

# THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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I.

## THE REAL PROBLEM OF INSPIRATION.

A GREAT deal is being said of late of "the present problem of inspiration," with a general implication that the Christian doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures has been brought into straits by modern investigation, and needs now to adapt itself to certain assured but damaging results of the scientific study of the Bible. Thus, because of an assumed "present distress," Canon Cheyne, in a paper read at the English Church Congress of 1888, commended a most revolutionary book of Mr. R. F. Horton's, called *Inspiration and the Bible*,\* which explains away inspiration properly so called altogether, as the best book he could think of on the subject. And Mr. Charles Gore defends the concessive method of treating the subject of inspiration adopted in *Lux Mundi*, by the plea that the purpose of the writers of that volume "was 'to succour a distressed faith,' by endeavoring to bring the Christian creed into its right relation to the modern growth of knowledge, scientific, historical, critical."† On our side of the water, Dr. Washington Gladden has published a volume which begins by presenting certain "new" views of the structure of the books of the Bible as established facts, and proceeds to the conclusion that: "Evidently neither the theory of verbal inspiration nor the theory of plenary inspiration can be made to fit the facts which a careful study of the writings themselves brings before us. These writings are not inspired

\* *Inspiration and the Bible*. An Inquiry. By Robert F. Horton, M.A., Late Fellow of New College, Oxford. Fourth Edition. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1889.

† *Lux Mundi*. Tenth Edition. London: John Murray, 1890. P. xi.

in the sense which we have commonly given to that word." Accordingly he recommends that under the pressure of these new views we admit not only that the Bible is not "infallible," but that its laws are "inadequate" and "morally defective," and its untrustworthiness as a religious teacher is so great that it gives us in places "blurred and distorted ideas about God and His truth."\* And Prof. Joseph H. Thayer has published a lecture which represents as necessitated by the facts as now known, such a change of attitude towards the Bible as will reject the whole Reformed doctrine of the Scriptures in favor of a more "Catholic" view which will look upon some of the history recorded in the Bible as only "fairly trustworthy," and will expect no intelligent reader to consider the exegesis of the New Testament writers satisfactory.† A radical change in our conception of the Scriptures as the inspired Word of God is thus pressed upon us as now necessary by a considerable number of writers, representing quite a variety of schools of Christian thought.

Nevertheless the situation is not one which can be fairly described as putting the old doctrine of inspiration in jeopardy. The exact state of the case is rather this: that a special school of Old Testament criticism, which has, for some years, been gaining somewhat widespread acceptance of its results, has begun to proclaim that these results having been accepted, a "changed view of the Bible" follows which implies a reconstructed doctrine of inspiration, and, indeed, also a whole new theology. That this changed view of the Bible involves losses is frankly admitted. The nature of these losses is stated by Dr. Sanday in a very interesting little book ‡ with an evident effort to avoid as far as possible "making sad the heart of the righteous whom the Lord hath not made sad," as consisting chiefly in making "the intellectual side of the connection between Christian belief and Christian practice a matter of greater difficulty than it has hitherto seemed to be," in rendering it "less easy to find proof texts for this or that," and in making the use of the Bible so much less simple and less definite in its details that "less educated Christians will perhaps pay more deference to the opinion of the more educated, and to the advancing consciousness of the Church at large." If this means all that it seems to mean, its proclamation of an indefinite Gospel eked out by an appeal to the Church and a scholastic hierarchy, involves a much greater loss than

\* *Who Wrote the Bible?* A Book for the People. By Washington Gladden. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1891. See pp. 61 (cf. pp. 57, 92 *sq.*), 21, 25, 154 (cf. pp. 105, 166, 37, etc.).

† *The Change of Attitude Towards the Bible.* A Lecture, etc. By Joseph Henry Thayer, Professor in Harvard University. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1891. See pp. 9, 10, 22, 52, 65.

‡ *The Oracles of God* (Longmans, 1891), pp. 5, 45, 76.

Dr. Sanday appears to think—a loss not merely of the Protestant doctrine of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, but with it of all that that doctrine is meant to express and safeguard—the loss of the Bible itself to the plain Christian man for all practical uses, and the delivery of his conscience over to the tender mercies of his human instructors, whether ecclesiastical or scholastic. Dr. Briggs is more blunt and more explicit in his description of the changes which he thinks have been wrought. “I will tell you what criticism has destroyed,” he says in an article published a couple of years ago. “It has destroyed many false theories about the Bible; it has destroyed the doctrine of verbal inspiration; it has destroyed the theory of inerrancy; it has destroyed the false doctrine that makes the inspiration depend upon its attachment to a holy man.”\* And he goes on to remark further “that Biblical criticism is at the bottom” of the “reconstruction that is going on throughout the Church”—“the demand for revision of creeds and change in methods of worship and Christian work.” It is clear enough, then, that a problem has been raised with reference to inspiration by this type of criticism. But this is not equivalent to saying that the established doctrine of inspiration has been put in jeopardy. For there is criticism and criticism. And though it may not be unnatural for these scholars themselves to confound the claims of criticism with the validity of their own critical methods and the soundness of their own critical conclusions, the Christian world can scarcely be expected to acquiesce in the identification. It has all along been pointing out that they were traveling on the wrong road; and now when their conclusions clash with well-established facts, we simply note that the wrong road has not unnaturally led them to the wrong goal. In a word, it is not the established doctrine of inspiration that is brought into distress by the conflict, but the school of Old Testament criticism which is at present fashionable. It is now admitted that the inevitable issue of this type of criticism comes into collision with the established fact of the plenary inspiration of the Bible and the well-grounded Reformed doctrine of Holy Scripture based on this fact.† The cry is therefore, and somewhat impatiently, raised that

\* The article appeared in *The Christian Union*, but we quote it from *Public Opinion*, Vol. x, No. 24 (March 25, 1891), p. 576.

† This remark, of course, does not imply that there are none who assert that the results of this type of criticism leave “inspiration” untouched. Dr. Driver does not stand alone when he says, in the Preface to his *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*: “Criticism in the hands of Christian scholars does not banish or destroy the inspiration of the Old Testament; it *presupposes* it” (p. xix). But Prof. Driver would be the last to maintain that the “inspiration” which criticism leaves to the Old Testament is what the Church has understood by the plenary inspiration of the Bible. Accordingly, Prof. Robertson speaks

this fact and this doctrine must "get out of the way," and permit criticism to rush on to its bitter goal. But facts are somewhat stubborn things, and are sometimes found to prove rather the test of theories which seek to make them their sport.

Nevertheless, though the strain of the present problem should thus be thrown upon the shoulders to which it belongs, it is important to keep ourselves reminded that the doctrine of inspiration which has become established in the Church, is open to all legitimate criticism, and is to continue to be held only as, and so far as, it is ever anew critically tested and approved. And in view of the large bodies of real knowledge concerning the Bible which the labors of a generation of diligent critical study have accumulated, and of the difficulty which is always experienced in the assimilation of new knowledge and its correlation with previously ascertained truth, it is becoming to take this occasion to remind ourselves of the foundations on which this doctrine rests, with a view to inquiring whether it is really endangered by any assured results of recent Biblical study. For such an investigation we must start, of course, from a clear conception of what the Church doctrine of inspiration is, and of the basis on which it is held to be the truth of God. Only thus can we be in a position to judge how it can be affected on critical grounds, and whether modern Biblical criticism has reached any assured results which must or may "destroy" it.

The Church, then, has held from the beginning that the Bible is the Word of God in such a sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of His mind and will. It has always recognized that this conception of coauthorship implies that the Spirit's superintendence extends to the choice of the words by the human authors (verbal inspiration\*), and preserves its product from everything inconsistent with a divine authorship—thus securing, among other things, that entire truthfulness which is everywhere presupposed

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directly to the point when he remarks in the Preface to his *Early Religion of Israel* (p. xi), that "such scholars would do an invaluable service to the Church, at the present time, if they would explain what they mean by inspiration in this connection." The efforts to do this, on our side of the water, are not reassuring. On the relation of the new views to inspiration see the lucid statement by Dr. E. C. Bissell in *The Hartford Seminary Record*, ii, 1.

\* It ought to be unnecessary to protest again against the habit of representing the advocates of "verbal inspiration" as teaching that the mode of inspiration was by dictation. The matter is fully explained in the paper: *Inspiration*. By Profs. A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1881, pp. 19 sq.

in and asserted for Scripture by the Biblical writers (inerrancy). Whatever minor variations may now and again have entered into the mode of statement, this has always been the core of the Church doctrine of inspiration. And along with many other modes of commending and defending it, the primary ground on which it has been held by the Church as the true doctrine is that it is the doctrine of the Biblical writers themselves, and has therefore the whole mass of evidence for it which goes to show that the Biblical writers are trustworthy as doctrinal guides. It is the testimony of the Bible itself to its own origin and character as the Oracles of the Most High, that has led the Church to her acceptance of it as such, and to her dependence on it not only for her doctrine of Scripture, but for the whole body of her doctrinal teaching, which is looked upon by her as divine because drawn from this divinely given fountain of truth.

Now if this doctrine is to be assailed on critical grounds, it is very clear that, first of all, criticism must be required to proceed against the evidence on which it is based. This evidence, it is obvious, is twofold. First, there is the exegetical evidence that the doctrine held and taught by the Church is the doctrine held and taught by the Biblical writers themselves. And secondly, there is the whole mass of evidence—internal and external, objective and subjective, historical and philosophical, human and divine—which goes to show that the Biblical writers are trustworthy as doctrinal guides. If they are trustworthy teachers of doctrine and if they held and taught this doctrine, then this doctrine is true, and is to be accepted and acted upon as true by us all. In that case, any objections brought against the doctrine from other spheres of inquiry are inoperative; it being a settled logical principle that so long as the proper evidence by which a proposition is established remains unrefuted, all so-called objections brought against it pass out of the category of objections to its truth into the category of difficulties to be adjusted to it. If criticism is to assail this doctrine, therefore, it must proceed against and fairly overcome one or the other element of its proper proof. It must either show that this doctrine is not the doctrine of the Biblical writers, or else it must show that the Biblical writers are not trustworthy as doctrinal guides. If a fair criticism evinces that this is not the doctrine of the Biblical writers, then of course it has "destroyed" the doctrine which is confessedly based on that supposition. Failing in this, however, it can "destroy" the doctrine, strictly speaking, only by undermining its foundation in our confidence in the trustworthiness of Scripture as a witness to doctrine. The possibility of this latter alternative must, no doubt, be firmly faced in our investigation of

the phenomena of the Bible; but the weight of the evidence, be it small or great, for the general trustworthiness of the Bible as a source of doctrine, throws itself, in the form of a presumption, against the reality of any phenomena alleged to be discovered which make against its testimony. No doubt this presumption may be overcome by clear demonstration. But clear demonstration is requisite. For, certainly, if it is critically established that what is sometimes called, not without a touch of scorn, "the traditional doctrine," is just the Bible's own doctrine of inspiration, the real conflict is no longer with "the traditional theory of inspiration," but with the credibility of the Bible. The really decisive question among Christian scholars (among whom alone, it would seem, could a question of inspiration be profitably discussed), is thus seen to be, "What does an exact and scientific exegesis determine to be the Biblical doctrine of inspiration?"

#### THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION CLEAR.

The reply to this question is, however, scarcely open to doubt. The stricter and the more scientific the examination is made, the more certain does it become that the authors of the New Testament held a doctrine of inspiration quite as high as the Church doctrine. This may be said, indeed, to be generally admitted by untrammelled critics, whether of positive or of negative tendencies. Thus, for instance—to confine our examples to a few of those who are not able personally to accept the doctrine of the New Testament writers—Archdeacon Farrar is able to admit that Paul "shared, doubtless, in the views of the later Jewish schools—the Tanaim and Amoraim—on the nature of inspiration. These views . . . made the words of Scripture coextensive and identical with the words of God."\* So also Otto Pfeleiderer allows that Paul "fully shared the assumption of his opponents, the irrefragable authority of the letter as the immediately revealed Word of God."† Similarly, Tholuck recognizes that the application of the Old Testament made by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "rests on the strictest view of inspiration, since passages where God is not the speaker are cited as words of God or of the Holy Ghost (i. 6, 7, 8, iv. 4, 7, vii. 21, iii. 7, x. 15)."‡ This fact is worked out also with convincing clearness by the writer of an odd and sufficiently free Scotch book published a few years ago,§ who formulates his conclusion in the words: "There is no doubt that the author of Hebrews, in common

\* *Life of Paul*, i, 49.

† *Paulinism*, i, 88.

‡ "Old Testament in the New," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, xi, 612.

