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## Dr. Sanday's Position, and Some of its Effects on the Anglican Communion.

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TO me the name of Dr. Sanday connotes not less than it does to most Englishmen. Perhaps I may class myself with those many to whom it conveys even more than what it does to the world at large. For a few months I was his pupil, and for many years I have had the honour of calling him a friend. To reverence for his massive and splendid erudition, to admiration for his sweet and lofty character, to firm persuasion that he is inflexibly loyal to the truth, there is added the gratitude of much personal kindness and the happiness of frequent personal intercourse.

It is, therefore, with more than usual concern, tinged with acute regret, that I have read his reply to the Bishop of Oxford, and have noted the position which he feels at present constrained to adopt towards portions of the miraculous element in the history of the New Testament. But as that regret is not greatly accompanied with surprise, so is it mitigated by two considerations, which I take leave to draw attention to. The first is this: There reigns in Dr. Sanday a scrupulosity of exquisite conscientiousness which we shall all do well to imitate, and a chivalrous promptitude of intellectual defence which they are fortunate who may enjoy it.

I am disposed to believe that his conscience has been stung by what he deems an unjust, or at least unfair, aggression on men with whom he largely sympathizes, and that this wounding may have aroused him to a transient exaggeration.

The second consideration is this: After all, Dr. Sanday remains a strenuous upholder of what we call "the supernatural." What the precise value of that upholding may be I shall try and estimate later on; but, in any case, such a declaration as the following, proceeding from such a man and such

a scholar as Dr. Sanday, must be allowed its fullest weight. For as he is incapable of insincerity, so he is master of the highest thought, and, as the reply shows, no less master of a measured and beautiful English: "Two things I would ask leave to do. I would ask leave to affirm once more my entire and strong belief in the central reality of the Supernatural Birth and the Supernatural Resurrection. No one believes in these things more strongly than I at least wish to believe in them" (p. 28). For all that, I am constrained to add that I count the reply to be a tragical and portentous event in the development of the Anglican Communion. It is a big disaster. It may be as big as the amputation of four Welsh sees, or as the threatened secession of a great section of Churchmen.

I confess, however, to a gratifying disappointment that the publication of Dr. Sanday's letter has not produced so large a disquietude as I feared, and as others, who have better right to judge, also feared. Still, I am afraid that as time goes on it may prove to be as momentous a blow to the security of the Church and of her faith as I have just indicated. May all our fears be falsified through the mercy of God! Yet we shall be mistaken if we allow these apprehensions to divert our minds from the issues of Kikuyu as a whole, even by the recession of so great and good a man as Dr. Sanday from some positions in Christian orthodoxy.

The question behind Kikuyu is really the old question of grace. That question, as old as St. Paul, has been the ground on which the main battles of the Christian faith have been fought. I could even hope that Dr. Sanday may have some help to render to us in the great conflict that is already dinning in our ears over the channels and the guarantees of grace.

As in the day of Augustine and of Berengarius and of St. Bernard, of Luther, of Pascal, of Wesley, and of Charles Simeon, of Vinet and of Neander, so now the crisis faces the Church of England, and takes on this special form: Is she going to stand for a gracious or a naturalistic interpretation of Jesus?

This is no matter of theological definitions, but of ultimate standpoints. The pathetic thing about the utterances of Dr. Sanday lies in this—that he seems to have thrown the weight of his immense learning and of his noble truthfulness into the scale that inclines towards the naturalistic interpretation of our Lord, and of the records on which we depend for adequate and effectual knowledge of Him.

To state the question in this way may be to make it appear less interesting and grand than it really is. The term “grace” has for a variety of reasons become unfashionable and out of date. Some elder Evangelicals have tended to use the term as a mere symbol of an antiquated scheme of things; and some High Churchmen, by their narrow and materializing conceptions of grace as a sacramental perquisite of the clergy, have tended from another direction to hurt the scriptural and essential majesty of this apostolic term.

Nevertheless, so great and absolutely engaging is the doctrine of grace, when presented in terms of life and truth, that I am sure that the fate of the Anglican Communion will be decided by her attitude towards this issue.

If she adopts the naturalistic interpretation of her Lord and of the New Testament, the Anglican Communion will merge herself among the amiable ameliorations of the world, and in time melt into a gentle insignificance. If she adheres to the interpretation that is required by a belief in “the grace of our Lord Jesus,” and patiently and honourably brings that interpretation into line with all that is true in modern thinking and acting, she will advance along the path of progressive victory over the world (1 John v.).

