

THE INSPIRATION OF THE SCRIPTURE*

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MR. PRESIDENT and members of the Board of Trustees, I must take this opportunity of expressing my deep appreciation to the Faculty of this institution for having nominated me to the Board of Trustees for the position of Professor of Systematic Theology and of expressing to the Board of Trustees my deep gratitude for the privilege they have conferred upon me when they elected me to and installed me in this office. While intimating my appreciation of this honour and privilege I cannot refrain from hastening to voice in the very same breath my keen sense of unworthiness. The department of Systematic Theology in Westminster Seminary is intended to continue a great tradition, that tradition associated with names second to none in the theological firmament of the last hundred years. The memory of the names of Hodge and Warfield, predecessors in this tradition, truly fills me with what I can only call a humiliating astonishment which tends to make it appear presumption on my part even to think of assuming a position which follows in the train of their illustrious and devoted service to God and His Kingdom.

But I have been prevented from succumbing entirely to the temptation arising from this humiliating sense of inadequacy by one consideration, the sense of Divine call and responsibility. In assuming this obligation I have been upheld and propelled not by the hope that I shall ever be able to discharge the office with the devotion, erudition, and distinction of those who have gone before in this noble tradition but only by the conviction that, for the present at least,

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it is my calling and therefore I can plead God's wisdom and grace in the pursuance of a task which though humbling in its demands is yet glorious in its opportunity.

I am going to address you tonight on the topic, "The Inspiration of the Scripture". It is a subject on which much has been written, particularly during the last hundred years. It is furthermore even a topic on which inaugural addresses have been given in the past by very distinguished and competent scholars. Nevertheless I think you will agree that it is a subject of paramount importance, importance increased rather than diminished by the movements of theological thought which are our legacy, and in the context of which we live the life that we live. At Westminster Seminary we claim that the reason for our existence as an institution is the exposition and defence of the Holy Scriptures. It is our humble boast that all our work centres around the Bible as the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. It is obvious, therefore, that our work and purpose are determined by our conception of what the Bible is. And what the Bible is is just the question of its inspiration.

In view of the extensive treatment accorded the subject and particularly the copious literature in defence of that view of the Bible which we at Westminster Seminary hold, there is scarcely anything new that I can say in elucidation and defence of the historic Christian position. Furthermore, it will be impossible to deal with the various theories of inspiration which have constituted divergence from or attack upon the Biblical concept itself.

The systematic reconstructions which characterised the nineteenth century were entirely inhospitable and even inimical to the historic doctrine of plenary inspiration. Theologically speaking, the nineteenth century was largely dominated by the systems of Friedrich Schleiermacher and Albrecht Ritschl. Schleiermacher's depreciation of the Old Testament is a well-known fact. He utterly failed to appreciate the organic unity of both Testaments. But even should he have appreciated the organic unity and continuity of both Testaments, his theological presuppositions would have prevented him from reaching any true estimate of what that organic unity really is. For Schleiermacher Christianity

consisted in the redemptive and potent God-consciousness exhibited by Jesus of Nazareth. This religious self-consciousness emanating from Jesus Christ is continued in the Christian church and as such it is the self-proclamation of Christ. His appeal to Scripture is simply for the purpose of ascertaining what that religious self-consciousness was. We ascertain thereby what was the religious experience of the first disciples, and so we may test our own experience as to its Christian character. The New Testament then is but the classic precipitate of Christian religious experience and only in that sense the norm of faith and the source of Christian theology.

Albrecht Ritschl avows that Christian doctrine is to be drawn alone from Holy Scripture, but only because Holy Scripture provides us with the classic documents of Christian beginnings. Ritschl had no doubt a deeper appreciation of history than did Schleiermacher. I take it that the centrum of Ritschl's theology is the overwhelming sense we have of the reality and presence of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The New Testament documents confront us, he would say, with this Jesus of Nazareth as he conceived this Jesus to be. As such they are unique. They are the classic documents of Christianity because they are the documents that stand nearest to Him. They reproduce most accurately the impression produced by Jesus upon those who came directly into contact with Him. But to the doctrine of inspiration Ritschl not only offers rejection but, as James Orr says, shows a positive repugnance.¹

I am not going, however, to orient this address by the views of Schleiermacher and Ritschl. There are three other views of the Bible I shall select. These have no doubt affinities with those of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, but into these genetic relations we shall not enter. Neither do I propose to offer any detailed examination or refutation of them. But by showing very summarily their character we shall be able more intelligently to understand the nature of the Biblical witness, and in our analysis of that witness detect how these views diverge from the Biblical doctrine.

¹ Cf. *The Ritschlian Theology*, London, 1897, p. 96.

The selection of these three views may appear arbitrary. To a certain extent this is true. Yet the reason will become apparent as we proceed. It is, in brief, that any treatment of inspiration must also deal with the concept of revelation. These three views taking their starting-point from revelation make capital of that concept to do prejudice to the historic doctrine of inspiration. It will be our aim to show, to some extent at least, that the fact of revelation can provide no escape from plenary inspiration, and that a concept of revelation that is true to the Biblical witness is a concept that embraces inspiration as a mode of revelation.

(1) The first is that view of inspiration which regards an infallible superintendence or direction of the Spirit of God as extending to those parts of Scripture that are the product of revelation from God, while no such superintendence or direction extends to those parts that could be composed by the exercise of man's natural faculties upon sources of information available to them and which required simply the ordinary methods of research, compilation and systematisation for their production.

I am aware that this particular way of stating the matter is but one modification of a more general point of view known as that of partial inspiration by which degrees of inspiration are posited. This theory of degrees of inspiration, it is thought, can readily be used to explain the various phenomena in Scripture and particularly the marks of human imperfection and fallibility which are considered to be inherent in it. But because we cannot deal with every particular modification of this general viewpoint we may keep that particular form more distinctly before our minds. To express this form more fully I might avail myself of the words of William Cunningham. "The general principle upon which the advocates of this view proceed is this, that we must not admit of any divine agency, or any immediate and supernatural interposition of God in effecting or producing anything which could possibly have been effected without it, and they then quietly set up human reason, i. e., themselves, or their own notions, as competent and adequate judges of whether or not, in a particular case, any immediate divine interposition was necessary. With these principles they come to examine

the Bible, take the different books of which it is composed, and the different subjects of which it treats, and set themselves to consider in regard to each book, and each subject, or class of subjects, whether mere men, unaided by any special divine assistance, could not possibly have given us such information as is there presented to us; and whenever there is any plausible ground for the allegation that men might possibly have communicated to us the information conveyed, they forthwith conclude that no divine inspiration was granted, that no special divine agency was exerted in guiding and directing them."²