§ *Principles of Christianity*, by James Stuart (1838), p. 346.

with the other New Testament writers, regards the whole Old Testament as having been dictated by the Holy Ghost, or, as we should say, plenarily, and, as it were, mechanically inspired." And more recently still Prof. Stapfer, of Paris,\* though himself denying the reality not only of an infallibility for the Bible, but also of any inspiration for it at all, declaring that "the doctrine of an Inspiration distinct from Revelation and legitimating it, is an error"—yet cannot deny that Paul held a different doctrine—a doctrine which made the Old Testament to him the divine Word and the term, "It is written," equivalent to "God says."†

A detailed statement of the evidence is scarcely needed to support a position allowed by such general consent. But it will not be improper to adjoin a brief outline of the grounds on which the general consent rests. In the circumstances, however, we may venture to dispense with an argument drawn up from our own point of view,‡ and content ourselves with an extract from the brief statement of the grounds of his decision given by another of those critical scholars who do not believe the doctrine of plenary inspiration, but yet find themselves constrained to allow that it is the doctrine of the New Testament writers. Richard Rothe § seeks, wrongly, to separate Christ's doctrine of the Old Testament from that of the apostles; our Lord obviously spoke of the Scriptures of His people out of the same fundamental conception of their nature and divinity as His apostles. But he more satisfactorily outlines the doctrine of the apostles as follows :

"We find in the New Testament authors the same theoretical view of the Old Testament and the same practice as to its use, as among the Jews of the time in general, although at the same time in the handling of the same conceptions and principles on both sides, the whole difference between the new Christian spirit and that of contemporary Judaism appears in sharp distinctness. Our authors look upon the words of the Old Testament as *immediate* words of God, and adduce them expressly as such, even those of them which are not at all related as direct sayings of God. They see nothing at all in the sacred volume which is simply the word of its human author and not at the same time the very Word of God Himself. In all that stands 'written' God Himself speaks to them, and so en-

\* *Séance de Rentrée des Cours de la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Paris, le Mardi 3 Novembre, 1891. Leçon d'Ouverture de M. le Prof. Edm. Stapfer.* Paris : Fischbacher, 1891. Pp. 26, 42.

† Compare also Kuenen, *Prophets*, p. 449; Reuss, *History of Christian Theology in the Apostolic Age*, i, p. 352 sq.; Riehm, *Der Lehrbegr. des Hebräerbriefes*, i, pp. 173, 177, etc.

‡ Those who wish to see a very conclusive and thorough statement of Paul's doctrine of inspiration should consult Dr. Purves's paper on "St. Paul and Inspiration," published in our January number. For our Lord's doctrine, see Dr. Caven's paper on "Our Lord's Testimony to the Old Testament," in the number of the REVIEW for July, 1892.

§ *Zur Dogmatik*, p. 177 sq.

tirely are they habituated to think only of this that they receive the sacred Word written itself, as such, as God's Word, and hear God speaking in it *immediately*, without any thought of the human persons who appear in it as speaking and acting. The *historical* conception of their Bible is altogether foreign to them. Therefore they cite the abstract *ἡ γραφή* or *αἱ γραφαί* or *γραφαὶ ἀγία* (Rom. i. 2), or again *τὰ ἱερὰ γράμματα* (2 Tim. iii. 15), without naming any special author, as self-evidently God's Word, *e. g.*, John vii. 30, x. 35, xix. 36, 37, xx. 9; Acts i. 16; James ii. 8; Rom. ix. 17; Gal. iii. 8-22, iv. 30; 1 Pet. ii. 6; 2 Pet. i. 20, etc.; and introduce Old Testament citations with the formulas, now that God (Matt. i. 22, ii. 15; Acts iv. 25, xiii. 34; Rom. i. 2), now that the Holy Spirit (Acts i. 16, xxviii. 25; Heb. iii. 7, ix. 8, x. 15; cf. also Acts iv. 25; 1 Pet. i. 11; 2 Pet. i. 20) so speaks or has spoken. The Epistle to the Hebrews unhesitatingly adduces with a *ὁ θεὸς λέγει* and the like, even passages in which God is spoken of expressly in the third person (i. 6, 7, 8 *sq.*, iv. 4, 7, vii. 21, x. 30), and even (i. 10) cites a passage in which in the Old Testament text God Himself (according to the view of the author it is, however, the Son of God) is addressed, as a word spoken by God. In 2 Tim. iii. 16 the *ἱερὰ γράμματα* (verse 15) are expressly called *θεόπνευστα*, however the sentence may be construed or expounded; and however little a special theory of the inspiration of the Bible can be drawn from an expression of such breadth of meaning, nevertheless this *datum* avails to prove that the author shared in general the view of his Jewish contemporaries as to the peculiar character of the Old Testament books, and it is of especial importance inasmuch as it attributes the inspiration, without the least ambiguity, directly to the writings themselves, and not merely to their authors, the prophets. No doubt, in the teaching of the apostles the conception of prophetic inspiration to which it causally attributes the Old Testament, has not yet the sharp exactness of our ecclesiastical-dogmatic conception; but it stands, nevertheless, in a very express analogy with it. . . . Moreover, it must be allowed that the apostolical writers, although they nowhere say it expressly, refer the prophetic inspiration also to the *actus scribendi* of the Biblical authors. The whole style and method of their treatment of the Old Testament text manifestly presupposes in them this view of this matter, which was at the time the usual one in the Jewish schools. With Paul particularly this is wholly incontrovertibly the case. For only on that view could he, in such passages as Rom. iv. 23, 24, xv. 4; 1 Cor. ix. 10, x. 11—in which he distinguishes between the occurrence of the Old Testament facts and the recording of them—maintain of the latter that it was done with express teleological reference to the needs of the New Testament believers, at least so far as the selection of the matter to be described is concerned; and only on that view could he argue on the details of the letter of the Old Testament Scriptures, as he does in Gal. iii. 15, 16. We can, moreover, trace the continuance of this view in the oldest post-apostolical Church. . . . So far as the Old Testament is concerned, our ecclesiastical-dogmatic doctrine of inspiration can, therefore, in very fact, appeal to the authority, not indeed of the Redeemer Himself—for He stands in an entirely neutral attitude towards it—but no doubt of the apostles."

A keen controversialist like Rothe does not fail, of course—as the reader has no doubt observed—to accompany his exposition of the apostolic doctrine with many turns of expression designed to lessen its authority in the eyes of the reader, and to prepare the way for his own refusal to be bound by it; but neither does he fail to make it clear that this doctrine, although it is unacceptable to him, is the apostles' doctrine. The apostles' *doctrine*, let it be observed that

we say. For even so bald a statement as Rothe's will suffice to uncover the fallacy of the assertion, which is so often made, that the doctrine of verbal inspiration is based on a few isolated statements of Scripture to the neglect, if not to the outrage, of its phenomena—a form of remark into which even so sober a writer as Dr. W. G. Blaikie has lately permitted himself to fall.\* Nothing, obviously, could be more opposite to the fact. The doctrine of verbal inspiration is based on the broad foundation of the carefully ascertained *doctrine* of the Scripture writers on the subject. It is a product of Biblical Theology. And if men will really ask, not, "What do the creeds teach? What do the theologians say? What is the authority of the Church? but, What does the Bible itself teach us?" and "fencing off from the Scriptures all the speculations, all the dogmatic elaborations, all the doctrinal adaptations that have been made in the history of doctrine in the Church," "limit themselves strictly to the theology of the Bible itself"—according to the excellent programme outlined by Dr. Briggs †—it is to the doctrine of verbal inspiration, as we have seen, that they must come. It is not Biblical criticism that has "destroyed" verbal inspiration, but Dr. Briggs' scholastic theories that have drawn him away in this matter from the pure deliverances of Biblical Theology.‡

Much more, of course, does such a statement as even Rothe's uncover the even deeper error of the assertion latterly becoming much too common, that, the doctrine of verbal inspiration, as a recent writer puts it,§ "is based wholly upon an *a priori* assumption of what inspiration *must be*, and not upon the Bible as it actually exists." It is based wholly upon an exegetical fact. It is based on the exegetical fact that our Lord and His apostles held this doctrine of Scripture, and everywhere deal with the Scriptures of the Old Testament in accordance with it, as the very Word of God, even in their narrative parts. This is a commonplace of exegetical science, the common possession of the critical schools of the left and of the right, a prominent and unmistakable deliverance of Biblical Theology. And on the establishment of it as such, the real issue is brought out plainly and stringently. If criticism has made such discoveries as to necessitate the abandonment of the doctrine of plenary inspiration, it is not

\* *Letter to the Rev. Andrew A. Bonar, D.D.*, etc. Edinburgh, 1890.

† *The Edward Robinson Chair of Biblical Theology in the Union Theological Seminary, New York* (1891), pp. 5, 6.

‡ The substance of some of the preceding paragraphs was printed in *The Homiletical Review* for May, 1891, under the title of "The Present Problem of Inspiration."

§ *Exegesis*. An Address delivered at the Opening of the Autumn Term of Union Theological Seminary, September 24, 1891. By Marvin R. Vincent, D.D., Professor of Sacred Literature. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1891. P. 40.

enough to say that we are compelled to abandon only a "particular theory of inspiration," though that is true enough. We must go on to say that that "particular theory of inspiration" is the theory of the apostles and of the Lord, and that in abandoning *it* we are abandoning *them* as our doctrinal teachers and guides, as our "exegetes," in the deep and rich sense of that word which Dr. Vincent vindicates for it.\* This real issue is to be kept clearly before us, and faced courageously. Nothing is gained by closing our eyes to the seriousness of the problem which we are confronting. Stated plainly it is just this: Are the New Testament writers trustworthy guides in doctrine? Or are we at liberty to reject their authority, and frame contrary doctrines for ourselves? If the latter pathway be taken, certainly the doctrine of plenary inspiration is not the only doctrine that is "destroyed," and the labor of revising our creeds may as well be saved and the shorter process adopted of simply throwing them away. No wonder we are told that the same advance in knowledge which requires a changed view of the Bible necessitates also a whole new theology. If the New Testament writers are not trustworthy as teachers of doctrine and we have to go elsewhere for the source and norm of truth as to God and duty and immortality, it will not be strange if a very different system of doctrine from that delivered by the Scriptures and docilely received from them by the Church, results.

And now, having uncovered the precise issue which is involved in the real problem of inspiration, let us look at it at various angles and thus emphasize in turn two or three of the more important results that spring from it.

## I.

### MODIFICATIONS OF THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE UNDERMINE THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.

First, we emphasize the fact that, this being the real state of the case, we cannot modify the doctrine of plenary inspiration in any of its essential elements without undermining our confidence in the authority of the apostles as teachers of doctrine.

Logically, this is an immediate corollary of the proposition already made good. Historically, it is attested by the driftage of every school of thought which has sought to find a ground of faith in any lower than the Church's doctrine of a plenary inspired Bible. The authority which cannot assure of a hard fact is soon not trusted for a hard doctrine. Sooner or later, in greater or less

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 5 sq.

degree, the authority of the Bible in doctrine and life is replaced by or subordinated to that of reason, or of the feelings, or of the "Christian consciousness"—the "conscious experience by the individual of the Christian faith"—or of that corporate Christian consciousness which so easily hardens into simple ecclesiastical domination. What we are to accept as the truth of God is a comparatively easy question, if we can open our Bibles with the confident belief that what we read there is commended to us by a fully credible "Thus saith the Lord." But in proportion as we allow this or that element in it not to be safeguarded to us by this divine guarantee, do we begin to doubt the trustworthiness of more and more of the message delivered, and to seek other grounds of confidence than the simple "It is written" which sufficed for the needs of our Lord and His apostles. We have seen Dr. Sanday pointing to "the advancing consciousness of the Church at large," along with the consensus of scholars, as the ground of acceptance of doctrines as true, which will be more and more turned to when men can no longer approach the Bible so simply as heretofore. This is the natural direction in which to look, for men trained to lay that great stress on institutional Christianity which leads Mr. Gore to describe the present situation as one in which "it is becoming more and more difficult to believe in the Bible without believing in the Church."\* Accordingly Dr. Sterrett also harmonizes his Hegelianism and Churchliness in finding the ground of Christian certitude in the "communal Christian consciousness," which is defined as the Church, as "objective, authoritative reason for every Christian," to which he must subordinate his individual reason.† Men of more individualistic training fall back rather on personal reason or the individual "Christian consciousness;" but all alike retire the Bible as a source of doctrine behind some other safeguard of truth.

It may not be without interest or value to subject the various pathways which men tread in seeking to justify a lower view of Scripture than that held and taught by the New Testament writers, to a somewhat close scrutiny, with a view to observing how necessarily they logically involve a gradual undermining of the trustworthiness of those writers as teachers of doctrine. From the purely formal point of view proper to our present purpose, four types of procedure may be recognized.

\* *Lux Mundi*. American Ed. New York: John W. Lovell Co. P. 283.

† *Reason and Authority in Religion*. By J. MacBride Sterrett, D.D., Professor in Seabury Divinity School. New York: T. Whittaker, 1891. P. 176.