The first form in which the question of grace emerges from the controversy about Kikuyu is the question of episcopacy. The question in that connection is this: Is episcopacy integral to the Church in such a way as that, without it, men have no guarantee that the grace of God is with them corporately? The second form of the same thing may be thus stated: Is the Bible predominantly the product of Divine grace? The former

question is the question of ministerial succession ; the latter is the question of Biblical inspiration. Yet I take leave to suggest that fundamentally they are one question. Our thought about the grace of God will determine our thought about the ministry and about the Bible.

The Bishop of Oxford has challenged Evangelical Churchmen to undertake the pain of thinking out their position, especially in regard to their belief about the Bible. He says : " I suppose that Evangelicals will not wholly agree with High Churchmen as to the basis of doctrinal authority in the Church, though truly I do not know what to-day is the conception of the basis of authority among those Evangelicals who cannot stand any longer upon the bare idea of the infallibility of the Bible, and I venture to say that they greatly need to think out their principles and express them " (" Basis of Anglican Fellowship," p. 27). The challenge is both just and timely ; for it may be suspected that we have talked and felt more strenuously than we have thought about our religion. It is also along this line that the reply to Dr. Sanday must be found. I therefore venture to offer a few observations on the present state of thought about the inspiration of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament. I trust to write helpfully and consolingly, for I know how much the minds of younger men and women at the Universities and elsewhere are disquieted, and even unsettled, by what they read or hear. Yet I trust, also, to write with detachment of mind, sympathetic with modern views of history and life, and free from crude and illiterate dogmatisms.

That some sincere and defensible statement of inspiration must be furnished, I am sure ; and I am sure, also, that by the aid of the Holy Spirit such a statement can be furnished.

I will begin with a postulate : Whatever power of conveying and transmitting grace has been granted to the Christian society, has been granted to the society as a whole, and not to any order of persons in that society. And the security of tenure in that power is guaranteed by the indefectible love and faithfulness of our Lord, and by nothing else. This is a proposition of very ample dimensions ; and its consequences may carry

me further than I at present see ; but, so far as I can see, here is the starting-point for the belief of the Christian about grace.

The effect of such a belief on the doctrine of the Christian ministry is obvious. So to believe is compatible with a large degree of veneration for an ordered ministry, and even with a belief in the necessity of the episcopate ; but so to believe is incompatible with any view of the ministry which renders the ministry essential to the security of grace. I must refuse the temptation to follow the Bishop of Oxford into the fields of history, and restrain myself to saying a little on that view of the Bible which we entitle inspiration.

I think that my postulate makes it clear that the Bible is not absolutely indispensable to salvation. For since salvation is by grace, and since grace depends for its security on the love and faithfulness of our Lord alone, Scripture is not indispensable to salvation. This important consideration seems to clear our ideas about the province of inspiration and the value of the Bible as inspired.

The Sixth Article declares that Holy Scripture contains all things necessary to salvation, but it does not declare that part of the contents of salvation is the necessity of Holy Scripture. The famous dictum of Chillingworth is to be understood in the same way. "The Bible, and the Bible alone," wrote Chillingworth, "is the religion of Protestants." I have heard this dictum derided as both false in itself and as no longer tenable in face of the altered views of the Bible produced by modern criticism. But I think that the dictum holds good now as ever. Because I think that Chillingworth did not mean that the Bible was indispensable to salvation, but that the Bible is the sole and sovereign arbiter in matters of religion—a doctrine which is distinctive of, if not peculiar to, the Protestant Churches.

There are some striking words of Luthardt's that I venture to insert here as elucidating this point. In his lecture on "Holy Scripture" in the volume entitled "The Saving Truths of Christianity," he says: "Certainly it cannot be said that Scripture is absolutely necessary to the salvation of the individual Christian. What is necessary to him

is the matter of Scripture. Many have been saved who never read the Bible—who, perhaps, never knew it. Irenæus tells us of Christian congregations on the banks of the Rhine, towards the end of the second century, who, though not possessing the word of God in the Scriptures, nevertheless bore it in their hearts" (p. 246).

