary Truths.

Or shall we not rather say, that although drawn from a different source of knowledge, that knowledge was as complete, and their testimony in regard to it as trustworthy, as if it had come from the evidence of their own eyesight, or indirectly and more remotely from the eyesight of others? Those who admit the supernatural character of the revelation which the Bible professes to contain, and understand what is implied in the pregnant admission, can hardly deny that the revelation of the Almighty, given to His servant for the very purpose, is to him a source of knowledge as complete and certain, and in every respect as reliable, as the perception of the outward eye, or the hearing of the outward ear, in the case of personal observation or of human testimony. The vision given to the prophet by God, when his eye was shut, or the voice spoken to the inner spirit when his ear slept, was to him a means of information not less clear and true than could have been supplied either by his personal observation of the facts, or by the witness of others.

To put the matter in this way, is indeed to understake the case. When God by special revelation makes known facts or truths which He seeks to be written down for ever, are we not warranted to say that the prophet has imparted to him a knowledge more true and perfect than knowledge obtained in any other way? When God speaks to His servant the things which He desires to make known to him and to others, is it not a testimony better and more immediate than human testimony to the like effect and to the same person? It is important to estimate aright the historical veracity that may be properly attributed to the Bible in its strictly historical character and portions. But it is no less important to estimate aright the credibility of the Bible, not only in its historical portions strictly so called, but also in those portions in which the writers had the source of their knowledge from above, and not from beneath, and when the information from which they speak to us was given not by man, but by God.

These two things are not inconsistent with each other; neither are they the same. The witness to what they record
emitted by the writers of Scripture in all cases from a source of knowledge supernatural, may, in many instances, co-exist along with another witness emitted by the same writers, and to the same effect, from a source of knowledge natural to them. The command issued to them by God, to record for the benefit of the Church in future times certain facts or truths which may have been known to them previously from their own observation or the testimony of others, could not nullify or supersede their personal knowledge; so that they were in circumstances to declare, both that God had certified to them these things, and also that to the same things their own knowledge bore witness. We cannot doubt that in the historical portions of Scripture, what was given them by God to write in a book for the information of others, sometimes consisted, in part or in whole, of what they were cognizant of as eye or ear witnesses, or had somehow learned through other channels of information. In such cases there is a twofold witness, corresponding to the twofold source from which the Bible speaks to us. As recipients of a communication from God to be conveyed to others, its authors can testify that God has showed them these things; and, irrespective of their credibility as human historians, they are entitled to be believed, because they can give us the warrant of His word for what they say. But over and above their office as recipients of a special revelation from God, they possess in many instances the character and trustworthiness of ordinary historians, who write what they themselves have known or seen; and therefore they are entitled to be believed on the different and additional ground, that for what they record we have the warrant of their own word. The testimony borne to Scripture truths when God addresses us through the lips of His prophets, and calls upon us to believe because He has declared them, is not inconsistent with the further testimony borne to the same truths by men who of their own knowledge can ratify them; neither are these two witnesses to be confounded or identified, as if they were one and the same. Injustice is often done to the Christian argument in this way,
by not distinguishing between the evidence derived from the personal knowledge of the sacred penmen, and the evidence derived from the supernatural revelation they had from God. In respect of much of what we read in the sacred volume, the testimony of the historian is added to that of the prophet. To estimate the full weight of the apologetic argument, we must discriminate between the evidence of men speaking on the ground of personal knowledge or observation, and the evidence of the same men speaking on the ground of the supernatural revelation enjoyed by them. The force of the argument is to be calculated not by identifying, but by adding the two.

The extent to which an historical character belongs to the Bible, is a remarkable peculiarity connected with it. Considerably more than one-half of its contents is made up of historical matter in the stricter sense of the word, while even in other portions, such as the prophetic and didactic, there is frequently such full and specific mention of times and places, of persons and events, as to give them, not indeed an historical character, but at least a connection, noticeable and real, with the course of history.