(2) The second is that view of inspiration which regards the inspiration of the Bible as consisting in a certain elevation of spirit possessed by the writers of Scripture. This viewpoint has probably taken much of its stimulus from Coleridge's *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*. Coleridge while admitting miraculous communication in the writing of part of Scripture yet refers the writing of the rest of Scripture to the highest degree of that gracious influence of the Spirit common to all believers.³ Christianity, it is claimed, is a supernatural religion grounded and settled on supernatural facts and doctrines, and the Bible is the precipitate of that supernatural revelation. The Bible is inspired because the men who wrote the Bible were inspired by the truth of the great supernatural and redemptive acts of God. The truth of Christianity taking possession of their hearts and minds caused a quickening and exaltation of spirit, and because written under that afflatus or exaltation of spirit the Bible is the product of inspiration. In the words of William Newton Clarke, "Inspiration to write was not different in kind from the general inspiration

² *Theological Lectures*, pp. 296 f.

³ Coleridge says that there is a chasm of difference between the miraculous communication or "inspired revelation" that is illustrated in the Law and the Prophets, "no jot or tittle of which can pass unfulfilled," and the inspiration which he calls "the highest degree of that grace and communion with the Spirit, which the Church under all circumstances, and every regenerate member of the Church of Christ, is permitted to hope, and instructed to pray, for." This difference, he thinks, "has in every generation been rendered evident to as many as read these Scriptures under the gracious influence of the Spirit in which they were written". See *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, Boston, 1841, pp. 120 f.

of the divine Spirit. The writing of the Scripture was one of the higher and finer fruits of the influence of God upon the whole body of believing and receptive people. No promise can be cited of a divine influence differing from all other, given on purpose to prepare men to write; nor is there any claim in Scripture that the whole class of writers, as writers, were wrought upon differently from other sons of men. Men wrote from inward impulse. They wrote because they were impressed by truth from God, and were so affected by its power and value that they could write it in abiding forms."⁴ Or, perhaps with some margin of difference, it might be stated in the words of William Sanday, "Just as one particular branch of one particular stock was chosen to be in a general sense the recipient of a clearer revelation than was vouchsafed to others, so within that branch certain individuals were chosen to have their hearts and minds moved in a manner more penetrating and more effective than their fellows, with the result that their written words convey to us truths about the nature of God and His dealings with man which other writings do not convey with equal fulness, power, and purity. We say that this special moving is due to the action upon those hearts and minds of the Holy Spirit. And we call that action Inspiration."⁵ We should naturally expect that this action of the Spirit should differ according to the nature of the content, and that is exactly what we find Sanday affirming. "At the same time we cannot be surprised if, in this process of the application to life and worship of the central truths of the religion, there are some parts which are more distant from the centre than others, and proportionately influenced in less degree by the principles which are most fundamental. The glowing mass which sends forth light and heat loses both by radiation." And so "there are some books in which the Divine element is at the *maximum* and others in which it is at the *minimum*."⁶ At the best then, on this view, inspiration is that action of the Holy Spirit in the hearts and minds of the writers of Holy Writ whereby

⁴ *An Outline of Christian Theology*, New York, 1909, p. 43.

⁵ *Inspiration*, London, 1903, p. 127.

⁶ *id.*, pp. 397 f.

they had a more penetrative and effective perception of truth and in virtue of which the truth they wrote received "classical expression, both as a model to after-ages and as a school of devout feeling".⁷ Inspiration then really respects the writers of Scripture and may be applied to Scripture only insofar as it is the product of men writing under that influence of the truth upon their hearts and minds.

(3) The third view is that of the Dialectic Theology, associated with the name of Karl Barth.⁸ Barth claims that the written word, the Bible, is normative and authoritative. The Bible constitutes itself the canon. This self-imposition consists in the fact that the prophetic and apostolic word is the witness and proclamation of Jesus Christ. In the fulness of time the Word became flesh; in Jesus Christ *Deus Dixit*. That is the absolute of the Bible, for it is *that* revelation that is attested in the Bible. As the Biblical writers are faithful to this centre they are the carriers of the eternal Word.

The Bible itself, however, cannot strictly be said to be revelation and it cannot in itself as an objective reality be spoken of as the Word of God. Revelation comes to us through the mediacy of the Bible as it also comes to us through the medium of church proclamation. It is only because the Bible attests revelation given in the past and is the medium through which in a concrete confrontation revelation comes to us here and now that it may be called the Word of God. That the Bible may be the Word of God it must continue to confront the church as a free and living Word. This confrontation is God's free act, it is an act of God's grace and is the result of a Divine decision. God from time to time speaks in the human word of the Bible, and in this event, which is a Divine act of revelation and in which the Bible imposes itself, the Bible *becomes* God's Word. Man's word in the Bible becomes here and now true in us and for us.

The Bible is God's Word then by *becoming* from time to time God's Word to us. So we can speak, therefore, of the

⁷ *id.*, p. 396.

⁸ See Karl Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik, Die Lehre vom Wort Gottes*, Erster Halbband, München, 1932, pp. 89–261. English Translation by G. T. Thomson, *The Doctrine of the Word of God*, Edinburgh, 1936, pp. 98–283.

content of the Word of God only as that Word is constantly repeated in fresh Divine utterance. God reveals Himself in propositions, even in human language, since from time to time a word spoken by prophets or apostles becomes God's Word to us. That is the content of the Word of God.

The sole way we know it as the Word of God is that it comes straight home to us, it is directed to us, and that in a concrete confrontation as a Divine *concretissimum* in a genuine and inescapable encounter. In this inescapable encounter a ruling Divine power invades us and we stand in a crisis. It is a crisis in which an act of God, in this way and in no other, to this particular person and to no other, confronts him with choice, the choice of obedience or disobedience together with their resultant correlates of blessedness or damnation. Because of this the Word of God is never to be conceived of by us or reproduced by us as a general truth. However accurately the revelation may have been attested by the Biblical writers it is never for that reason the Word of God to us. Only as there is the ever-recurring human crisis and Divine decision does it become the Word of God.

Since, however, the absolute of the Bible is the witness to Jesus Christ the past revelation becomes contemporary. The time of Christ is made contemporary with the time of the prophets and apostles, and all in turn becomes contemporary with us. A particular *illic et tunc* (there and then) becomes a particular *hic et nunc* (here and now).

