

# Free Grace Broadcaster

ISSUE 239

## GOD-BREATHED SCRIPTURE

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*All scripture is given  
by inspiration of God.*

2 Timothy 3:16

### Our Purpose

*“To humble the pride of man,  
to exalt the grace of God in salvation,  
and to promote real holiness in heart and life.”*

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## GOD-BREATHED SCRIPTURE

# 239

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# THE IMPREGNABLE ROCK

Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

**C**HRISTIANITY is the religion of a Book. Christianity is based upon the impregnable<sup>1</sup> rock of Holy Scripture. The starting point of all doctrinal discussion must be the Bible. Upon the foundation of the divine inspiration<sup>2</sup> of the Bible stands or falls the entire edifice of Christian truth: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psa 11:3). Surrender the dogma<sup>3</sup> of verbal inspiration<sup>4</sup> and you are left like a rudderless ship on a stormy sea—at the mercy of every wind that blows. Deny that the Bible is, without any qualifications, the very Word of God, and you are left without any ultimate standard of measurement and without any supreme authority. It is useless to discuss any doctrine taught by the Bible until you are prepared to acknowledge, unreservedly, that the Bible is the final court of appeal. Grant that the Bible is a divine revelation<sup>5</sup> and communication of God’s own mind and will to men, and you have a fixed starting point from which advance can be made into the domain of truth. Grant that the Bible is (in its original manuscripts) inerrant<sup>6</sup> and infallible,<sup>7</sup> and you reach the place where study

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<sup>1</sup> **impregnable** – incapable of being defeated or overcome.

<sup>2</sup> **inspiration** – God’s act by the Holy Spirit upon a human author, by which he is infallibly moved and guided in his writing so that his words are God’s words. Modern songwriters or poets claim their writings are “inspired,” and actors, musicians, and athletes are said to give “inspired” performances; this weakens the idea of inspiration. Therefore, some theologians prefer the term *God-breathed*. This is the literal meaning of *theopneustos* (teh-OP’-nyoo-stos) in 2 Timothy 3:16, which is “given by inspiration of God” in the AV.

<sup>3</sup> **dogma** – authoritative principle or doctrine.

<sup>4</sup> **verbal inspiration** – God’s act by the Holy Spirit of authoring every word of Scripture, not merely its thoughts or ideas.

<sup>5</sup> **revelation** – knowledge that God communicates to man, especially revealing Himself and His will by various means, including the Bible. Revelation and inspiration are related: revelation communicates the knowledge of God by different means. Inspiration preserved the Bible’s human authors from error as they wrote the content of Scripture, thus giving us an infallible Bible by which we are made wise unto salvation. Revelation is often divided into *general* revelation—nature, history, conscience—and *special* revelation—the incarnate Son of God and the written Word of God.

<sup>6</sup> **inerrant** – without error.

<sup>7</sup> **infallible** – not capable of erring; “The word has communicated essentially the same meaning for at least five centuries, from the fifteenth through the twentieth. ‘Infallible’ is far stronger than ‘certain’ or ‘unerring’ in that it communicates a theoretical impossibility of committing error. A person may score 100% on an exam in English. On that particular exam, the person was ‘certain’ or ‘inerrant.’ However, that does not indicate that the person is incapable of missing a question on an exam. Thus, some writing could be cer-

of its contents is both practical and profitable

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of the doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture. This is the strategic center of Christian theology and must be defended at all costs. It is the point at which our satanic enemy is constantly hurling his hellish battalions. Here it was he made his first attack. In Eden, he asked, “Yea, hath God said?” (Gen 3:1), and today he is pursuing the same tactics. Throughout the ages, the Bible has been the central object of his assaults. Every available weapon in the devil’s arsenal has been employed in his determined and ceaseless efforts to destroy the temple of God’s truth. In the first days of the Christian era, the attack of the enemy was made openly—the bonfire being the chief instrument of destruction—but, in these “last days” the assault is made in a more subtle manner and comes from a more unexpected quarter. The divine origin of the Scriptures is now disputed in the name of “Scholarship” and “Science,” and that, too, by those who profess to be friends and champions of the Bible. Much of the learning and theological activity of the hour are concentrated in the attempt to discredit and destroy the authenticity and authority of God’s Word, the result being that thousands of nominal<sup>8</sup> Christians are plunged into a sea of doubt. Many of those who are paid to stand in our pulpits and defend the truth of God are now the very ones who are engaged in sowing the seeds of unbelief and destroying the faith of those to whom they minister. But these modern methods will prove no more successful in their efforts to destroy the Bible than did those employed in the opening centuries of the Christian era. As well might the birds attempt to demolish the granite rock of Gibraltar by pecking at it with their beaks—“For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psa 119:89).

Now the Bible does not fear investigation. Instead of fearing it, the Bible courts and challenges consideration and examination. The more widely it is known, the more closely it is read, the more carefully it is studied, the more unreservedly will it be received as the Word of God. Christians are not a company of enthusiastic fanatics. They are not lovers of myths. They are not anxious to believe a delusion. They do not desire their lives to be molded by an empty superstition. They do not wish to mistake hallucination for inspiration. If they are

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tain without being necessarily infallible. But infallibility, the inability to err, does guarantee certainty.” (L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, Revised and Expanded, 50)

<sup>8</sup> **nominal** – in name only.

wrong, they wish to be set right. If they are deceived, they want to be disillusioned. If they are mistaken, they desire to be corrected.

The first question that the thoughtful reader of the Bible has to answer is, “What importance and value am I to attach to the contents of the Scriptures? Were the writers of the Bible so many fanatics moved by oracular frenzy?<sup>9</sup> Were they merely poetically inspired and intellectually elevated?” Or, were they, as they claimed to be and as the Scriptures affirm they were, moved by the Holy Spirit (2Pe 1:21) to act as the voice of God to a sinful world? Were the writers of the Bible inspired by God in a manner no other men were in any other age of the world? Were they invested and endowed with the power to disclose mysteries and point men upward and onward to that which otherwise would have been an impenetrable<sup>10</sup> future?

One can readily appreciate the fact that the answer to these questions is of supreme importance. If the Bible is not inspired in the strictest sense of the word, then it is worthless; for it claims to be God’s Word. And if its claims are spurious,<sup>11</sup> then its statements are unreliable and its contents are untrustworthy. If, on the other hand, it can be shown to the satisfaction of every impartial inquirer that the Bible is the Word of God, inerrant and infallible, then we have a starting point from which we can advance to the conquest of all truth.

A book that claims to be a divine revelation—a claim which...is substantiated by the most convincing credentials—cannot be rejected or even neglected without grave peril to the soul. True wisdom cannot refuse to examine it with care and impartiality. If the claims of the Bible be well founded, then the prayerful and diligent study of the Scriptures becomes of paramount importance: they have a claim upon our notice and time that nothing else has; and, beside them, everything in this world loses its luster and sinks into utter insignificance. If the Bible be the Word of God, then it infinitely transcends<sup>12</sup> in value all the writings of men; and in exact ratio to its immeasurable superiority to human productions, such is our responsibility and duty to give it the most reverent and serious consideration.

As a divine revelation, the Bible ought to be studied; yet, this is the only subject on which human curiosity does not desire information. Into every other sphere, man pushes his investigations; but the Book

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<sup>9</sup> **oracular frenzy** – supposedly divine communications uttered by demented prophets.

<sup>10</sup> **impenetrable** – impossible to understand.

<sup>11</sup> **spurious** – false.

<sup>12</sup> **transcends** – goes beyond, rises above the limits; surpasses.

of books is neglected, and this, not only by the ignorant and illiterate, but by the wise of this world as well. The cultured dilettante<sup>13</sup> will boast of his acquaintance with the sages<sup>14</sup> of Greece and Rome, yet, will know little or nothing of Moses and the prophets, Christ and His apostles. But the general neglect of the Bible verifies the Scriptures and affords additional proof of their authenticity. The contempt with which the Bible is treated demonstrates that human nature is exactly what God's Word represents it to be—fallen and depraved—and is unmistakable evidence that the carnal mind is enmity<sup>15</sup> against God.

If the Bible is the Word of God; if it stands on an infinitely exalted plane all alone; if it immeasurably transcends all the greatest productions of human genius; then, we should naturally expect to find that it has unique credentials, that there are internal marks that prove it to be the handiwork of God, that there is conclusive evidence to show that its author is superhuman, divine. That these expectations are realized, we shall now endeavor to show; that there is no reason whatever for anyone to doubt the divine inspiration of the Scriptures is the purpose of this [booklet] to demonstrate. As we examine the natural world, we find innumerable proofs of the existence of a personal Creator; and the same God Who has manifested Himself through His works has also revealed His wisdom and will through His Word. The God of creation and the God of written revelation are One, and there are irrefutable<sup>16</sup> arguments to show that the Almighty Who made the heavens and the earth is also the author of the Bible.

From *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, in the public domain.

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**Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952):** Pastor, itinerate Bible teacher, author; born in Nottingham, England, UK.



The Word of the Lord is a light to guide you, a counsellor to counsel you, a comforter to comfort you, a staff to support you, a sword to defend you, and a physician to cure you. The Word is a mine to enrich you, a robe to clothe you, and a crown to crown you. It is bread to strengthen you, wine to cheer you, a honeycomb to feast you, music to delight you, and a paradise to entertain you.

—*Thomas Brooks*

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<sup>13</sup> **dilettante** – amateur who engages in an activity without serious intentions and who pretends to have knowledge.

<sup>14</sup> **sages** – men of profound wisdom; wise men.

<sup>15</sup> **enmity against** – hostile to; condition of being an enemy.

<sup>16</sup> **irrefutable** – impossible to deny or disprove.

# GOD-BREATHED SCRIPTURE

Louis Gausson (1790-1863)

**O**UR object in this [article] is, with God's help and on the sole authority of His Word, to set forth, establish, and defend the Christian doctrine of divine inspiration.

*Theopneustia*<sup>1</sup> defined: This term is used for the mysterious power that the divine Spirit put forth on the authors of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, in order to their composing these as they have been received by the Church of God at their hands. "All scripture," says an apostle, "is *theopneustic*" (2Ti 3:16).

This Greek expression, at the time when St. Paul employed it, was new perhaps even among the Greeks. Yet, though the term was not used among the idolatrous Greeks, such was not the case among the Hellenistic Jews.<sup>2</sup> The historian Josephus,<sup>3</sup> a contemporary of St. Paul's, employs another [term] closely resembling it in his first book against Apion<sup>4</sup>: in speaking of all the prophets who composed...the twenty-two sacred books of the Old Testament,<sup>5</sup> he adds that they wrote "according to the *pneustia* (or the *inspiration*) that comes from God." And the Jewish philosopher Philo,<sup>6</sup> himself a contemporary of Josephus, in the account he has left us of his [mission as an ambassador] to the emperor Caius, making use...of an expression closely resembling that

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<sup>1</sup> *theopneustia* (teh-op-nyoo-STEE'-uh) – God-breathed; "What is declared by this fundamental passage [2Ti 3:16] is simply that the Scriptures are a divine product...The 'breath of God' is in Scripture just the symbol of His almighty power... 'By the word of the LORD,'" we read in the significant parallel of Psalm 33:6, 'were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth'... When Paul declares, then, that 'every scripture,' or 'all scripture' is the product of the divine breath, 'is God-breathed,' he asserts with as much energy as he could employ that Scripture is the product of a specifically divine operation." (B. B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 79)

<sup>2</sup> **Hellenistic Jews** – Jews that adopted Greek language and culture.

<sup>3</sup> **Titus Flavius Josephus** (AD 37 - c. 100) – first century Romano-Jewish scholar and historian.

<sup>4</sup> **Apion** (c. 30-20 BC – c. AD 45-48) – Hellenized Egyptian grammarian (teacher of boys) who wrote a work against the Jews; Josephus replied to his attacks.

