

# UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

A Presbyterian Quarterly

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ADDRESS:

### UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.

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Please give notice of change of address

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Published four times a year—January, April, July and October. Annual sub-  
scription, \$1.50; foreign, \$1.75. Single copies, 40 cents.

Entered at the Post-Office, at Richmond, Va., as second-class matter.

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THE RICHMOND PRESS, INC., PRINTERS

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4582

# THE UNION SEMINARY REVIEW

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Vol. XLI.

APRIL, 1930.

No. 3.

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## ORGANIC UNION AMONG PRESBYTERIANS.

BY REV. JAMES I. VANCE, D. D., LL. D.,  
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“Do not hurry, we have no time to lose,” a great surgeon said to his assistant as he was starting to perform a major operation.

Two things are vastly important in approaching the consideration of organic union among Presbyterians. They are prayer and patience. Two classes of people are not disposed to give either. They are those who have made up their minds not to have union under any conditions, and those who have made up their minds to have it at any price. To pray and to wait with a closed mind is to find ourselves where we were.

If anything deserves earnest prayer in connection with the interests of the church, the consideration of organic union would seem to deserve it. But there can be no prayer that does not first say to God: “Thy will be done.” Some have been praying for light on this subject. How much longer is the waiting attitude to be maintained? Organic union was an acute question, as I well remember, when Dr. A. W. Pitzer, of Washington City, some forty years ago published his series of articles in the church papers advocating union, and brought down upon his head the lasting condemnation of some of the brethren. They said he was in advance of the times.

How much longer are we to wait for the times to catch up? Certainly until union, if it comes at all, shall come as a love

procedure may turn out to be only so much breath wasted. The next Assembly may swing from pro-union to contra-union. It may abolish all the committees it has appointed. It may scrap all the machinery its predecessors have set in motion. This is a way General Assemblies have of doing, and in doing so, they are entirely within their rights.

Having marched up the hill and once more marched down again, there will be nothing left us but to follow the example of the Chinese Christians at the Jerusalem Conference who, failing to devise a basis satisfactory to all, came to this conclusion: "Agreed to differ, but resolved to love and unite to serve."

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## THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE.

BY REV. FRANCIS L. PATTON, D. D., LL. D.,

*President of Princeton University, 1888-1902; President of  
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[The following article is a re-print from pages 161-173 of "Fundamental Christianity" and is published in *The Review* with the permission of the Macmillan Company, the publishers of Dr. Patton's book. This book contains the James Sprunt Lectures delivered by Dr. Patton at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va., in the fall of 1924.]

A threefold cord is not easily broken. In support of our Christian faith we have the indubitable testimony of history. That is to say we have the trustworthiness of the Bible. We have the conviction of its truth in our own subjective states produced in us, as we feel and the Scriptures assert, by the witness of the Spirit. In other words, we have the testimony of history confirmed by subjective inspiration. And in addition we have the objective inspiration of the Scriptures themselves. But just as the meaning of the witness of the Spirit needs careful interpretation, and the lack of it may be used to the disadvantage of Christianity, so the inspiration of the

Scriptures may be affirmed in a degree that goes beyond the evidence of it and may be used in a way that is detrimental to the cause in behalf of which it is cited. Something therefore should be said in order that the use of this doctrine may be both sane and safe.

It is clear, to begin with, that the inspiration of the Scriptures is not a doctrine that supersedes the historical statements that support the truth of the Scriptures. For if the documents which teach this doctrine should prove to be untrustworthy or the passages in these documents which teach inspiration should turn out to be the interpolation of "a later hand", then the evidence for the inspiration of the Scriptures would be so weakened as to discredit the doctrine. And not only is this true, but it is also true that part of the evidence in support of the doctrine of Inspiration proceeds on the assumption that certain other doctrines are true. We must have faith in Paul's right to speak when he says that he taught "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but in words which the Holy Ghost teaches". We must believe in the divine authority of Jesus before we can base an argument for the Inspiration of the Scriptures on the words, "But the Scriptures cannot be broken". So that before we can logically reach the conclusion that the Scriptures are inspired, we must find in them sufficient evidence of their historic trustworthiness.