Since we are now dealing with inspiration it interests us to inquire a little more particularly what is the relation of this event of revelation — which is the Word of God in a concrete situation, in a crisis for us of life or death — to the written text of the Bible. Barth tells us that when the Word of God becomes an event, then revelation and the Bible are one in fact. But he warns us that we must not identify the Bible with this revelation. For in the Bible we have but human attempts to repeat and reproduce in human thoughts and expressions the Word of God. And so the Bible is not the Word of God until in a definite situation it becomes the medium of the Word of God to a particular person, not until by a concrete act of God repeated anew it becomes to that person the Word of God. For not until then does it have the

personal character, the Divine authority and the ruling power of the Word of God. Not until then can it be said that *Deus Dixit* (God spoke), only that *Paulus Dixit* (Paul spoke). And indeed God is not bound to the verbal form of Holy Scripture. He can use a verbal form beyond that of Scripture.

It has surely become clear then that the Bible, according to Barth, is not the Word of God by reason of a past activity of God, not the Word of God because, by a specific Divine influence upon the writers, it possesses inherently in itself Divine quality and character. It is not as a book written, not as an existing and abiding entity, not as a permanent deposit of Divine truth, the Word of God. Apart from a *hic et nunc* personal act of God signalled in an event, it is never the Word of God. It is but the human witness to past revelation except as concrete parts of it, in concrete crises, become by a recurring act of divine revelation the Word of God to an individual soul.

The concepts of revelation held by these three views are not of course to be identified. Yet, in accordance with their respective presuppositions, they all hold to supernatural revelation. The first two regard this supernatural revelation as a finished activity of God, the third demands that it be regarded as a continuous or at least ever-recurring act of God. In the matter of inspiration, the first holds to supernatural inspiration limited in extent or scope, the second holds to inspiration not specifically supernatural but in kind common with the influence of the Spirit enjoyed by all believers, while the third can virtually dispense with inspiration altogether in favour of what is propounded to be the ever-present revelatory action of the Holy Spirit. It will have been seen how in each case the concept of revelation has been used to support the claim that the Bible is the Word of God, and yet has been used to eliminate the need and fact of plenary inspiration. Any presentation of the doctrine of inspiration that would be formulated or defended in opposition to these theories must, if it is to clarify and maintain itself, proceed along the line of defining these concepts and their relation the one to the other.

It must be appreciated that there is a distinction that may quite properly be drawn between revelation and inspiration. In this present discussion we are, of course, confining ourselves to *supernatural* revelation as it relates to inspiration. Revelation in this limited sense may be used with reference to the Divine activity or to the product of that Divine activity. In the narrowest and strictest sense the content of such revelation is the truth immediately communicated by God. Inspiration on the other hand refers to that influence of the Spirit of God brought to bear upon the writers of Holy Scripture whereby Scripture itself in its whole extent and every part is Divine in origin, character and authority. Or, if we are thinking of Scripture as a finished product, we may use the word "inspiration" to designate the quality of Scripture as Divine by reason of that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit under which it was produced.

Now as we study the content of Scripture it becomes obvious that much that is contained in Scripture is the product of supernatural revelation in this its strictest sense, the product of immediate communication from God to the mind of man. By various modes God disclosed to men knowledge that could be derived, not only from no other source, but also by no other method than that of immediate communication. And the Bible is the depository of that kind or type of knowledge.

But it is just as obvious that the Bible also contains much that was not derived from such supernatural communications. There is much material of varied character of which the writers were eyewitnesses or which they could have derived in the use of their natural faculties from extant sources of information. It must at least be conceded that there is much within the pages of Holy Writ that did not require for its knowledge on the part of the writers any supernatural revelation. And so it is apparent that there are at least two distinct kinds of content within the pages of Scripture.

Recognising this distinction as regards content, how does it affect the question at issue, namely, that of inspiration? The moment we have asked that question it becomes necessary to make another distinction, a distinction necessitated

by the consideration that we are dealing now with the influences brought to bear upon the writers of Scripture. It must be allowed that the writers of Scripture were themselves sometimes the recipients of supernatural revelations in the strictest sense. In such instances what they wrote was communicated to them by this strictly supernatural mode. But on other occasions, while the content of what they wrote is itself the product of supernatural revelation, that is, of immediate Divine communication, we have no reason to suppose that the mode of communication to them as writers was that of supernatural communication. Peter, James and John were on the holy mount recipients of supernatural revelation, but we have no reason to suppose that Luke, in recording for us the information as to what Peter, James and John heard from heaven on that occasion, was the recipient of a supernatural revelation to that effect. We have good reason to believe that he learned it from Peter, James or John, or from sources of information emanating from the testimony of Peter, James and John. So that while oftentimes the data with which the inspired writer is dealing are data of a strictly supernatural character come to the knowledge of man by a strictly supernatural mode of communication, the mode of knowledge on the part of the writer is not in the strict sense supernatural.

We are not supposing that we have by any means exhausted the various categories into which the truth-content of Scripture would have to be placed nor the various modes by which the writers of Scripture came to the knowledge of that truth-content they have conveyed to us. Far less have we been presuming to be able to determine in every case what were the modes by which the writers of Scripture were equipped to be the conveyors of the truth to us. But we have gone far enough in our analysis to appreciate the question: How does inspiration, whether we are regarding it as a Divine influence or a Divine quality, Divine influence in producing Scripture or Divine quality resident in Scripture, relate itself to the diverse kinds of truth-content embodied in Scripture?

There are various ways in which we may put this question according as we are thinking of the various views of the nature of Scripture. If we are thinking, for example, of the

Barthian view of Scripture, are we to suppose that the writers of Scripture, when engaged in their task of writing the diverse types of truth-content, were left to the infirmities and imperfections characteristic of human nature and characteristic of other human writers? Are we to suppose that they, though on occasions dealing with the Word of God in the most absolute sense of the word and though themselves even on occasion recipients of revelation, that is to say, in Barthian terms confronted in concrete crises with the Word of God in its authoritative and ruling power, yet give to us in the word they have written a merely human witness to that Word? Are we for that reason to suppose that the word of Scripture cannot itself be said to be the Word of God but rather that ever and anon, now and here, in concrete situations by Divine action and decision, it becomes the Word of God? Is that the way in which we may discover Christ and His apostles to have dealt with the then existing corpus of Scripture?

Or, having still another view of Scripture in mind, are we to believe that the inspiration of the writers was that elevation of spirit that came to them because of the supernaturalness of the revelation-content with which they were dealing?

