

THE
INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY
OF
SCRIPTURE.

F. G. B.

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The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture.

IN these days, when the advance of scepticism even within the churches of Christendom tends to undermine the integrity and authority of Scripture in the minds of men, it is of the greatest importance that all true Christians should be more than ever clearly and firmly established in that which forms the divine foundation of their faith and the light and direction for their path.

“Higher Criticism,” and various phases of unbelief in the plenary inspiration of the Bible, are now publicly preached, in more or less degree, from many of our pulpits ; they are frequently advocated in religious papers, and too often taught to students in our theological seminaries.

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” This is a question not inappropriate to the circumstances of our day. The answer of the Psalmist is most reassuring, “The Lord is in His holy temple ;” He has His place amidst His people on earth, to be recognised by faith as a sufficient resource ; and, “The Lord’s throne is in heaven ;” He has His place on high, which nothing can shake, (whatever may transpire in this world) from whence He governs and controls all.

Has God given an adequate revelation of and from Himself, suitable to the needs of men, written in language which can be understood by the simple reader, and expressed in words which can be relied upon to give us the certainty of absolute truth ?

To those who have a reverence for God and His word, there cannot for a moment be any question on this point: for we are not now trying to prove to infidels that the Bible is true. The Scripture itself is the best answer; it carries its own credentials and proofs, as we shall endeavour to show. There, and there alone, we have *God Himself* speaking; using various instruments and means no doubt, but still God's voice coming directly to the creature. Now, if this be admitted, it is plain that such communications must necessarily command our belief, our obedience, and our subjection in heart and soul.

"All Scripture," says the Apostle Paul, "is given by inspiration of God."

No other book ever made or could make such a claim: one which is by no means restricted to the assertion that what is inspired is *contained* in the Scripture. This many who deny verbal inspiration would admit; but the claim goes further than this, in that it asserts that the whole of Scripture is inspired in every part of it.

Here, in 2nd Timothy from which we quote, the Apostle speaks of his departure being at hand. At such a moment, it was, evidently, all the more necessary that the faithful should be well grounded in the source, the integrity, the character and the value of divine revelation.

It is of all importance to see that the Bible itself takes the place of being a revelation of and from God. *God* is its source: He it was who spoke formerly in many parts and in many ways to the fathers of old. The prophets were the instruments used to convey the communications: but it was *God* who spoke. In the first chapter of Genesis we find repeatedly the phrase, "And God said." It is applied to the creation of the heavens and the earth seven times, to the creation of man once, and it is addressed directly to man twice—that is, ten times in all.

As already stated, no other book ever took such a place. What else but a divine oracle could say, "And God said?" And so with kindred expressions, such as "Jehovah spake," "Thus saith Jehovah," &c., repeated over and over again. And this not by one writer merely, but by many—extending over many centuries and setting forth the authoritative pronouncement or expression of God's will and commands, in a variety of different circumstances. Take, again, such an expression as, "And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Thus saith Jehovah." Whatever the nature of the communication might be, whether pleadings in grace or warnings of judgment, God, and God only, was its source.

Scripture itself, being from God, speaks with divine authority; but it does so simply, naturally and without effort. Witness, for example, the sublime simplicity with which it opens—"In the beginning God created," &c. There is no hesitation, no uncertainty, no probabilities based upon certain theories, many of which, after a few years, have to be abandoned when further investigations of science have rendered them untenable. No!—such a thing as this would be wholly incompatible with divine authorship.

Again, the divine source of the Old Testament is not only attested in that section of the Scripture itself, but it is fully confirmed in the New. Many passages prove this. Peter, addressing the disciples in Acts i. 16, says, "This Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake," &c. It was God the Holy Ghost who spoke, using David as his mouthpiece. So, in Acts xxviii. 25 we read, "Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias, the prophet, unto our fathers." In Hebrews iii. 7, the inspired writer, referring to Psalm xcv., introduces the quotation with the words, "As the Holy Ghost saith"; and in chapter ix. 8, in

contrasting the tabernacle service with christianity, he adds, "The Holy Ghost this signifying."* Indeed in that epistle we find the word "saith" referred to *God* as speaking in the quotations made from the Old Testament, about twenty times.