To this we are certainly brought, that we do not need the Inspiration of the Scriptures to prove their inspiration. We cannot assume a doctrine in order to prove it. But if a doctrine so important as the Inspiration of the Scriptures can be proved from Scripture without the presupposition of their inspiration, then other doctrines, such as the Divinity of Christ, can in like manner be proved without this presupposition. In fact, it is safe to say that we can on the simple historicity of the New Testament prove a fairly complete system of theology. The doctrine of the Inspiration of the Scripture is an induction based upon the teachings of the Scripture. In other words, the facts and phenomena of Scripture justify the belief that the writers of the several books that compose the

Bible were under the controlling influence of the Holy Ghost. This is the plain inference from what these writers say. The inference, however, like other inductions, is in the terms of probability. If therefore the Inspiration of the Scriptures is expressed in the terms of probability, we cannot logically claim a higher degree of conviction in regard to what the Scriptures say. We cannot have the authority of the Scriptures in the terms of probability and at the same time claim demonstration for what the Scriptures say, for the stream cannot rise higher than its source.

Conceding now the Inspiration of Scripture, you cannot on that account assume that it is errorless. You may say that being inspired it is fair to expect that it will be preserved from error, but this is not evidence. We are accustomed in support of the Inspiration of the Bible to cite its accuracy; inspired, let us say, because errorless. It is a different thing, however, to say errorless because inspired. To say that the Bible is trustworthy because of its accuracy is by implication to say that we have the right and power to discern between truth and error. You cannot license Reason to seek truth and deny her right to see error. And it is a hazardous thing to say that being inspired the Bible must be free from error; for then the discovery of a single error would destroy its inspiration. Nor have we any right to substitute the word "inerrancy" for "inspiration" in our discussion of the Bible unless we are prepared to show from the teaching of the Bible that inspiration means inerrancy—and that, I think, would be a difficult thing to do.

This will serve to show how it is that some at the present day are saying that unless the Bible is without error it cannot be trusted for anything, and also how foolish such a statement is. Is there anything in all that is said about inspiration that can show us the exact area covered by inspiration and can tell us how far the mind of the Spirit and the mind of the author were co-extensive in the writing of the Bible? Is there anything which assures us that Paul was as much under the influence of inspiration in sending for his cloak at Troas as in

writing the Galatian Epistle? Then whatever you may think, however reasonable it is to suppose that the Spirit and Paul were concurrently active and in the same degree in all that Paul wrote, we cannot claim that this is explicitly stated or by fair inference logically deducible from anything said in the New Testament. With the deepest reverence for the Scriptures as the inspired word of God, I am nevertheless bound to say that difference of opinion on this point must be allowed to exist, as they have always existed, among Christians.

Let us suppose, however, that in the study of the Old Testament, for example, you felt compelled to modify certain preconceived notions. Suppose that scientific proofs should compel you to put another interpretation upon the programme of creation, as it has compelled you to give another meaning to the word "day", would you give up the whole of the New Testament? Without pretending to any special scientific knowledge, it seems to me remarkable that the biblical account of creation which so wonderfully taught the essential truth of creation to man ages before science was born, still teaches it to scientific men if their prosaic science has not caused their imagination to suffer atrophy. But how foolish it would be to give up the Gospel simply because a dead literalism of interpretation would find no support in a modern text book on biology!

Probability is the guide of life, said Bishop Butler. The best ship afloat may be sunk at sea, but on that account do you take one known not to be seaworthy? You may prefer to stay ashore, but you cannot stay on this shore. The time is coming when you must embark. Will you refuse to take passage in the boat that carries Jesus because you still have some trouble about the one that carried Noah? It is a mistake to put the whole weight of the argument for Christianity on either the credibility of the Christian documents or their inspiration alone. I like to feel the force of the *a fortiori* argument. I like when I go to sea to know that the ship is provided with bulkheads and watertight compartments, so that in case a collision come, whether it be on bow or bilge, she will

float. I do not care to put all my hope of heaven in a theory of inerrant inspiration, so that if a hole were bored in it the great ship would founder. I like to feel that the historicity and the inspiration of the Bible cooperate and help to strengthen faith, so that if either is sufficient how much better both will be.