<sup>5</sup> **twenty-two...Old Testament** – Josephus claimed that the Jews combined 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, 1 & 2 Chronicles, Ruth and Judges, Ezra and Nehemiah, Jeremiah and Lamentations, and the 12 minor prophets, bringing the number of books in their Scriptures to 22, instead of the 39 found in English translations; the content in both, however, is identical (see Duane L. Christensen, "Josephus and the Twenty-two-book Canon of Sacred Scripture" in *JETS* 21/1 [March 1986] 37-46). However, the general three-fold division of the Hebrew Bible is 24 books: Torah (5), the Prophets (8), and the Writings (11).

<sup>6</sup> **Philo of Alexandria** (c. 25 BC – c. AD 50) – Hellenistic Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria, Egypt.

of St. Paul's, calls the Scriptures "*theochrest* oracles," that is, oracles given under the agency and dictation<sup>7</sup> of God.

**Theopneustia Asserted, Not Explained.** Meanwhile, it is of consequence for us to say, and it is of consequence that it be understood, that this miraculous operation of the Holy Ghost had not the sacred writers themselves for its object—for these were only His instruments and were soon to pass away; but that its objects were *the holy books themselves*, which were destined to reveal the counsels of God to the Church from age to age and which were never to pass away.

The power then put forth on those men of God, and of which they themselves were sensible only in very different degrees, has not been precisely defined to us. Nothing authorizes us to explain it. Scripture has never presented either its manner or its measure as an object of study. What it offers to our faith is solely the inspiration of what they say—the divinity of the book they have written. In this respect, it recognizes no difference among them. What they say, they tell us, is *theopneustic*—their book is from God. Whether they recite the mysteries of a past more ancient than the creation, those of a future more remote than the coming again of the Son of man, the eternal counsels of the Most High, the secrets of man's heart, or the deep things of God; whether they describe their own emotions, relate what they remember, repeat contemporary narratives, copy over genealogies, or make extracts from uninspired documents, their writing is inspired, their narratives are directed from above. It is always God Who speaks, Who relates, Who ordains or reveals by their mouth, and Who in order to this employs their personality in different measures: for the Spirit of God has been upon them, it is written, and His word has been upon their tongue (*see* 2Sa 23:2). And though it be always the word of man, since they are always men who utter it, it is always, too, the Word of God, seeing that it is God Who superintends, employs, and guides them. They give their narratives, their doctrines, or their commandments, "not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth" (1Co 2:13); and thus it is that God

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<sup>7</sup> The gift of Scripture through its human authors took place by a process much more intimate than can be expressed by the term *dictation*...It took place in a process in which the control of the Holy Spirit was too complete and pervasive to permit the human qualities of the secondary authors in any way to condition the purity of the product as the Word of God. The Scriptures, in other words, are conceived by the writers of the New Testament as through and through God's book, in every part expressive of His mind, given through men after a fashion that does no violence to their nature as men, and constitutes the book also men's book as well as God's, in every part expressive of the mind of its human authors. (B. B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 99)



Himself has not only put His seal to all these facts and constituted Himself the author of all these commands and the revealer of all these truths, but that, further, He has caused them to be given to His Church in the order, in the measure, and in the terms that He has deemed most suitable to His heavenly purpose.

Were we asked, then, how this work of divine inspiration has been accomplished in the men of God, we should reply that we do not know, that it [is not required of] us to know, and that it is in the same ignorance and with a faith quite of the same kind that we receive the doctrine of the new birth and sanctification of a soul by the Holy Ghost.<sup>8</sup> We believe that the Spirit enlightens that soul, cleanses it, raises it, comforts it, softens it. We perceive all these effects; we admire and we adore the cause; but we have found it our duty to be content never to know how this is done. Be it the same, then, regarding divine inspiration.

And were we, further, called to say at least what the men of God experienced in their bodily organs, in their will, or in their understandings, while engaged in tracing the pages of the sacred book, we should reply that all did not feel the powers of inspiration to the same degree and that their experiences were not at all uniform. But we might add that the knowledge of such a fact bears very little on the interests of our faith, seeing that, as respects that faith, we have to do with the book and not with the man. It is the book that is inspired and altogether inspired: to be assured of this ought to satisfy us.

**Theopneustia: Its Existence, Universality, Plenitude<sup>9</sup> Affirmed...** Our design then...is to prove the existence, the universality, and the plenitude of the divine inspiration of the Bible.

First, it concerns us to know if there has been a divine and miraculous inspiration for the Scriptures. We say that there has. Next, we must know if the parts of Scripture that are divinely inspired are equally and entirely so; or, in other terms, if God has provided, in a certain though mysterious manner, that the very words of His holy book should always be what they ought to be and that it should contain no error. This, too, we affirm to be the case. Finally, we must know whether what is thus inspired by God in the Scriptures is a *part*

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<sup>8</sup> [Inspiration] is the operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human mind for the purpose of conveying religious truth to mankind. It has therefore a certain resemblance to regeneration in having a divine author and source. But it differs from it in that the aim is not to impart holiness but information...When the Holy Spirit inspires a person, He does not necessarily sanctify him; He only instructs him and conveys truth by him. (W. G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. 1, 85)

<sup>9</sup> **plenitude** – fullness.

of the Scriptures or the *whole* of the Scriptures. We say that it is the whole Scriptures—the historical books as well as the prophecies; the Gospels as well as the Song of Solomon; the Gospels of Mark and Luke, as well as those of John and Matthew; the history of the shipwreck of St. Paul in the waters of the Adriatic, as well as that of the shipwreck of the old world in the waters of the flood; the scenes of Mamre beneath the tents of Abraham, as well as those of the day of Christ in the eternal tabernacles; the prophetic prayers in which the Messiah, a thousand years before His first advent, cries in the Psalms, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?...They pierced my hands and my feet...They look and stare upon me. They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Psa 22:1, 16-18), as well as the narratives of them by St. John, St. Mark, St. Luke, or St. Matthew.

In other words, it has been our object to establish by the Word of God that the Scripture is from God, that the Scripture is throughout from God, and that the Scripture throughout is entirely from God.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, however, we must make ourselves clearly understood. In maintaining that all Scripture is from God, we are very far from thinking that man [has no part] in it...There, all the words are man’s, as there, too, all the words are God’s! In a certain sense, the Epistle to the Romans is altogether a letter of Paul’s; and in a still higher sense, the Epistle to the Romans is altogether a letter of God’s...In causing His books to be written by inspired men, the Holy Ghost has almost always, more or less, employed the instrumentality of their understanding, their will, their memory, and all the powers of their personality...And it is thus that God, Who desired to make known to His elect in a book that was to last forever the spiritual principles of divine philosophy, has caused its pages to be written in the course of a period of sixteen hundred years, by priests, by kings, by warriors, by shepherds, by publicans, by fishermen, by scribes, by tentmakers, associating their affections and their faculties therewith...according as He deemed fit.

Such, then, is God’s book. Its first line, its last line, all its teachings, understood or not understood, are by the same Author; and that ought to suffice for us. Whoever may have been the writers—whatever their circumstances, their impressions, their comprehension of the book, and the measure of their individuality in this powerful and mysterious operation—they have all written faithfully and under su-

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<sup>10</sup> This is the doctrine of *plenary* (full) *inspiration*, which means that the Bible is God-breathed and infallible in all its parts.

perintendence in the same roll, under the guidance of the same Master, for Whom a thousand years are as one day; and the result has been the Bible.

Therefore, I will not lose time in idle questions; *I will study the book*. It is the word of Moses, the word of Amos, the word of John, the word of Paul; but still the thoughts expressed are God's thoughts, and the words are God's words. "Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said" (Act 4:25)... "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me," said he, "and his word was in my tongue" (2Sa 23:2).

It would then, in our view, be holding very erroneous language to say [that] certain passages in the Bible are man's and certain passages in the Bible are God's. No, every verse without exception is man's, and every verse without exception is God's, whether we find Him speaking there directly in His own name or whether He employs the entire personality of the sacred writer... In fact, it is with divine inspiration as with efficacious<sup>11</sup> grace. In the operations of the Holy Ghost while causing the sacred books to be written, and in those of the same divine agent while converting a soul and causing it to advance in the ways of sanctification, man is in different respects entirely active and entirely passive. God does all there; man does all there. And it may be said for both of these works what St. Paul said of one of them to the Philippians, "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do" (Phi 2:13). Thus, you will see in the Scriptures the same operations are attributed alternately to God and to man. God converts, and it is man that converts himself. God circumcises the heart, God gives a new heart; and it is man that should circumcise his heart and make himself a new heart...

Such, then, is the Word of God. It is God speaking in man, God speaking by man, God speaking as man, God speaking for man... Now, how shall a man establish this doctrine? By the Scriptures, and only by the Scriptures.

From *Theopneustia, The Bible: Its Divine Origin and Inspiration*,  
in the public domain.

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**François Samuel Robert Louis Gaussen (1790-1863):** Swiss Protestant pastor and theologian; born in Geneva, Switzerland.



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<sup>11</sup> **efficacious** – having the power to produce a desired effect; effective.

# VERBAL INSPIRATION

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)

**W**HEN we say that the Bible is divinely inspired, what exactly do we mean? Let us start again with a negative. We do not mean that certain portions of the Bible are inspired and that others are not. There are some people who think that. There are, they say, portions and particular statements and teachings, especially those concerned with the Lord Jesus Christ, that are inspired. But, they say, those historical books and various other sections are not inspired. Now, that is not what we mean when we say the Bible is divinely inspired.

Neither do we mean simply that the men who wrote were writing in an exalted or creative way. When a poet has produced a masterpiece, you have often heard people say that the poet was “inspired.” But we do not mean that the writers of the books of the Bible were inspired in that way when they came to write these books. Others say they regard inspiration as just meaning that the ideas that were given to the writers were inspired. That is true, of course, but we mean much more than that. Neither does it mean that the books—the writings as such—are the product of human origin on to which the divine breath or *afflatus* has come.

So, what do we mean? We mean that the Scriptures are a divine product breathed out by God. Inspired really means “God-breathed.” We mean that God breathed these messages into men and through them, and these Scriptures are the result of that divine action. We believe that they were produced by the creative breath of the almighty God. Put in a simpler form, we mean that everything we have here has been given by God to man. And, of course, this obviously carries with it the idea that this is true of the particular words. So I shall try to demonstrate to you that the Bible claims for itself what is called *verbal inspiration*. It is not merely that the thoughts are inspired, not merely the ideas, but the actual record, down to the particular words. It is not merely that the statements are correct, but that every word is divinely inspired.

Now, again we could spend time in discussing the various theories about inspiration, but I am concerned rather to expound what the Scripture itself says—and it claims this verbal inspiration. Yet, we

must make it clear that when we say that the Bible is verbally inspired by God in this way, we are not teaching some sort of mechanical dictation. We do not mean that the writers sat down, as it were, as a shorthand-writer does, and that God dictated all the words to them. The difference of style between the writers is evidence that that is not the case. You notice that each one seems to have his own idiosyncrasies and habits, his own individual style. You can tell at once that something has been written by Paul rather than by Peter or John.

Moreover, if you read the introduction to the Gospel of Luke, you will find that Luke says that he himself had read various other records in order to examine certain reports. And you often find the same thing in the Old Testament. So our whole conception of inspiration must allow not only for the individual writer and his characteristics, but also for his research and for his consulting of other authorities. What, then, does inspiration mean? It means that the writer has been controlled by the Holy Spirit of God in such a way that he cannot be guilty of error in what he writes...

Verbal inspiration means that the Holy Spirit has thus overruled and controlled and guided these men, even in the choice of particular words, in such a way as to prevent any error, and above all to produce the result that was originally intended by God.

How, then, does the Bible claim this? I suggest to you that the following headings will be of some help. Incidentally, I am attempting the impossible in trying to cover it all so briefly; it is a subject upon which great books have been written. I am simply trying to give you a scheme whereby you can work this out for yourselves in your study of the Scriptures. If you want a very great and learned book on the subject, it is called *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, by Dr. B. B. Warfield. Those of you who like studying a masterpiece on any subject will be well advised to get a copy of that book. And there are many other books on this subject that you can consult for yourselves.

My first heading is this: The Bible makes specific claims in this matter of inspiration. Take, for instance, certain terms that the Bible uses of itself, such as the term *Scripture*. That designates "holy writings," not ordinary writings; special—holy writings.