But the historical character of Christianity as a revelation is more especially to be seen in the intimate alliance between its truths and the events of the world for the long period of four thousand years. Those central doctrines of revelation which are commonly spoken of as the gospel, are not so much founded on the history of Christ, as they are themselves the events of that history. The spiritual truths which a sinner is called upon to believe for the saving of his soul, have been revealed primarily and chiefly in the form of historical facts embodied in the life and death, the resurrection and ascension, of the Son of God. The Gospels and the Acts, which contain the narrative of these facts and their immediate results in the

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1 I would refer to the valuable contribution to the controversy in connection with the authority of the sacred volume, entitled, 'The Bible and Modern Thought,' by Rev. T. R. Birks. It is an able and conclusive argument, in a popular and effective form.
world, form more than one-half of the New Testament. But this history does not stand alone. We find that it is closely connected with, and to a large extent dependent upon, a previous and larger one, reaching from the beginning of the world, and stretching onward with a continuity unbroken to the close of the Old Testament period; and this earlier history fills up the larger portion of the first of the two volumes of which the Bible is composed.

As in the history contained in the New Testament we find the doctrine of human salvation revealed in the form of historical facts, so in the narrative of events at the commencement of the Old Testament history we have revealed in a like form the doctrine of human ruin and sin. Between these two dates we have the narrative of the development of God’s actings and movements upon the earth in His plan of grace,—connecting, by a series of historical events, the fall with the redemption, and exhibiting in these events the divine method of dealing with sin, and of working out man’s salvation from it. The proper interpretation of this long history of thousands of years is necessary to the true and full understanding of Christianity, which is less a system of spiritual truths presented in an abstract form, than a series of facts and examples exhibiting the manner in which God deals with the sin that He hates, and provides for the recovery of the sinner whom He pities. The historical annals of the Bible, embracing as they do the story of the world since its creation, and of the human race from its cradle,—telling of man both in his unfallen and fallen state,—beginning at a date so remote that no contemporary accounts exist to be confronted with them, and reaching downward to the fulness of time,—running parallel with the rise, greatness, and fall of many of the mightiest nations of antiquity, and tracing the footsteps of God through human history to its consummation in the manifestation of His Son upon the earth,—constitute an essential part of the Christian revelation, inseparable not only from its form, but also from its substance. The two grand truths of man’s sin and man’s salvation have been embodied in his-
torical facts at the commencement and at the close of the Scripture narrative; and between these facts the history that intervenes has been both acted and written, to exhibit in examples the divine righteousness in dealing with the one, and the divine grace in providing, and preparing for, the other.

In the fact that history has been thus made to do the work and teach the doctrines of revelation, the Bible stands alone and distinguished from all other systems of religion, and all other books professing to record a communication of truths from God. The easiest form, and perhaps the most natural, for a fabricated revelation to assume, is that of direct dogmatic teaching, in which doctrine shall be inculcated in abstract propositions and duty enjoined by formal precepts,—keeping clear, as far as possible, of any near and dangerous connection with the historical realities of time and place, persons and events. If facts are used at all, they will be used sparingly, and with a view to give the likeness of reality to unreal histories, or fashioned into fictitious parables and stories to illustrate or embellish the doctrine.

Such at least, to a very marked extent, is the character of the false revelations that have been palmed upon the world. In this respect Christianity presents a contrast to other religions hardly less than divine. None, indeed, but that same God who, by His almighty power and universal providence, controls and directs all the events of the world, governing and ordering all His creatures and all their actions, could have so made use of human history to embody and exemplify His truth. This history, as it has been selected and written in the Bible, has first of all been acted on the theatre of this earth, and through its successive ages, in order that it afterwards might be recorded there. God is both the actor and the writer. Unless it had been so, the acted events would not have furnished the written teachings in which they have been embodied. An ordinary historian may indeed select from the course of events in the world those of them that happen to suit and enforce his peculiar views, turning and accommodating them, after they have occurred, to the purpose
of illustrating, to some small extent, his instruction. But none but a divine Historian, who Himself had first ordered these events, and shaped them according to His pleasure, could have made human history to be itself His revelation, and many of the deeds done on the earth to be His acted parables, through successive generations, needing nothing but to be written down in a book and interpreted in order to teach His supernatural truths. The lessons that God has taught in His revelation were first written on the outward pages of history, and only afterwards written in the words and with the commentary and explanations of the Bible.