## CHRIST VERSUS THE APOSTLES.

1. There is first, that, of which Richard Rothe is an example, which proceeds by attempting to establish a distinction between the teaching of Christ and the teaching of His apostles, and refusing the latter in favor of the former.

As we have already remarked, this distinction cannot be made good. Rothe's attempt to establish it proceeds on the twofold ground, on the one hand, of an asserted absence from our Lord's dealings with the Scriptures of those extreme facts of usage of it as the Word of God, and of those extreme statements concerning its divine character, on the ground of which in the apostles' dealing with it we must recognize their high doctrine of Scripture; and on the other hand, of an asserted presence in Christ's remarks concerning Scripture of hints that He did not share the conception of Scripture belonging to contemporary Judaism, which conception we know to have been the same high doctrine that was held by the apostles. He infers, therefore, that the apostles, in this matter, represent only the current Jewish thought in which they were bred, while Christ's divine originality breaks away from this and commends to us a new and more liberal way.

But in order to make out the first member of the twofold ground on which he bases this conclusion, Rothe has to proceed by explaining away, by means of artificial exegetical expedients, a number of facts of usage and deliverances as to Scripture, in which our Lord's dealings with Scripture culminate, and which are altogether similar in character and force to those on the basis of which he infers the apostles' high doctrine. These are such passages as the quotation in Matt. xix. 4, 5, of Adam's words as God's Word, which Lechler appeals to as decisive just as Rothe appeals to similar passages in the epistles—but which Rothe sets aside in a footnote simply with the remark that it is not decisive here; the assertion in John x. 35, that the "Scripture cannot be broken," which he sets aside as probably not a statement of Christ's own opinion but an *argumentum ad hominem*, and as in any case not available here, since it does not explicitly assert that the authority it ascribes to Scripture is due "to its origination by inspiration"—but which, as Dr. Robert Watts has shown anew,\* is conclusive for our Saviour's view of the

\* *Faith and Inspiration*. The Carey Lectures for 1884. By Robert Watts, D.D. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1885. P. 139. "The sole question is: What, according to the language employed by Him, was His estimate of the Old Testament Scripture? It will be observed that He does not single out the passage on which He bases His argument, and testify of it that it is unbreakable, making its infallibility depend on His authority. Stated formally, His argument is as follows: *Major*—The Scripture cannot be broken. *Minor*—'I said ye are

entire infallibility of the whole Old Testament; the assertion in Matt. v. 18 (and in Luke xvi. 17) that not "one jot or one tittle (*ἰῶτα ἢ ἓν μίαν κεραία*) shall pass away from the law till all be fulfilled," which he sets aside with the remark that it is not the law-codex, but the law itself, that is here spoken of, forgetful of the fact that it is the law itself *as written* that the Lord has in mind, in which form alone, moreover, do "yodhs and horns" belong to it; the assertion in Matt. xxii. 43, that it was "in the Spirit" that David called the Messiah, "Lord," in the one hundredth and tenth Psalm, which he sets aside with the remark that this does prove that Jesus looked upon David as a prophet, but not necessarily that he considered the one hundred and tenth Psalm inspired, as indeed he does not say *γράφει*, but *ἔαλει*—forgetful again that it is to the written David alone that Christ makes His appeal and on the very language written in the Psalm that He founds His argument.

No less, in order to make out the second member of the ground on which he bases his conclusion, does Rothe need to press passages which have as their whole intent and effect to rebuke the scribes for failure to understand and properly to use Scripture, into indications of rejection on Christ's part of the authority of the Scriptures to which both He and the scribes appealed. Lest it should be thought incredible that such a conclusion should be drawn from such premises, we transcribe Rothe's whole statement.

"On the other hand, we conclude with great probability that the Redeemer did *not* share the conception of His Israelitish contemporaries as to the inspiration of their Bible, as stated above, from the fact that He repeatedly expresses his dissatisfaction with the manner usual among them of looking upon and using the sacred books. He tells the scribes to their face that they do not understand the Scriptures (Matt. xxii. 29; Mark xii. 24), and that it is delusion for them to think to possess eternal life in *them*, therefore in a *book* (John v. 39), even as He also (in the same place) seems to speak disapprovingly of their searching of the Scriptures, because it proceeds from such a perverted point of view." \*

Thus Jesus' *appeal* to the Scriptures as testifying to Him, and His rebuke to the Jews for not following them while professing to honor them, are made to do duty as a proof that He did not ascribe ple-nary authority to them.†

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God's,' is written in your law, which is Scripture. *Conclusion*—'I said ye are God's' cannot be broken. . . . He argues the infallibility of the clause on which He founds His argument from the infallibility of the record in which it occurs. According to His infallible estimate, it was sufficient proof of the infallibility of any sentence or phrase of a clause, to show that it constituted a portion of what the Jews called 'the Scripture' (*ἡ γραφή*)."

\* *Zur Dogmatik*, p. 177.

† Compare Meyer, *in loc.* (E. T., i, p. 262, note): "Even Rothe . . . takes *δοξεῖτε* in the sense of a *delusion*, namely, that they possessed eternal *life* in a *book*. Such explanations are opposed to the high veneration manifested by Jesus towards the Holy Scriptures, especially apparent in John. . . ."

Furthermore, Rothe's whole treatment of the matter omits altogether to make account of the great decisive consideration of the general tone and manner of Christ's allusions and appeal to the Scriptures, which only culminate in such passages as he has attempted to explain away, and which not only are inconsistent with any other than the same high view of their authority, trustworthiness and inspiration, as that which Rothe infers from similar phenomena to have been the conception of the apostles, but also are necessarily founded on it as its natural expression. The distinction attempted to be drawn between Christ's doctrine of Holy Scripture and that of His apostles is certainly inconsistent with the facts.

But we are more concerned at present to point out that the attempt to draw this distinction must result in undermining utterly all confidence in the New Testament writers as teachers of doctrine. So far as the apostles are concerned, indeed, it would be more correct to say that it is the outgrowth and manifestation of an already present distrust of them as teachers of doctrine. Its very principle is appeal from apostolic teaching to that of Christ, on the ground that the former is not authoritative. How far this rejection of apostolic authority goes is evidenced by the mode of treatment vouchsafed to it. Immediately on drawing out the apostles' doctrine of inspiration, Rothe asks, "But now what dogmatic value has this fact?" And on the ground that "by their fruits ye shall know them," he proceeds to declare that the apostles' doctrine of Scripture led them into such a general use and mode of interpretation of Scripture as Rothe deems wholly unendurable.\* It is not, then, merely the teaching of the apostles as to what the Scriptures are, but their teaching as to what those Scriptures teach, in which Rothe finds them untrustworthy. It would be impossible but that the canker should eat still more deeply.

Nor is it possible to prevent it from spreading to the undermining of the trustworthiness of even the Lord's teaching itself, for the magnifying of which the distinction purports to be drawn. The artificial manner in which the testimony of the Lord to the authority of the Scriptures is explained away in the attempt to establish the distinction, might be pleaded indeed as an indication that trust in it was not very deeply rooted. And there are other indications that had the Lord been explained to be of the apostles' mind as to Scripture, a way would have been found to free us from the duty of following His teaching.† For even *His* exegesis is declared not to be authoritative, seeing that "exegesis is essentially a scientific function, and conditioned on the existence of scientific means, which in relation to the Old Testament were completely at the command

\* *Op. cit.*, pp. 181, 182.

† *Op. cit.*, pp. 174, 175.

of Jesus as little as of His contemporaries ;” and the principle of partial limitation at least to the outlook of His day which is involved in such a statement is fully accepted by Rothe.\* All this may, however, be thought more or less personal to Rothe’s own mental attitude, whereas the ultimate undermining of our Lord’s authority as teacher of doctrine, as well as that of His apostles, is logically essential to the position assumed.

This may be made plain at once by the very obvious remark that we have no Christ except the one whom the apostles have given to us. Jesus Himself left no treatises on doctrine. He left no written dialogues. We are dependent on the apostles for our whole knowledge of Him, and of what He taught. The portraiture of Jesus which has glorified the world’s literature as well as blessed all ages and races with the revelation of a God-man come down from heaven to save the world, is limned by his followers’ pencils alone. The record of that teaching which fell from His lips as living water, which if a man drink of he shall never thirst again, is a record by his followers’ pens alone. They have painted for us, of course, the Jesus that they knew, and as they knew Him. They have recorded for us the teachings that they heard, and as they heard them. Whatever untrustworthiness attaches to them as deliverers of doctrine, must in some measure shake also our confidence in their report of what their Master was and taught.

But the logic cuts even deeper. For not only have we no Christ but Him whom we receive at the apostles’ hands, but this Christ is committed to the trustworthiness of the apostles as teachers. His credit is involved in their credit. He represents His words on earth as but the foundation of one great temple of doctrine, the edifice of which was to be built up by Him through their mouths, as they spoke moved by His Spirit ; and thus He makes Himself an accomplice before the fact in all they taught. In proportion as they are discredited as doctrinal guides, in that proportion He is discredited with them. By the promise of the Spirit, He has forever bound His

\* Even on an extreme Kenotic view, it is, however, not so certain that *error* should be attributed to the God-man. Prof. Gretillat, of Neuchatel, a Kenotist of the type of Gess and his own colleague Godet, is able to teach that “by reason of the relation which unites the intelligence with the will,” our Lord must needs be free not only from sin, but also from all error (*Exposé de Theol. Syst.*, iv, 288). Tholuck occupied a position similar to Rothe’s ; yet he reminds us that : “Proofs might be brought to show that, even in questions pertaining to learned exegesis”—which are such as our Lord needed to *learn* as a man—“such as those concerning the historical connection of a passage, the author and age of a book, an original spiritual discernment without the culture of the schools may often divine the truth” (*Citations of the Old Testament in the New*, Tr. in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, xi, p. 615).

trustworthiness with indissoluble bands to the trustworthiness of His accredited agents in founding His Church, and especially by that great promise recorded for us in John xvi. 12-18: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine and shall show it unto you." Says Dr. C. W. Hodge:\*

"It is impossible to conceive how the authority of the Master could be conveyed to the teaching of the disciples more emphatically than is here done by Christ. He identifies His teaching and the teaching of the Spirit as parts of one whole; His teaching is carrying out My teaching, it is calling to remembrance what I have told you; it is completing what I have begun. And to make the unity emphatic, He explains why He had reserved so much of His own teaching, and committed the work of revelation to the Spirit. He, in His incarnation and life, comprised all saving truth. He was the revealer of God and the truth and the life. But while some things He had taught while yet with them, He had many things to say which must be postponed because they could not yet bear them. . . . If Christ has referred us to the apostles as teachers of the truths which He would have us know, certainly this primary truth of the authority of the Scriptures themselves can be no exception. All questions as to the extent of this inspiration, as to its exclusive authority, as to whether it extends to words as well as doctrines, as to whether it is infallible or inerrant, or not, are simply questions to be referred to the Word itself."

In such circumstances the attempt to discriminate against the teaching of the apostles in favor of that of Christ, is to contradict the express teaching of Christ Himself, and thus to undermine our confidence in it. We cannot both believe Him and not believe Him. The cry, "Back to Christ!" away from all the imaginations of men's hearts and the cobweb theories which they have spun, must be ever the cry of every Christian heart. But the cry, "Back to Christ!" away from the teachings of His apostles, whose teachings He Himself represents as His own, only delivered by His Spirit through their mouths, is an invitation to desert Christ Himself. It is an invitation to draw back from the Christ of the Bible to some Christ of our own fancy, from the only real to some imaginary Christ. It is to undermine the credit of the whole historical revelation in and through the Christ of God, and to cast us for the ascertainment and authentication of truth on the native powers of our own minds.

\* Sermon on "The Promise of the Spirit," in the volume: *Princeton Sermons*. By the Faculty of the Seminary. New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1893. P. 33. The whole of this noble sermon should be read.

## ACCOMMODATION OR IGNORANCE?

2. Another method is that of those who seek to preserve themselves from the necessity of accepting the doctrine of inspiration held by the writers of the New Testament, by representing it as merely a matter of accommodation to the prejudices of the Jews, naturally if not necessarily adopted by the first preachers of the Gospel in their efforts to commend to their contemporaries their new teaching as to the way of life.