Then take the description it gives of itself as the *Word of God*. How often you find the Bible using that term about itself! Now here is a striking and interesting fact—and someone has taken the trouble to count all this—the words, "The LORD said," "The LORD spake,"

“The word of the LORD came,” and cognate<sup>1</sup> expressions are actually used 3,808 times in the Old Testament alone!

But let us come to some more specific claims. Take again that great prophecy, which is very crucial in this matter, spoken by Moses and recorded in Deuteronomy 18:18. These are the words: “I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.” Not only is that a prophecy of the coming of our Lord, it also tells us much about Moses himself and his own ministry. Then, of course, all the prophets of the Old Testament make this claim. They do not say that they suddenly decided to write; they say, “The word of the LORD came...” (*see*, for example, Eze 1:3; Hos 1:1; Jon 1:1), and they tell you exactly when it came. They were called, they were commissioned, and the word was given to them. So, they are constantly saying something like this: “Thus saith the LORD.” That is their claim.

Another interesting fact, and a very valuable argument, is that some of these prophets tell us quite honestly that at times they were reluctant to speak. Jeremiah often did not want to speak, but he was compelled (Jer 1:6-7). The very reluctance is seen in the way in which he disclaims his own authorship, but the “burden” came. It was placed upon him by God, and he simply delivered what God had given him.

Still another important fact is that you will find the prophet saying that he does not understand even what he himself is writing. Take the statement in Daniel 12:8, where Daniel says, “I heard, but I understood not.” You find Peter saying the same thing: “Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (1Pe 1:10-12).

Then the apostle Paul makes a crucial statement. He says, “Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth...” He is referring, you see, not only to the subject matter, not only to the doctrine, but to the way in which he speaks it. The

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<sup>1</sup> **cognate** – related in some way and therefore similar.

words with which he speaks, he says, are not after man “but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1Co 2:13). The whole of that chapter is very important in this connection.

Then, there is that interesting and to me always very fascinating statement that you will find in 2 Peter 3:15-16, where Peter, referring to “our beloved brother Paul,” says this: “...even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto 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”—notice—“as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” By using that phrase, “the other scriptures,” the apostle Peter there equates the epistles of Paul with the Old Testament Scriptures and puts them on the same basis.

Then there is that important statement in Ephesians 2 where Paul says that Christians “are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (v. 20). Now you and I are built upon that foundation. We do not regard as authoritative anything that has been said subsequent to the New Testament canon. Here is our foundation, and we do not accept any teaching of any church or of any tradition as being divinely inspired. This is the basis, and the Church is to be built upon this teaching because of its unique authority.

Now this brings me to what I would call the crucial passages. The first is in the second epistle to Timothy. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti 3:16). So runs the *Authorized Version*, but the *Revised Version* is different; it reads, “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching...” This is a very serious matter because there is no question at all that at this point the *Revised Version* is not only wrong but is tragically and lamentably wrong. It suggests at once that there are Scriptures that are not divinely inspired. The *Authorized Version*, however, is quite clear about it: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.”

So, what can be said at this point? Well, the *Revised Version* makes the apostle Paul guilty of what is called tautology, saying the same thing twice over, expatiating<sup>2</sup> upon the obvious. To render it “All scripture [every scripture] inspired of God is also profitable” makes the thing ridiculous because every Scripture inspired of God is of necessity profitable, and there is no need to say so. But the *Authorized*

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<sup>2</sup> **expatiating** – speaking at length.

*Version*, you notice, does not say that. It says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...”; that is a very different way of putting it.<sup>3</sup>

Again, the *Revised Version*, of course, simply contradicts what the Scripture says about itself. The Bible does not differentiate between parts and portions; it does not say that certain Scriptures are divinely inspired but others are not: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” Furthermore, the *Revised Version*, when it introduces that word *also*, is doing something that it does not do elsewhere. The authorities are very easily able to convict these translators of being inconsistent with themselves. For instance, in Hebrews 4:13 you find this statement: “...all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” Now to be consistent with themselves, the *Revised Version* translators should have translated that like this: “All naked things are also opened unto the eyes of him...” But they did not do it there, and thus they have not carried out their own principle because they saw it was obviously ridiculous; if everything is “naked” it must be “open.”

There are various other examples that could be given of the same thing, but we must move on. However, we need to remember that certain important members of the committee that produced the *Revised Version*, such as Archbishop Trench and Bishop Wordsworth and others, strongly protested at the time. Dr. Tregelles, who was one of the greatest Bible students of the last century, made a similar protest, as other authorities have done. Let us therefore always remember when we are dealing with that verse that we must adhere resolutely to the *Authorized Version* and the statement there is as definite as this: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” There is no exception.

From “The Authority of the Bible” in *God the Father, God the Son* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1996), 22-33. USA distribution by permission of Crossway Books. Worldwide distribution by permission of Hodder & Stoughton, London, England.

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**David Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981):** Welsh expository preacher and author; born in Cardiff, Wales, UK.




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<sup>3</sup> George W. Knight, III, argues, “All scripture is God-breathed: If this is a passive verbal form, it indicates that Scripture’s source is the breath of God, i.e., that Scripture itself is a result of that action...Paul appears to be saying, therefore, that all Scripture has as its source God’s breath and that this is its essential characteristic. This is another way of saying that Scripture is God’s word.” (George W. Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 446)



# THE CANON<sup>1</sup> OF SCRIPTURE

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

**T**HE Scriptures of the Old Testament are those that begin with Genesis and end with Malachi. The Scriptures of the New Testament are those that begin with Matthew and end with the Revelation. And it is worthy of our special remark that the Old Testament and the New, like the cherubims in the most holy place, stretch forth their wings touching one another: the Old Testament ends with the prophecy of sending Christ and John the Baptist [in] Malachi 4, and the New begins with the history of the coming of these two.

The Hebrews divided the books of the Old Testament into three: the Law, the Prophets, and [the Writings].<sup>2</sup> The Law contains the five books of Moses; the Prophets are twofold—former and latter. The former are the historical books of the Old Testament: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings; they were so called because they told things already done. The latter related things before they were done and are of two sorts: the *greater*, which are three, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; the *lesser* twelve, that is, Hosea, Joel, etc. The written books were called so because they were written by such as had the gift of the Holy Spirit, as the Hebrews speak, but not of prophecy. And of that sort are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Canticles,<sup>3</sup> 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel. The Hebrews ascribe this division of them to Ezra; and it seems our Lord Jesus Christ acknowledged the same, while He tells His disciples [in] Luke 24:44 of the writings of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms.

The books of the New Testament are divided into three sorts: Histories (the Four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles), the Epistles, and the Revelation, which is prophetic.

Different authors<sup>4</sup> wrote the books of both Testaments. As to the Old Testament, Moses wrote the Pentateuch; only some verses in the end of Deuteronomy, where Moses' death is recorded, could not be

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<sup>1</sup> **canon** – list of all the books that belong in the Bible; from the Greek κανών (*kanōn*) = “reed; measuring rod; standard of measure.”

<sup>2</sup> **Law...Writings** – Hebrew divisions are Torah (Law), Nevi'im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings), often referred to as the *Tanakh*, from the first letters of these divisions.

<sup>3</sup> **Canticles** – Song of Solomon; from the Latin *canticulum* = little song or hymn.

<sup>4</sup> Where Scripture itself does not identify the author of a book, one cannot be dogmatic. Boston's identification regarding such books arises primarily from Jewish tradition.

written by him, but are said to have been written by Joshua. [He] also wrote the book that bears his name; or, according to the opinion of some, it was written by Eleazar, Aaron's son. Samuel is supposed to have written the book of Judges, and, it would appear, the last part of the book of Joshua, containing the account of the death of Joshua and Eleazar. Some think that [each of] the Judges wrote the history of [his] own time, and that Samuel at last did put them all into one volume. The book of Ruth also was written by him, as the Hebrews tell. He also wrote the first book bearing his name to the 25<sup>th</sup> chapter, where his death is narrated. The rest of the chapters of that book and the whole of the second book are said to have been written by David.<sup>5</sup> The books of the Kings are supposedly written by David and Solomon<sup>6</sup> and other prophets that lived in these times, so that each of them did write what was done in his own time. Job is supposed to have written the book that bears his name. David wrote the Psalms, but not all: such as are not his have the author's name prefixed, such as Asaph, Heman, etc.<sup>7</sup> And they were all by Ezra collected into one volume. Ezra is said to have written the books of Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah; Mordecai, that of Esther; and Solomon, the Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the other prophets, wrote everyone their own prophecies, containing a short sum of their sermons.

As for the books of the New Testament, without controversy, the evangelists wrote the Gospels, according as their names are prefixed to them. Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles; and the remaining books, the Epistles and the Revelation, were written by those whose names they bear. Only to the Epistle to the Hebrews has there been some doubt, some ascribing it to Luke, some to Barnabas, others to Apollos, and others to Clemens. But many learned men<sup>8</sup> have given good reasons to prove it to be written by the apostle Paul.

But the principal author is the Holy Spirit, whence<sup>9</sup> the Scripture is called the Word of God. The penmen were but the instruments in the hand of God in writing the same. It was the Spirit that dictated them, that inspired the writers and guided them. But the inspiration was not the same in all points to all the penmen: some things were before utterly unknown to the writer, as the history of the creation of

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<sup>5</sup> Some attribute it to Samuel, Nathan, and Gad.

<sup>6</sup> Some suggest Jeremiah.

<sup>7</sup> Some include Ethan, the sons of Korah, Solomon, and others.

<sup>8</sup> For example, John Owen (1616-1683).

<sup>9</sup> **whence** – from which.

the world to Moses; the prediction of future events in respect of the prophets, which therefore the Spirit did [directly] reveal to them. Other things were known to the writers before, such as the history of Christ to the four evangelists,<sup>10</sup> etc. In respect of these, there [was] no need [for] new revelation, but a divine irradiation<sup>11</sup> of the mind of the writer, giving him a divine certainty of those things that he wrote. By this inspiration, all of them were infallibly guided, so [that] they were put beyond all possibility of erring. And this inspiration was extended not only to the things themselves expressed, but to the *words* wherein they were expressed, though agreeable to the natural style and manner of each writer (2Pe 1:21; Psa 45:1). Upon this account the Scripture is attributed to the Holy Spirit, without making any mention of the penmen (Heb 10:15).

**Question:** But what opinion are we to form of the books called *Apocrypha*, and why are they so called? **Answer:** These books, which are found placed in some Bibles between Malachi and Matthew, are called *Apocrypha*. [This] is a Greek word signifying *hidden* or *absconded*.<sup>12</sup> The reasons of this name are given thus: (1) Because the Church did not acknowledge them to be of divine inspiration. (2) Because the names of the authors were hidden. (3) Because they contain some things unknown to Moses, the prophets, and the apostles. (4) Because, for the [previously mentioned] reasons, they were judged unworthy to be publicly read in the church. Concerning these books, we believe that they are not of divine inspiration, and therefore no part of the canon of Scripture; that is, they are not to be admitted as any part of the rule of faith and manners. Therefore, they are of no authority in the Church of God for the determining of controversies in religion. Though they may be of use as other human writings, yet they are not otherwise to be made use of nor approved. The reasons are,

**1. The church of the Jews did not acknowledge them for canonical.** The apostle tells us, “The oracles of God”—under the Old Testament dispensation—“were committed” (Rom 3:2) [to them]. They even forbade their children to read them until they came to mature age.

**2. They were not written in the Hebrew tongue, but in the Greek.** And the authors of them [came after] Malachi, who was the last of the prophets: according to the saying of the Hebrews, the Holy Ghost went up from Israel after the death of Haggai, Zechariah, and Mala-

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<sup>10</sup> **evangelists** – authors of the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

<sup>11</sup> **irradiation** – beaming forth of spiritual light; illumination of the mind.

<sup>12</sup> **absconded** – concealed; hidden away.

chi. And 1 Maccabees 4:46 plainly shows that there was no prophet among them to show them what they should do with the stones of the polluted altar. And it may clearly appear to any unbiased person that the interposing of these books between Malachi and Matthew does cut off the beautiful connection between the end of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New, and how Malachi's prophecy is designed of God to close up the Scriptures of the Old Testament, in that he prophesies most distinctly of the coming of Christ and John the Baptist, His forerunner, with the accomplishment of which Matthew begins his gospel, as I observed before.