Turning again to Acts we read (chap. iii. 25), "God . . . saying unto Abraham;" (chap. iv. 25), "God, who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said;" (xiii. 47), "For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying . . ." The testimonies referred to were given in the Old Testament and applied in the New by the same divine Author.

That the words of the Old Testament are indeed the words of God Himself, whatever might be the vessel used to convey the communication, is a principle laid deep in the structure of the New Testament. We may illustrate this from the Gospel of Matthew. In chapter i. 22, we read, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying . ." The preposition here translated "through" never signifies the source of the communication, but the instrument or means used to convey it. The Lord Jehovah Himself is always the Giver of the prophetic utterance, the prophet being the means or instrument used to pass it on to us. We find this same word used in connection with prophetic quotations from the Old Testament eleven times in the Gospel of Matthew, and it is rightly translated, either in the text or in the footnote, as "through," in every instance, by the Revisers. We should always remember when we read the Scriptures that it is

* See also Zech. vii. 12, "The words which the Lord of hosts sent in (or by) His Spirit by the former prophets." Luke i. 70, "As He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began." Daniel ix. 10, "The voice of the Lord our God . . . which He set before us by His servants the prophets." Neh. ix. 30, "Thou . . . testifiedst . . . by Thy Spirit in Thy prophets."

God Himself who is speaking to us : this removes distance and brings the soul into direct contact with Him whose loving interest and concern for our blessing is continually brought before us in the revelation which He has given for our profit and guidance from day to day.

Let us now consider briefly the instruments whom God has been pleased to make use of to give us this revelation of His mind. Suitably to the importance of the communications, the vessels through whom they were given were chosen and fitted for this service. They were not left to their own discretion; they "were moved by," they "spake under the power of" the Holy Ghost. "Prophecy," says the Apostle Peter, "came not in old time by the will of man." Its source was divine, the time and circumstances under which it was given were ordered of God, and the channel through which it came was in keeping with the character of the message ; for it was "holy men of God" who spoke. Seeing, therefore, that the sacred writers were not left to their own judgment, but spake "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," there is, as we might expect, a unity of design and purpose in Scripture. No matter what book of the Bible we take up, all were indited by one and the same Spirit, and with one and the same end in view, even the accomplishment of the counsels of God for the glory of Christ; whether in reference to His earthly kingdom in Israel, or His heavenly one in connection with which the character of His church is unfolded.

The following quotation from the pen of one who was a diligent student of Scripture for many years, puts the value and divine character of the word of God in a very clear light. "The Scriptures have a living source, and living power has pervaded their composition: hence their infiniteness of bearing, and the impossibility of separating any one part

from its connection with the whole, because one God is the living centre from which all flows; one Christ, the living centre round which all its truth circles, and to which it refers, though in various glory; and one Spirit, the divine sap which carries its power from its source in God to the minutest branches of the all-united truth, testifying of the glory, the grace, and the truth of Him whom God sets forth as the object and centre and head of all that is in connection with Himself, of Him who is, withal, God over all, blessed for evermore. To give all this as a whole and perfectly would require the Giver Himself. Even in learning it, we know in part, and we prophesy in part. The more—beginning from the utmost leaves and branches of this revelation of the mind of God, by which we have been reached when far from Him—we have traced it up towards its centre, and thence looked down again towards its extent and diversity, the more we learn its infiniteness, and our own feebleness of apprehension. We learn, blessed be God, this, that the love which is its source is found in unmingled perfectness and fullest display in those manifestations of it which have reached us even in our ruined state. The same perfect God of love is in it all. But the unfoldings of divine wisdom in the counsels in which God has displayed Himself remain ever to us a subject of research, in which every new discovery, by increasing our spiritual intelligence, makes the infiniteness of the whole, and the way in which it surpasses all our thoughts, only more and more clear to us."

It was God, by His Spirit, who moved the sacred writers of old. They wrote for our profit, for "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," but they did not always understand their own writings. Consequently they inquired and searched diligently concerning what the grace of God was to accomplish for others.