That selection of events from the history of the world which is actually found in the Bible, can be explained only on the principle that it is a narrative of God’s proceedings with a view to man’s recovery and salvation. It is a history, mainly and distinctively, of redemption. It travels between the two ideas of the world created by God, and the same world redeemed by God; and in the interval it exhibits, in a series of historical facts, the manner in which God deals with the great problem of moral evil,—facts which teach, with a clearness and impressiveness which no abstract or didactic teaching could possess, the main features of God’s character, and the general principles of His moral government. It is God’s world as made by Him, and then ruined by sin, with which the history begins; and it is the same world redeemed by Him, and to be restored, with which it concludes. Thousands of years run on between the beginning and the close; but in so far as the annals of these years have been recorded in Scripture history, they are filled up with God’s dealings with sin and with grace.

First of all we have the experiment worked out, of man left to himself, from the date of the fall to the flood. It is the history of the grand trial of what man could do, through his own natural powers, to stay the onward ruin of sin, and to recover his own soul from destruction. Save the one promise at the outset, there was no outward teaching from God; excepting the ordinances of sacrifice and the Sabbath, there were no positive institutions of religion during fifteen hun-
dred years; save the voices of Enoch or Noah, heard alone, there was no prophet from the Most High to warn men of sin, or to declare the way of salvation. And the experiment, carried on upon the wide scale of the whole earth, and prosecuted for hundreds of years, proved beyond controversy that there was no recovery for man in man himself, and that, left to his own unaided resources by God, he was insufficient for his own good. The trial of human strength, after it had shown itself to be weakness, and of human virtue unhelped, after it had lapsed into utter and irreemediable wickedness, was closed by the waters of the flood; and the history of the antediluvian age has proved, by the best of all evidence,—the evidence of experiment,—that man can never be either a revelation or a religion to himself.

A second experiment had to be made, and was prosecuted during the patriarchal period. The experiment of natural religion common to man, and of such a revelation of God as the works of creation and the teachings of conscience taught to all alike, had been tried and found wanting. Now, particular individuals were chosen to receive extraordinary communications from God, and to be the teachers of others; the revelation of divine truth concerning sin and a Saviour was directed into the special channel of the patriarchal line; and the supernatural light, which nature could not supply, was preserved and transmitted in a selected order of prophets and teachers personally instructed by God for the purpose. Along with the oral and traditionary revelation communicated from them, there was a system of symbolical teaching by outward ordinances begun; and the verbal and typical instruction in divine things went on together, in a twofold method of manifestation. But this experiment of personal revelations, and a traditionary religion handed down by patriarchs, was insufficient to preserve the knowledge of God upon the earth, and especially to declare His mind as to moral evil and the way of recovery. Beyond the single household or family in which the prophet dwelt and the revelation was preserved, and sometimes scarcely there, there was no light of divine truth in the
dwellings of men. And the experiment, prosecuted throughout the patriarchal period, from the date of the flood until the exodus, has proved, by the historical evidence of facts, that an unwritten and traditionary revelation made to selected men for the benefit of others, even though assisted by some instruction in the form of significant and standing ordinances, is helpless to meet and turn back the flood of darkness and depravity.