**3. The primitive church for the first four centuries did not receive these books.** And when they came to be read, the reader stood in an inferior place. They [were] then read as profitable books, though not of divine authority.

**4. They are nowhere cited by Christ and His apostles.** Yes, He did [clearly] reject them, [when] He divided the Scriptures into Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (Luk 24:44). And whereas the apostle tells us that "the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2Pe 1:21), the authors of these books pretend to no such thing...

**Lastly, they neither agree with themselves nor the Holy Scriptures.** [This] may plainly appear to those who will consider them diligently. 1 Maccabees 6:16, compared with verse 4, [says] that Antiochus died at Babylon. Yet, 2 Maccabees 1:13-16 [says] that when he was come into Persia, he was slain in the temple of Nanea, whom he pretended he would marry and would receive money in name of dowry by her priests. Yes, 2 Maccabees 9:28 [says he] died in a strange country in the mountains. The book of Tobit is stuffed with absurd stories: it makes the angel Raphael tell a lie and teach Tobit's son a devilish art to drive away the devil with the heart and liver of a fish; and when the evil spirit smelled the smell, he fled into the utmost parts of Egypt, etc....These things plainly show that these books are not from the Spirit of God.

From "The Divine Authority of the Scriptures" in *The Whole Works of Thomas Boston*, Vol. I, 19-37, in the public domain.

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**Thomas Boston (1676-1732):** Scottish Presbyterian minister and theologian; born in Duns, Berwickshire, UK.



# INFALLIBILITY AND AUTHORITY

Charles Hodge (1797-1878)

**T**HE infallibility and divine authority of the Scriptures are due to the fact that they are the Word of God; and they are the Word of God because they were given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost...That inspired men were the instruments<sup>1</sup> of God in such a sense that their words are to be received not as the words of men, but as they are in truth, as the words of God (1Th 2:13), is proved,

1. **From the signification and usage of the word.** It is, of course, admitted that words are to be understood in their historical sense. If it can be shown what idea the men living in the apostolic age attached to the word *theopneustos* and its equivalents, that is the idea that the apostles intended to express by them. All nations have entertained the belief not only that God has access to the human mind and can control its operations, but that He at times did take such possession of [specific] persons as to make them the instruments of His communications...According to all antiquity, an inspired man was one who was the instrument of God in what he said, so that his words were the words of the god of which he was the instrument. When, therefore, the sacred writers use the same words and forms of expression that the ancients used to convey that idea, they must in all honesty be assumed to mean the same thing.

2. **That this is the Scriptural idea of inspiration is further proved from the meaning of the word *prophet*.** The sacred writers divide the Scriptures into the “law and the prophets.” As the law was written by Moses, and as Moses was the greatest of the prophets, it follows that all the Old Testament was written by prophets. If, therefore, we can determine the Scriptural idea of a prophet, we shall thereby determine the character of their writings and the authority due to them. A prophet, then, in the Scriptural sense of the term, is a spokesman, one who speaks for another in his name and by his authority, so that it is not the spokesman but the person for whom he acts who is responsible for the truth of what is said. In Exodus 7:1, it is said, “See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy

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<sup>1</sup> The author’s original word here was *organs*. For the sake of clarity, the word *instrument* (singular and plural) has been substituted throughout the article.

prophet,” *i.e.*, thy spokesman. This is explained by what is said in Exodus 4:14-16: “Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well...Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words into his mouth; and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be, to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God” (*see* Jer 36:17-18). This determines definitely what a prophet is. He is the mouth of God, one through whom God speaks to the people, so that what the prophet says, God says. So, when a prophet was consecrated, it was said, “Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jer 1:9; Isa 51:16).

That this is the Scriptural idea of a prophet is moreover evident from the formulas, constantly recurring, which relate to his duties and mission. He was the messenger of God; he spoke in the name of God; the words, “Thus saith the Lord,” were continually in his mouth. “The word of the Lord” is said to have come to this prophet and on that; “the Spirit came upon,” “the power,” or “hand” of God was upon him, all implying that the prophet was the instrument of God, that what he said, he said in God’s name and by His authority...This is precisely what the apostle Peter teaches when he says, “No prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men spake as they were moved<sup>2</sup> by the Holy Ghost” (2Pe 1:20-21). Prophecy, *i.e.*, what a prophet said, was not human, but divine. It was not the prophet’s own interpretation of the mind and will of God. He spoke as the instrument of the Holy Ghost.

**3. It is another decisive proof that the sacred writers were the instruments of God in the sense above stated, that whatever they said the Spirit is declared to have said.** Christ Himself said that David by the Spirit called the Messiah “Lord” (Mat 22:43). David in the 95<sup>th</sup> Psalm said, “To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart” (95:8); but, in Hebrews 3:7, the apostle says that these were the words of the Holy Ghost. Again, in Hebrews 10:15, the same apostle says, “Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord,” thus quoting the language of Jeremiah 31:33 as the language of the Holy Ghost. In Acts 4:25, the assembled apostles said, “with one accord,” “Lord thou art God...Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage?” In

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<sup>2</sup> **moved** – *Greek* = φερόμενοι; borne along as a ship by the wind.

Acts 28:25, Paul said to the Jews, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers.” It is in this way that Christ and His apostles constantly refer to the Scriptures, showing beyond doubt that they believed and taught that what the sacred writers said, the Holy Ghost said.

**Inspiration of the New Testament Writers:** This proof bears specially, it is true, only on the writings of the Old Testament. But no Christian puts the inspiration of the Old Testament above that of the New. The tendency, and we may even say the evidence, is directly the other way. If God gave the Scriptures of the old economy by inspiration, much more were those writings that were penned under the dispensation of the Spirit. Besides, the inspiration of the apostles is proved,

(1) From the fact that Christ promised them the Holy Spirit, Who should bring all things to their remembrance, and render them infallible in teaching. “It is not ye that speak,” He said, “but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you” (Mat 10:20). “He that heareth you heareth me” (Luk 10:16). He forbade them to enter upon their office as teachers until they were endued with power from on high.

(2) This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the Spirit descended upon the apostles as a rushing mighty wind, and they were filled with the Holy Ghost and began to speak as the Spirit gave them utterance (Act 2:2, 4)...From this moment, they were new men with new views, with new spirit, and with new power and authority. The change was sudden. It was not a development. It was something altogether supernatural, as when God said, “Let there be light, and there was light” (Gen 1:3)...

(3) After the day of Pentecost, the apostles claimed to be the infallible instruments of God in all their teachings. They required men to receive what they taught, not as the word of man but as the word of God (1Th 2:13). They declared, as Paul does, that the things that they wrote were the commandments of the Lord (1Co 14:37). They made the salvation of men to depend on faith in the doctrines that they taught. Paul pronounces *anathema*<sup>3</sup> [on] even an angel from heaven who should preach any other gospel than that which he had taught (Gal 1:8). John says that whoever did not receive the testimony that he bore concerning Christ made God a liar because John’s testimony was God’s testimony (1Jo 5:10). “He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us” (1Jo 4:6). This assertion of infallibility, this claim for the divine authority of their teaching, is charac-

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<sup>3</sup> **anathema** – a curse.

teristic of the whole Bible. The sacred writers all and everywhere disclaim<sup>4</sup> personal authority; they never rest the obligation to faith in their teachings on their own knowledge or wisdom. They never rest it on the truth of what they taught as manifest to reason or as capable of being proved by argument. They speak as messengers, as witnesses, as instruments. They declare that what they said God said, and, therefore, on His authority it was to be received and obeyed...This, from first to last, has been the doctrine of the Church, notwithstanding the endless diversity of speculations in which theologians have indulged on the subject. This, then, is the ground on which the sacred writers rested their claims. They were the mere instruments of God. They were His messengers. Those who heard them, heard God; and those who refused to hear them, refused to hear God (Mat 10:40; Joh 13:20).

**4. This claim to infallibility on the part of the apostles was duly authenticated**—not only by the nature of the truths that they communicated and by the power that those truths have ever exerted over the minds and hearts of men, but also by the inward witness of the Spirit of which St. John speaks when he says, “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself” (1Jo 5:10); “an unction<sup>5</sup> from the Holy One” (1Jo 2:20). It was confirmed also by miraculous gifts. As soon as the apostles were endued with power from on high, they spake in “other tongues”; they healed the sick, restored the lame and the blind. “God also,” as the apostle says, “bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will” (Heb 2:4). And Paul tells the Corinthians that the signs of an apostle had been wrought among them “in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (2Co 12:12). The mere working of miracles was not an evidence of a divine commission as a teacher. But when a man claims to be the instrument of God, when he says that God speaks through him, then his working of miracles is the testimony of God to the validity of his claims. And such testimony God gave to the infallibility of the apostles.

The above considerations are sufficient to show that, according to the Scriptures, inspired men were the instruments or mouth of God, in the sense that what they said and taught has the sanction and authority of God...This doctrine involves nothing out of analogy<sup>6</sup> with the ordinary operations of God. We believe that He is everywhere present in the material world and controls the operations of natural

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<sup>4</sup> **disclaim** – refuse; reject.

<sup>5</sup> **unction** – anointing.

<sup>6</sup> **analogy** – similarity between things that are otherwise not similar.



causes. We know that He causes the grass to grow and gives rain and fruitful seasons. We believe that He exercises a like control over the minds of men, turning them as the rivers of water are turned. All religion, natural and revealed, is founded on the assumption of this providential government<sup>7</sup> of God. Besides this, we believe in the gracious operations of His Spirit by which He works in the hearts of His people to will and to do (Phi 2:13). We believe that faith, repentance, and holy living are due to the ever-present influence of the Holy Spirit. If, then, this wonder-working God everywhere operates in nature and in grace, why should it be deemed incredible that holy men should speak as the Holy Ghost moved them, so that they should say just what He would have them say, so that their words should be His words.

After all, Christ is the great object of the Christian's faith. We believe Him, and we believe everything else on His authority. He hands us the Old Testament and tells us that it is the Word of God; that its authors spoke by the Spirit; that the Scriptures cannot be broken (Joh 10:35). And we believe on His testimony. His testimony to His apostles is no less explicit, although given in a different way. He promised to give them a mouth and a wisdom that their adversaries could not gainsay or resist. He told them to take no thought what they should say, "For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luk 12:12); "For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you" (Mat 10:20). He said to them "he that receiveth you receiveth me" (Mat 10:40); and He prayed for those who should believe on Him through their word. We believe the Scriptures, therefore, because Christ declares them to be the Word of God. Heaven and earth may pass away, but His Word cannot pass away (Mat 24:35; Mar 13:31; Luk 21:33).

From *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 1, 153-168, in the public domain.

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**Charles Hodge (1797-1878):** American Presbyterian theologian; born in Philadelphia, PA, USA.



Oh, that power might come down upon us from the Spirit of truth and grace, and beams from the Sun of righteousness break in upon our minds as we contemplate the intrinsic glories of the Bible!—*Octavius Winslow*

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<sup>7</sup> **providential** – sovereign rule over all things in the protection and care of His creatures.

# JESUS AND BIBLICAL AUTHORITY

Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921)

**E**VERYWHERE, to [Jesus] and to [His disciples] alike, an appeal to Scripture is an appeal to an indefectible<sup>1</sup> authority whose determination is final. Both He and they make their appeal indifferently to every part of Scripture, to every element in Scripture, to its most incidental clauses, as well as to its most fundamental principles and to the very form of its expression.

This attitude toward Scripture as an authoritative document is, indeed, already intimated by their constant designation of it by the name of *Scripture*, the *Scriptures*, that is, “the Document,” by way of eminence<sup>2</sup> and by their customary citation of it with the simple formula, “It is written.” What is written in this document admits so little of questioning that its authoritativeness required no asserting, but might safely be taken for granted. Both modes of expression belong to the constantly illustrated [habits] of our Lord’s speech.