Their prophecies were given to them by inspiration, and they searched to find what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them pointed out, when it testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ and the glories which should follow (1 Peter i. 11.)

But it is not only in the writings of the prophets, but in the whole of the Old Testament, from Genesis to Malachi, that we find such a wealth of prophetic testimony to Christ. Sometimes He is the direct subject of plain and unmistakable prophetic witness, which is explained and applied to Him in the New Testament by the same Spirit who moved the prophet of old. Sometimes, again, He is the subject of testimony in types and shadows, which had their antitype in Him, and in no other. Abel's offering of the firstlings of his flock; the sacrifices all through the old dispensation, the tabernacle with its mystic furniture, the servants of God themselves in certain aspects of their lives—all these were types of Christ. Typical teaching concerning Him is interwoven, in a greater or less degree, throughout the whole text of the Old Testament. In truth, Christ is the great subject of the Bible from beginning to end. By the Scripture we are enabled to learn about Him far back in the counsels of the Godhead before the world was. In the Scripture we see that He was the One who carried out the glorious work of creation; and when the first man failed in his place of responsibility in Eden, Scripture shows us that God had the "Second man" before Him and that all the promises would be made good in Him. As the sun is the centre of our universe and everything is regulated by it, so Christ is the centre of all God's ways and counsels, and the object of all the prophecies, as the One without whom no promises of blessing for man could take effect. When, therefore, we acknowledge Him as the centre, and His glory as the great concern of

the Spirit throughout the inspired book, we strike the keynote with which all Scripture is in perfect harmony.

A very important principle, moreover, and one which sets the Bible on quite a different footing from that of any human compilation, however valuable, is its fulness and breadth. This, too, is an unmistakable evidence of its divine authorship. "No prophecy of Scripture," says the Apostle Peter, "is of any private interpretation." Prophecy, unlike any human calculation or forecast of events, however accurate, cannot be limited in its scope to one particular event, nor can it be rightly explained unless the unity of the whole be kept in view. The object ever before the divine mind in Scripture is always connected, in some way or other, with the glory of Christ and the establishment of His kingdom. We may take as an illustration of this the quotation from Joel in Peter's sermon with reference to the pouring out of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii.)—"This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," &c. The prophecy itself evidently refers to a day still future, when Israel shall be restored to their own land (see Zech. xii. 10); but it is equally clear that there was a fulfilment of it at Pentecost. We should fail to understand its scope and bearing were we to limit the fulfilment of the prophecy to the pouring out of the Spirit spoken of in Acts ii. The same might be said of the Assyrian, so often the subject of Isaiah's prophecy. It is true that the Assyrian, as well as other personages and nations existed and formed the subject of prophetic utterance at that time; but anyone who reads Scripture intelligently will admit that they will have their representatives in the last days, and much that is said respecting them awaits its complete fulfilment at the time when God will resume His dealings with Israel preparatory to the establishment of the kingdom

under Christ, their true Messiah. In fact it is characteristic of the prophetic writings, that, while occupied with events which were taking place at the time, they pass rapidly onward from these to events which still await their fulfilment in the last days.

We are naturally disposed to look at things from a human standpoint, and to reason upward from ourselves to what God is or does; in this way our thoughts are in danger of being warped by the pettiness of the human mind. In divine things we must reason downwards from God to man. Has He given a revelation of Himself and His counsels for the glory of His Son? If so, it must be an adequate one, and it cannot be fitted in within the framework of man's judgment or calculation as to what is possible or probable: all must contribute to the working out of God's counsels and purposes. In short, *God* has spoken; He has made use of human instruments to communicate His mind it is true, but still it is God who has spoken in the Scriptures of truth, and this is an immense fact to lay hold of.

The next point to which we desire to draw the reader's attention is that the inspiration of Scripture is not merely plenary, but verbal; it is not limited to the general sense but extends to the words which express it. The sacred writers were not simply given the scope and substance of the communication, and then left to their own discretion as to the use of terms suitable to make it intelligible; on the contrary, the very words in and by which the truth is conveyed were chosen of God; they were inspired or God-breathed. If this great truth be given up, the sword with which the Christian would meet the enemy, at once falls from his hand; he no longer holds that which fully fits the man of God for every good work (2 Tim. iii.)