A third lesson had yet to be taught by the course of human history, when shaped and overruled by God to declare His truth, before men could be educated and shut up by this schoolmaster unto Christ. Instead of a solitary individual here and there amid the universal darkness, chosen out of the rest to be the depository of the message of God, a nation was selected to receive in fuller and larger measure the light of divine truth. Instead of an oral revelation, restricted to brief and scanty hints of religious teaching and promise, and entrusted to the channel of tradition for transmission, there was given to Moses a revelation to be written in a book, and read in the hearing of Israel from generation to generation. Along with this written revelation there was a large and extensive system of instruction in divine truth by means of outward and public ordinances for daily use; as a nation they were fenced about with rites and institutions from Heaven, significant and symbolical; and their national life and actions were divinely shaped into a system of religious discipline and teaching for their spiritual profit. That God who had become, through human ignorance and unbelief and sin, almost an unknown God in the world He had made, was pleased to dwell, under a visible symbol, in the centre of the nation, so that men could not deny His presence without denying the evidence of their own senses. From the date of the exodus, itself a divinely ordered type, upon a public and national scale, of divine truth, the events of human history were fashioned into symbols of supernatural doctrine, according to a standard at once more extensive and more distinct. A church dedicated to God, and populous with the pictorial ordinances that spake of Him, was set up co-extensive
with the people of Israel. A nation was made itself a grand type of divine truth. Public persons and occurrences were, under the special arrangement of God, made significantly to teach spiritual things; and the course of human history was crowded more and more with the manifestations or the promises of a coming salvation. Yet all was in vain. This third experiment of a written revelation and a visible church, and standing ordinances of worship, and speaking symbols of divine truth, and above all, a God visible in His sanctuary, was wrought out, like the former experiments, upon an extensive scale and for a lengthened time, and, like them, without success. Israel would not know; God's people would not consider Him. And the nation in whose history this grand exhibition of God's character and truth, and of man's unbelief and sin, was exemplified, were sold into captivity, and because of this unbelief have forfeited their place and standing as a people.

But although each experiment in the course of human history, as it is related and embodied in the Old Testament, has one after another failed of success, yet they have not been tried in vain, if they have brought back men, as their last resource, to that final experiment recorded in the history of the New. Both the character of God and the character of man, in connection with the matter of sin and salvation, have been divinely developed and recorded in the course of the past, in a manner so true and complete and incontrovertible, as to shut out all hope of deliverance from anything that is in man, or in the dealings of God with man, short of that method of salvation which is in Christ. The history acted out under the earlier dispensation and recorded in the Old Testament, in its various and successive failures, has sufficiently established this by the evidence of experiment. The interval of time between the close of the history in the earlier volume, and the commencement of another and better history in the later—during which all further special dealings on the part of God with men ceased, and the ominous silence of the record appears to indicate that any further trials in the same direc-
tion were in vain—seems to look like a pause which, if it forms the proper close of the failures in the past, may well introduce the success of the future. These failures are not failures, if they have by a sort of exhaustive process narrowed the conditions of the problem, and shut up the hopes of men to the one and last method for their salvation made known, not in the oral or written word, but in the personal revelation of the Eternal Word made flesh. The record of that method, as developed in His acts and life, gives the historical character to the New Testament, appropriately introduces the doctrinal books which follow, and interprets the spiritual and dogmatic meaning of the facts.

But the latter history cannot be understood aright, without understanding the former. The doctrine of salvation, as exhibited in the historic facts of the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, loses both its meaning and its value, when not viewed and interpreted in the light of the doctrine of sin as developed in the historic facts of the temptation and transgression and fall recorded at the opening of Genesis. And neither the one nor the other can be understood, as it is intended to be understood, unless we follow out that historic connection between the two which may be traced in the footsteps of God's providence, leading from the first to the second, and in that long series of divinely ordered events which have made human history, as recorded in the Bible, to be a revelation pregnant with spiritual truths. To deny or ignore the historical element in the Bible, or to attempt to separate between it and its doctrinal teaching, is simply an impossibility, without destroying the Christian revelation altogether. Before proceeding to inquire into the question of the inspiration of its writings, we must assume as proved the historical veracity of Scripture. So thoroughly is revelation identified with Bible history, that if the Bible be not historically true, it is a matter of no consequence whether it be inspired or not.

III. A third proposition which we must be entitled to hold as proved, before entering on the question of Inspiration, is
this, that the Bible contains an authoritative and infallible standard of truth and duty, apart from ourselves. This third proposition is intimately connected with, or rather involved in, the former two, and is altogether independent of the question as to whether or not the sacred volume is inspired. We say that the Bible contains such a standard; we do not say that the Bible is such a standard. Were the divine and plenary inspiration of the sacred volume satisfactorily established, in addition to the fact that it is historically the authentic and credible record of a supernatural communication given by God, we should be entitled to say of it, that it is, as well as that it contains, a certain and authoritative test of belief and practice. But before proceeding to the ulterior question of its inspiration, and in order to do so aright, we are not only warranted, but bound, in virtue of the two preceding propositions, to hold that it contains, in one form or other, and with more or less verbal accuracy, the only sure and ultimate standard of truth and falsehood, of right and wrong, in respect of all those matters on which it speaks, with a view to our belief and obedience.