The first words He is recorded as uttering after His manifestation to Israel were an appeal to the unquestionable authority of Scripture: to Satan’s temptations, He opposed no other weapon than the final “It is written” (Mat 4:4, 7, 10; Luk 4:4, 8)! And among the last words that He spoke to His disciples before He was received up was a rebuke to them for not understanding that all things “which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms” concerning Him (Luk 24:44)—that is in the entire Scriptures—“must be (very emphatic) fulfilled” (Luk 24:44). “Thus it is written” (Luk 24:46), says He, as rendering all doubt absurd. For, as He had explained earlier upon the same day (Luk 24:25 *ff.*), it argues only that one is “foolish and slow of heart,” if he does not “believe (if his faith does not rest securely on, as on a firm foundation) all (without limit of subject-matter here) that the prophets (explained in v. 27 as equivalent to ‘all the scriptures’) have spoken.”

The necessity of the fulfilment of all that is written in Scripture, which is so strongly asserted in these last instructions to His disciples, is frequently [referred to] by our Lord. He repeatedly explains of occurrences occasionally happening that they have come to pass

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<sup>1</sup> **indefectible** – incapable of defect or failure; perfect.

<sup>2</sup> **eminence** – distinguished superiority.

that the Scripture might be fulfilled (Mar 14:49; Joh 13:18; 17:12; *cf.*<sup>3</sup> 12:14; Mar 9:12-13). Based on Scriptural declarations, therefore, He announces with confidence that given events will certainly occur: “All ye shall be offended<sup>4</sup> in me this night: *for* it is written...” (Mat 26:31; Mar 14:27; *cf.* Luk 20:17). Although holding at His command ample means of escape, He bows before oncoming calamities, for, He asks, how otherwise “shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?” (Mat 26:54)...Their failure is due, not to the Scriptures but to themselves, who read the Scriptures to such little purpose.

Quite similarly our Lord often finds occasion to express wonder at the little effect to which Scripture had been read, not because it had been looked into too curiously, but because it had not been looked into earnestly enough, with sufficiently simple and robust trust in its every declaration. “Have ye not read this scripture?” He demands, as He adduces<sup>5</sup> Psalm 118 to show that the rejection of the Messiah was already intimated in Scripture (Mar 12:10; Mat 21:42 varies the expression to the equivalent: “Did ye never read in the scriptures?”). And when the indignant Jews came to Him complaining of the Hosannas with which the children in the Temple were acclaiming Him and demanding, “Hearest thou what these say?” He met them merely with, “Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?” (Mat 21:16).

The underlying thought of these passages is spoken out when He intimates that the source of all error in divine things *is just ignorance of the Scriptures*: “Ye do err,” He declares to His questioners on an important occasion, “not knowing the scriptures” (Mat 22:29); or, as it is put perhaps more forcibly in interrogative form in its parallel in another Gospel, “Do ye not therefore err, because ye know not the scriptures, neither the power of God?” (Mar 12:24). Clearly, he who rightly knows the Scriptures does not err.

The confidence with which Jesus rested on Scripture in its every declaration is further illustrated in a passage like Matthew 19:4-6. Certain Pharisees had come to Him with a question on divorce, and He met them thus: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?...What therefore God hath joined to-

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<sup>3</sup> *cf.* – *Latin = confer*: compare.

<sup>4</sup> literally “scandalized.”

<sup>5</sup> **adduces** – quotes as evidence.

gether, let not man put asunder.” The point to be noted is the explicit reference of Genesis 2:24 to God as its author: “*He who made them...said*”; “what therefore *God* hath joined together.” Yet this passage does not give us a saying of God’s recorded in Scripture, but just the word of Scripture itself and can be treated as a declaration of God’s only on the hypothesis that all Scripture is a declaration of God’s. The parallel in Mark 10:5ff. just as truly, though not as explicitly, assigns the passage to God as its author, citing it as authoritative law and speaking of its enactment as an act of God’s. And it is interesting to observe in passing that Paul, having occasion to quote the same passage (1Co 6:16), also explicitly quotes it as a divine word: “For two, saith he, shall be one flesh”—the “he” here, in accordance with a usage to be noted later, meaning just “God.”

Thus clear is it that Jesus’ occasional adduction<sup>6</sup> of Scripture as an authoritative document rests on an ascription of it to God as its author. His testimony is that whatever stands written in Scripture is a word of God. Nor can we [empty] this testimony of its force on the plea that it represents Jesus only in the days of His flesh, when He may be supposed to have reflected merely the opinions of His day and generation. The view of Scripture He announces was, no doubt, the view of His day and generation as well as His own view. But there is no reason to doubt that He held it, not because it was the current view, but because, in His divine-human knowledge, He knew it to be true. For, even in His humiliation,<sup>7</sup> He is the faithful and true witness. And in any event, we should bear in mind that this was the view of the resurrected as well as of the humiliated<sup>8</sup> Christ. It was after He had suffered and had risen again in the power of His divine life that He pronounced those foolish and slow of heart who do not believe all that stands written in all the Scriptures (Luk 24:25); and that He laid down the simple “Thus it is written” as the sufficient ground of confident belief (Luk 24:46).

Nor can we explain away Jesus’ testimony to the divine trustworthiness of Scripture by interpreting it as not His own, but that of His followers, placed on His lips in their reports of His words. Not only is it too constant, minute, intimate, and in part incidental, and therefore, as it were, hidden, to admit of this interpretation; but it so pervades all our channels of information concerning Jesus’ teaching as to

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<sup>6</sup> **adduction** – quoting or referring to as evidence.

<sup>7</sup> **even...humiliation** – days when He became a human being, “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi 2:8).

<sup>8</sup> **humiliated** – humbled.

make it certain that it comes actually from Him. It belongs not only to the Jesus of our evangelical records, but as well to the Jesus of the earlier sources that underlie our evangelical records, as anyone may assure himself by observing the instances in which Jesus adduces the Scriptures as divinely authoritative that are recorded in more than one of the Gospels, e.g.,<sup>9</sup> “It is written” (Mat 4:4, 7, 10; Luk 4:4, 8, 10; Mat 11:10; Luk 7:27; Mat 21:13; Luk 19:46; Mar 11:17; Mat 26:31; Mar 14:21); “the scripture” or “the scriptures” (Mat 19:4; Mar 10:9; Mat 21:42; Mar 12:10; Luk 20:17; Mat 22:29; Mar 12:24; Luk 20:37; Mat 26:56; Mar 14:49; Luk 24:44). These passages alone would suffice to make clear to us the testimony of Jesus to Scripture as in all its parts and declarations divinely authoritative.

From *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration, Vol. 1*,  
in the public domain.

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**Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921):** Presbyterian professor of theology at Princeton Seminary; born near Lexington, KY, USA.



We must not rest content with having given a superficial reading to a chapter or two; but with the candle of the Spirit, we must deliberately seek out the hidden meaning of the Word. Holy Scripture requires searching—much of it can only be learned by careful study. There is milk for babes, but also meat for strong men. The rabbis wisely say that a mountain of matter hangs upon every word, yea, upon every title of Scripture. Tertullian exclaims, “I adore the fullness of the Scriptures.” No man who merely skims the book of God can profit thereby; we must dig and mine until we obtain the hid treasure. The door of the Word only opens to the key of diligence. The Scriptures claim searching. They are the writings of God, bearing the divine stamp and imprimatur—who shall dare to treat them with levity? He who despises them despises the God Who wrote them. God forbid that any of us should leave our Bibles to become swift witnesses against us in the great Day of Account. The Word of God will repay searching. God does not bid us sift a mountain of chaff with here and there a grain of wheat in it, but the Bible is winnowed corn—we have but to open the granary door and find it.

—*Charles Spurgeon*

Study the Scriptures of truth with a heart in prayerful uplifting for the accompanying power, light, and anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Word is but a dead letter, unattended by the Spirit. The Word of God is a “sword,” but the sword is effectual only as it is wielded, by the power of the Spirit.—*Octavius Winslow*

The whole Scripture is but one entire love letter, dispatched from the  
Lord Christ to His beloved spouse.—*Thomas Brooks*

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<sup>9</sup> e.g. – *Latin = exempli gratia*, for example.

# DIVINE AUTHORITY: CHURCH OR HOLY SCRIPTURE?

Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711)

**Question:** Are the Holy Scriptures truly the Word of God, having divine authority, both in regard to historical accounts where many words and deeds of the ungodly are related and in regard to the rule for doctrine and life? It is necessary for man to be convinced of this and to esteem the Scriptures as the Word of God. Therefore, how may man be assured that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God?

**Answer:** [Romanism] answers that we must believe it because [it] says that it is so. We do affirm that the true Church, which believes and declares that the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, is a means whereby the Holy Spirit brings man to the Word and thereby persuades man to believe it. We deny, however, that the church is the foundation upon which the belief that the Scriptures are the Word of God rests, and whereby man is assured of the same. Rather, the Holy Scriptures, by the inwrought evidences of their divinity<sup>1</sup> and the Holy Spirit speaking in that Word, are themselves the foundation and basis whereby we believe them to be divine. The authority of the Word is derived from the Word itself.

The church cannot be the foundation upon which one believes that the Scriptures are the Word of God, for, first, the Church derives all its authority from the Word. We cannot acknowledge a church to be the true Church except by means of the Word of God—and only if it preaches the pure doctrine and has the credentials that Scripture expresses as belonging to the true Church. “Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph 2:20); “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house” (2Jo 10); “...and avoid them” (Rom 16:17).

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<sup>1</sup> **divinity** (or Scriptures as divine) – this description of Scripture arises from the biblical testimony that God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is the direct cause of Scripture; therefore, in much the same way that creation reflects the attributes of God, Scripture reflects its holy Author in its content, in the testimony of the Son in the New Testament, and in the inward testimony of the Spirit in believers. Because God has spoken, His Word is authoritative, infallible, and perspicuous (clear). It has a divine purpose: the glory of God and the salvation of the elect; it reveals God’s divine truth in every part; and it reflects the divine character of the God Who breathed it.

If the Word of God is the only criterion by which we can determine a church to be the true Church of God, then we must first acknowledge Scripture to be the Word of God before acknowledging the church to be the true Church. Furthermore, we cannot receive the testimony of the church unless we acknowledge her to be the true Church. Thus, we do not believe the Word to be the Word of God because the *church* affirms it, but on the contrary, we believe a church to be the true Church because the *Word* validates her as such. A house rests upon its foundation, and not the foundation upon the house. A product proceeds from its origin; the origin does not proceed from its producer.

**Extenuating Argument:**<sup>2</sup> The two can be interchangeable: Christ bore witness to John the Baptist, and John in return to Christ.

**Answer:** It is one thing to bear witness, but quite another to be the foundation of faith itself. Christ was Truth personified, and He testified with authority. John, however, was merely an instrument whereby the truth was disclosed, as every minister is today. God's servants are nevertheless not the foundation upon which the faith of the hearers is resting: that foundation is Jesus the Christ. Rather, with the Samaritans we must confess, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (Joh 4:42).

The basis for respecting someone's words is the person himself. The laws issued by the government derive their authority to demand compliance from the government itself. The laws do not receive this authority, however, from the person who publishes these laws either by reading or by displaying them. Thus, we acknowledge the Word to have divine authority solely because *God is the One Who speaks*: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken" (Isa 1:2). The Church merely functions as a herald.

If the Word derived its authority from the church, then we would have to hold the church in higher esteem than God Himself. For whoever gives the credence<sup>3</sup> and emphasis to someone's words is superior to the person who speaks them. God has no superior, and therefore no one is in a position to give authority to His words. "I receive not testimony from man" (Joh 5:34), exclaimed the Lord Jesus. Even though John testified of Him, that is, declared that He was the Christ, it would nevertheless be contrary to the will of the Lord Jesus that someone would believe for that reason only. John's testimony

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<sup>2</sup> **extenuating argument** – argument that lessens the importance of what it argues against.

<sup>3</sup> **credence** – belief that something is true.

was merely a means to an end. “But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me” (Joh 5:36).

**Objection 1:** “...which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1Ti 3:15). Whatever provides the truth with support and stability, provides it with the authority to be received as truth. Such is the relationship of the church to the truth.

**Answer:** I emphatically reject the conclusion of this proposition. The most eminent proponents of the church are called pillars, which is true in daily conversation as well as in Scripture. “James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars” (Gal 2:9).