In saying this it must not be supposed that we

assert that every word in the Authorized Version or any other *translation* is inspired; errors in transcription of manuscripts there may be, and doubtless there have been, as well as occasional failures in rendering the sense of the original in a translation; but what we contend for is this, that so far from the sacred writers being given the general outline of truth, and permitted to express in it their own way; the *very words* which contain it were given to them of God, so that His people might have, in all ages, a divine and unimpeachable foundation for their faith.

We have a very plain proof of this in 1 Cor. ii., where the Apostle Paul refers to the "things" which are freely given to us of God, "which," he says, "we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth;" that is to say, the very words in and by which the truth was communicated were taught by the Holy Ghost. The communications were not only divine in their origin, but the very words by which they were to be expressed were furnished by the Holy Ghost. These words were consequently without any admixture of human infirmity and error. The Scriptures, as they were penned, were those "which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

With regard to the original text of the Bible; it is a fact of deep interest to the Bible student, and it affords us an evidence of the care with which God in His goodness has watched over these revelations, that a very large number of authorities are available for controlling the exactitude of a given passage. Whilst but a few ancient manuscripts exist of many books written by what are commonly known as profane authors, we possess many of the various books of the Bible; some of them very valuable and of great antiquity.

If it is a question of translations; our "Authorized Version," though it be not faultless, is admitted to

be an excellent one. Thus, in the providence of God, the ordinary English reader can listen to the language of Scripture, with the assurance that therein the voice of God is speaking to his soul. He needs not to be a learned man or a scholar in order to get from the Word of God that spiritual food, without which he cannot advance in divine things or be safeguarded from the snares and pitfalls which lie around him on every hand as he goes through the world.

The question of differences of style in the inspired writers is one which is often referred to in connection with verbal inspiration. There is no real difficulty in this: on the contrary, one cannot but be assured that the more Scripture is read under the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit, such differences only add to the beauty and harmony of Scripture, thus confirming at every step, and in no way setting aside, the truth of verbal inspiration. There are intentional differences, and diverse lines of truth appropriated to the writers to whom they were confided. For example, the style and matter treated by John and Paul are widely different: but this, so far from creating a difficulty, enables the attentive reader to grasp the truth more clearly. God provided beforehand and shaped the instruments which He has been pleased to use, fitting the vessel for the work it was required to perform.

All who own the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, must readily acknowledge that the fact that He attached such immense importance to Scripture, is one which necessarily carries great weight. In this connection a point to which it is well to direct special attention is that our Lord, not only fulfilled the prophetic predictions; but He *came* to fulfil—"I am come to fulfil" (Matt. v. 17): His life and ministry were shaped

by it. Thus there was, not only the *fact* of His fulfilling all, but there was the direct object, intention and purpose to do so—He *came* to do it.

We say it reverently; that the written word, the Holy Scriptures, and the living eternal Word, the Son of God, stand or fall together. If our Lord Himself fully owned, and, if we may so say, placed His imprimatur upon the very Old Testament Scriptures which we have to-day, surely His endorsement of them is sufficient. Whatever difficulties certain passages may present to the mind, especially of those young in the faith, we should never doubt the veracity of Scripture. When there is patient study together with faith and dependence on God for teaching, these very difficulties become inlets for clearer light as to the real meaning of the sacred word. Infidel objections, to a very large extent, arise from a desire to get rid of a book which does not accommodate itself to the pride of man or to his carnal heart.

Our Lord Himself met and overcame the tempter, as the obedient and dependent man, with the simple word "It is written." Satan could have no power against One whose every motive and act were founded upon the revealed will of God.