This position is quite baldly stated by a recent Scotch writer, to whose book, written with a frank boldness, a force and a logical acumen which are far above the common, too little heed has been paid as an indication of the drift of the times.\* Says Mr. James Stuart :

“The apostles had not merely to reveal the Gospel scheme of salvation to their own and all subsequent ages, but they had to present it in such a form, and support it by such arguments, as should commend it to their more immediate hearers and readers. Notwithstanding its essentially universal character, the Gospel, as it appears in the New Testament, is couched in a particular form, suited to the special circumstances of a particular age and nation. Before the Gospel could reach the hearts of those to whom it was first addressed, prejudices had to be overcome, prepossessions had to be counted on and dealt with. The apostles, in fact, had just to take the men of their time as they found them, adapting their teaching accordingly. Not only so, but there is evidence that the apostles were themselves, to a very great extent, men of their own time, sharing many of the common opinions and even the common prejudices, so that, in arguing *ex concessis*, they were arguing upon grounds that would appear to themselves just and tenable. Now one of the things universally conceded in apostolic times was the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament; another was the legitimacy of certain modes of interpreting and applying the Old Testament. The later Jews, as is well known, cherished a superstitious reverence and attached an overwhelming importance to the letter of the Old Testament, which they regarded as the ‘Word of God’ in the fullest and most absolute sense that can possibly be put upon such an expression. The doctors taught and the people believed that the sacred writings were not only inspired, but inspired to the utmost possible or conceivable extent. In the composition of Scripture, the human author was nowhere, and the inspiring Spirit everywhere; not the thoughts alone, but the very words of Scripture were the Word of God, which He communicated by the mouth of the human author, who merely discharged the duty of spokesman and amanuensis, so that what the Scripture contains is the Word of God in as complete and full a sense as if it had been dictated by the lips of God to the human authors, and recorded with something approaching to perfect accuracy. . . . Such being the prevalent view of the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament writings, what could be more natural than that the apostles should make use of these writings to enforce and commend their own ideas? And if the Old Testament were to be used for such a purpose at all, evidently it must be used according to the accepted methods; for to have fol-

\* *The Principles of Christianity*. Being an Essay towards a More Correct Apprehension of Christian Doctrine, Mainly Soteriological. By James Stuart, M.A. London: Williams & Norgate, 1888. P. 67 sq.

lowed any other—assuming the possibility of such a thing—would have defeated the object aimed at, which was to accommodate the Gospel to established prejudices.”

Now, here too, the first remark which needs to be made is that the assertion of “accommodation” on the part of the New Testament writers cannot be made good. To prove “accommodation,” two things need to be shown: first, that the apostles did not share these views, and, secondly, that they nevertheless accommodated their teaching to them. “Accommodation” properly so called cannot take place when the views in question are the proper views of the persons themselves. But even in the above extract Mr. Stuart is led to allow that the apostles shared the current Jewish view of the Scriptures, and at a later point\* he demonstrates this in an argument of singular lucidity, although in its course he exaggerates the character of their views in his effort to fix a stigma of mechanicalness on them. With what propriety, then, can he speak of “accommodation” in the case? The fact is that the theory of “accommodation” is presented by Mr. Stuart only to enable him the more easily to refuse to be bound by the apostolic teaching in this matter, and as such it has served him as a stepping stone by which he has attained to an even more drastic principle, on which he practically acts: that whenever the apostles can be shown to agree with their contemporaries, their teaching may be neglected. In such cases, he conceives of the New Testament writers “being inspired and guided by current opinion,”† and reasons thus: ‡

“Now it is unquestionable that the New Testament writers in so regarding the Old Testament were not enunciating a new theory of inspiration or interpretation, they were simply adopting and following out the current theory. . . . In matters of this kind . . . the New Testament writers were completely dominated by the spirit of the age, so that their testimony on the question of Scripture inspiration possesses no independent value.” “If these popular notions were infallibly correct before they were taken up and embodied in the New Testament writings, they are infallibly correct still; if they were incorrect before they were taken up and embodied in the New Testament writings, they are incorrect still.”§

This is certainly most remarkable argumentation, and the principle asserted is probably one of the most singular to which thinking men ever committed themselves, viz., that a body of religious teachers, claiming authority for themselves as such, are trustworthy *only* when they teach *novelties*. It is the apotheosis of the old Athenian and new modern spirit, which has leisure and

\* P. 345 *sq.*

† P. 213.

‡ Pp. 348, 349.

§ P. 70. The immediate reference of these last words is to matters of criticism and exegesis; but according to the contextual connection they would also be used of matters of inspiration.

heart "for nothing else but either to tell or hear some new thing." Nevertheless, it is a principle far from uncommon among those who are seeking justification for themselves in refusing the leadership of the New Testament writers in the matter of the authority and inspiration of the Scriptures. And, of late, it is, of course, taking upon itself in certain quarters a new form, the form imposed by the new view of the origin of Christian thought in Hellenic sources, which has been given such vogue by Dr. Harnack and rendered popular in English-speaking lands by the writings of the late Dr. Hatch. For example, we find it expressed in this form in the recent valuable studies on the First Epistle of Clement of Rome, by Lic. Wrede.\* Clement's views of the Old Testament Scriptures are recognized as of the highest order; he looks upon them as a marvelous and infallible book whose very letters are sacred, as a veritable oracle, the most precious possession of the Church. These high views were shared by the whole Church of his day, and, indeed, of the previous age: "The view which Clement has of the Old Testament, and the use which he makes of it, show in themselves no essential peculiarities in comparison with the most nearly related Christian writings, especially the Pauline epistles, the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Epistle of Barnabas." And yet, according to Wrede, this view rests on "the Hellenistic conception of inspiration, according to which the individual writers were passive instruments of God." † Whether, however, the contemporary influence is thought to be Jewish or Greek, it is obvious that the appeal to it in such matters has, as its only intention, to free us from the duty of following the apostles and can have as its only effect to undermine their authority. We may no doubt suppose at the beginning that we seek only to separate the kernel from the husk; but a principle which makes husk of all that can be shown to have anything in common with what was believed by any body of contemporaries, Hebrew or Greek, is so very drastic that it will leave nothing which we can surely trust. On this principle the Golden Rule itself is not authoritative, because something like it may be found in Jewish tradition and among the heathen sages. It certainly will not serve to make novelty the test of authority.

From the ethical point of view, however, this theory is preferable to that of "accommodation," and it is probable that part, at least, of the impulse which led Mr. Stuart to substitute it for the theory

\* *Untersuchungen zum ersten Klemensbriefe*. Von Lic. Theol. W. Wrede, Privatdocent der Theologie in Göttingen. Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht's Verlag, 1891. Pp. 60, 75 sq.

† Compare the review of Wrede by Prof. H. M. Scott, in this REVIEW, January, 1893, p. 163.

of "accommodation," with which he began, arose from a more or less clear perception of the moral implications of the theory of "accommodation." Under the impulse of that theory he had been led to speak of the procedure of the apostles in such language as this: "The sole principle that regulates all their appeals to the Old Testament, is that of obtaining, at whatever cost, support for their own favorite ideas."\* Is it any wonder that the reaction took place and an attempt was made to shift the burden from the *veracity* to the *knowledge* of the New Testament writers? † In Mr. Stuart's case we see very clearly, then, the effect of a doctrine of "accommodation" on the credit of the New Testament writers. His whole book is written in order to assign reason why he will not yield authority to these writers in their doctrine of a sacrificial atonement. This was due to their Jewish type of thought. But when the doctrine of accommodation is tried as a ground for the rejection of their authority, it is found to cut too deeply even for Mr. Stuart. He wishes to be rid of the authority of the New Testament writers, not to impeach their veracity; and so he discards it in favor of the less plausible, indeed, but also less deeply cutting canon, that the apostles are not to be followed when they agree with contemporary thought, because in these elements they are obviously speaking out of their own consciousness, as the products of their day, and not as proclaimers of the *new* revelation in Christ. Their inspiration, in a word, "was not *plenary* or *universal*—extending, that is, to all matters whatever which they speak about—but *partial* or *special*, being limited to securing the accurate communication of that plan of salvation which they had so profoundly experienced, and which they were commissioned to proclaim."‡ In all else "the New Testament writers are simply on a level with their contemporaries." It may not be uninteresting to note that under such a formula Mr. Stuart not only rejects the teachings of these writers as to the nature and extent of inspiration, but also their teaching as to the sacrificial nature of the very plan of salvation which they were specially commissioned to proclaim. But what it is our business at present to point out is that the doctrine of accommodation is so obviously a blow at not only the trustworthiness, but the very veracity of the New Testament authors, that Mr. Stuart, even after asserting it, is led to permit it to fall into neglect.

And must it not be so? It may be easy indeed to confuse it with that progressive method of teaching which every wise teacher uses, and which our Lord also employed (John xvi. 12 *sq.*); it may be easy to represent it as nothing more than that harmless wisdom which the apostle proclaimed as the principle of his life, as he went about

\* P. 66.

† P. 353.

‡ P. 258.

the world becoming all things to all men. But how different it is from either! It is one thing to adapt the teaching of truth to the stage of receptivity of the learner; it is another thing to adopt the errors of the time as the very matter to be taught. It is one thing to refrain from unnecessarily arousing the prejudices of the learner, that more ready entrance may be found for the truth; it is another thing to adopt those prejudices as our own, and to inculcate them as the very truths of God. It was one thing for Paul to become "all things to all men" that he might gain them to the truth; it was another for Peter to dissemble at Antioch, and so confirm men in their error. The accommodation attributed to the New Testament writers is a method by which they did and do not undeceive but deceive; not a method by which they teach the truth more winningly and to more; but a method by which they may be held to have taught along with the truth also error. The very object of attributing it to them is to enable us to separate their teaching into two parts—the true and the false; and to justify us in refusing a part while accepting a part at their hands. At the best it must so undermine the trustworthiness of the apostles as deliverers of doctrine as to subject their whole teaching to our judgment for the separation of the true from the false; at the worst, it must destroy their trustworthiness by destroying our confidence in their veracity. Mr. Stuart chose the better path; but he did so, as all who follow him must, by deserting the principle of accommodation, which leads itself along the worse road. With it as a starting point we must impeach the New Testament writers as lacking either knowledge or veracity.

#### TEACHING VERSUS OPINION.

3. A third type of procedure, in defense of refusal to be bound by the doctrine of the New Testament writers as to inspiration, proceeds by drawing a distinction between the belief and the teaching of these writers; and affirming that, although it is true that they did believe and hold a high doctrine of inspiration, yet they do not explicitly teach it, and that we are bound, not by their opinions, but only by their explicit teaching.

This appears to be the conception which underlies the treatment of the matter by Archdeacon (then Canon) Farrar, in his *Life and Work of St. Paul*. Speaking of Paul's attitude towards Scripture, Dr. Farrar says: \*

"He shared, doubtless, in the views of the later Jewish schools—the Tanaim and Amoraim—on the nature of inspiration. These views, which we find also in Philo, made the words of Scripture coextensive and identical with the words

\* *Op. cit.*, Vol. i, p. 49.

of God, and in the clumsy and feeble hands of the more fanatical Talmudists often attached to the dead letter an importance which stifled or destroyed the living sense. But as this extreme and mechanical literalism—this claim to absolute infallibility even in accidental details and passing allusions—this superstitious adoration of the letters and vocables of Scripture, as though they were the articulate vocables and immediate autograph of God—finds no encouragement in any part of Scripture, and very distinct discouragement in more than one of the utterances of Christ, so there is not a single passage in which any approach to it is dogmatically stated in the writings of St. Paul.”

This passage lacks somewhat more in point of clearness than it does in point of rhetorical fire. But three things seem to be sufficiently plain: (1) That Dr. Farrar thinks that Paul shared the views of the Tanaim, the Amoraim and Philo as to the nature of inspiration. (2) That he admits that these views claimed for Scripture “absolute infallibility even in accidental details and passing allusions.” (3) That nevertheless he does not feel bound to accept this doctrine at Paul’s hands, because, though Paul held it, he is thought not to have “dogmatically stated” it.

Now, the distinction which is here drawn seems, in general, a reasonable one. No one is likely to assert infallibility for the apostles in aught else than in their official teaching. And whatever they may be shown to have held apart from their official teaching, may readily be looked upon with only that respect which we certainly must accord to the opinions of men of such exceptional intellectual and spiritual insight. But it is more difficult to follow Dr. Farrar when it is asked whether this distinction can be established in the present matter. It does not seem to be true that there are no didactic statements as to inspiration in Paul’s letters, or in the rest of the New Testament, such as implicate and carry into the sphere of matters taught, the whole doctrine that underlies their treatment of Scripture. The assertion in the term “theopneustic” in such a passage as 2 Tim. iii. 16, for example, cannot be voided by any construction of the passage; and the doctrine taught in the assertion must be understood to be the doctrine which that term connoted to Paul who uses it, not some other doctrine read into it by us.