If you turn now to the evidence for the Inspiration of the Scriptures, you will find that the argument in support of it consists largely in certain individual texts, and that the method of the adverse critic is the old way of warfare, "divide and conquer". Accordingly he subjects each text to cross-examination for the purpose of showing that it does not teach the doctrine that is built upon it. If you quote, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable", etc., he will tell you that "every inspired ("theopneustic"), writing is profitable", etc., is a much better rendering, that theopneustic Scripture is not necessarily infallible and that the text does not say that all Scripture is theopneustic. If you quote the words of Jesus, "The Scriptures cannot be broken", he will tell you that this is true only on the supposition that Jesus is Divine and that at the present stage of the argument we do not know that Jesus is Divine; and, moreover, that it is an open question whether the words "cannot be broken" carry with them the idea of infallibility; and still further, that we cannot be sure that Jesus meant anything more than to call attention to the popular opinion in regard to all the Scriptures, and consequently it is an error to make this text the basis of an affirmation regarding the inspiration of the Bible. When these and similar texts have been dealt with in this way, the critic feels that he has overthrown the doctrine of inspiration. Evidently this method is unfair; and the critic would be less disingenuous if he would ask whether, conceding the justice of this examination of each separate text, there is not, in the consilience of testimony of all the texts, a totality of impression left upon the reader's mind that the idea of inspiration was nevertheless a ruling conviction in the minds of those who wrote them.

But what has been said may serve to show that a better way of dealing with this question is not to begin with specific texts, but to introduce them later; and meanwhile let the facts of history, the experience of the early Christian community, and some of the great doctrines of the New Testament other than that of inspiration, bear part of the weight. For another reason, too, the method I refer to would commend itself, inasmuch as an attempt to build the doctrine of inspiration on a few scattered texts may easily be regarded as assuming the doctrine in order to prove it. Why, it may be asked, do you attach so much importance to the meaning of these texts except upon the hypothesis that you already regard as settled what you are seeking to prove?

If, however, men would only see that the great truths of Christianity do not depend upon the doctrine of inspiration, but stand in their own right and on the ground of the specific evidence which supports them, they would realize, perhaps, that without reasoning in a circle, these truths, though separately supported by specific arguments, have also in them an element of interdependence and support each other, just as we may say without any flaw of logic that the keystone of the arch keeps the stones on either side of it in their place and these stones at the same time keep the keystone from falling down. Here, for example, is a child's picture-puzzle, which the boy builds up, beginning in the centre or at one of the corners as he feels disposed, by finding, one after another, the piece in which the left-hand side fits the right-hand side of a piece already on the table; until, by and by, the picture is complete and the boy knows that he is right because each piece fits the other and all of them together make a complete picture.

Here also is the human body, with its circulatory, digestive, muscular and nervous systems, all related to one another, and each contributing to the well-being of the entire body. Or, to go further, let us remember that the body as a whole is made of microscopic cells each of which is a separate organism with power of growth, and nourishment, and reproduction. The

Scriptures long ago made us familiar with the idea that if one member suffer all the members suffer with it; but can we say that any one member is the cause of the well-being of any other member, in a sense which is not reciprocally true of that other member? Do these microscopic cells which make epithelial, muscular, or connective tissue, keep the larger organs like the liver, lungs and stomach, in a state of health? Or do these organs supply the conditions of life to the cellular system? Do these two sets of organs, the gross and cellular, stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect; and, if so, which is cause and which effect? Or are the two reciprocally cause and effect to each other? The latter of course is true; so that if the cellular life languishes the gross organs will not function properly, and if the gross organs are diseased the cellular life will suffer. In other words, these several systems in the body are organic to each other. I believe that something like this is true of the Bible in the relations which the Old and New Testaments sustain to each other.

It may be easier, as I have said, to proceed from the historical facts of the New Testament and the legitimate deductions which follow from them, to the story of the Old Testament. But one can hardly help seeing that the Bible is an organism and not a miscellaneous collection of writings. And the way to study it is to "see it steady and to see it whole", to realize it as a totality, the parts of which fit each other, supplement each other, support each other, and that through the whole the same "increasing purpose runs". *Mens agit molem* is the conspicuous thing about the Bible. If we so regard it we shall see that a single idea rules the whole and that the Old Testament is a preparation for the New; that besides the temporal interests of Israel and, indeed, as part of them, there was an outlook as to Israel's place in the preparation of the world for Christ. With all this in our minds there will be no difficulty in accepting, without putting a hard and fast interpretation upon it, the doctrine of the Inspiration of the Scriptures. We shall accept without cavil the texts which especially teach it. Without forcing a meaning upon them in

the interests of one theory, or denying what they say in the interests of another theory, without being disturbed over "various readings" or the subtleties of exegesis, we can accept these texts as confirming what an impartial study of the Bible would lead us to expect; so that while we believe that in "the olden time" holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, we can also believe that we have a more sure word of prophecy whereunto we do well to take heed.