The Lord attached the greatest value to *words* of Scripture. In Luke iv. 18, He read from the book of Isaiah that passage which describes His ministry amongst the people (chap. lxi. 1), "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor . . . to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." Here, as has often been noticed, He stopped in the middle of a sentence; quoting just so much of the prophetic prediction respecting Himself as was applicable to His mission at that particular moment. He closed the book without reading those words of the prophet which foretold His future coming in judgment, "the day of vengeance of our God." In the last

chapter of the same Gospel, the risen Saviour binds together His own words and the Scriptures, giving equal weight to both. "These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me." He first refers to His own spoken words, then to the written words given in the threefold division of the Old Testament—Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms; He places both on the same level and stamps the very Old Testament Scriptures which we have to-day with His own authority. The same connection may be seen in John ii. 22, "When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said," Here, then, we have the two things, the written words of Scripture, and the spoken words of the Son of God so bound together that, for faith, they claim equal authority over the soul. So, again, in John v., Christ says, "Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" Moses wrote many centuries before Christ, but that fact only serves to bring out into greater relief the continuity of Scripture, just because it is the word of God. Whether it was given through Moses, or spoken by the Son of God Himself, all flowed from the same divine source. Christ Himself distinctly says that the very words He used were given Him of the Father, to express the truths He had to communicate (John iii. 34; xii. 49; xiv. 10): who could question that His words have paramount and supreme authority? Yet we see in John v., that He attaches an importance equal, if not greater, to what was written than to what was spoken. The same thing is stated respecting the Holy Spirit in chapter xvi.

13, "He shall not speak of (or rather "from") Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak." Now when we connect this with the fact that the Holy Spirit it was who guided the inspired writers and taught them the very words they should use (1 Cor. ii. 13), how complete the chain is. For the words which He gave to the Apostles, in order to guide them into all truth, were not given as from Himself independently of the Father and the Son, but were those which He should "hear," in the communion of the Godhead.

Again, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, where the Saviour draws aside the veil that hides the unseen world, we find a similar emphasis laid upon the value of Scripture. The rich man asks Abraham to send someone to his five brethren to testify to them, but Abraham replies, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them." Again the rich man pleads that someone might be sent from the dead to warn them, but Abraham answers, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." The writings of Moses and the prophets were God's testimony in Scripture at the time when our Lord was speaking; but here is the divine proof, namely, that if a soul will not give heed to the written word, neither would they do so even if someone rose from the dead.

Another evidence of the unity and value of Scripture is to be found in the manner in which every prophecy concerning Christ necessarily has its fulfilment; not one jot or tittle could fail. His birth, His ministry, His death, His resurrection, His session at the right hand of God, His return in power and glory; all these and much more are set forth in the Old Testament. Set forth, too, in such a way as to exercise the hearts and consciences of those who were then living, while not exceeding the limits of their actual relationship with God at that

time, but nourishing them in the hope of a coming Messiah. But when the light of the New Testament shines upon the Old, giving us the full meaning of its types, its shadows, as well as its more direct prophetic predictions; its marvellous perfection and divine harmony are seen. What else but a divine oracle could have such a character and scope; could portray in so many types and shadows, as well as in the most unmistakable prophetic utterances, the One of whom the New Testament gives us so complete a record by the pen of chosen witnesses?

It is evident that the great central truth of the Bible is the Person of Christ. It must be so, it could not be otherwise when we consider the momentous fact that *God* has been manifested in flesh, *God* has been in this very world. The incarnate Son, Himself the Creator of the universe, has been in this world as Light and Love, revealing and making known all that God is in the moral qualities of His nature; His love, His grace, His truth, His holiness, &c. In the Old Testament God was, so to speak, hidden behind a veil: in the New we have the full light shining, God was no longer hidden but revealed; "the life was the light of men"—the light, not of angels or other beings, but of *men*—God Himself was here as *man* in the midst of men. This is the central fact of eternity itself. The Old Testament had spoken of the Son of David sitting upon David's throne; the Messiah, anointed King in Zion; Emanuel, God with His people; the Son of man who should be set, according to the counsels of God, over all the works of God's hands. The New gives us the Son of God; the Word made flesh; the Life, the Light of men, whose presence amongst men necessarily put man to the test and brought out his utter alienation from God, as He says, "Righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee," and