Or, again, are we to suppose that a supernatural Divine influence superintended, directed and controlled the writers of Scripture when they were writing what is revelatory in character, while no such influence was exerted upon them when they were dealing simply with the facts of nature and history or even dealing with those matters that required only the exercise of their natural faculties?

The thesis we maintain is that an examination of the Biblical witness as to its character will show that a supernatural influence was exerted on the writers of Scripture, that this influence was all-pervasive extending to every part of Scripture, that amidst the diversity of ways in which the content of Scripture was communicated to men, and amidst the diversity of ways in which the content of Scripture became the possession of its writers so that they might communicate it to us, there are no exceptions to, or degrees of, that supernatural influence we call "inspiration", and no exceptions to, or degrees of, that "inspiration" whereby Scripture regarded

as a product is rendered wholly Divine in its origin, character, truth and authority.⁹

In view of this all-pervasive supernatural activity by which we contend Scripture is rendered wholly Divine in character, we are required to recognise that the distinction between revelation and inspiration, though proper and necessary within certain well-defined limits, is not a distinction that can be applied with any absoluteness. The fact of revelation in the strictest sense cannot be pleaded as an excuse for denying the pervasive activity or quality we call inspiration. Far less can revelation, when conceived of as a continuous or ever-recurring activity of God, be intruded as a substitute for that inspiration by which Scripture is constituted the Word of God.

The absoluteness with which the distinction is drawn in the interest of doing prejudice to that supernatural influence whereby Scripture in its entirety is invested with Divine quality would have to be resisted for this reason, if for no other, namely, that the strictly revelation material cannot be abstracted from the historical, geographical and physical context in which it was given originally and in the context of which, as inscripturated, it is conveyed to us. God progressively disclosed and accomplished His redemptive plan in certain historical and geographical conditions; He revealed Himself in word and deed in the sphere of a providence that includes as its necessary environment the world of nature. Revelation, though itself supernatural and therefore not given through the processes of nature, was given in the environment of the world of nature. Revelation does not consist of a series of abstract disclosures nor of disconnected disclosures. There is what Dr. Vos calls the "practical adaptability" of revelation. "He has caused His revelation to take place in

⁹ It is deemed unnecessary to enter into any exposure of that gross caricature of the doctrine here stated that it involves the placing of the Divine imprimatur upon everything that Scripture records as having been said or done by fallen angels or men. The doctrine of plenary inspiration does not, of course, imply Divine approval of the sins in thought, word and deed of which Satan, men and demons are represented as guilty. The writer would credit his readers with sufficient knowledge of the doctrine of inspiration to make such labour superfluous.

the milieu of the historical life of a people . . . All that God disclosed of Himself has come in response to the practical religious needs of His people as these emerged in the course of history."¹⁰ Revelation as an organism is therefore interwoven with the historical context, we may even say the natural context, in which it was given. Consequently the transmission of it to us must come in that context. It must not be abstracted. Any divergence from truth in the historical context must in the nature of the case disturb and distort the revelation itself. It becomes apparent then how prejudicial to the authenticity of the revelation material itself must be the attempt to drive a line of cleavage between the Divine influence that guarded the transmission of the revelation content and the merely human agency by which the historical and geographical context of that revelation is transmitted.

But the most cogent reason why the absoluteness of the distinction between revelation and inspiration must be resisted is that Scripture not only records revelation, not only is it the inscripturation of revelation; it is as such in its entirety revelation. The Bible is much more than a living record of Divine action and revelation. It is more than even a living reproduction and interpretation of the revelation of God in history. It is itself, as a written fact, *revelation*. In other words, it is not simply a history of revelation, not simply the vessel or vehicle of revelation, indeed not simply revelation history. It is, as *written word*, in itself revelation *fact*. It is *God* speaking to us men and, because so, it is, as a written product, in all its extent and detail, of Divine origin and character and therefore Divinely authoritative. It is itself, no less than the movements of God in history that it records, normative and determinative. That is just saying that inspiration is a mode of revelation. The Scriptures, as Dr. Warfield says, cannot "be degraded into the mere human record of revelation. They are themselves a substantial part of God's revelation; one form which his revealing activity chose for itself; and that its final and complete form, adopted as such for the very purpose of making God's revealed will

¹⁰ Mimeographed *Lectures on Old Testament Biblical Theology*, p. 5.

the permanent and universal possession of man. Among the manifold methods of God's revelation, revelation through 'inspiration' thus takes its natural place; and the Scriptures, as the product of this 'inspiration', become thus the work of God; not only a substantial part of revelation, but, along with the rest of revelation, a substantial part of his redemptive work . . . But it is much more than a record of past revelations. It is itself the final revelation of God, completing the whole disclosure of his unfathomable love to lost sinners, the whole proclamation of his purposes of grace, and the whole exhibition of his gracious provisions for their salvation."¹¹

But we must proceed to ask: Does this view of inspiration we have presented stand the test of scrutiny? The moment we have said scrutiny we are required to ask, scrutiny of what? Is it the scrutiny of experience, or of history, or of scientific investigation? We would not disparage or dismiss with abuse the questions raised by these, nor would we underestimate the quota of evidence that might properly be elicited from them. But in the ultimate the norm is that which we have throughout suggested, the norm of Scripture itself. What is that view of Scripture entertained by itself? In other words, what is the Biblical notion of inspiration? We may confine the inquiry to the question: What is the view entertained of Scripture by our Lord and His apostles? We do not claim that the inquiry more comprehensively treated should thus be delimited. But for our present purposes we may legitimately confine the question to these limits. We can, however, even within these limits do little more than give a few examples of the witness on the part of our Lord and His apostles to that view and use of Scripture which they held.

Perhaps the most significant utterance in the apostolic witness is that of Paul in II Tim. 3:16, a text that has been subjected to the most searching exegesis, particularly since the Reformation.¹²

¹¹ *Revelation and Inspiration*, pp. 47 f.

¹² I must express here my deep indebtedness to Dr. B. B. Warfield for the exact and massive scholarship he has brought to bear upon this whole

There might be some reasonable doubt as to whether Scriptures of the New Testament canon were included in the scope of the *πᾶσα γραφή* of which Paul here speaks. Some able and cautious expositors are disposed to regard Paul as comprehending within the scope of Scripture all that could be called by that name. But Paul in the preceding context speaks of the *ιερά γράμματα* which Timothy had known from a child. These sacred writings can be none other than the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Whether Paul had in mind a wider application by which other Scriptures were to be added and to which the same predicate could be ascribed, it may be difficult to say. But in any case the denotation cannot be any less than the Scriptures of the Jewish canon. This defines for us the denotation of that which Paul had in mind when in the succeeding context he affirms, "All Scripture is inspired of God".