There is a second observation on the Bible that I think should be made, for it bears directly on the challenge that the Bishop of Oxford has addressed to Evangelicals. He implies that we adhere to, or that some of us adhere to, the idea of infallibility in the Bible. I ask myself, therefore, is infallibility an inevitable attribute of inspiration? I would not say that it is. It is true that the Bible offers us no reason for thinking that it is fallible. On the other hand, we cannot too forcibly remind ourselves that the Bible never calls itself infallible. I am, indeed, very reluctant to listen to those who proclaim that the Bible is fallible at any given point—in history, in science, in its doctrines or its ethics. Yet I am inclined to think that its freedom from fallibility is due to the honesty, sobriety, and intellectual conscientiousness of its writers, as well as to the special illumination of the Holy Spirit, which is the source of its prerogative dignity.

What, then, does inspiration do? What better are we for having an inspired Bible? In answering these questions, four considerations come in as confirmatory to faith.

The first is this: Inspiration is not an abstract quality that we can argue about. We know it in the Bible, and in the Bible alone. We use the term, indeed, in a loose and popular way, as when we talk about an inspiring speech or an inspiring scene. But for the purposes of religion we know inspiration only as it exists in the Bible. Of this quality any man is as good a judge as another. If only he has the sympathetic and receptive state of mind, he becomes aware of the inspiration of the Bible from reading the Bible itself, just as the Psalmists did or just as the Prophets did. Argument and learning go but a little way here. Knowledge is first hand and for all. "Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them."

Secondly, we may allow that there is a difference between the degree of inspiration in the Old Testament and that in the New. This is no more than to allow that the Revelation of God has been growing and graduated. The plainest proof of this is furnished by the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews : " God, having of old times spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds " (Heb. i. 1-3, R.V.). The inspiration of the Old Testament was Divine ; but it was, so to speak, on a lower plane. I am as far as possible from adopting Dr. Gore's estimate of the Old Testament, but I am prepared to find that the whole *Corpus Divinitatis* was, under the Old Covenant, less free from admixture of human ingredients than was the case after the outpouring of the Spirit of Truth on the Pentecostal Church.

Thirdly, I have often thought that the inspiration of the Bible, and especially of the New Testament writings, is powerfully sustained by the very ancient date of the belief in that inspiration. I do not think that it is too much to say that the belief in the distinctive inspiration of the New Testament is part of the primitive deposit of the faith. I write without the books before me, but I feel sure that a perusal of the writings of Polycarp, Irenæus, and Tertullian will convince that the belief that the New Testament is inspired was an axiom with the first Christians. Now, that means that these books possessed this character from the very time of their appearance. And, if that be so, it is certain, either that the idea of inspiration was an illusion, which the Apostles connived at, or that it is an irresistible conviction derived from the writings themselves and sanctioned by their authors.

The final consideration which aids us in realizing the nature and value of inspiration is the attitude of our Blessed Lord towards the Bible of the Jewish Church. His attitude towards the Old Testament was one of constant, deferential, varied use. In temptation, in controversy, in instruction, He gave it the first place. He made his *début* on the stage of history at a school of



Bible-study ; He condescended to His last agony at the bidding of the Scriptures ; He sighed His parting soul away to the music of the Psalms ; He employed the first hours of His risen life in traversing with two disciples the familiar lines of ancient prophecy. Such an example could not be lost upon the believing fellowship of the disciples. When, in turn, the promised Spirit came with signal fulness on some of them, they realized that the promise of the guidance into all the Truth involved the formation and the preservation of the sacred writings of the New Covenant.

In commending these thoughts to my readers, and in bespeaking for them some attention at the present grave crisis in the Church, I wish to add two reflections.

The first is irenical. I conceive that the very office of inspiration is to guarantee a true record of what we call the supernatural. Dr. Sanday maintains with intense and iterated earnestness that he believes in the Supernatural Birth and the Supernatural Resurrection ; yet he declares that he cannot accept the accounts of those events as they are narrated in the Gospels. Now, I think that if the authority of the Gospels is sufficient to support our belief in the truth of those events, it ought also to suffice to support our belief in the records as to the mode in which those events took place. To dispute this seems to be going too far for faith, and not far enough for philosophy.

The view of inspiration maintained in this article seems to be irreconcilably opposed to one idea that has obtained ascendancy over the modern mind. That idea is the evolution of Biblical religion on the lines which have sustained the evolution of religions not Biblical. The most violent form of that idea is known as the "Graf-Wellhausen" hypothesis of the Old Testament.

I may be pardoned if I close by saying that, so far as I can see, no real belief in any valid and genuine inspiration is compatible with that view of the origin and processes of the religion of the Bible.