It is further necessary to inquire what sources we have in a case like that of Paul, to inform us as to what his opinions were, apart from and outside of his teachings. It might conceivably have happened that some of his contemporaries should have recorded for us some account of opinions held by him to which he has given no expression in his epistles; or some account of actions performed by him involving the manifestation of judgment—somewhat similar, say, to Paul’s own account of Peter’s conduct in Antioch (Gal. ii. 11 *sq.*). A presumption may be held to lie also that he shared the ordinary opinions of his day in certain matters lying outside the scope of his

teachings, as, for example, with reference to the form of the earth, or its relation to the sun; and it is not inconceivable that the form of his language, when incidentally adverting to such matters, might occasionally play into the hands of such a presumption. But it is neither on the ground of such a presumption, nor on the ground of such external testimony, that Dr. Farrar ascribes to him views as to inspiration similar to those of his Jewish contemporaries. It is distinctly on the ground of what he finds on a study of the body of official teaching which Paul has left to us. Dr. Farrar discovers that these views as to the nature of Scripture so underlie, are so assumed in, are so implied by, are so interwoven with Paul's official teaching that he is unwillingly driven to perceive that they were Paul's opinions. With what color of reason then can they be separated from his teaching?

There is raised here, moreover, a very important and far-reaching question, which few will be able to decide in Dr. Farrar's sense. What is taught in the New Testament? And what is the mode of its teaching? If we are to fall in with Dr. Farrar and say that nothing is taught except what is "dogmatically stated" in formal didactic form, the occasional character of the New Testament epistles would become a source of grave loss to us, instead of, as it otherwise is, a source of immense gain; the parabolic clothing of much of Christ's teaching would become a device to withhold from us all instruction on the matters of which the parables treat; and all that is most fundamental in religious truth, which, as a rule, is rather assumed everywhere in Scripture as a basis for particular applications than formally stated, would be removed out of the sphere of Biblical doctrine. Such a rule, in a word, would operate to turn the whole of Biblical teaching on its head, and to reduce it from a body of principles inculcated by means of examples into a mere congeries of instances hung in the air. The whole advance in the attitude of Dogmatics towards the Scriptures which has been made by modern scholarship is, moreover, endangered by this position. It was the fault of the older dogmatists to depend too much on isolated proof-texts for the framing and defense of doctrine. Dr. Farrar would have us return to this method. The alternative, commended justly to us by the whole body of modern scholarship, is, as Schleiermacher puts it, to seek "a form of Scripture proof on a larger scale than can be got from single texts," to build our systematic theology, in a word, on the basis, not of the occasional dogmatic statements of Scripture alone, taken separately and, as it were, in shreds, but on the basis of the theologies of the Scriptures—to reproduce first the theological thought of each writer or group of writers and then to combine these several theologies (each according

to its due historical place) into the one consistent system, consentaneous parts of which they are found to be.\* In rejecting this method, Dr. Farrar discredits the whole science of Biblical Theology. From its standpoint it is incredible that one should attribute less importance and authoritativeness to the fundamental conceptions that underlie, color and give form to all of Paul's teaching than to the chance didactic statements he may have been led to make by this or that circumstance at the call of which his letters happened to be written. This certainly would be tithing mint and anise and cummin and omitting the weightier matters of the law.

That this mode of presenting the matter must lead, no less than the others which have already come under review, to undermining the authority of the New Testament writers as deliverers of doctrine, must already be obvious. It begins by discrediting them as leaders in doctrinal thought and substituting for this a sporadic authority in explicit dogmatic statements. In Dr. Farrar's own hands it proceeds by quite undermining our confidence in the apostles as teachers, through an accusation lodged against them, not only of holding wrong views in doctrine, but even of cherishing as fundamental conceptions theological fancies which are in their very essence superstitious and idolatrous, and in their inevitable outcome ruinous to faith and honor. For Dr. Farrar does not mince matters when he expresses his opinion of that doctrine of inspiration—in its nature and its proper effects—which Philo held and the Jewish Rabbis and in which Paul, according to his expressed conviction, shared. "To say that every word and sentence and letter of Scripture is divine and supernatural, is a mechanical and useless shibboleth, nay, more, a human idol, and (constructively, at least) a dreadful blasphemy." It is a superstitious—he tells us that he had almost said fetish-worshiping—dogma, and "not only unintelligible, but profoundly dangerous." It "has in many ages filled the world with misery and ruin," and "has done more than any other dogma to corrupt the whole of exegesis with dishonest casuistry, and to shake to its centre the religious faith of thousands, alike of the most ignorant and of the most cultivated, in many centuries, and most of all in our own."† Yet these are the views which Dr. Farrar is forced to allow that Paul shared! For Philo "held the most rigid views of inspiration;" than him indeed "Aqiba himself used no stronger language on the

\* The present writer has tried to state the true relations of Systematic and Biblical theology in a discussion of *The Idea of Systematic Theology Considered as a Science* (Inaugural Address), pp. 22-28. A. D. F. Randolph & Co., 1888. He ventures to refer the reader to it.

† *Inspiration*. A Clerical Symposium. By the Rev. Archdeacon Farrar and others. London: James Nisbet and Co., 1888. 2d ed. Pp. 219, 241.

subject"\*—Aqiba, "the greatest of the Tanaites;"† and it was the views of the Tanaim, Amoraim and Philo, which Dr. Farrar tells us the apostle shared. How after this Dr. Farrar continues to look upon even the "dogmatic statements" of Paul as authoritative, it is hard to see. By construction he was a fetish worshiper and placed Scripture upon an idol's pedestal. The doctrines which he held and which underlie his teaching were unintelligible, useless, idolatrous, blasphemous and profoundly dangerous, and actually have shaken to its centre the religious faith of thousands. On such a tree what other than evil fruits could grow?

No doubt something of this may be attributed to the exaggeration characteristic of Dr. Farrar's language and thought. Obviously Paul's view of inspiration was not altogether identical with that of contemporary Judaism; it differed from it somewhat in the same way that his use of Scripture differed from that of the Rabbis of his day. But it is one with Philo's and Aqiba's on the point which with Dr. Farrar is decisive: alike with them he looked upon Scripture as "absolutely infallible, even in accidental details and passing allusions," as the very Word of God, His "Oracles," to use his own high phrase, and therefore Dr. Farrar treats the two views as essentially one. But the situation is only modified, not relieved, by the recognition of this fact.

In any event the pathway on which we enter when we begin to distinguish between the didactic statements and the fundamental conceptions of a body of incidental teaching, with a view to accepting the former and rejecting the latter, cannot but lead to a general undermining of the authority of the whole. Only if we could believe in a quite mechanical and magical process of inspiration (from believing in which Dr. Farrar is no doubt very far) by which the subject's "dogmatical statements" were kept entirely separate from and unaffected by his fundamental conceptions, could such an attitude be logically possible. In that case we should have to view these "dogmatical statements" as not Paul's at all, standing, as they do *ex hypothesi*, wholly disconnected with his own fundamental thought, but as spoken through him by an overmastering spiritual influence; as a phenomenon, in a word, similar to the oracles of heathen shrines, and without analogy in Scripture except perhaps in such cases as that of Balaam. In proportion as we draw back from so magical a conception of the mode of inspiration, in that proportion our refusal of authority to the fundamental conceptions of the New Testament writers must invade also their "dogmatical statements." We must logically, in a word, ascribe like authority to the whole

\* *History of Interpretation*. Bampton Lectures. By F. W. Farrar, D.D. London: Macmillan, 1880. P. 147.

† P. 71.

body of their teaching, in its foundation and superstructure alike, or we must withhold it in equal measure from all; or, if we withhold it from one and not the other, the discrimination would most naturally be made against the superstructure rather than against the foundation.

#### FACTS VERSUS DOCTRINE.

4. Finally, an effort may be made to justify our holding a lower doctrine of inspiration than that held by the writers of the New Testament, by appealing to the so-called phenomena of the Scriptures and opposing these to the doctrine of the Scriptures, with the expectation, apparently, of justifying a modification of the doctrine taught by the Scriptures by the facts embedded in the Scriptures.

The essential principle of this method of procedure is shared by very many who could scarcely be said to belong to the class who are here more specifically in mind, inasmuch as they do not begin by explicitly recognizing the doctrine of inspiration held by the New Testament writers to be that high doctrine which the Church and the best scientific exegesis agree in understanding them to teach.\* Every attempt to determine or modify the Biblical doc-

\* On the contrary these writers usually minimize the Biblical definition of inspiration. Thus Dr. Marvin R. Vincent, who is immediately to be quoted (op. c. p. 15), tells us "Scripture does not define the nature and extent of its own inspiration. The oft-quoted passage of 2 Tim. iii. 16 really gives us no light on that point. . . . The passage does indeed point out certain *effects* which attend the use of inspired writings. . . . But after all, we are no nearer than ever to an answer to the question, *What is inspiration?* . . . So that we must fall back on the facts, on the phenomena of the Bible as we have it." But the deck is not cleared by such remarks; after all, Paul does assert *something* by calling the Scriptures theopneustic, and what the thing is that he asserts in the use of this predicate, is not discoverable from an examination into what the Scriptures *are*, but only by an examination into what Paul *means*; but what *Paul understands* by theopneustic, Dr. Vincent makes no effort to investigate. This whole procedure is typical. Thus, for example, the Rev. J. Patterson Smyth, in his recent book, *How God Inspired the Bible* (p. 64), proceeds in an exactly similar manner. "Our theory of inspiration must be learned from the facts presented in the Bible, and in order to be correct it must be consistent with all these facts. . . . I want to find out what I can about inspiration. God has nowhere revealed to me exactly what it is. He has told me it is a divine influence, an in-breathing of the Holy Ghost on the spirit of the ancient writers. But I cannot tell how much that means or what effects I should expect from it. I have, therefore, no way of finding out except by examining the phenomena presented by the Bible itself." This method amounts simply to discarding the guidance of the doctrine of Scripture in favor of our own doctrine founded on our examination of the nature of Scripture. Mr. Smyth cannot close his eyes to certain outstanding facts on the surface of Scripture, indicative of the doctrine as to Scripture held by the Biblical writers (pp. 36 and 106), though he makes no effort to collect and estimate all such phenomena. And when he realizes that some may be affected even by his meagre statement of them so far as to say that "the strong

trine of inspiration by an appeal to the actual characteristics of the Bible must indeed proceed on an identical principle. It finds, perhaps, as plausible a form of assertion possible to it in the declaration of Dr. Marvin R. Vincent\* that "our only safe principle is that *inspiration is consistent with the phenomena of Scripture*"—to which one of skeptical turn might respond that whether *the inspiration claimed by Scripture* is consistent with the phenomena of Scripture after all requires some proof, while one of a more believing frame might respond that it is a safer principle that the phenomena of Scripture are consistent with its inspiration. Its crudest expression may be seen in such a book as Mr. Horton's *Inspiration and the Bible*, which we have already had occasion to mention. Mr. Horton chooses to retain the term, "inspiration," as representing "the *common sense* of Christians of all ages and in all places" as to the nature of their Scriptures,† but asserts that this term is to be understood to mean just what the Bible *is*—that is to say, whatever any given writer chooses to think the Bible to be. When Paul affirms in 2 Tim. iii. 16 that every Scripture is "inspired by God," therefore, we are not to enter into a philological and exegetical investigation to discover what Paul meant to affirm by the use of this word, but simply to say that Paul must have meant to affirm the Bible to be what we find it to be. Surely no way could be invented which would more easily enable us to substitute our thought for the apostles' thought, and to proclaim our crudities under the sanction of their great names. Operating by it, Mr. Horton is enabled to assert that the Bible is "inspired," and yet to teach that God's hand has entered it only in a providential way, by His dealings through long

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expressions just here quoted from some of the Bible writers, and even from our Lord Himself, convince me that the theory of verbal inspiration is most probably true," he has only such an answer as the following: "Well, reader, you will find a good many thoughtful people disagreeing with you. Why? Because, while fully receiving these arguments as a proof of God's inspiration of the Bible, they have looked a little further than the surface to judge how much God's inspiration implies, and they cannot believe from their examination of Scripture that it implies what is known as verbal inspiration" (p. 109). Mr. Smyth means by "verbal inspiration" the theory of mechanical dictation. But putting that aside as a man of straw, what it is difficult for us to understand is how "thoughtful people" can frame a theory of inspiration after only such shallow investigation of the Scriptural doctrine of inspiration, and how "thoughtful people" can assign their inability to believe a doctrine, an inability based on their own conception of what Scripture is, as any proof that that doctrine is not taught by the "strong expressions" of the Bible writers and the Lord Himself. Is it any more rationalistic to correct the Scriptural doctrine of the origin of the universe from our investigations of the nature of things, than it is to correct the Scriptural doctrine of inspiration from our investigations of the nature of Scripture?

\* *Mag. of Christian Lit.*, April, 1892.

† *Op. cit.*, p. 5.

ages with a people who gradually wrought out a history, conceived hopes, and brought all through natural means to an expression in a faulty and often self-contradictory record, which we call inspired only "because by reading it and studying it we can find our way to God, we can find what is His will for us and how we can carry out that will."\* The most naïve expression of the principle in question may be found in such a statement as the following, from the pen of Dr. W. G. Blaikie: "In our mode of dealing with this question the main difference between us is, that you lay your stress on certain general considerations, and on certain specific statements of Scripture. We, on the other hand, while accepting the specific statements, lay great stress also on the *structure* of Scripture as we find it, on certain phenomenon which lie on the surface, and on the inextricable difficulties which are involved in carrying out your view in detail."† This statement justly called out the rebuke of Dr. Robert Watts, ‡ that "while the principle of your theory is a mere inference from apparent discrepancies not as yet explained, the principle of the theory you oppose is the formally expressed utterances of prophets and apostles, and of Christ Himself."