again, "They have both seen and hated both Me and My Father." But what we wish to insist upon, is that the Bible is not a mere allegory or a beautiful story, as some modern teachers would have us believe. The men it speaks of—Adam, Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, &c., were not mythical personages, emblematic of certain qualities, but real persons who lived and died. Our Lord Himself speaks in unmistakable terms when He says, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day," "Lot went out of Sodom," "Moses wrote of Me," "Solomon in all his glory," "Daniel the prophet," and so of many others. Turning Scripture into a kind of allegory, even though it be extolled as a "very beautiful one," is a delusion which, if the same kind of reasoning be applied to Christ as to others, must end in destroying christianity as a real thing. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables," says the Apostle Peter, referring to the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. They "saw" His glory, they were "eyewitnesses" of His majesty, and they "heard" the voice which came from heaven when they were with Him on the holy mount. Christ's death, His resurrection, His coming as the Son of man in His future kingdom are facts,—facts attested by many and chosen witnesses, and revealed to us in Scripture by the pen of inspired men. So fully did Christ Himself and His apostles accredit the whole of Scripture that it would be impossible, with any show of consistency, to regard any one part as merely allegorical, without invalidating the whole. There is throughout a minute care in the fulfilment of the written word of God. This, we may remark, is especially marked in Matthew, where it is the evident design of the Spirit to establish it (see chap. v. 17), though in the other Gospels many striking passages could be noted.

Even at the solemn hour of the cross not one

word or letter of what was written could fail to be accomplished. Every prediction of the prophetic word as to the sufferings of the blessed Saviour had its fulfilment. The Lord Himself quotes from Zech. xiii. (Matt. xxvi. 31), "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Again, He quotes from Psalm xli., (John xiii. 18) "That the Scripture may be fulfilled. He that eateth bread with Me hath lifted up his heel against Me;" and from Isaiah liii. 12 (Luke xxii. 37), "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, And He was reckoned among the transgressors." They cast lots upon His vesture, "that the Scripture might be fulfilled;" and, He says, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him." Then at the close of the three hours of darkness He cries, in fulfilment of Psalm xxii., those solemn words, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" There remained one Scripture still to be fulfilled before His death. Psalm lxix. had said, "They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." So, in order "that the Scripture might be fulfilled," Jesus says, "I thirst." When He receives the vinegar and all is done, He says, "It is finished," and bows His head in death. The thieves had not died, and their legs were broken; but Jesus was already dead, and by His death He fulfils another Scripture, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken;" then the Roman soldier with a spear pierces His side and thus becomes the unwilling instrument of the accomplishment of yet another, "And they shall look on Him whom they have pierced." The fact that Christ is the great subject of Scripture is just what the Apostle Peter insists upon, "To Him give all the prophets witness" (Acts x. 43); one design and object was before them all.

Thus it is that the entire Scripture is interwoven together ; it stands or falls as one complete whole ; and, as being intimately bound up with it, the Christ of whom it testifies from beginning to end. Were we to remove any part we should dislocate the whole ; were we to deny its equal authority throughout we should invalidate all.

Reviewing all that has been before us ; would it not be inconceivable to suppose that God gave merely the general outline to the sacred writers, and left them to themselves in the choice of their words ? The *very words* are taken up in the New Testament, quoted by our Lord and verified and accomplished in Him. No—the prophets were the channels through which the communications were given ; but the stream flowed from its divine source, and coming to us pure and undiluted, we have in the Bible an unmixed and unsullied revelation of absolute truth, there is nothing there but that. In every merely human writing, valuable though it may be in its place, there is a possibility of admixture of error : Scripture alone can and does guarantee the truth in its absolute purity, for it is, as it purports to be, the word of God.