I think that we may rather summarily dismiss what may be called the Socinian interpretation which reads the text as if Paul were making a distinction between inspired Scripture and uninspired Scripture, and which regards the *ὠφέλιμος* as the only predicate of the sentence, in which case it should read, "Every Scripture that is God-inspired is profitable for doctrine". Suffice it to say with Robert Watts that "it cannot be for a moment imagined that, after passing such high eulogium upon the Holy Scriptures which Timothy, and his mother, and grandmother, had held in such veneration, the Apostle would at once proceed to inculcate an indefinite theory of inspiration, which, from its indefiniteness, could serve no other end than to perplex those who would attempt to apply it, and must, in the end, lead to sceptical views on the whole subject of the claims of the sacred record".¹³

It is immaterial whether we translate *πᾶσα γραφή* as "all

subject and upon this text in particular. I would refer especially to his articles, "The Inspiration of the Bible", "The Biblical Idea of Inspiration", "The Real Problem of Inspiration" and "God-Inspired Scripture" in the volume cited above, *Revelation and Inspiration*. This volume is composed of articles written by Dr. Warfield in several publications. They were published in book form after his death by the Oxford University Press, American Branch in 1927.

¹³ *The Rule of Faith and the Doctrine of Inspiration*, p. 142.

Scripture" or "every Scripture", that is to say whether Paul conceives of Scripture collectively or distributively. If the former, then he means that Scripture in its entire mass as a unit is inspired of God. If the latter, then he means that Scripture in its every part is inspired of God. The result is the same. If Scripture in its whole extent is given by inspiration of God, then every part which goes to the making up of that total is inspired of God. And if Scripture is in every part given by inspiration of God, then Scripture in its total extent and content, which is the aggregation of its several parts, is given by inspiration of God. Scripture as such, whether viewed in its component parts or in its total mass, is given by Divine inspiration.

What then is this quality that Paul predicates of Scripture? The word which we have so far translated as "given by inspiration of God" or "inspired of God" is very much more significant than our English translation might suggest. Paul is not here speaking of an inbreathing on the part of God into Holy Scripture. Nor is Paul speaking of an inbreathing into the writers of Holy Scripture. The term lends no support whatsoever to the notion that a human product or human witness is so inspired by God that it is by a here-and-now action of the personal God converted into or made to become the Divine Word. Far less does it lend any support to the view that the writers of Holy Scripture were so inspired by the supernatural revelations they were honoured to record or communicate to us that a unique quality both as to content and character resides in the word they wrote. What Paul says is that "All Scripture is God-breathed" or "All Scripture, being God-breathed, is as well profitable". What Paul affirms, therefore, is that Scripture, in Warfield's words, "is the product of the creative breath of God, and, because of this its Divine origination, is of supreme value for all holy purposes".¹⁴ Or again, "What is *θεόπνευστος* is 'God-breathed', . . . the product of Divine inspiration, the creation of that Spirit who is in all spheres of the Divine activity the executive of the Godhead".¹⁵ Paul's terse emphatic affirma-

¹⁴ *Revelation and Inspiration*, p. 80.

¹⁵ *id.*, p. 280.

tion is that Scripture, the minimum denotation of which is placed beyond question by the context, is just precisely this kind of product. It is God's mouth, God's breath, God's oracle. He makes no qualifications and no reservations. He does not discriminate. He does not speak of degrees of inspiration. But what he does say is that "every Scripture" or "all Scripture" is God-breathed. All Scripture, since it is God-breathed, is also for that reason profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work.

Paul is not here telling us anything about the human writers, nor of the way in which a Divine product came to us through human instrumentality. He is, of course, well aware of the fact that God used human instruments, that He prepared and equipped these naturally, providentially, supernaturally, that certain modes of Divine activity were operative in and through these human instruments to the end of giving us a *γραφὴ θεόπνευστος*. But the question of the human instrumentality is not within the purview of his thought here. He is now laying down with tremendous insistence the datum that Scripture is of Divine origin and authorship, and by manifest implication that it is therefore of Divine character and authority. It is the oracular Word of God. This is the tremendous *Pauline concretissimum*.

Perhaps the most significant utterance in the apostolic teaching beside this one of the Apostle Paul is that of Peter in his second epistle. "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there was borne such a voice to him by the Majestic Glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: and this voice we ourselves heard borne out of heaven, when we were with him in the holy mount. And we have the word of prophecy made more sure: whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of

man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit."¹⁶

It was a very great privilege that Peter and the other two disciples enjoyed when they were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. They heard the eternal Father in audible speech bear witness to the eternal Son, as the well-beloved Son on whom *His* good pleasure had come to rest. No wonder he relates the experience in such magnificent terms, "We were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory when there was borne to Him such a voice by the excellent glory." No wonder he calls the scene the holy mount. But the astounding fact for our purposes is that he does not place that voice which came from heaven on a higher plane, as regards divinity, authority and stability, than the written Scripture. No indeed; he says the very opposite. "We have also a more steadfast word of prophecy whereunto ye do well that ye take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts." The written word, whether he refers to the whole of Scripture or to that part specifically prophetic, gives ground for stronger and more stable assurance than the very word spoken on that occasion. It was not that Peter entertained any doubt as to the veracity and security of the heavenly voice that spake on the holy mount. But he advances a series of reasons why the Scripture affords us a more stable ground of confidence. These reasons are both negative and positive.

1. "No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation." The negative, it will be noted, is universal. In every case private interpretation is excluded. It is not the product of individual reflection or imagination. It is not merely the product of the writer's testimony to a fact or event witnessed by him.

2. "No prophecy was ever brought by the will of man." It does not owe its origin to human volition, determination, or initiative. Again the negative is universal.

3. "Men spake from God." The human instrumentality is recognised, and so any false inferences from the foregoing

¹⁶ II Pet. 1:16-21. A. R. V.

emphatic negatives — inferences calculated to do prejudice to the ostensible facts of the human authorship — Peter curtly obviates by the simple statement that men spake. They spake, however, from God, and it is that modification that supplies the ground for the negations of private interpretation and the will of man.