Nevertheless, these men did not give to the church the authority to be recognized as the true Church. Similarly, the Church is the keeper, the defender, and the protector of the Word. If there were no Church, the Word of God and the truth contained in it would almost entirely disappear from the world. The expression “a pillar and ground” has no reference to *giving* authority and credibility, but rather to preservation and protection. The oracles of God have been committed to the Church (Rom 3:2). Her calling is to preserve and defend them, as well as to publish them abroad. What credence does this give to the Word of God itself?

**Objection 2:** No one would know that the Bible is the Word of God if the church had not declared it to be so. God is not now declaring from heaven that the Bible is the Word of God; therefore, there must be someone who declares such to be the case in order that the people can hear it.

**Answer:** (1) No one can know which law the government has issued forth, except for the announcement by a herald; yet he is not the person who gives these laws their authority. Such is also the case here. (2) The argument that no one can know that the Bible is the Word of God except the church declares it to be so, does not hold. It occasionally occurs that someone born and raised far distant from other people, and being ignorant of the existence of a church, will accidentally find a Bible in his home. While reading it diligently, he finds delight in these matters, and they are used as a means for his conversion. Consequently, he acknowledges the Bible to be of God, and he begins to love His Word. I have known such an individual and what has happened to him can also happen to anyone else. Hundreds of people are ignorant concerning the Church and thus have no regard for it.



Yet they will acknowledge the Bible to be the Word of God and may even attempt to seek out the true Church by means of the Word. Whether the Church or someone else gives us the Bible and declares it to be the Word of God is immaterial. In either case, it can motivate a person to search; and while searching, he can discern evidences of divine authorship in it. (3) The objector will claim [Rome] to be the true Church, thereby giving authority to the Word. We believe, however, that the Bible is the Word of God, but not because [Rome] says it is...

*Objection 3:* The church existed prior to the written Word and is better known than the Word; thus, the church gives the Word divine authority.

*Answer:* The Church is not older than the Word; the very opposite is true. The Word is the seed of the Church. The first gospel message was issued forth prior to the existence of the Church and was a means whereby the Church came into existence. It is true that the Church existed prior to the time that the Scriptures were fully contained in the Bible. Nevertheless, the Church did not give credence to the books of Moses and the Scriptures that followed them...Generally, one acquires esteem for the Bible as the Word of God prior to comprehending what the Church is and discerning what she has to say about the Word. From this it follows that the Church does not have more recognition than the Word. The contrary is true...

Thus, the church does not give divine authority to the Word among men. We do not believe the Word to be divine because the church declares it to be so, but the Holy Scriptures themselves manifest their divinity to the attentive hearer or reader, and this becomes clear from the following:

(1) The prefaces of the books of the Bible and apostolic letters, and such words as, "Thus saith the Lord," "The Lord speaks," "Hear the Word of the Lord," etc., touch the heart.

(2) Scripture manifests its divinity to man by its revelation of the lofty mysteries of God and divine matters, which nature does not reveal, no human could have conceived, and which, apart from the operation of the Holy Spirit, cannot be comprehended. The divinity of Scripture is also manifested in the holiness and purity of its injunctions as well as by the way in which man is commanded to conduct himself. Therefore, all other writings that are not derived from this Word are carnal, unrefined, vain, and foolish, whereas those writings

that are derived from Scripture compare to Scripture as a painting resembles a living human being.

(3) The divinity of Scripture is further evident from the power it exerts upon the human heart, for wherever the gospel is preached, hearts are conquered and brought into subjection to Scripture. The more those who confess the truth of Scripture are suppressed and persecuted, the more the Word will exert its power.

(4) It is evident from the wondrous light with which the Word illuminates the soul, the internal and external change it engenders,<sup>4</sup> and the way it fills believers with sweet comfort and inexpressible joy. It enables them to endure all persecution in love and with joy as well as to surrender themselves willingly to death.

(5) Finally, it is evident from the prophecies that, having declared thousands of years in advance what would subsequently occur, have been fulfilled in minute detail, thus validating these prophecies.

These and similar matters are rays of the divinity of the Word that illuminate and convince man of this divinity by its inherent light. However, the task of fully persuading someone, especially a person who uses his corrupt intellect to judge in this matter, is the work of God's Spirit, Who is the Spirit of faith (2Co 4:13). He gives faith (1Co 12:9) and bears witness that the Spirit speaking by means of the Word is truth (1Jo 5:6): "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1Co 12:3).

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**Wilhelmus à Brakel (1635-1711):** Dutch theologian and major representative of the Dutch Second Reformation; born in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands.



Who, when nature is dissolving, earth is receding, eternity is opening, is in a condition to weigh, examine, and sift the evidences of the divinity of the Scriptures? The earnest, imploring language of such a one, alive to a conviction of sin and danger, is, "Is there pardon, is there salvation, is there hope for such a sinner as I am? Does the Word of God tell me how I may be saved? Read to me of Christ. Tell me of the Savior. Point me to the Lamb of God. Direct my eye to the cross, and let me behold Him Whose blood cleanses from all sin. Read to me, speak to me, tell me only of JESUS."—*Octavius Winslow.*

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<sup>4</sup> **engenders** – causes; produces.

# NECESSITY OF SCRIPTURE

Octavius Winslow (1808-1878)

**A**MONG the precious things of God, the saints of the Most High will ever regard His revealed Word as transcendently precious... The works of creation, varied and rich in their forms of beauty, while they testify to “His power and Godhead”—thus leaving man inexcusable for his atheism—nowhere supply an answer to the momentous question, “What must I do to be saved?” They bear [an obvious] and solemn witness to man’s apostasy,<sup>1</sup> but they testify nothing to his recovery. They tell of a fallen, but not of a restored humanity. They speak not of a Savior of a salvation of hope of heaven. I may wander in sad and pensive thought upon the sunny banks of its flowing rivers, I may tread its carpeted vales, or climb its cloud-capped mountains, reveling amid its beauty, its grandeur, and sublimity,<sup>2</sup> and yet find no repose for this restless mind, no peace for this troubled heart, no hope for this sinful and lost soul. Not a flower below, not a star above, tells me of JESUS, a Savior!<sup>3</sup>

I turn to the “glorious gospel of the blessed God” (1Ti 1:11), and my case as a ruined, self-destroyed, condemned sinner is met by that single, but comprehensive and sublime announcement: “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1Ti 1:15). Beloved reader, the kingdom of nature, replete as it is with the wisdom, power, and benevolence of Jehovah—every spire of grass, every lowly flower, every towering mountain, every glimmering star, rebuking the “fool’s” denial of God—can never disclose how you may be pardoned, justified,<sup>4</sup> and saved. No solution can it supply to the great moral problem of the universe: how God can be just and yet the justifier of the ungodly (Rom 3:26). The “gospel of the grace of God”...meets to the utmost your case as a sinner, bringing life and immortality to light, and thus revealing to you a hope, resplendent<sup>5</sup> and eternal, beyond the gloom and corruption of the grave... Everything that is solemn and precious to us as believers is bound up in the fact that the Book upon which we

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<sup>1</sup> **apostasy** – falling away from God by sin.

<sup>2</sup> **sublimity** – lofty height; quality that awakens feelings of awe.

<sup>3</sup> The author here shows our desperate need of *special revelation* compared to *general revelation*.

<sup>4</sup> **justified** – declared righteous by faith in the crucified and resurrected Savior Jesus Christ.

<sup>5</sup> **resplendent** – shining, brilliant, and splendid.

ground our hope of the future is what it declares itself to be the WORD OF THE LORD.

The moment our faith in the divinity of the Holy Scriptures is shaken, everything else trembles with it. Life, in all its moral relations, wears another and a totally different aspect. Its foliage is withered, its flowers are blighted, its springs are embittered, and the entire landscape of the present and the future is enshrouded in gloom and despair. No marvel, then, that error should plant its strong and stern battery in front of this, the most precious doctrine of our faith: the divine inspiration of the Scriptures.

How truly has the apostle described the unbelieving mind: “The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2Co 4:4). We hold it, then, of infinite moment that our faith in the divinity of the Bible, in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, should grow stronger and stronger; and that whatever tends to instruct and confirm us in this doctrine of our faith—be it a fact in history, a discovery in science, or a page in the volume of our personal history—we should welcome with eagerness and acknowledge with devout thanksgiving and praise.

The Lord keep you, my reader, from the low views of divine inspiration prevalent in this day! If this foundation be destroyed or even apparently shaken, what else has your immortal soul to build upon but quicksand, every step, passing to eternity, over which sinks your soul deeper and deeper in doubt, darkness, and despair? As the Word of the Lord, then, it is most precious. It could possess no intrinsic worth apart from this fact: the Bible claims to be nothing less than the Word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration from God” (2Ti 3:16), and “holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2Pe 1:21). We part the [covers] of this sacred volume, and we listen to God’s voice sometimes in terrific thunder, at others in entrancing music now in sublime majesty, then gentle as an infant’s whisper, in mercy and in judgment God’s Word speaks...

We recur to the thought that God’s Word is precious because it is truly and emphatically His Word—the *Word of Jehovah*. And when the believer opens the Bible, it is with the profound and solemn conviction that he is about to listen to the voice of God! But not only is the Word of God precious as a revelation of His being and perfections, but to the child of God it is peculiarly so as revealing the mind and will of God. What the thoughts and purposes of God were could be but dimly gathered from the external works and operations of na-

ture. If these divine thoughts were ever made known to man, God Himself must reveal them. “Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?” (Job 11:7)...The face of nature, the natural countenance of God, is replete with His power, wisdom, and beauty. There is enough of His Godhead to confound and silence the deepest and loudest atheism of man. But nature can go no further. It leads me to the vestibule,<sup>6</sup> but cannot conduct me into the glory within. It tells me there is a God, but it reveals not His nature and character as a Father and a sin-forgiving God.

But where nature leaves me, revelation comes to my aid. Hence the high estimate in which God is represented as regarding His own Word. “Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name” (Psa 138:2). That is, God has magnified His Word above every other manifestation of His name, there being no such revelation and illustration of the Deity as is found in His revealed Word. Do the heavens and the earth declare the glory of God? Does providence testify to His divine government? How much more His revealed truth! Truly, “Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name!” As a revelation of His character, the Word of God is precious. What we gather of God’s moral character from the kingdom of nature is more inferential than positive. From its creation, we infer the being of God; from its loveliness, we infer that God is beautiful; from its wonders, we infer that God is great; from the admirable unity and fitness of all its parts, we infer that God is wise; from the merciful blessings so richly and profusely scattered over its surface, we infer that God is good; and from the judgments which follow sin, and land upon the sinner, we infer that God is holy and just. But for the clear, positive, and complete revelation of God’s character as a righteous, holy, wise, merciful, and sin-pardoning God, we must repair to His written Word. God has unfolded more of His moral character, perfections, and glory in the following words, spoken to Moses on Mount Sinai, amid the awful emblems of His majesty, than in all the beauties, wonders, and sublimities of His created work: “And the LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the

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<sup>6</sup> vestibule – entrance hall.

children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation" (Exo 34:5-7).

What a glorious unfolding of God! What a foreshadowing of the yet richer unfolding of the gospel! If God was so glorious on Mount Sinai, what must be His glory as revealed on Mount Calvary! As a revelation of the love of God, His Word is inexpressibly precious. We want to know more than the mind of God. We are sinners, and we want to read His heart—His loving, gracious, sin-forgiving heart. We want to know, not only what His thoughts and purposes are, but what His [thoughts] towards us are. Does He love us? Does His justice smile on us? Does His heart expand with mercy and glow with affection towards us? The Bible alone supplies the answer to these momentous questions. There we read—as we read it tableted in no part of this vast and beautiful universe— “God is love” (1Jo 4:8, 16). And when we approach the subject yet closer, penetrate more deeply into the heart of God, what a transcendent, marvelous unfolding of His love is presented in the gift of His beloved Son! Read the declaration, often read before, yet to read again and again with deepening wonder, gratitude, and praise: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16)...