Under whatever safeguards, indeed, it may be attempted, and with whatever caution it may be prosecuted, the effort to modify the teaching of Scripture as to its own inspiration by an appeal to the observed characteristics of Scripture, is an attempt not to obtain a clearer knowledge of what the Scriptures teach, but to *correct* that teaching. And to *correct* the teaching of Scripture is to proclaim Scripture untrustworthy as a witness to doctrine. The procedure in question is precisely similar to saying that the Bible's doctrine of creation is to be derived not alone from the teachings of the Bible as to creation, but from the facts obtained through a scientific study of creation; that the Bible's doctrine as to man is to be found not in the Bible's deliverances on the subject, but "while accepting these, we lay great stress also on the *structure* of man as we find him, and on the inextricable difficulties which are involved in carrying out the Bible's teaching in detail;" that the Bible's doctrine of justification is to be obtained by retaining the term as commended by the common sense of the Christian world and understanding by it just what we find justification to be in actual life. It is precisely similar to saying that Mr. Darwin's doctrine of natural selection is to be determined not solely by what Mr. Darwin says concerning it, but equally

\* *Op. cit.*, p. 240.

† *Letter to the Rev. Andrew A. Bonar, D.D.* By William G. Blaikie, D.D., LL.D. 2d ed. Edinburgh: Macniven & Wallace, 1890. P. 5.

‡ *A Letter to the Rev. Prof. William G. Blaikie, D.D., LL.D.* By Robert Watts, D.D., LL.D. Edinburgh: R. W. Hunter, 1890. P. 30.

by what we, in our own independent study of nature, find to be true as to natural selection. A historian of thought who proceeded on such a principle would scarcely receive the commendation of students of history, however much his writings might serve certain party ends. Who does not see that underlying this whole method of procedure—in its best and in its worst estate alike—there is apparent an unwillingness to commit ourselves without reserve to the *teaching* of the Bible, either because that teaching is distrusted or already disbelieved; and that it is a grave logical error to suppose that the teaching of the Bible as to inspiration can be corrected in this way any otherwise than by showing it not to be in accordance with the facts? The proposed method, therefore, does not conduct us to a somewhat modified doctrine of inspiration, but to a disproof of inspiration; by correcting the doctrine delivered by the Biblical writers, it discredits those writers as teachers of doctrine.

Let it not be said that in speaking thus we are refusing the inductive method of establishing doctrine. We follow the inductive method. When we approach the Scriptures to ascertain their doctrine of inspiration, we proceed by collecting the whole body of relevant facts. Every claim they make to inspiration is a relevant fact; every statement they make concerning inspiration is a relevant fact; every allusion they make to the subject is a relevant fact; every fact indicative of the attitude they hold towards Scripture is a relevant fact. But the characteristics of their own writings are not facts relevant to the determination of *their doctrine*. Nor let it be said that we are desirous of determining the true, as distinguished from the Scriptural, doctrine of inspiration otherwise than inductively. We are averse, however, to supposing that in such an inquiry the relevant "phenomena" of Scripture are not first of all and before all the claims of Scripture and second only to them its use of previous Scripture. And we are averse to excluding these primary "phenomena" and building our doctrine solely or mainly upon the characteristics and structure of Scripture, especially as determined by some special school of modern research by critical methods certainly not infallible and to the best of our own judgment not even reasonable. And we are certainly averse to supposing that this induction, if it reaches results not absolutely consentaneous with the teachings of Scripture itself, has done anything other than discredit those teachings, or that in discrediting them, it has escaped discrediting the doctrinal authority of Scripture.

Nor again is it to be thought that we refuse to use the actual characteristics of Scripture as an aid in, and a check upon, our exegesis of Scripture, as we seek to discover its doctrine of inspiration. We do not admit, we affirm on the contrary, that in every sphere

the observed fact may throw a broad and most helpful light upon the written text. It is so in the narrative of creation in the first chapter of Genesis; which is only beginning to be adequately understood as science is making her first steps in reading the records of God's creative hand in the structure of the world itself. It is preëminently so in the written prophecies, the dark sayings of which are not seldom first illuminated by the light cast back upon them by their fulfillment. As Scripture interprets Scripture, and fulfillment interprets prediction, so may fact interpret assertion. And this is as true as regards the Scriptural assertion of the fact of inspiration as elsewhere. No careful student of the Bible doctrine of inspiration will neglect anxiously to try his conclusions as to the teachings of Scripture by the observed characteristics and "structure" of Scripture, and in trying he may and no doubt will find occasion to modify his conclusions as at first apprehended. But it is one thing to correct our exegetical processes and so modify our exegetical conclusions in the new light obtained by a study of the facts, and quite another to modify, by the facts of the structure of Scripture, the Scriptural teaching itself, as exegetically ascertained; and it is to this latter that we should be led by making the facts of structure and the facts embedded in Scripture cofactors of the same rank in a so-called inductive ascertainment of the doctrine of inspiration. Direct exegesis after all has its rights: we may seek aid from every quarter in our efforts to perform its processes with precision and obtain its results with purity; but we cannot allow its results to be "modified" by extraneous considerations. Let us by all means be careful in determining the doctrine of Scripture, but let us also be fully honest in determining it; and if we count it a crime to permit our ascertainment of the facts recorded in Scripture to be unduly swayed by our conception of the doctrine taught in Scripture, let us count it equally a crime to permit our ascertainment of its doctrine to be unduly swayed or colored by our conception of the nature of the facts of its structure or of the facts embedded in its record. We cannot, therefore, appeal from the doctrine of Scripture as exegetically established to the facts of the structure of Scripture or the facts embedded in Scripture, in the hope of modifying the doctrine. If the teaching and the facts of Scripture are in harmony the appeal is useless. If they are in disharmony, we cannot follow both—we must choose one and reject the other. And the attempt to make the facts of Scripture cofactors of equal rank with the teaching of Scripture in ascertaining the true doctrine of inspiration, is really an attempt to modify the doctrine taught by Scripture by an appeal to the facts, while concealing from ourselves the fact that we have modified it, and in

modifying corrected it, and, of course, in correcting it, discredited Scripture as a teacher of doctrine.

Probably these four types of procedure will include most of the methods by which men are to-day seeking to free themselves from the necessity of following the Scriptural doctrine of inspiration, while yet looking to Scripture as the source of doctrine. Is it not plain that on every one of them the outcome must be to discredit Scripture as a doctrinal guide? The human mind is very subtle, but with all its subtlety it will hardly be able to find a way to refuse to follow Scripture in one of the doctrines it teaches without undermining its authority as a teacher of doctrine.

## II.

### IMMENSE WEIGHT OF EVIDENCE FOR THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE.

It is only to turn another face of the proposition with which we are dealing towards us, to emphasize next the important fact, that, the state of the case being such as we have found it, the evidence for the truth of the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture is just the whole body of evidence which goes to show that the apostles are trustworthy teachers of doctrine.

Language is sometimes made use of which would seem to imply that the amount or weight of the evidence offered for the truth of the doctrine that the Scriptures are the Word of God in such a sense that their words deliver the truth of God without error, is small. It is on the contrary just the whole body of evidence which goes to prove the writers of the New Testament to be trustworthy as deliverers of doctrine. It is just the same evidence in amount and weight which is adduced in favor of any other Biblical doctrine. It is the same weight and amount of evidence precisely which is adducible for the truth of the doctrines of the Incarnation, of the Trinity, of the Divinity of Christ, of Justification by Faith, of Regeneration by the Holy Spirit, of the Resurrection of the Body, of Life Everlasting. It is of course not absurdly intended that every Biblical doctrine is taught in the Scriptures with equal clearness, with equal explicitness, with equal frequency. Some doctrines are stated with an explicit precision that leaves little to systematic theology in its efforts to define the truth on all sides, except to repeat the words which the Biblical writers have used to teach it—as for example the doctrine of Justification by Faith. Others are not formulated in Scripture at all, but are taught only in their elements, which the systematician must collect and combine and so arrive finally at the doctrine—as for example the doctrine of the Trinity. Some are adverted to so frequently as to form the

whole warp and woof of Scripture—as for example the doctrine of redemption in the blood of Christ. Others are barely alluded to here and there, in connections where the stress is really on other matters—as for example the doctrine of the fall of the angels. But however explicitly or incidentally, however frequently or rarely, however emphatically or allusively, they may be taught, when exegesis has once done its work and shown that they are taught by the Biblical writers, all these doctrines stand as supported by the same weight and amount of evidence—the evidence of the trustworthiness of the Biblical writers as teachers of doctrine. We cannot say that we will believe these writers when they assert a doctrine a hundred times and we will not believe them if they assert it only ten times or only once; that we will believe them in the doctrines they make the main subjects of discourse, but not in those which they advert to incidentally; that we will believe them in those that they teach as conclusions of formal arguments, but not in those which they use as premises wherewith to reach those conclusions; that we will believe them in those they explicitly formulate and dogmatically teach, but not in those which they teach only in their separate parts and elements. The question is not *how* they teach a doctrine, but *do* they teach it; and when that question is once settled affirmatively, the weight of evidence that commends this doctrine to us as true is the same in every case; and that is the whole body of evidence which goes to show that the Biblical writers are trustworthy as teachers of doctrine. The Biblical doctrine of inspiration, therefore, has in its favor just this whole weight and amount of evidence. It follows on the one hand that it cannot rationally be rejected save on the ground of evidence which will outweigh the whole body of evidence which goes to authenticate the Biblical writers as trustworthy witnesses to and teachers of doctrine. And it follows, on the other hand, that if the Biblical doctrine of inspiration is rejected, our freedom from its trammels is bought logically at the somewhat serious cost of discrediting the evidence which goes to show that the Biblical writers are trustworthy as teachers of doctrine. In this sense, the fortunes of distinctive Christianity are bound up with those of the Biblical doctrine of inspiration.

Let it not be said that thus we found the whole Christian system upon the doctrine of plenary inspiration. We found the whole Christian system on the doctrine of plenary inspiration as little as we found it upon the doctrine of angelic existences. Were there no such thing as inspiration, Christianity would be true, and all its essential doctrines would be credibly witnessed to us in the generally trustworthy reports of the teaching of our Lord and of His authori-

tative agents in founding the Church, preserved in the writings of the apostles and their first followers, and in the historical witness of the living Church. Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. It is the last and crowning fact as to the Scriptures. These we first prove authentic, historically credible, generally trustworthy, before we prove them inspired. And the proof of their authenticity, credibility, general trustworthiness would give us a firm basis for Christianity prior to any knowledge on our part of their inspiration, and apart indeed from the existence of inspiration. The present writer, in order to prevent all misunderstanding, desires to repeat here what he has said on every proper occasion—that he is far from contending that without inspiration there could be no Christianity. “Without any inspiration,” he added, when making this affirmation on his induction into the work of teaching the Bible\*—“without any inspiration we could have had Christianity; yea, and men could still have heard the truth and through it been awakened, and justified, and sanctified, and glorified. The verities of our faith would remain historically proven to us—so bountiful has God been in His fostering care—even had we no Bible; and through those verities, salvation.” We are in entire harmony in this matter with what we conceive to be the very true statement recently made by Dr. George P. Fisher, that “if the authors of the Bible were credible reporters of revelations of God, whether in the form of historical transactions of which they were witnesses, or of divine mysteries that were unveiled to their minds, their testimony would be entitled to belief, even if they were shut up to their unaided faculties in communicating what they had thus received.”† We are in entire sympathy in this matter, therefore, with the protest which Dr. Marcus Dods raised in his famous address at the meeting of the Alliance of the Reformed Churches at London, against representing that “the infallibility of the Bible is the ground of the whole Christian faith.”‡ We judge with him that it is very important

\* *Discourses Occasioned by the Inauguration of Benj. B. Warfield, D.D., to the Chair of New Testament Exegesis and Literature in the Western Theological Seminary, April 25, 1880.* Pittsburgh, 1880. P. 46. Cf. *Inspiration.* By Prof. A. A. Hodge and Prof. B. B. Warfield. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1881. Pp. 7, 8 (also in *The Presbyterian Review* for April, 1881). Also, *The Inspiration of the Scriptures.* By Francis L. Patton, D.D. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1869. Pp. 22, 23, 54.

† *The Congregationalist*, Nov. 3, 1892; *The Magazine of Christian Literature*, Dec., 1892, p. 236, first column. This whole column should be read; its statement and illustration are alike admirable.