4. "As borne by the Holy Spirit men spake from God." This phrase "borne by the Holy Spirit" has the position of emphasis in the sentence. It is, as Warfield observes, "a very specific one. It is not to be confounded with guiding, or directing, or controlling, or even leading in the full sense of that word. It goes beyond all such terms, in assigning the effect produced specifically to the active agent. What is 'borne' is taken up by the 'bearer', and conveyed by the 'bearer's' power, not its own, to the 'bearer's' goal, not its own. The men who spake from God are here declared, therefore, to have been taken up by the Holy Spirit and brought by His power to the goal of His choosing. The things which they spoke under this operation of the Spirit were therefore His things, not theirs. And that is the reason which is assigned why the 'prophetic word' is so sure."¹⁷

It is the absolute trustworthiness of Scripture that is being affirmed, and it is being affirmed expressly for the reason that it is not in the last analysis human testimony to a Divine disclosure or revelation, not the product of human inspiration in recording the content of Divine communications, but because it is itself Divine testimony. The reason why he affirms this greater stability is just the fact that it is Scripture. Peter and his readers have not simply a word spoken on a particular occasion but the Word of God that has received, because it is Scripture, permanent embodiment and authentication.

When we turn to the testimony of our Lord Himself, we find that His attitude to Scripture falls perfectly into line with those examples we have given of apostolic witness. Perhaps it would be more accurate and reverent to state the case in reverse order. We find that the apostolic witness

¹⁷ *Revelation and Inspiration*, p. 83.

breathes in the very same atmosphere as that attitude of meticulous acceptance and reverence exhibited by our Lord. The Apostles had learned of Christ and they were baptised with His Spirit. It was none other than Jesus who said, "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets, I came not to destroy but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all things be fulfilled" (Matt. 5:17, 18). And it was He who said with a similar asseveration with respect to Himself, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). In the teaching of our Lord we are presented with the astounding fact that His attitude of meticulous acceptance and reverence proceeds from His recognition of the simple fact that it is written. We find no evidence that He sharply distinguished between the Word of God borne to us by Scripture as its vessel and vehicle and the written Word itself. No! The inescapable fact supported by an amazing mass of direct and indirect statement is that the Scripture, just because it was *Scripture*, just because it was *written*, just because it fell within the denotation "*it is written*", was a finality in all questions. And the only explanation of such an attitude is that what Scripture said, God said, that it was God's Word just because it was Scripture, with which goes the corollary that it became Scripture because it was God's Word.

There are three episodes in the life and teaching of our Lord which we may adduce as illustrative of the thesis we have stated, namely, that the uniform attitude of our Lord was one of meticulous acceptance of Scripture in its entirety as the Word of God.

(1) The first is that of John 10:33-36. Jesus had just claimed equality with God the Father. He said, "I and the Father are one", and the Jews rightly interpreted this as placing Himself on an equality with God. Accordingly, they took up stones to stone Him and accused Him of blasphemy, a charge perfectly proper if the claim was not true. The charge, be it observed, was a tremendously serious one. It did two things: it denied His Deity and it denied His veracity, both of which were the basis of His mission and work. Vali-

date the charge the Jews brought against Him, and Jesus was the greatest of impostors.

It was a charge of just that kind that Jesus had to answer. Effective rebuttal, if ever necessary, was indispensable now. And it was by appeal to Scripture He met the charge. "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God." He staked his argument for the overthrow of the most serious allegation that could be levelled against Him upon a statement of the 82nd Psalm, a statement too which does not appear in the Psalm as a Word of God but as the word of the psalmist himself. Does he not do this precisely because He is convinced that in the Scriptures He is possessed of an unassailable instrument of defence? "The Scripture cannot be broken."

It is well for us to note the force of the brief parenthetical phrase, "The Scripture cannot be broken". It might be argued that Jesus in this reply to His adversaries was simply taking advantage of an *ad hominem* argument. "Is it not written in your law?" And so no inference as to his own attitude to Scripture could be based upon his appeal to the 82nd Psalm. Jesus' parenthetical remark, "The Scripture cannot be broken", silences any such objection, for there he expresses, not simply the attitude of the Jews to Scripture, but makes a categorical statement with respect to the inviolability of Scripture as such. It is not only because an appeal to Scripture is a finality for His opponents but because an appeal to Scripture is really and intrinsically a finality in itself. And for that reason an argument *a minori ad majus*, on the basis of one brief statement from the Old Testament, He regards as sufficient answer to the most potent kind of attack upon His person, veracity and mission. In the words of Robert Watts, "Now the question here is not whether our Saviour's argument were cogent or pertinent. This is to be assumed if His personal rank be admitted. The sole question is, What, according to the language employed by Him, was His estimate of the Old Testament Scripture? It will be

observed that He does not single out the passage on which He bases His argument, and testify of it that it is unbreakable, making its infallibility depend upon His own authority. Stated formally His argument is as follows:—

“Major — The Scripture cannot be broken.

“Minor — I said ye are gods, is written in your law, which is Scripture.

“Conclusion — ‘I said ye are gods,’ cannot be broken. Such is unquestionably our Saviour’s argument, and it assumes and affirms the unbreakableness and infallibility of all that was recognized by the Jews of His day as Scripture — the infallibility of the entire Jewish Bible; for He argues the infallibility of the clause on which He founds His argument, from the infallibility of the record in which it occurs. According to His infallible estimate, it was sufficient proof of the infallibility of any sentence, or clause of a sentence, or phrase of a clause, to show that it constituted a portion of what the Jews called (ἡ γραφή) the Scripture. In this argument our Lord ignores and, by implication, invalidates all the distinctions of the later Rabbis, and their followers among modern Biblical critics, in regard to diversity of degrees of Inspiration among different books of Scripture . . . He argues the infallibility of the law itself and the clause embraced in it, from the infallibility of the Scripture, of which the law was but a part.¹⁸ According to our Saviour’s teaching, therefore, the entire set of writings designated Scripture by the Jews, was infallibly inspired.”¹⁹

(2) The second episode to which I shall refer is that recorded in Matthew 26:53, 54. The scene is the garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was being apprehended by the servants of the high priests and rulers of the people. One of Jesus’ disciples in his anger and excitement drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the high priest’s servants. Jesus remonstrates

¹⁸ It is questionable if Jesus in this passage in the use of the phrase “your law” is referring to any particular part of Scripture. The present writer is disposed to think that “your law” here is a designation of the entire Old Testament. But any difference of judgment with Dr. Watts on that subsidiary detail does not in any way affect our judgment as to the cogency of his argument for the infallibility of Scripture.

¹⁹ *The Rule of Faith and the Doctrine of Inspiration*, pp. 139 f.

with His disciple, "Put up thy sword into its place. For all those who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot pray to my Father, and he will send me even now more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must come to pass?"