How precious ought that Word to be to our hearts, which contains such declarations and reveals such truths as these! Well may the apostle exclaim, “Herein is love!” as if he had said, and he might have added, “and nowhere else but here!” Nowhere in the heavens above, in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; no star, no flower, no creature, so reveals, expresses, and embodies the love of God as the gift of His dear Son to die for our sins. Oh, what love is this! “God so loved the world!”—*so* loved that He gave Jesus! Jesus is the most precious exponent of God's love; Jesus descends from the bosom of His love; Jesus draws aside the veil of His love; Jesus is the expression of His love, God's love incarnate, God's love speaking, laboring, dying, redeeming! Beyond this it would seem impossible that love could go. Oh, let every affection of our heart, every faculty of our soul, every power of our mind, every action of our life, embody as its grateful response the words of the adoring apostle, “Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift!”...

Oh, cling then to Christ's Word...From its commencement to its close, [it is] a record of the Lord Jesus. Around Him, the divine and glorious Center, all its wondrous types, prophecies, and facts gather. His promise and foreshadowing, His holy Incarnation, nativity, and

baptism, His obedience and passion, His death, burial, and resurrection, His ascension to heaven, His Second Coming to judge the world, and to set up His glorious kingdom, are the grand and touching, the sublime and tender, the priceless and precious truths interwoven with the whole texture of the Bible...

Beloved, let *this* be the one and chief object in your study of the Bible: the knowledge of Jesus. The Bible is not a history, a book of science, a poem—it is a record of Christ. Study it to know more of Him, His nature, His love, His work. With the [greathearted] Paul, “Count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus your Lord” (Phi 3:8). Then will God’s Word become increasingly precious to your soul and its truths unfold. You will trace the history of Jesus, see the glory of Jesus, admire the work of Jesus, learn the love of Jesus, and hear the voice of Jesus, in every page. The whole volume will be [fragrant with] His name and luminous with His beauty. Oh, what [would] the Bible [be] to us apart from its revelation of a Savior! Is there not great danger of studying it merely intellectually and scientifically, of reveling among its literary beauties and its grandeur, blind to its true value, and without any desire to know that precious Savior Who died for sinners, that divine Redeemer Who purchased the ransom of His Church with His own blood; that Friend Who loves us, that Brother Who sympathizes with us, that enthroned High Priest Who intercedes for us within the veil?...Do we study the “Word of Christ” spiritually and honestly, as those whose souls hunger and thirst for this the bread and water of life? Do we search it diligently and earnestly as for hid treasure—treasure beyond all price?...Do we read it with a childlike mind, receive it with a believing heart, bow to its teaching with reverence of soul, and receive its decisions in all questions of faith and practice as decisive and ultimate? In a word, do we search the Scriptures humbly, prayerfully, depending upon the guidance of the Spirit, to find Jesus in them? Of these Scriptures, He is the Alpha and the Omega, the substance, the sweetness, the glory—the one, precious, absorbing theme.

From *Precious Things of God*, in the public domain.

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**Octavius Winslow (1808-1878):** Nonconformist pastor; born in London, England, raised in New York, buried in Abbey Cemetery, Bath, UK.



Whatever you neglect, neglect not the Bible.—*Octavius Winslow*.

# PERSPICUITY OF SCRIPTURE

Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

**D**OCTRINE: “The Scriptures are the rule to direct how we may glorify and enjoy God.” Here I shall only give the properties of this rule.

It is a **perspicuous**<sup>1</sup> or clear rule. For though all things in Scripture are not alike plain in themselves, nor alike clear unto all, yet those things that are necessary to be known, believed, and observed for salvation are so clearly propounded<sup>2</sup> and opened in some place of Scripture or other that not only the learned, but the unlearned, in a due sense of the ordinary means,<sup>3</sup> may attain unto a sufficient understanding of them.

(1) With respect to all things necessary to salvation, whether for faith or practice, it cannot be denied that there are portions of the Scripture very obscure, which possibly are not rightly interpreted even to this day; but in such things as are necessary to salvation, they are clear. And in this respect, it hath been said that the Scriptures are a depth wherein a lamb may wade and an elephant may swim.

(2) Though some things, the faith of which is necessary to salvation, be high and incomprehensible mysteries, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, of the incarnation of the Son of God, etc., yet the way of propounding them is clear.

(3) It may be that what is truly necessary unto salvation may be very obscurely laid down in some place of Scripture; yet in some other place, we shall find the same thing clearly propounded,

(4) So that not only the learned, but even the unlearned, may attain to a sufficient understanding of them—which you must carefully remember is meant here of believing persons. [They] have the inward illumination of the Spirit, removing their own natural darkness. For if ye understood it of unbelievers, it contradicts what we have laid down above, relating to the necessity of spiritual illumination. And so the sense is that not only may the learned Christian, but even the un-

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<sup>1</sup> **perspicuous** – (per-SPIK-yoo-us) clearly expressed and easily understood; perspicuity (per-spi-KYOO-i-tee) then is the quality of being clear and understandable.

<sup>2</sup> **propounded** – put forward for consideration.

<sup>3</sup> **due sense...means** – appropriate perception by prayerfully reading or attentively hearing the Word of God.



learned, attain to a sufficient understanding of the Word,

(5) Providing they make use of the ordinary means appointed of God for the understanding of them: reading attentively and devoutly, with prayer and meditation on them, etc.

This perspicuity of the Scriptures I shall prove by the following arguments.

(1) The Scripture plainly teaches its own perspicuity and clearness in this sense. It is called a lamp and a light (Psa 119:105). The very entrance of it (it is said) gives light and understanding to the simple (119:130; *see* Pro 6:23). [In 2 Peter 1:19,] the apostle calls the Holy Scriptures a light, and particularly the word of prophecy, or the prophetic word, which of all the rest seems most dark; yet this he calls a light and a shining light, shining in a dark place, shewing thereby, that where it comes and shines, though the place be of itself dark, yet it dispels the darkness.

(2) Such is the way God hath delivered His Word that its commands are not remote from the understanding. The meanest<sup>4</sup> believer hath no reason to complain of the difficulty of it in the things necessary to salvation. “For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it” (Deu 30:11-14).

(3) If all things necessary to salvation be understood by all sincere Christians, and this by the Spirit dwelling in every believer, then the Scriptures are clear in all things necessary to salvation to the meanest believer. But the former is true: “He that is spiritual judgeth all things” (1Co 2:15). “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things...The anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but...the same anointing teacheth you of all things” (1Jo 2:20, 27). Consider to whom John is there speaking—not only to learned men and great divines, but to all believers, even to little children—to all that have the Spirit, which is common to all: “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom 8:9).

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<sup>4</sup> **meanest** – lowest; most common.

(4) The things that are necessary to salvation are hid only to unbelievers, “in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.” As for others, God Himself hath taught them (2Co 4:4, 6).

(5) God hath promised to write His Law in His people’s hearts and that He Himself will teach them to know Him (Jer 31:33-34). Therefore, the Scripture must needs be perspicuous and clear in things necessary to salvation: for that which is written in our hearts cannot be but clear unto us; and that which God Himself teacheth us cannot be obscure, for who teacheth like God?

(6) If the Scriptures be not clear in themselves to all believers, but that all its perspicuity depends on the interpretation of the church, then our faith is to be ultimately resolved into the testimony of man. But that cannot be, for human testimony is not infallible and authentic, and therefore cannot [establish] divine faith and an infallible persuasion. The reason of the consequence is clear. Hearers are obliged if they will not pin their faith on men’s sleeves, to compare the interpretations given by men with the Scriptures themselves (Act 17:11), which is utterly impractical unless the Scriptures be clear in themselves in such things as are necessary to salvation.

(7) The perspicuity of the Scripture appears, if ye consider their author—God Himself, the Father of lights—and the end for which He gave the Scriptures unto the Church, [namely,] that they might be a rule of faith and life...It is a perfect rule. There is nothing necessary to be believed or done but what is to be found there. It is a perfect rule for us to walk by in the way to heaven and glory. What can be more desired than that, in the text, it is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness”? “The law of the LORD is perfect” (Psa 19:7). The Scriptures were written that men might have life (Joh 20:31) and comfort and hope in all conditions (Rom 15:4).

From “The Divine Authority of the Scriptures” in *The Whole Works of Thomas Boston*, Vol. I, 37-40, in the public domain.



Oh, therefore, before all and above all, search the Scripture, study the Scripture, dwell on the Scripture, delight in the Scripture, treasure up the Scripture; no wisdom [compares] to Scripture wisdom, no knowledge to Scripture knowledge, no experience to Scripture experience, no comforts to Scripture comforts, no delights to Scripture delights, no convictions to Scripture convictions, nor no conversion to Scripture conversion.—*Thomas Brooks*.

# WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT

John Murray (1898-1975)

**I**F...Scripture is divine in its origin, character, and authority, it must bear the marks or evidences of that divinity. If “the heavens declare the glory of God” (Psa 19:1) and therefore bear witness to their divine Creator, the Scripture as God’s handiwork must also bear the imprints of His authorship. This is just saying that Scripture evidences itself to be the Word of God; its divinity is self-evidencing and self-authenticating.<sup>1</sup> The ground of faith in Scripture as the Word of God is therefore the evidence it inherently contains of its divine authorship and quality. External evidence, witness to its divinity derived from other sources extraneous to itself, may corroborate and confirm the witness it inherently contains, but such external evidence cannot be in the category of evidence sufficient to ground and constrain faith. If the faith is *faith in the Bible as God’s Word*, obviously, the evidence upon which such faith rests must itself have the quality of divinity. For only evidence with the quality of divinity would be sufficient to ground a faith in divinity. Faith in Scripture as God’s Word, then, rests upon the perfections<sup>2</sup> inherent in Scripture and is elicited by the perception of these perfections. These perfections constitute its incomparable excellence; and such excellence, when apprehended, constrains the overwhelming conviction that is the only appropriate kind of response.

If Scripture thus manifests itself to be divine, why is not faith the result in the case of everyone confronted with it? The answer is that not all men have the requisite perceptive faculty.<sup>3</sup> Evidence is one thing, the ability to perceive and understand is another. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Co 2:14). It is here that the necessity for the internal testimony of the Spirit enters. The darkness and depravity of man’s mind because of sin make man blind to the divine excellence of Scripture. And the effect of sin is not only that it blinds the mind

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<sup>1</sup> **self-authenticating** – bears evidence within itself, from its attributes and characteristics, of its own divine origin.

<sup>2</sup> **perfections** – authority, necessity, perspicuity (clarity), sufficiency.

<sup>3</sup> **requisite perceptive faculty** – necessary ability to perceive or understand.

of man and makes it impervious<sup>4</sup> to the evidence, but also that it renders the heart of man utterly hostile to the evidence. The carnal mind is enmity against God and therefore resists every claim of the divine perfection. If the appropriate response of faith is to be yielded to the divine excellence inherent in Scripture, nothing less than radical regeneration by the Holy Spirit can produce the requisite susceptibility.<sup>5</sup> “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3). “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God” (1Co 2:14). It is here that the internal testimony of the Spirit enters, and it is in the inward work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart and mind of man that the internal testimony consists. The witness of Scripture to the depravity of man’s mind and to the reality, nature, and effect of the inward work of the Holy Spirit is the basis upon which the doctrine of the internal testimony rests.

When Paul institutes the contrast between the natural man and the spiritual and says with respect to the latter, “But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no one” (1Co 2:15), he means that the “spiritual” person is the person endowed *with* and indwelt *by* the Holy Spirit. It is only such a one who has the faculty to discern the things revealed by the Spirit. By way of contrast with the natural man, he receives, knows, and discerns the truth.

Earlier in this same chapter, Paul tells us in terms that even more pointedly deal with our present subject that the faith of the Corinthians in the gospel was induced by the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. “And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1Co 2:4-5). No doubt Paul here is reflecting upon the manner of his preaching...He is saying, in effect, that the Spirit of God so wrought in him and in his preaching that the response on the part of the Corinthians was the solid faith that rests upon the power of God and not that evanescent<sup>6</sup> faith that depends upon the appeal of rhetorical<sup>7</sup> art and worldly wisdom. It is in the demonstration of which the Holy Spirit is the author that the faith of the Corinthians finds its source. It is, indeed, faith terminating upon the Word of God preached by Paul. But it is faith produced by the accompanying demonstration of the Spirit and manifestation of divine power.