‡ This address may be most conveniently consulted in *The Expositor* for October, 1888, pp. 301, 302. In expressing our concurrence with portions of this address and of Dr. Fisher's papers just quoted, we are not to be understood, of course, as concurring with their whole contents.

indeed that such a misapprehension, if it is anywhere current, should be corrected. What we are at present arguing is something entirely different from such an overstrained view of the importance of inspiration to the very existence of Christian faith, and something which has no connection with it. We do not think that the doctrine of plenary inspiration is the ground of Christian faith, but if it was held and taught by the New Testament writers, we think it an element in the Christian faith; a very important and valuable element;\* an element that appeals to our acceptance on precisely the same ground as every other element of the faith, viz., on the ground of our recognition of the writers of the New Testament as trustworthy witnesses to doctrine; an element of the Christian faith, therefore, which cannot be rejected without logically undermining our trust in all the other elements of distinctive Christianity by undermining the evidence on which this trust rests. We must indeed prove the authenticity, credibility and general trustworthiness of the New Testament writings before we prove their inspiration; and even were they not inspired this proof would remain valid and we should give them accordant trust. But just because this proof is valid, we must trust these writings in their witness to their inspiration, if they give such witness; and if we refuse to trust them here, we have in principle refused them trust everywhere. In such circumstances their inspiration is bound up inseparably with their trustworthiness, and therefore with all else that we receive on trust from them.

On the other hand, we need to remind ourselves that to say that the amount and weight of the evidence of the truth of the Biblical doctrine of inspiration is measured by the amount and weight of the evidence for the general credibility and trustworthiness of the New Testament writers as witnesses to doctrine, is an understatement.

\* How important and valuable this element of the Christian faith is, it is not the purpose of this paper to point out. Let it suffice here to say briefly that it is (1) the element which gives detailed certitude to the delivery of doctrine in the New Testament, and (2) the element by which the individual Christian is brought into immediate relation to God in the revelation of truth through the prophets and apostles. The importance of these factors in the Christian life could not be overstated. The importance of the recognition of plenary inspiration to the preservation of sound doctrine is negatively illustrated by the progress of Rationalism, as thus outlined briefly by Dr. Charles Hodge (*Syst. Theol.*, iii, p. 195): "Those who admitted the divine origin of the Scriptures got rid of its distinctive doctrines by the adoption of a low theory of inspiration and by the application of arbitrary principles of interpretation. Inspiration was in the first instance confined to the religious teachings of the Bible, then to the ideas or truths, but not to the form in which they were presented, nor to the arguments by which they were supported. . . . In this way a wet sponge was passed over all the doctrines of redemption and their outlines obliterated." It looks as if the Church were extremely slow in reading the most obvious lessons of history.

ment rather than an overstatement of the matter. For if we trust them at all we will trust them in the account they give of the person and in the report they give of the teaching of Christ; whereupon, as they report Him as teaching the same doctrine of Scripture that they teach, we are brought face to face with divine testimony to this doctrine of inspiration. The argument, then, takes the form given it by Bishop Wordsworth: "The New Testament canonizes the Old; the INCARNATE WORD sets His seal on the WRITTEN WORD. The Incarnate Word is God; therefore, the inspiration of the Old Testament is authenticated by God Himself."\* And, again, the general trustworthiness of the writers of the New Testament gives us the right and imposes on us the duty of accepting their witness to the relation the Holy Ghost bears to their teaching, as, for example, when Paul tells us that the things which they uttered they uttered "not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit; joining Spirit-given things with Spirit-given things" (1 Cor. ii. 13), and Peter asserts that the Gospel was preached by them "in the Holy Spirit" (1 Peter i. 12); and this relation asserted to exist between the Holy Ghost and their teaching, whether oral or written (1 Cor. xiv. 37; 2 Thess. ii. 15, iii. 6-14), gives the sanction of the Holy Ghost to their doctrine of Holy Scripture, whatever that is found to be. So that, even though we begin on the lowest ground, we may find ourselves compelled to say, as Bishop Wilberforce found himself compelled to say: "In brief, my belief is this: The whole Bible comes to us as 'the Word of God' under the sanction of God, the Holy Ghost."† The weight of the testimony to the Biblical doctrine of inspiration, in a word, is no less than the weight to be attached to the testimony of God—God the Son and God the Spirit.

But our present purpose is not to draw out the full value of the testimony, but simply to emphasize the fact that on the emergence of the exegetical fact that the Scriptures of the New Testament teach this doctrine, the amount and weight of evidence for its truth must be allowed to be the whole amount and weight of the evidence that the writers of the New Testament are trustworthy as teachers of doctrine. It is not on some shadowy and doubtful evidence that the doctrine is based—not on an *a priori* conception of what inspiration ought to be, not on a "tradition" of doctrine in the Church, though all the *a priori* considerations and the whole tradition of doctrine in the Church are also thrown in the scale for and not in that against this doctrine; but first on the confidence which we have in the writers of the New Testament as doc-

\* Wordsworth on the Canon, p. 51, Am. Ed.

† Life of the Rt. Rev. S. Wilberforce, D.D., Vol. iii, p. 149.

trinal guides, and ultimately on whatever evidence of whatever kind and force exists to justify that confidence. In this sense, we repeat, the cause of distinctive Christianity is bound up with the cause of the Biblical doctrine of inspiration. We accept Christianity in all its distinctive doctrines on no other ground than the credibility and trustworthiness of the Bible as a guide to truth; and on this same ground we must equally accept its doctrine of inspiration. "If we may not accept its account of itself," asks Dr. Purves, pointedly, "why should we care to ascertain its account of other things?"\*

### III.

#### IMMENSE PRESUMPTION AGAINST ALLEGED FACTS CONTRADICTORY OF THE BIBLICAL DOCTRINE.

We are again making no new affirmation but only looking from a slightly different angle upon the same proposition with which we have been dealing from the first, when we emphasize next the fact, that the state of the case being as we have found it, we approach the study of the so-called "phenomena" of the Scriptures with a very strong presumption that these Scriptures contain no errors, and that any "phenomena" apparently inconsistent with their inerrancy are so in appearance only: a presumption the measure of which is just the whole amount and weight of evidence that the New Testament writers are trustworthy as teachers of doctrine.

It seems to be often tacitly assumed that the Biblical doctrine of inspiration cannot be confidently ascertained until all the facts concerning the contents and structure and characteristics of Scripture are fully determined and allowed for. This is obviously fallacious. What Paul, for example, believed as to the nature of Scripture is obviously an easily separable question from what the nature of Scripture really is. On the other hand, the assumption that we cannot confidently accept the Biblical doctrine of inspiration as true until criticism and exegesis have said their last word upon the structure, the text, and the characteristics of Scripture, even to the most minute fact, is more plausible. But it is far from obviously true. Something depends upon our estimate of the force of the mass of evidence which goes to show the trustworthiness of the apostles as teachers of truth, and of the clearness with which they announce their teaching as to inspiration. It is conceivable, for example, that the force of the evidence of their trustworthiness may be so great that we should be fully justified in

\* *St. Paul and Inspiration*. Inaugural Address, etc. A. D. F. Randolph & Co., 1892. P. 52. PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW, January, 1893, p. 21.

yielding implicit confidence to their teaching, even though many and serious difficulties should stand in the way of accepting it. This, indeed, is exactly what we do in our ordinary use of Scripture as a source of doctrine. Who doubts that the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Incarnation present difficulties to rational construction? Who doubts that the doctrines of native demerit and total depravity, inability and eternal punishment raise objections in the natural heart? We accept these doctrines and others which ought to be much harder to credit, such as the Biblical teaching that God so loved sinful man as to give His only-begotten Son to die for him, not because their acceptance is not attended with difficulties, but because our confidence in the New Testament as a doctrinal guide is so grounded in unassailable and compelling evidence, that we believe its teachings despite the difficulties which they raise. We do not and we cannot wait until all these difficulties are fully explained before we yield to the teaching of the New Testament the fullest confidence of our minds and hearts. How then can it be true that we are to wait until all difficulties are removed before we can accept with confidence the Biblical doctrine of inspiration? In relation to this doctrine alone, are we to assume the position that we will not yield faith in response to due and compelling evidence of the trustworthiness of the teacher, until all difficulties are explained to our satisfaction?—that we must fully understand and comprehend before we will believe? Or is the point this—that we can suppose ourselves possibly mistaken in everything else except our determination of the characteristics and structure of Scripture and the facts stated therein? Surely if we do not need to wait until we understand how God can be both one and three, how Christ can be both human and divine, how man can be both unable and responsible, how an act can be both free and certain, how man can be both a sinner and righteous in God's sight, before we accept, on the authority of the teaching of Scripture, the doctrines of the Trinity, of the Incarnation, of man's state as a sinner, of God's eternal predestination of the acts of free agents, and of acceptance on the ground of Christ's righteousness, because of the weight of the evidence which goes to prove that Scripture trustworthy as a teacher of divine truth; we may on the same compelling evidence accept, in full confidence, the teaching of the same Scripture as to the nature of its own inspiration, prior to a full understanding of how all the phenomena of Scripture are to be adjusted to it.

No doubt it is perfectly true and is to be kept in mind that the claim of a writing to be infallible may be mistaken or false. Such a claim has been put forth in behalf of and by other writings be-

sides the Bible, and has been found utterly inconsistent with the observed characteristics of those writings. An *a priori* possibility may be asserted to exist in the case of the Bible, that a comparison of its phenomena with its doctrine may bring out a glaring inconsistency. The test of the truth of the claims of the Bible to be inspired of God through comparison with its contents, characteristics and phenomena, the Bible cannot expect to escape; and the lovers of the Bible will be the last to deny the validity of it. By all means let the doctrine of the Bible be tested by the facts and let the test be made all the more, not the less, stringent and penetrating because of the great issues that hang upon it. If the facts are inconsistent with the doctrine, let us all know it, and know it so clearly that the matter is put beyond doubt. But let us not conceal from ourselves the greatness of the issues involved in the test, lest we approach the test in too light a spirit, and make shipwreck of faith in the trustworthiness of the apostles as teachers of doctrine, with the easy indifference of a man who corrects the incidental errors of a piece of gossip. Nor is this appeal to the seriousness of the issues involved in any sense an appeal to deal deceitfully with the facts concerning or stated in the Bible, through fear of disturbing our confidence in a comfortable doctrine of its infallibility. It is simply an appeal to common sense. If you are told that a malicious lie has been uttered by some unknown person you may easily yield the report a languid provisional assent; such things are not impossible, unfortunately in this sinful world not unexampled. But if it is told you of your loved and trusted friend, you will probably demand the most stringent proof at the point of your walking stick. So far as this, Robert Browning has missed neither nature nor right reason, when he makes his Ferishtah point out how much more evidence we require in proof of a fact which brings us loss than what is sufficient to command

“The easy acquiescence of mankind  
In matters nowise worth dispute.”

If it is right to test most carefully the claim of every settled and accepted faith by every fact asserted in rebuttal of it, it must be equally right, nay incumbent, to scrutinize most closely the evidence for an asserted fact, which, if genuine, wounds in its vitals some important interest. If it would be a crime to refuse to consider most carefully and candidly any phenomena of Scripture asserted to be inconsistent with its inerrancy, it would be equally a crime to accept the asserted reality of phenomena of Scripture, which if real strike at the trustworthiness of the apostolic witness to doctrine, on any evidence of less than demonstrative weight.

But we approach the consideration of these phenomena alleged to be inconsistent with the Biblical doctrine of inspiration not only thus with what may be called, though in a high sense, a sentimental presumption against their reality. The presumption is an eminently rational one, and is capable of somewhat exact estimation. We do not adopt the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture on sentimental grounds, nor even, as we have already had occasion to remark, on *a priori* or general grounds of whatever kind. We adopt it specifically because it is taught us as truth by Christ and His apostles, in the Scriptural record of their teaching, and the evidence for its truth is, therefore, as we have also already pointed out, precisely that evidence, in weight and amount, which vindicates for us the trustworthiness of Christ and His apostles as teachers of doctrine. Of course, this evidence is not in the strict logical sense "demonstrative;" it is "probable" evidence. It therefore leaves open the metaphysical possibility of its being mistaken. But it may be contended that it is about as great in amount and weight as "probable" evidence can be made, and that the strength of conviction which it is adapted to produce may be and should be practically equal to that produced by demonstration itself. But whatever weight it has, and whatever strength of conviction it is adapted to produce, it is with this weight of evidence behind us and with this strength of conviction as to the unreality of any alleged phenomena contradictory of the Biblical doctrine of inspiration, that we approach the study of the characteristics, the structure, and the detailed statements of the Bible. Their study is not to be neglected; we have not attained through "probable" evidence apodeictic certainty of the Bible's infallibility. But neither is the reality of the alleged phenomena inconsistent with the Bible's doctrine, to be allowed without sufficient evidence. Their reality cannot be logically or rationally recognized unless the evidence for it be greater in amount and weight than the whole mass of evidence for the trustworthiness of the Biblical writers as teachers of doctrine.

