

THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.*

*A Paper read at the "National Protestant Congress," in London, by Rev. E. R. BALLINGER.

"THE Inspiration of Holy Scripture, and therefore its Divine authorship and authority, lies at the root and foundation of true Christianity--not only in its relation to infidelity, but also in its relation to the Romish controversy.

"It was the one great question which underlay all others at the Reformation. For, what was the Reformation in its essence? Was it not just the abandonment of human authority for Divine authority? Was it not all contained in this--the giving up of the authority of the church for the authority of the Word of God?

"Hence, the Reformers, on the one hand, diligently translated, established and disseminated the Scripture; while Rome, on the other hand, has always been the enemy of the Scripture, hiding it from the people for centuries, using the tortures of the Inquisition to crush it out, afterwards by authorizing a Bible of her own (the Latin Vulgate), and finally making and sending forth her own translations of it, in the form of what are known as Roman Catholic, or Vulgate, versions. In the preface to her English version of the Vulgate, known as the Douay Bible, she distinctly declares what her object was in making these various translations. It was not that Rome had changed, not because she had repented of her sin in hiding the Bible; or of her crime in crushing it, by torturing its readers; but because it has ever been her policy to adapt herself to circumstances. The policy which to-day leads her to publish cheap editions of it in some countries, is the same policy by which she burns them in others.

"These are her own words from the preface to the English translation of the Latin Vulgate:--

"We do not publish [this translation] upon the erroneous opinion of necessity that the Holy Scriptures should always be in our mother tongue, or that they ought, or were ordained by God, to be read indifferently of all...Not for these or any such like causes do we translate this book, but upon special consideration of the present time, state, and condition of our country; unto which divers things are either necessarie or profitable, or medicinable *now*, that otherwise the peace of the church were neither much requisite, nor perchance wholly intolerable. Now since Luther's revolt also, divers learned Catholics, for the more speedy abolishing of a number of false and impious translations put forth by sundry sects, and for the better preservation and reclaime of many good souls endangered thereby, have published the Bible in the several languages of almost all the principal provinces of the Latin Church, no other bookes in the world being so pernicious as heretical translations of the Scripture, poisoning people under colour of Divine authoritie; and not many other remedies being more souveraine against the same (if it be used in order, discretion, and humilitie) than the true, faithful, and sincere interpretation opposed thereunto.'

"This vast divergence as to 'poison' and 'antidote' gave rise, in due course, to two great questions--viz., The CANON of Scripture, and the INSPIRATION of Scripture.

"If Rome's Text (the Papal Latin Vulgate) be the true one, then the Protestant *Canon* is wrong; and if her Versions of it be correct, then *Inspiration* is done away with.

"Inspiration is therefore essentially a Protestant question--one which must be met and fought on the highest

grounds.

"The teachings of Luther, Erasmus, and other Reformers, on Inspiration were met by the Jesuits at the very outset. In 1586, Leonard Less and John Hamel, of the University of Louvain, put forth three propositions:-- (1) That it is not necessary that each word should be inspired. (2) It is not necessary that each truth or doctrine should be inspired by the Holy Spirit in the writers. (3) Any book (*e.g.*, 2 Maccabees) written by human industry without the assistance of the Holy Spirit (if the Holy Spirit afterwards testifies [R2012 : page 176] that there is nothing false in it), it becomes *Holy Scripture*.

"Here we see the Satanic hand working by those Jesuits, and we see it working down to this present day, in all the varied attacks on inspiration.

"These three propositions were submitted by the Archbishop of Cambray and Mechlin to the Universities of Douai and Louvain. Being condemned by these, the Jesuits appealed to the Sorbonne and also to the Universities of Treves and Mayence. They also forwarded a copy to the General of their Order, at Rome.

"The dispute was terminated by an 'Apostolic Brief,' dated April 15th, 1588, in which Pope Sixtus V. enjoined *silence* on all parties until the affair should be decided by the Holy See!

"That is just where the matter remains till to-day!

"Rome has never broken the silence which she enjoined, and this great question, so far as she is concerned, rests exactly where she left it in 1588.

"But the Reformers did not keep silence. The celebrated Dr. William Whitaker, the Regius Professor of Divinity, and Master of St. John's College, Cambridge, publicly lectured on this important subject, and in that same year (1588) published his famous work on *The Disputation of Holy Scripture*. He introduces the subject in the following weighty words:--

"If ever any heretics have impiously outraged the Holy Scripture of God, we may justly rank the papists of our time with this class of men who pervert things the most sacred. For, not to mention how insultingly most of them speak, and how meanly they think of the Scriptures,...there are especially six opinions concerning Scripture which they now hold and obstinately defend that are eminently absurd, heretical, and sacrilegious.'

THE SIX POINTS CONCERNING ROME AND THE BIBLE.

"1. The *first* concerns the CANON--*i.e.*, the number of the canonical and truly inspired books of Scripture which is affected by Rome's addition of the Apocryphal and other spurious books.

"2. The *second* concerns the ORIGINAL TEXT, by which the Hebrew and Greek are put aside in favor of the Latin Vulgate, which was authorized by the Council of Trent in 1542....Thus Rome exchanged gold for brass, preferred the work of man to the work of God, and chose a polluted cistern to the pure water of life.*...