In dealing with this impulsive disciple He could have used many forceful arguments. He could have said, "It is the will and purpose of my Father that thus it should be, and that purpose cannot be frustrated". He could have said, "Your eternal security is bound up with this ordeal and thus it must be. Invincible love of redemptive purpose constrains to this ordeal". Such arguments could have been used with full sincerity and perfect validity. But such arguments He did not use. The argument He did use in this supremely critical hour of His earthly work was no more and no less than this, "How then should the Scriptures be fulfilled?" I venture to say that the underlying presupposition of His resolution and argument — one that belonged to the ineradicable bent of His mind and will — was that the veracity of God was so bound up with the truth of Scripture, that, once thwart the fulfilment of Scripture, and you make God a liar. Could we find more demonstrable evidence of the supreme concern our Lord had for the unerring truth of the Old Testament, a concern amounting to crude fanaticism if it were not right and holy and true.

(3) The third instance I shall adduce is that from Luke 24:25-27, 44-47. It might with some degree of plausibility be argued that with the resurrection from the dead so momentous a change had occurred in the Divine administration of His redemptive plan, so sharp a cleavage between the Old Testament dispensation and the New signalled, that the appeal to the past and in particular to the Old Testament Scriptures would have given place to, or at least be overshadowed by, the exposition of the new economy. The remarkable fact is that when our Lord after His resurrection is opening up to the disciples the redemptive significance for the world of His death and resurrection — opening up to them what Paul calls "the mystery hid from ages and from generations" that there is no longer Jew nor Gentile, male

nor female, bond nor free, but that Christ is all and in all — He made the very same characteristic appeal to the Old Testament. And His appeal is, if anything, more emphatic and illuminating. He Himself and His work is no doubt the centre of discourse and exposition. But the text for exposition of His own person and work is just precisely the Old Testament, as the embodiment of Divine revelation with respect to His person and work and of the future programme of the kingdom of God upon earth. "O fools", He says to the two disciples, "and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory? And having begun from Moses and all the prophets he expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

The question forces itself upon us, however: Does not this mass of testimony from our Lord and His Apostles, a tithe of which we have not given, confine itself to the Old Testament? It must be conceded that it is the Old Testament Scriptures Paul had in mind when he said to Timothy that from a child he had known the Holy Scriptures. It must be recognised that it was the Old Testament our Lord had in mind when He used as His final argument "it is written" and said that "the Scripture cannot be broken". We not only recognise it but rejoice in the fact that to our Old Testament, so irreverently maligned by the scholarly and un-scholarly world, we have the signature of Him Who is the image of the invisible God, the way, the truth and the life. We are not, of course, saying that the testimony of our Lord imparts inspiration to the Old Testament. It was inspired before He, the incarnate Son, accorded His testimony to it. His witness rather confirms and seals to us a Divine character and authority antecedently and permanently belonging to it.

But does this fact not leave the New Testament Scriptures in a precarious position as regards the testimony to their inspiration? It must be acknowledged that we do not have precisely similar testimony from our Lord. He passed from this earthly scene before the New Testament was written. We do not have from the writers of the New Testament as copious a mass of testimony to the inspiration of the New as

we have to that of the Old. But what we do have is adequate testimony, a line of testimony that constitutes the ground of faith. There is a threefold argument which I propose to advance.

I. *The first argument* is that drawn from analogy. It is just this. The New Testament economy is set forth in Scripture as even more glorious than that of the Old. That is just saying that it is signalised by a fuller and more glorious disclosure of the Divine character and will. The Epistle to the Hebrews enunciates the reason for this and that which constitutes it when it says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds, who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high" (1:1-3). And the Apostle Paul intimates a similar contrast with respect to the Mosaic economy when he says, "For verily that which hath been made glorious hath not been made glorious in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth. For if that which passeth away was with glory, much more that which remaineth is with glory" (II Cor. 3:10, 11). Now it is that revelation at sundry times and in divers manners and that economy which Paul says was passing away that the Old Testament enshrines, the Old Testament to which we have such an amazing mass of testimony from our Lord and his apostles. Is it reasonable or tolerable to suppose that the Scripture which enshrines and communicates to us the content of that new and better covenant established upon better promises — the kingdom which cannot be moved, through which we come not to the mount that burned with fire but unto mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn which is written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel —

should be less inspired, less God-breathed? If the older economy had an inspiration whereby Jesus could say, "The Scripture cannot be broken", whereby Paul could say, "All Scripture is God-breathed", and Peter, "As borne by the Holy Spirit men spake from God", are we to believe that the new covenant and economy signalised by all the implications of Pentecost was participant of a lesser gift? I cannot believe it. We find ourselves in a situation in which the promise of our Lord comes to bear with peculiar significance, "It is expedient for you that I go away. For if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart I will send him unto you . . . He will guide you into all the truth" (John 16:7, 13).

II. *The second argument* I shall plead is that drawn from the Divine authority the New Testament writers were conscious of possessing. As we read the New Testament one of its most impressive and pervasive features is the note of incisive and decisive authority, a note that does not confine itself to the apostolic preaching that lay back of the apostolic writings but belongs also to the writings themselves.

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, for example, the Apostle Paul devotes a considerable part of his discussion to the treatment of the spiritual gifts given to the Apostolic Church, the gifts of tongues, of prophesying, of miracles, of the interpretation of tongues. He enjoins that these gifts are to be exercised in compliance with principles of decency and good order. At the conclusion of that treatment he animadvertes on the status and place of women in the public assemblies of worship. "As in all churches of the saints", he says, "let the women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak, but let them be in subjection as also saith the law . . . For it is a shame for a woman to speak in the church. What? Was it from you that the word of God went out, or hath it come unto you alone?" (I Cor. 14:33-36). He enjoins silence upon women in the church by appeal to the universal custom of the churches of Christ. The Corinthians were not to be a law unto themselves in this matter, for the Word of God did not proceed from them and it was not given exclusively to them. They were to conform to a uniform practice enforced by the Word of God, and in accordance

even with the law of the Old Testament. And then Paul, to clinch his whole argument, not only with respect to the place of women, but also with respect to the proper conduct of worship and the proper exercise of spiritual gifts and perhaps also the whole preceding part of his epistle, so far as it is regulative for the conduct of the Christian community, says, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet or spiritual"—that is to say, if any one reckons himself to be possessed of the gift of revelation or possessed of the Holy Spirit—"let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandment of the Lord. And if any is ignorant, let him be ignorant" (I Cor. 14:37, 38). The force of this for the topic we have in hand is that Paul reckons his own written word to be invested with the sanction and authority of God. He makes no qualification in his appeal to the Holy Spirit Himself that the things he writes are the commandment of the Lord.