It is not to be thought that this amounts to a recommendation of strained exegesis in order to rid the Bible of phenomena adverse to the truth of the Biblical doctrine of inspiration. It amounts to a recommendation of great care in the exegetical determination of these alleged phenomena; it amounts to a recommendation to allow that our exegesis determining these phenomena is not infallible. But it is far from recommending either strained or artificial exegesis of any kind. We are not bound to harmonize the alleged phenomena with the Bible doctrine; and if we cannot harmonize them save by strained or artificial exegesis they would be better

left unharmonized. We are not bound, however, on the other hand, to believe that they are unharmonizable, because we cannot harmonize them save by strained exegesis. Our individual fertility in exegetical expedients, our individual insight into exegetical truth, our individual capacity of understanding are not the measure of truth. If we cannot harmonize without straining, let us leave unharmonized. It is not necessary for us to see the harmony that it should exist or even be recognized by us as existing. But it is necessary for us to believe the harmony to be possible and real, provided that we are not prepared to say that we clearly see that on any conceivable hypothesis (conceivable to us or conceivable to any other intelligent beings) the harmony is impossible—if the trustworthiness of the Biblical writers who teach us the doctrine of plenary inspiration is really safeguarded to us on evidence which we cannot disbelieve. In that case every unharmonized passage remains a case of difficult harmony and does not pass into the category of objections to plenary inspiration. It can pass into the category of objections only if we are prepared to affirm that we clearly see that it is, on any conceivable hypothesis of its meaning, clearly inconsistent with the Biblical doctrine of inspiration. In that case we would no doubt need to give up the Biblical doctrine of inspiration; but with it we must also give up our confidence in the Biblical writers as teachers of doctrine. And if we cannot reasonably give up this latter, neither can we reasonably allow that the phenomena apparently inconsistent with the former are real, or really inconsistent with it. And this is but to say that we approach the study of these phenomena with a presumption against their being such as will disprove the Biblical doctrine of inspiration—or, we may add (for this is but the same thing in different words), correct or modify the Biblical doctrine of inspiration—which is measured precisely by the amount and weight of the evidence which goes to show that the Bible is a trustworthy guide to doctrine.

The importance of emphasizing these, as it would seem, very obvious principles, does not arise out of need for a very great presumption in order to overcome the difficulties arising from the "phenomena" of Scripture, as over against its doctrine of inspiration. Such difficulties are not specially numerous or intractable. Dr. Charles Hodge justly characterizes those that have been adduced by disbelievers in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, as "for the most part trivial," "only apparent," and "marvelously few" "of any real importance." They bear, he adds, about the same relation to the whole that a speck of sandstone detected here and there in the marble of the Parthenon would bear to that building.\*

\* *Systematic Theology*, i, pp. 169, 170: We have purposely adduced this pas-

They do not for the most part require explaining away, but only to be fairly understood in order to void them. They constitute no real strain upon faith, but when approached in a candid spirit one is left continually marveling at the excessive fewness of those which do not like ghosts melt away from vision as soon as faced. Moreover, as every student of the history of exegesis and criticism knows, they are a progressively vanishing quantity. Those which seemed most obvious and intractable a generation or two ago, remain to-day as only too readily forgotten warnings against the ineradicable and inordinate dogmatism of the opponents of the inerrancy of the Bible, who override continually every canon of historical and critical caution in their eager violence against the doctrine that they assail. What scorn they expressed of "apologists" who doubted whether Luke was certainly in error in assigning a "proconsul" to Cyprus, whether he was in error in making Lysanias a contemporary tetrarch with the Herodian rulers, and the like. How easily that scorn is forgotten as the progress of discovery has one by one vindicated the assertions of the Biblical historians. The matter has come to such a pass, indeed, in the progress of discovery, that there is a sense in which it may be said that the doctrine of the inerrancy of the Bible can now be based, with considerable confidence, on its observed "phenomena." What marvelous accuracy is characteristic of its historians! Dr. Fisher, in a paper already referred to, invites his readers to read Archibald Forbes' article in the *Nineteenth Century* for March, 1892, on "Napoleon the Third at Sedan," that they may gain some idea of how the truth of history as to the salient facts may be preserved amid "hopeless and bewildering discrepancies in regard to details," in the reports of the most trustworthy eye-witnesses. The article is instructive in this regard. And it is instructive in another regard also. What a contrast exists between this mass of "hopeless and bewildering discrepancies in regard to details," among the accounts of a single important transaction, written by careful and watchful eye-witnesses, who were on the ground for the precise purpose of gathering the facts for report, and who were seeking to give an exact and honest account of the events which they witnessed, and the marvelous

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sage here to enable us to protest against the misuse of it, which, in the exigencies of the present controversy, has been made, as if Dr. Hodge was in this passage admitting the reality of the alleged errors. The passage occurs in the reply to objections to the doctrine, not in the development of the doctrine itself, and is of the nature of an *argumentum ad hominem*. How far Dr. Hodge was from admitting the reality of error in the original Biblical text may be estimated from the frequency with which he asserts its freedom from error in the immediately preceding context—pp. 152, 155, 163 (no less than three times on this page), 165, 166, 169 (no less than five times).

accuracy of the Biblical writers! If these "hopeless and bewildering discrepancies" are consistent with the honesty and truthfulness and general trustworthiness of the uninspired writers, may it not be argued that the so much greater accuracy attained by the Biblical writers when describing not one event but the history of ages—and a history filled with pitfalls for the unwary—has something more than honesty and truthfulness behind it, and warrants the attribution to them of something more than general trustworthiness? And, if in the midst of this marvel of general accuracy there remain here and there a few difficulties as yet not fully explained in harmony with it, or if in the course of the historical vindication of it in general a rare difficulty (as in the case of some of the statements of Daniel) seems to increase in sharpness, are we to throw ourselves with desperate persistency into these "last ditches" and strive by our increased insistence upon the impregnability of *them* to conceal from men that the main army has been beaten from the field? Is it not more reasonable to suppose that these difficulties, too, will receive their explanation with advancing knowledge? And is it not the height of the unreasonable to treat them like the Sibylline books as of ever-increasing importance in proportion to their decreasing number? The importance of keeping in mind that there is a presumption against the reality of these "inconsistent phenomena," and that the presumption is of a weight measurable only by the weight of evidence which vindicates the general trustworthiness of the Bible as a teacher of doctrine, does not arise from the need of so great a presumption in order to overcome the weight of the alleged opposing facts. Those facts are not specially numerous, important or intractable, and they are, in the progress of research, a vanishing quantity.

The importance of keeping in mind the principle in question arises rather from the importance of preserving a correct logical method. There are two ways of approaching the study of the inspiration of the Bible. One proceeds by obtaining first the doctrine of inspiration taught by the Bible as applicable to itself, and then testing this doctrine by the facts as to the Bible as ascertained by Biblical criticism and exegesis. This is good logical procedure; and in the presence of a vast mass of evidence for the general trustworthiness of the Biblical writings as witnesses of doctrine, and for the appointment of their writers as teachers of divine truth to men, and for the presence of the Holy Spirit with and in them aiding them in their teaching (in whatever degree and with whatever effect)—it would seem to be the only logical and proper mode of approaching the question. The other method proceeds by seeking the doctrine of inspiration in the first instance through a comprehensive induction from the

facts as to the structure and contents of the Bible, as ascertained by critical and exegetical processes, treating all these facts as cofactors of the same rank for the induction. If in this process the facts of structure and the facts embedded in the record of Scripture—which are called, one-sidedly indeed but commonly, by the class of writers who adopt this procedure, “the phenomena” of Scripture—alone are considered, it would be difficult to arrive at a precise doctrine of inspiration, at the best: though, as we have already pointed out, a degree and kind of accuracy might be vindicated for the Scriptures which might lead us to suspect and to formulate as the best account of it, some divine assistance to the writers’ memory, mental processes and expression. If the Biblical facts and teaching are taken as cofactors in the induction, the procedure (as we have already pointed out) is liable to the danger of modifying the teaching by the facts without clear recognition of what is being done; the result of which would be the loss from observation of one main fact of errancy, viz., the inaccuracy of the teaching of the Scriptures as to their own inspiration. This would vitiate the whole result: and this vitiation of the result can be avoided only by ascertaining separately the teaching of Scripture as to its own inspiration, and by accounting the results of this ascertainment one of the facts of the induction. Then we are in a position to judge by the comparison of this fact with the other facts, whether this fact of teaching is in accord or in disaccord with those facts of performance. If it is in disaccord, then of course this disaccord is the main factor in the case: the writers are convicted of false teaching. If it is in accord, then, if the teaching is not proved by the accord, it is at least left credible, and may be believed with whatever confidence may be justified by the evidence which goes to show that these writers are trustworthy as deliverers of doctrine. And if nice and difficult questions arise in the comparison of the fact of teaching with the facts of performance, it is inevitable that the relative weight of the evidence for the trustworthiness of the two sets of facts should be the deciding factor in determining the truth. This is as much as to say that the asserted facts as to performance must give way before the fact as to teaching, unless the evidence on which they are based as facts outweighs the evidence on which the teaching may be accredited as true. But this correction of the second method of procedure, by which alone it can be made logical in form or valid in result, amounts to nothing less than setting it aside altogether and reverting to the first method, according to which the teaching of Scripture is first to be determined, and then this teaching to be tested by the facts of performance.

The importance of proceeding according to the true logical

method may be illustrated by the observation that the conclusions actually arrived at by students of the subject seem practically to depend on the logical method adopted. In fact, the difference here seems mainly a difference in point of view. If we start from the Scripture doctrine of inspiration, we approach the phenomena with the question whether they will negative this doctrine, and we find none able to stand against it, commended to us as true, as it is, by the vast mass of evidence available to prove the trustworthiness of the Scriptural writers as teachers of doctrine. But if we start simply with a collection of the phenomena, classifying and reasoning from them, whether alone or in conjunction with the Scriptural statements, it may easily happen with us, as it happened with certain of old, that meeting with some things hard to be understood, we may be ignorant and unstable enough to wrest them to our own intellectual destruction, and so approach the Biblical doctrine of inspiration set upon explaining it away. The value of having the Scripture doctrine as a clue in our hands, is thus fairly illustrated by the ineradicable inability of the whole negative school to distinguish between *difficulties* and *proved errors*. If then we ask what we are to do with the numerous phenomena of Scripture inconsistent with verbal inspiration, which, so it is alleged, "criticism" has brought to light, we must reply: Challenge them in the name of the New Testament doctrine, and ask for their credentials. They have no credentials that can stand before that challenge. No single error has as yet been demonstrated to occur in the Scriptures as given by God to His Church. And every critical student knows, as already pointed out, that the progress of investigation has been a continuous process of removing difficulties, until scarcely a shred of the old list of "Biblical Errors" remains to hide the nakedness of this moribund contention. To say that we do not wish to make claims "for which we have only this to urge, that they cannot be absolutely disproved," is not to the point; what is to the point is to say, that we cannot set aside the presumption arising from the general trustworthiness of Scripture, that its doctrine of inspiration is true, by any array of contradictory facts, each one of which is fairly disputable. We must have indisputable errors—which are not forthcoming.

The real problem brought before the Churches by the present debate ought now to be sufficiently plain. In its deepest essence it is whether we can still trust the Bible as a guide in doctrine, as a teacher of truth. It is not simply whether we can explain away the Biblical doctrine of inspiration so as to allow us to take a different view from what has been common of the structure and charac-

teristics of the Bible. Nor, on the other hand, is it simply whether we may easily explain the facts, established as facts, embedded in Scripture, consistently with the teaching of Scripture as to the nature, extent and effects of inspiration. It is specifically whether the results proclaimed by a special school of Biblical criticism—which are of such a character, as is now admitted by all, as to necessitate, if adopted, a new view of the Bible and of its inspiration—rest on a basis of evidence strong enough to meet and overcome the weight of evidence, whatever that may be in kind and amount, which goes to show that the Biblical writers are trustworthy as teachers of doctrine. If we answer this question in the affirmative, then no doubt we shall have not only a new view of the Bible and of its inspiration but also a whole new theology, because we must seek a new basis for doctrine. But if we answer it in the negative, we may possess our souls in patience and be assured that the Scriptures are as trustworthy witnesses to truth when they declare a doctrine of Inspiration as when they declare a doctrine of Incarnation or of Redemption, even though in the one case as in the other difficulties may remain, the full explanation of which is not yet clear to us. The real question, in a word, is not a new question but the perennial old question, whether the basis of our doctrine is to be what the Bible teaches, or what men teach. And this is a question which is to be settled on the old method, viz., on our estimate of the weight and value of the evidence which places the Bible in our hands as a teacher of doctrine.

PRINCETON.

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.