If, indeed, the Bible did not in any shape embody a supernatural revelation from God, it could have no claims to be regarded as coming to us with His unerring truth and express authority attached to what it declares. Or if, being the record of such a revelation, it were destitute of all historical veracity as a record, it were impossible to say what in it possessed the authority of God, and came to us as His truth, and what did not. But if, on the contrary, it both contains a revelation from God, and has transmitted it to us in a record marked by that kind and measure of historical veracity which, in the case of other books, makes them worthy to be believed, then, independently of its inspiration, it must be accepted as the depository at least of an authoritative and infallible standard of truth and duty, apart from reason or conscience in man.

To what extent, on the supposition that the Bible is simply an historical and not an inspired record of a divine communication, the deposit of supernatural truth which it records
has been mingled with the imperfection or errors of the human historian, is a question which can receive its best, perhaps its only possible, answer in an appeal to the instance of other historical books. It is granted on the one side, that the authors of Scripture history were honest and competently informed, and therefore authentic and credible in the sense in which human historians are, whose writings are surely believed among us. It is granted on the other side, that neither in the case of profane historians nor in the case of the sacred penmen, do honesty and competent knowledge alone secure their readers against all imperfection and mistakes in their narratives. And the question comes to be, What margin must be allowed in the writings of both for errors which may exist, but are not inconsistent with perfect historical veracity, as regards the proper contents and real substance of their histories?

In dealing with such a question with a view to answer it in its application to Scripture as simply an historical book, the proper way is to inquire into what is found to be the case in the instance of profane historians confessedly accepted as trustworthy. In such cases there is to be found no systematic attempts to falsify, and, indeed, no intentional errors of any kind consciously introduced into their writings. Such defects would be inconsistent with the supposition that they are veracious historians. Neither are there broad and palpable misstatements in matters of fact, even unintentional and unconscious. This would be inconsistent with the supposition of competent knowledge on the part of the writers. But in profane historians, the best authenticated and most trustworthy, there are mistakes in matters of opinion honestly entertained and recorded; and even inaccuracies, minute and verbal, in questions of fact, written down unconsciously, while yet for all practical purposes their histories are true. Our experience in the case of ordinary books and authors justifies and requires this concession. And if the Scriptures had not been inspired by God, as well as written by perfectly credible human writers, we must have made the same concession as
to their narratives which experience has taught us to make in respect of profane authors. Errors arising out of dishonest intention or the absence of competent knowledge there could not have been; errors arising from human imperfection, and connected with opinion or expression, there might have been. But all this would not have affected, in the case of Scripture history, as it does not affect in the case of profane history, its perfect truth in substance, or the historical veracity of the Scripture writers as worthy to be believed, when they tell us of what they know, or speak of a communication made to them by God.

Assuming the general historical veracity of any document, there are four different cases to be distinguished from each other when dealing with the question of error or imperfection attaching to it,—two in reference to the facts that are embodied in it, and two in reference to the opinions or truths recorded. First, in the case of facts patent to the senses, and known to the writers through their evidence, there can, with ordinary historians, credible and competent, be few inaccuracies beyond inaccuracies of expression, not touching the reality of the facts. Secondly, in the case of the like facts known to them from the testimony of witnesses similarly qualified as to credibility and competence, there cannot be very much more room for error. Thirdly, in the instance of opinions or truths communicated by other parties of sufficient honesty and knowledge, and recorded by historians, there may be more openings for mistakes, though not for serious or fundamental ones, as to the right understanding on their part of what is communicated, and therefore as to the accuracy of their report (for it is the truth of the report, and not of the opinions, that is in question). It is, fourthly, in the case chiefly of truths or opinions held by themselves, and spoken out of their own minds, that the common fallibility of human historians warrants us to expect in the record the occurrence of errors many or considerable.