We have a similar note in II Thessalonians 3:12-14. In the immediate context Paul is dealing with those who had in their wanton, or even supposedly pious, idleness become busybodies. "For we hear of some who walk among you disorderly, working not at all but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that with quietness they work and eat their own bread" (vss. 11, 12). And then in concluding he says, "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, in order that he may be ashamed". Could Paul have expressed himself with such imperious imperative and corrective if he had not been deeply aware of the Divinely authoritative contents of his epistle, Divinely authoritative, let it be remembered, not only in the more sublime phases of its teaching, but also in the most practical of its details?

In the First Epistle to the Corinthians again he informs us as to the source of this authority. In the second chapter he is dealing with the transcendent wisdom of God, the wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew, the things which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man. "For", he proceeds, "God hath revealed them unto us through the Spirit. For the Spirit

searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God . . . Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth, combining spiritual things with spiritual" (I Cor. 2:10-13). The source not only of the Divine wisdom Paul is teaching but of the very words he uses to teach it is the Holy Spirit. Spirit-taught things and Spirit-taught words! That is the explanation and the only feasible explanation of the Apostle's imperious authority.

III. *The third argument* is that derived from the fact that the New Testament writers themselves on occasion refer to one another's writings as they would to the inspired writings of the Old Testament or to the authoritative words of our Lord.

The only example I shall adduce is perhaps the most striking one. It is that of II Peter 3:10-16. Peter is dealing with the momentous facts and issues of the last day, the consummation of the world. He is answering the unbelief of those who say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation". He answers by appeal to the promise and veracity of the Lord. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness." And so he asseverates, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat". "Nevertheless we according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." As we read these words we feel that the atmosphere is charged with the deepest solemnity. Peter is writing on a theme that required the most explicit Divine utterances for the support of every statement made. Accordingly his appeal to the Divine promise. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise." "We according to his promise look for new heavens and a new earth." The reality of it all is staked upon the Divine veracity and faithfulness. But mark the sequence. It is just in that context, as he draws lessons from these momentous facts, that he says, "Account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wis-

dom given to him hath written unto you, as also in all his epistles speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest as they do also the other Scriptures unto their own destruction". In a context of the profoundest solemnity and in one in which his argument is staked upon the Divine veracity he appeals to the epistles of Paul, and in the most express way places the epistles of Paul on a plane of authority equal to that of the other Scriptures. This correlation of the Pauline epistles with other Scriptures he would not have dared to make unless it were the settled conviction of his mind that what could be said of other Scriptures could also be said of the epistles of Paul. It is Peter who said of other Scriptures in this same epistle that "the Scripture is not of any private interpretation, for the Scripture came not of old time by the will of man, but as borne by the Holy Spirit men spake from God". The inference is direct and inescapable that it was only because he would have said the same thing of the epistles of Paul that he placed them on a par with other Scriptures.

Now on the basis of such evidence we can surely say with intelligent and well-grounded assurance that the view which the Bible, considered as a unit consisting of both Testaments, entertains of itself is that, "All Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness". This we can affirm whatever may have been the denotation of Scripture directly in the purview of Paul when he penned these words.

If we reject the testimony of Scripture with respect to its own character can we validly or properly plead the authority of Scripture on any other topic? Are we not driven to the conclusion that if the testimony of Scripture on the doctrine of Scripture is not authentic and trustworthy, then the finality of Scripture as the absolute norm of faith is irretrievably undermined? Now, I am not saying that Scripture in that case would be useless. I am not saying that in that case it would entirely cease to be profitable. But what I am saying is that it would in that case no longer as *Scripture*, and for the reason that it is *Scripture*, constitute the final court of

appeal in all matters of faith and practice. It might still be an invaluable witness but no longer could we appeal to its final authority as residing in the fact that it is Scripture. For only as we accept the integrity of its witness can we accept any of its witness simply and finally because it is *its* witness. Much more is at stake in this matter than the doctrine of inspiration. The question at stake is the place of Scripture as the canon of faith. It is the question of the integrity of its witness, and the finality of its authority. More particularly it is the regulative authority of Apostolic witness that is at stake. Most particularly it is the very integrity of our Lord Himself.

The line of thought in this text we have quoted is to be very distinctly marked. Much thinking on this subject proceeds in the opposite direction from that of the Apostle. Paul grounds the profitableness or utility of Scripture upon its Divine origin. At least the preface and precondition of the purposes enumerated for which it is profitable is the fact that it is a Divine product. It is divinity that validates its utility. In that Paul very simply and directly cuts athwart any pragmatic grounding of the inspired character of Scripture. If we take our point of departure from utility and make utility our standard of judgment, then we have relinquished the Divine order of truth and knowledge. To put it mildly, we have deserted the standing ground of a Divine absolute and universal for that of a relative human particular that tosses itself on the uncharted, harborless ocean of endless surmising.

“All scripture is God-breathed and profitable . . . for instruction, which is in righteousness.” It will surely be conceded without argument that the fundamental need of the individual and of society in any age is *righteousness*. It is righteousness that lies at the basis of, and is the end procured for us by, what is the cardinal doctrine of our faith. “Whom God hath set forth”, says Paul, “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood to declare his righteousness . . . that he might be just and the justifier of him who hath faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:25, 26). As sin hath reigned unto death, so hath grace reigned through *righteousness* unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (cf. Rom. 5:21). “What the

law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:3). Righteousness the basis and righteousness the end!

But what is the righteousness that is to be fulfilled in us? What is its content or norm? There is but one answer for the Christian — it is inspired Scripture alone that is the infallible and sufficient rule of faith and manners. Oh, my friends, how precious it is that in this world of sin with its vagaries of unbelief, its fluctuating philosophies, its dim light which is darkness and wisdom which is foolishness with God, its bewilderment and despair, we have a sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well in taking heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place until the day dawn and the day-star arise in our hearts! How precious that we have a word Divine, infallible and sufficient for the individual, for the family, for the church, for society, for the commonwealth and even for the world! That is the implication of the Apostle's word, "instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work". There is no circumstance in which man may be placed, no office he may be called upon to fill, no department of life in all its complexity and detail, for which Holy Scripture is not the infallible and sufficient guide. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward" (Ps. 19:7-11).

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