But the naturalistic critic is determined to see nothing but the operation of natural causes in all that bespeaks purpose, and that paves the way for the Christian dispensation. Having, therefore, an antecedent conviction adverse to inspiration, he picks holes in all the texts which affirm it, tells us that we reason in a circle, that the suppressed premise in our enthymeme is unproved, and that we reach the height of our argument by piling question-begging inferences upon each other until we have built a pyramid which from top to bottom is a fallacious sorites.

But so many men on both sides of this great controversy, which carries with it every interest that makes life worth living, lack imagination and the seer's gift. They are the "wooden vessels" in the great house of learning and might easily be dispensed with. The spirit of the Old Testament has not touched them enough to make them see that it breathes in purpose. They are so anxious to show that it is not divine that they do not stop to see that it is human. They do not appreciate the fact that the Bible is a bow of promise as well as a book of duty; that with matchless art it can pack a page of precept in a line of epigram; that its stories suggest homely duties as well as open chapters in the movement of Providence; that good men are painted without excessive praise and bad men are spoken of in blunt ruggedness of fact, and not in the half concealing, half revealing way of modern art which makes vice enticing. They do not see that topics for the times on which the prophet speaks are also lessons for all time. They read with a prosaic literalism his message to the men of his day, but do not see the far-off look on his face which carries

his meaning down the ages. No wonder, then, that the Old Testament is sundered from the New. No wonder that under the doctrine of naturalistic uniformitarianism, the New Testament, bereft of miracle and no longer heir of prophecy, is found to be but a shrivelled remnant of the Jewish faith. No wonder that this outcropping of Jewish modernism, speaking in terms of a lofty thought and an emotional philosophy of love, feels no need of a Divine Saviour, repudiates the expiation of sin, and putting the cross of individual self-sacrifice in place of the one to which was nailed the suffering Saviour of the world, parades "salvation by character" as the be-all and end-all of the new Christianity.

"Choose ye this day whom ye will serve. If Baal be God serve him, if the Lord be God serve Him." We come ultimately to the old issue of choice between contradictory alternatives. Let us not multiply issues. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations." Let none be made an offender for a word. Let us not drive the ploughshare of division between the friends of Christ. But, ultimately, we are logically forced to choose between a naturalistic and a supernaturalistic explanation of the Bible. And if we wish to keep the Christianity which teaches salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, we are shut up to a doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible. Taking it in respect to the relations of the Old and New Testaments to each other, taking it as a whole whose parts are organic to each other and the whole, there is no way of denying its inspiration which does not put its leading doctrines in jeopardy. Let us look then at the Bible as an organic whole; follow the trend of the Old Testament teaching along the level path of history, into the byways of precept, story and epigram, up the slopes of prophetic vision, and on to the mountain tops of religious aspiration. For this is the Bible's way. It speaks in didactic narrative, persuades by fervid argument, soars in lofty verse, and sings in a melody that stirs the deepest feelings of our being. All that the prophets foretold is fulfilled in the New Testament, all the hopes they fostered are realized in it. The Incarnation

crowns the great story of Divine fellowship with men; and the New Testament message is a commission and command to preach the gospel of salvation to a perishing world.

The Bible presents to us a panorama of the Divine purpose. As we look we see the unfolding of the great drama of sin and salvation. As we listen to its majestic music from the creation overture in Genesis to the hallelujah chorus in the Apocalypse, we realize that we have been holding in our hands the inspired *libretto* of God's great oratorio of Redemption.

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## ARE WE IN KEEPING TODAY WITH THE CALVINISTIC DOCTRINE OF ELECTION?

BY REV. J. MACPHAIL WAGGETT, D. D.,

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In a cemetery near my boyhood home is a tombstone bearing the quotation from Esther 4:16: "So will I go in unto the king, and if I perish, I perish." This epitaph reflected the doctrinal atmosphere of the community. Incidentally it gave the writer of this article a lifelong interest in the Doctrine of Election.

It is clear that the Reformed Creeds gave a conspicuous place to this doctrine, as the following may indicate. In the *Confessio Gallicana* and the *Confessio Belgica*, we read: "God resolved without regard to belief or unbelief, to have mercy upon and elect some of his fallen creatures to everlasting life, but to permit others to remain in condemnation and finally to consign them to everlasting punishment."

The *Consensus Genevensis* and the *Dordrecht Synod* declared: "He inclines the hearts of those whom He has pre-