We may refer, in conclusion, to the importance attached by the inspired writers themselves to the fact that their communications were a revelation from God. Many proofs of this might be adduced, but a striking one will be found in 1. Cor. vii., where the Apostle Paul distinguishes between his own judgment as a spiritual man (which, indeed, he was inspired to record), and what he had by command from the Lord. Referring to certain things, he says, “ I command, yet not I, but the Lord ; ” as to others he adds, “ To the rest speak I, not the Lord.” Again, on another subject, “ I have no command from the Lord : yet I give my judgment ” Here he distinguishes between a positive divine communication, and the result of

his own christian experience, as "having received mercy of the Lord to be faithful"—an experience in which he was guided by the Holy Spirit. It is clear, therefore, that the Apostle himself regarded the inspired Epistles as coming from the Lord for the guidance of His people, carrying divine authority to all who take the place of owning Christ as their Saviour and Lord; and being from Him, they come with equal force to us at the present time. We learn from the last of Paul's Epistles (2. Tim.) as well as from his last address to the elders of the church of Ephesus (Acts xx.), that he attached special importance and value to Scripture during the period which should follow the departure of the Apostles and the consequent close of oral apostolic ministry. In exhorting Timothy to continue in the things which he had learned and been assured of, the Apostle adds, "knowing of whom thou hast learned them." This is of all importance, because the Scriptures were given through elect vessels chosen of God, and they therefore claim authority from Him, which no merely human writing can do. The later Epistles all speak of a decline of spiritual energy in the church, opening the door to all sorts of corruption and evil, and this going on till it meets its judgment at the coming of the Lord. The unfailing safeguard for the faithful at all times is the word of God. So far back as Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophetic testimony pointed out the judgment of these corrupters at the coming of the Lord: indeed His coming, in its various aspects, is interwoven with the entire fabric of Scripture; and furnishes, if that were needed, a still further evidence of unity of design throughout.

Two things are said to characterise the godly man in Psalm i.—first, his delight is in the law of the Lord; secondly, he meditates in it day and night. All the description here given shows that it finds its first and fullest accomplishment in our

Lord Himself. So also Joshua was told, when about to fight the battles of the Lord in Canaan, that the book of the law was not to depart out of his mouth, but he was to meditate therein day and night. It is not at all sufficient to merely read a chapter; we need to meditate upon Scripture in a spirit of prayer, of dependence on God and of subjection to His will, that the One who gave the Book may unfold its contents and make it to be continually a profitable and living communication to the soul. God has given a complete revelation, able to make wise unto salvation, perfectly adapted to every phase of the church's history, and every growing need of each individual believer's soul. It is sufficient as a light and guide in the darkest days and the most trying circumstances. It is true that there are wide differences of judgment amongst Christians who all profess to adopt the Bible as their standard; but this needs to be borne with, and dealt with in patience. It in no way invalidates the authority of God's word. To be taught of God there must be the teachable state of soul—"If any man will (or desires to) do His will, he shall know of the doctrine"—*our* wills must be broken; the eye must be single, the motive must be Christ and His glory, and that only. "To this man will I look, even to Him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word:" these are weighty words. Nothing is more to be feared in divine things than the mere activity of the human intellect, which always exalts man and shuts out God. How can we expect God's blessing if we frame theories of our own, and then try to make Scripture square with our ideas? And yet this is too often done. The mere possession of the letter of Scripture is not in itself sufficient: it needs the same Spirit who indited the word to unfold and apply its various parts, thus affording the right guidance and direction in any given case. "Hath

not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"—yea, He has chosen "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise;" but "the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God," and gives intelligence in His mind. Moreover, we need to guard against merely admiring Scripture, while it has little practical power over the soul. It is quite possible to admire the Bible as a divinely inspired book, and yet our life and ways not to be governed by its teaching; "but, be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

It has been said by some that faith in God's word is not that whereby the blessings of which it speaks are made ours, but that the appropriation of the blessings is effected by the Spirit rather than by the word of God. Nothing can be more fallacious; for the Spirit never operates apart from the written word and faith in it. He applies to the soul what is written. The foundation and authority for faith is not something within us, but the unchanging word of God. Romans x. 17 is conclusive as to this; "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And again, "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin."

The word of God is "living" and "abiding" (1 Peter i. 23). We may even say that it has the attributes of the living Word Himself, for it is "quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. iv. 12). When heaven and earth have passed away, the living Word shall remain, and not one jot or tittle of the written word shall perish.

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