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<sup>4</sup> **impervious** – unable to be affected by.

<sup>5</sup> **requisite susceptibility** – necessary capacity of being affected by something.

<sup>6</sup> **evanescent** – temporary; quickly disappearing.

<sup>7</sup> **rhetorical** – clearly expressing and persuasive.

In the first epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul again refers to the power and confidence with which he and his colleagues preached the gospel at Thessalonica. “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and much assurance” (1Th 1:5). In this text, the reference to power and assurance appears to apply to the power and confidence with which Paul and Silvanus and Timothy proclaimed the Word rather than to the conviction with which the Thessalonians received it. The gospel came in the Holy Spirit and therefore with power and assurance. But we must not dissociate the reception of the Word on the part of the Thessalonians from this power and confidence wrought by the Spirit. For Paul proceeds, “And ye became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction with joy of the Holy Spirit” (vs. 6). The resulting faith on the part of the Thessalonians must be regarded as proceeding from this activity of the Holy Spirit in virtue of which the gospel was proclaimed “in power and in the Holy Spirit and much assurance.” That the Thessalonians became imitators of the Lord and received the Word with joy is because the gospel came not in word only, and it came not in word only because it came in the power of the Holy Spirit. Their faith therefore finds its source in this demonstration of the Spirit, just as the joy with which they received the Word is the joy wrought by the Spirit.

When the apostle John writes, “And ye have an anointing from the Holy One and ye know all things. I have not written to you because ye do not know the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth” (1Jo 2:20-21; *cf.* 27), he is surely alluding to that same indwelling of the Spirit with which Paul deals in 1 Corinthians 2:15. This anointing is an abiding possession and invests believers with discernment of the truth and steadfastness in it.

Summing up the conclusions drawn from these few relevant passages, we may say that the reception of the truth of God in intelligent, discriminating, joyful, and abiding faith is the effect of divine demonstration and power through the efficiency of the Holy Spirit, and that this faith consists in the confident assurance that, though the Word of God is brought through the instrumentality of men, it is not the word of man but in very truth the Word of God. We again see how even in connection with the internal testimony of the Spirit, the ministry of men in no way militates against the reception of their message as the Word of God.

This witness of the Holy Spirit has been called the *internal testimony* of the Spirit. The question arises, why is the inward work of the

Spirit called testimony? There does not appear, indeed, to be any compelling reason why it should be thus called. There is, however, an appropriateness in the word. The faith induced by this work of the Spirit rests upon the testimony the Scripture inherently contains of its divine origin and character. It is the function of the Holy Spirit to open the minds of men to perceive that testimony and cause the Word of God to be borne home to the mind of man with ruling power and conviction. Thereby the Holy Spirit may be said to bear perpetual witness to the divine character of that which is His own handiwork.

The internal testimony of the Spirit has frequently been construed as consisting in illumination or in regeneration on its noetic side.<sup>8</sup> It is illumination because it consists in the opening of our minds to behold the excellence that inheres in Scripture as the Word of God. It is regeneration on the noetic side because it is regeneration coming to its expression in our understanding in the response of the renewed mind to the evidence Scripture contains of its divine character. Anything less than illumination in the sense defined above, the internal testimony cannot be...

There is one principle that it is necessary to stress, namely, that the internal testimony does not convey to us *new truth content*. The whole truth content that comes within the scope of the internal testimony is contained in the Scripture. This testimony terminates upon the end of constraining belief in the divine character and authority of the Word of God and upon that end alone. It gives no ground whatsoever for new revelations of the Spirit.

When Paul writes to the Thessalonians, "Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and much assurance," he is surely making a distinction between the actual content of the gospel and the attendant power with which it was conveyed to them and in virtue of which it was carried home with conviction to the hearts of the Thessalonians. In like manner in 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, the content of Paul's word and preaching will surely have to be distinguished from the demonstration of the Spirit and of power by which Paul's message was effectual in the begetting of faith in the Corinthian believers. And we are likewise justified in recognizing a distinction between the truth that John says his readers already knew and the abiding anointing of the Spirit that provided them with the proper knowledge and discernment to the end of bringing to clearer consciousness and consistent application the truth that they had al-

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<sup>8</sup> **noetic** – mental activity; intellectual.

ready received (1Jo 2:20-27). In each case, the illumining and sealing function of the Spirit has respect to truth that had been received from another source than that of His confirming and sealing operations.

The internal testimony of the Spirit is the necessary complement to the witness Scripture inherently bears to its plenary inspiration. The two pillars of true faith in Scripture as God's Word are the *objective* witness and the *internal* testimony. The objective witness furnishes us with a conception of Scripture that provides the proper basis for the ever-active sealing operation of the Spirit of truth. The internal testimony insures that this objective witness elicits the proper response in the human consciousness. The sealing function of the Spirit finds its complete explanation and validation in the pervasive witness that Scripture bears to its own divine origin and authority. And the witness to plenary inspiration receives its constant confirmation in the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in the hearts of believers.

From *The Infallible Word*, Westminster Theological Seminary  
and P&R Publishing; used by permission.

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**John Murray (1898-1975):** Presbyterian theologian and author; born in Badbea, near Bonar Bridge, Sutherland County, Scotland, UK.



“Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2Pe 1:21). There are various translations of this word *moved*. Some say that it should be “carried along”; others would say that it means “borne along”; some would even say “driven along.” Probably all are right; the word can carry all those various meanings. What is important for us is that they all agree in this: when these prophecies were written, it was not a case of a man in control of himself, using his natural powers and propensities and abilities, thinking things out and then writing as best he could. Not at all! The whole time, he was controlled by this gale of the Spirit, by this wind of God, this divine energy. This divine [creative impulse] came upon him, it held him and carried him, and he was borne along by the Spirit. And it was as a result of that process that these prophecies and these Scriptures came into being.—*David Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

None but God can so open the eyes of the blind, so open the graves of the dead,  
so quicken and enliven the conscience that was seared, so bind over the soul  
of a sinner to the judgment to come, so change and alter the frame and  
temper of a man's spirit, or so powerfully raise, refresh, and comfort  
a drooping, dying soul; certainly the power of God is in all this;  
and, if there were no more, yet this alone were sufficient  
to make full proof of the divine authority of  
the Scriptures.—*John Flavel*

# GOD'S CLAIM UPON YOUR ATTENTION

Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

*The mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.—Isaiah 1:20*

**E**VERY word that God has given us in this Book claims our attention because of the *infinite majesty of Him that spake it*. I see before me a Parliament of kings and princes, sages and senators. I hear one after another of the gifted Chrysostoms<sup>1</sup> pour forth eloquence like the “Golden-mouthed.” They speak, and they speak well. Suddenly, there is a solemn hush. What a *stillness*! Who is now to speak? They are silent because God the Lord is about to lift His voice. Is it not right that they should be so? Doth He not say, “Keep silence before me, O islands”? What voice is like His voice? “The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Lebanon...The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh” (Psa 29:4-6, 8). See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.

O my hearer, let it not be said of you that you went through this life, God speaking to you in His Book, and you refusing to hear! It matters very little whether you listen to *me* or not; but it matters a very great deal whether you listen to God or not. It is He that made you; in His hands is your breath; and if He speaks, I implore you, open your ear and be not rebellious. There is an infinite majesty about every line of Scripture, but especially about that part of Scripture in which the Lord reveals Himself and His glorious plan of saving grace in the person of His dear Son Jesus Christ. The cross of Christ hath a great claim upon you. Hear what Jesus preaches from the tree. He says, “Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live” (Isa 55:3).

God's claim to be heard lies also in *the condescension<sup>2</sup> that has led Him to speak to us*. It was something for God to have made the world and bid us look at the work of His hands. Creation is a picture-book

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<sup>1</sup> **John Chrysostom** (c. 347-407) – early theologian and expositor of the Greek Church, whose name means “golden mouthed”; Spurgeon's reference here is to young preachers.

<sup>2</sup> **condescension** – coming down or stooping to people or things unworthy.



for children. But for God to speak in the language of mortal men is still more marvelous, if you come to think of it. I wonder that God spoke by the prophets; but I admire still more that He should have written down His word in black and white, in unmistakable language, which can be translated into all tongues, so that we may all see and read for ourselves what God the Lord has spoken to us, and what, indeed, He continues to speak. For what He has spoken, He still speaks to us as freshly as if He spake it for the first time. O glorious Jehovah, dost Thou speak to mortal man? Can there be any that neglect to hear Thee? If Thou art so full of lovingkindness and tenderness that Thou wilt stoop out of heaven to converse with Thy sinful creatures, none but those who are more brutal than the ox and the ass will turn a deaf ear to thee! God's Word has a claim, then, upon your attention because of its majesty and its condescension.

But, further, it should win your ear because of *its intrinsic importance*. "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it"—then it is no trifle.<sup>3</sup> God never speaks vanity. No line of His writing treats of the frivolous themes of a day. That which may be forgotten in an hour is for mortal man, and not for the eternal God. When the Lord speaks, His speech is God-like, and its themes are worthy of one whose dwelling is infinity and eternity. God does not play with thee, man: wilt thou trifle with Him? Wilt thou treat Him as if He were altogether such a one as thyself? God is in earnest when He speaks to thee: wilt thou not in earnest listen? He speaks to thee of great things, which have to do with thy soul and its destiny. "It is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life" (Deu 32:47). Thy eternal existence, thy happiness or thy misery, hang on thy treatment of that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken. Concerning eternal realities, He speaks to thee. I pray thee, be not so unwise as to turn away thine ear. Act not as if the Lord and His truth were nothing to you. Treat not the Word of the Lord as a secondary thing, which might wait thy leisure and receive attention when no other work was before thee: put all else aside, but hearken to thy God.

Depend upon it, if "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," there is an *urgent, pressing necessity*. God breaks not silence to say that which might as well have remained unsaid. His voice indicates great urgency. Today, if ye will hear His voice, hear it; for He demands immediate attention. God does not speak without abundant reason; and, O

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<sup>3</sup> **trifle** – matter of little value or importance.

my hearer, if He speaks to thee by His Word, I beseech thee, believe that there must be overwhelming cause for it!

I know what Satan says: he tells thee that thou canst do very well without listening to God's Word. I know what thy carnal heart whispers: it says, "Listen to the voice of business, and of pleasure; but listen not to God." But, oh! If the Holy Spirit shall teach thy reason to be reasonable and put thy mind in mind of true wisdom, thou wilt acknowledge that the first thing thou hast to do is to heed thy Maker. Thou canst hear the voices of others another time; but thine ear must hear God first, since He is first, and that which He speaks must be of first importance. Without delay, do thou make haste to keep His commandments. Without reserve answer to His call, and say, "Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth" (1Sa 3:9). When I stand in this pulpit to preach the gospel, I never feel that I may calmly invite you to attend to a subject that is one among many, and may very properly be let alone for a time should your minds be already occupied. No; you may be dead before I again speak with you, and so I beg for immediate attention. I do not fear that I may be taking you off from other important business by entreating you to attend to that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken; for no business has any importance in it compared with this: this is the master theme of all. It is your soul, your own soul, your ever-existing soul that is concerned, and it is your God that is speaking to you. Do hear Him, I beseech you. I am not asking a favor of you when I request you to hear the Word of the Lord: it is a debt to your Maker that you are bound to pay. Yea, it is, moreover, kindness to your own self. Even from a selfish point of view, I urge you to hear what the mouth of the Lord hath spoken, for in His Word lies salvation. Hearken diligently to what your Maker, your Savior, your best friend, has to say to you. "Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (Heb 3:8), but "incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live" (Isa 55:3). "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Rom 10:17).

From a sermon delivered on Lord's Day morning, March 11, 1888,  
at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, Newington.

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**Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892):** Influential English Baptist preacher; born at Kelvedon, Essex, England, UK.



Sit not at the feet of men, but at the feet of Jesus. His Word alone can instruct you in these sacred and precious truths. You must learn in Christ's school and be taught by the Holy Spirit.—*Octavius Winslow*