So far as regards the Bible, it may be asserted that errors of this last class cannot occur in any instance, if it be admitted that it is all a revelation from God recorded by honest and
competent men; because, although there is the expression of individual opinions or beliefs on the part of its authors to be found in its pages, yet the expression of them there is not without the warrant and direction of God authorizing the writer so to express them. But without arguing this point for the present, and setting aside, as connected with it, whatever in Scripture can be called the individual beliefs of the writers, declaring their own insight and apprehension of truth, it is plain that after this is conceded the whole substance of the Christian revelation remains entire, and perfectly independent of the concession. The first three cases cover the whole ground of Scripture fact and doctrine, making up the revelation from God to man embodied in the sacred volume. In the facts of which the writers were informed by the eye or ear, or which came to them through the testimony of credible human witnesses, or of God Himself as a witness better still, or of both, we have the whole historical contents of the Bible. In the opinions or truths, again, which the authors have recorded as given to them by the express revelation of God, and guaranteed by His word, we have the whole of the doctrinal contents of the Bible. Were they no more than human historians, honest and competent, but uninspired, and recording a supernatural communication from Heaven, we would be warranted in saying, that, in respect of all the matters with which it deals, with a view to our instruction, it contains within it the authority and the truth of God. Keeping out of view the higher fact of its inspiration, but accepting it as historically true, the analogy of other authentic and credible books justifies us in asserting that the errors which can be conceived as possibly attaching to it as an historical document, are so few in number and inconsiderable in value, that they cannot substantially affect it as a real depository of the mind of God; and that therefore, taking even the lowest view of the Bible, it embodies, in a form rightfully fitted to command the submission of men, an available and authoritative standard of right and wrong in all questions of opinion or practice on which it decides.
In regard to opinions or truths not the product of the writer's own mind, but drawn from other and reliable sources, the Scripture historians have a peculiar advantage which gives them a claim to our belief that others do not possess. In the case of ordinary historians, they may be called upon, in some instances, to record the opinions of others, with which they are themselves wholly unacquainted, and which, when communicated from trustworthy quarters, are only partially understood; and thus, in recording them, they may be misstated, because unintentionally misapprehended. Although credible in other respects, yet in the one respect of competent knowledge the authors may have been defective. But such a case could not occur in connection with the penmen of Scripture, if they enjoyed a supernatural communication of truth at all, and if their teacher in the understanding of it was God.

The prophet, indeed, was in very many instances totally unacquainted beforehand with the truths which he was commissioned to write for the benefit of others: they might, indeed, be of a kind beyond the reach of man's intellect altogether; or they might be of a kind which, to be understood aright, must be spiritually discerned. But, in so far as it was necessary to accomplish the purpose of being recorded truly, and not untruly, we cannot but believe that the writers, under the hand of God, were taught with a knowledge that could not fail, or leave them in a state of doubt or misunderstanding as to what they should record. The truths themselves might be higher than the height of their minds, and deeper than the depth of their penetration; they might be spiritual, and therefore not understood aright by men who had not spiritual insight; so that they might, in many cases, be left to search, and perhaps in vain, what the Spirit which was in them did signify. But if there was a revelation of truth from God supernaturally given to His servants,—if they were commissioned and authorized, first to receive it, and then to record it, that others in distant lands and generations might receive it also at their hands, it would have defeated the very object for which it was given, if, from
Standard of Truth in Scripture.

Misapprehension of its meaning, they were permitted to record a different truth, or perhaps a lie in its stead, or were left in any degree open to that misunderstanding or partial reception of it which, in the case of ordinary historians, proves a source of error. It is not necessary, even were it lawful, to inquire into that miraculous process of the presentation of truth from the mind of God to the mind of the prophet found in every case of supernatural revelation. But if it took place at all, it could not have included in it an element to frustrate the end in view; or rather, it must have included in it that measure and kind of instruction in the truths recorded, necessary to their being put upon record without misstatement, so that the revelation actually embodied in Scripture should be God's, and not another.