*We cannot agree to this criticism as a whole. Our English common version Bible is translated from the Latin Vulgate and holds its own very well when compared with the oldest Greek and Hebrew MSS., recently found. It deserves our respect; if for no other reason, because God has been pleased to use it, in sending his gospel message over the world. But the originals are what we desire, or translations as near to them and their purity as we can obtain.

"3. The *third* concerns the AUTHORITY of the Scripture, by making it to depend on the authority of the *Church*, saying that the Scripture is no Scripture to us if the church did not give it its authority. What the word 'Church' exactly means in this connection has never yet been defined. The Church of England, on the contrary, has declared (Art. xx.) that 'the Church is the witness and keeper of Holy Writ'--not its gaoler or its authority.

"4. The *fourth* concerns INTERPRETATION of the Scriptures. Rome complains of the incredible obscurity of the Scriptures, not for the purpose of rousing men to diligence in studying them, but to bring the Scriptures into hatred and contempt. She refers to [2 Pet. 1:20](#), and says that as the Scripture did not come from man but from God, therefore it is too obscure and too dangerous to be read by private individuals. True, the Scripture did come from God, but the previous *verse* (19) says it is a light in a dark place to which we *do well* to take heed! How many so-called Protestants fall into Rome's snare and read these words as though they were written 'prophecy is a dark place which we do well to avoid!' But notice that PETER is the apostle whom God has chosen to speak most clearly on these two great points: (1) concerning the inspiration and importance of the *written Word* ([1 Pet. 1:10,11,23,25](#); [2:2](#); [2 Pet. 1:19-21](#)), and (2) concerning Christ as *the Rock*, the one and only foundation of his people's salvation.--[1 Pet. 2:4-8](#); [Acts 4:11,12](#).

"5. The *fifth* concerns the Scripture as the final APPEAL on all matters of controversy. Rome refuses to have controversies decided by the Scripture. Instead of saying, 'To the law and to the testimony,' she says, 'To the Pope and the Church.' She will have only one court of appeal, and that is at Rome.

"6. The *sixth* concerns TRADITION, by which the Word of God is made of none effect. Rome declares that the Scriptures are incomplete without the innumerable unwritten traditions of the church, of which she is the sole depositary.

"These are the six 'monstrous errors of the papists,' as Dr. Whitaker calls them. He so ably refuted them from the Scripture, the Fathers, the Schoolmen' and classic Romish authors, that even his great adversary, Bellarmine, procured a portrait of him, which he kept in his study, as an enemy for whom he had the profoundest respect and admiration.

"These six points embrace and cover the ground of the whole controversy. They were the battlefield of the Reformation, and the Protestant victory is summed up in the words of Article VI. of the Church of England,--

"Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the **[R2013 : page 176]** Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation.'

"Any one of these six points is vital to the *whole* of Reformation Truth.

"Thus the attitude of Rome towards the Bible is clear. As to any theory of Inspiration she is dumb, and has herself preserved the silence she has enjoined on others. As to the Bible itself, there is nothing she so abominates, and nothing that she so fears. She will burn it or translate it, authorize it or forbid it, destroy it or print it, condemn it or praise it, as it may suit her purpose. She may vary her treatment of it, but whatever form that treatment may take, its aim, object, and end is always one and the same--to make it of none effect!"

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The thoughtful reader will be struck with the fact that very many educated persons, *called* "Protestants," **[R2013 : page 177]** are rapidly taking the same view of the Scriptures here attributed to Papacy. The "Protestant" higher critics deny the inspiration of the Scriptures except in the same sense that they themselves claim to be inspired--namely, by intelligence from education and not by a plenary inspiration by God's holy spirit exerted phenomenally.

Protestants of all sects and parties state their faiths, but how few admit that "whatsoever is not read therein, or may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of faith, or thought requisite or necessary to salvation." Protestants have left or are leaving the Scriptures as the "divine authority," just as Romanists did in the dark ages. They too are now inclined to ask, What does our church teach? rather than What do the Scriptures teach?

O HEART, BE STRONG!

O heart, be strong, in God be strong;
Lift up thy cry, lift up thy song;
Pour out thy heavenly message sweet,
Oh, bear it forth on beauteous feet;
Cry the glad news from mountain height,
Flash through the gloom thy flaming light,
And to a listening world proclaim
The saving power of Jesus' name.

O heart, be strong, in God be strong,
Thy suffering time will not be long;
Sow on a little while in tears,
Thy harvest is for endless years;
Weep through the night, but soon the day
Shall chase all grief and gloom away;
And thou with songs of joy shalt come
And enter thine eternal home.

O heart, be strong, for on the throne
God's only well beloved Son
Sways the strong scepter of his might,
And vanquishes the hosts of night.
Lo, I am with you to the end,
An ever present, mighty friend--
All power is given into my hand,
Go, and obey my high command.

O heart, be strong, though countless foes
Thy march resist, thy work oppose;
Salvation's Captain fights for thee,
He shall thy shield and buckler be;
He shall lift up and shield thy head,
While thou shalt on the serpent tread;
And more than conqueror thou shalt be,
Through Christ who gives the victory.

--**H.L. Hastings.**

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