Granted, then, the two facts of, first, a supernatural revelation contained in Scripture, and, secondly, the historical veracity of the record, and we are shut up to the acknowledgment of an infallible and authoritative standard of truth and duty, apart from our own nature, and superior to it. Whatever number and amount of minute and unimportant errors might be conceived as attaching to a merely human record of a superhuman revelation, they cannot, if restricted within the limits of complete historical veracity, destroy or impair the assurance, rising to a moral certainty, with which we are called upon to accept that Book, as containing both the truth of God and the authority of God, in a form fitted and entitled to rule our belief and obedience.

First of all, we have the truth of God in Scripture; and because it is His truth, coming from Him as its source, guaranteed by the perfection of His nature, given to us for the very purpose of instructing and guiding us in spiritual things, and even taking the lowest view of it, unimpaired as to its substantial purity by any want of historical veracity in the record, it must have an excellency of power in itself, and a righteousness in its claim to be believed as true, which no other source of truth can possess. There may be other and co-operating sources of belief which God has given to His
intelligent creatures: in the depths of their rational or spiritual being, He may have laid the foundations of certainty to some extent to them, apart from the special revelations of Scripture; He may have made the lights of reason and of conscience in certain cases to rule over the firmament of human knowledge, guiding man on his earthly pilgrimage by night and by day; there may be within us intuitive convictions of sensible things, and intuitive convictions of moral things, to contradict which were itself a contradiction. But if a special revelation of light has come from the bosom of the Godhead to the heart of man; if the wisdom which dwelt with the Eternal Father from the beginning, has been embodied in human speech for our teaching, there can be no higher fountain-head from which the spirit of man can draw truth, and no source of certainty that rises above it. Even the certainty with which our intuitions in the department of outward and sensible knowledge rule our beliefs and conduct, is a certainty that has come from that God who has made certain to us the supernatural revelation which the Bible contains. The beliefs taught by conscience, and embodied in the fundamental convictions of our moral nature, are beliefs resting on no better ground than the appointment of Him who has made our reason so to speak, and who Himself has spoken His word, to be a witness to us no less sure. The discoveries of truth which science has treasured up in the past, and which the experience and belief of ages have confirmed, are discoveries gathered amid the darkness of nature, and not in that supernatural light which revelation has shed on spiritual things. Truth is indeed the same, whether it comes to us from the discoveries of reason or the discoveries of grace. Viewed objectively, there is no certainty in the one kind of truth which is not found in the other; but, viewed subjectively, or as regards our apprehension of it, God has given a fulness of light in revelation which He has denied to nature, and therefore to us has made the discoveries of the first to possess an assurance far greater than those of the second.
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It is unreasonable, and indeed impossible, rightly to compare our beliefs in the department of sensible facts resting on our instinctive perceptions, and our belief in the department of Scripture truth resting on moral evidence. But we may compare as to certainty the spiritual truths which are taught by nature, and the religious knowledge taught by revelation. The thousand forms of spiritual belief or unbelief, different and opposite, which owe their origin to the religion of nature, tell unmistakably of the doubtfulness of the source from which they are derived. The natural reason and conscience of one theorist,—the Christian consciousness of another,—the religious sentiment congenital to man of a third,—the spiritual insight of a fourth,—the religious intuitions of a fifth,—the verifying faculty of a sixth,—the special power in human nature that looks face to face upon God and divine truth of yet another,—have all been appealed to as the proper source of religious certainty, and by the multitude and diversity of the answers upon the plainest and most elementary questions in the science of faith, have proved themselves to be uncertain. The experience of the present, and the lessons of history in the past, alike declare that there is no source of religious assurance for man in man himself; and that although truth is to be believed for itself, and on whatever grounds of evidence or certainty it is recommended, yet, in so far as regards spiritual things, there is no resting-place for man, and no sure ground for his faith, except it is built upon God's revealed Word.

But besides the truth, we have also the authority of God connected with the revelation contained in Scripture, and going to make up that infallible and supreme standard of appeal in matters of belief and duty which has been given to us. There is implied, in the very first notion of a supernatural communication made by God to His creatures, the idea of a command on His part, and an obligation on theirs, to receive it as His, and comply with its requirements in the way both of belief and obedience; so that, apart from any express injunction to that effect, to reject it is to reject His