

The Bible Is the Inspired Word of God

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Introduction

One can hardly imagine any subject in religion but that men have capitulated the Biblical teaching on it.¹ The mere mention of the inspiration of the Bible, the authority of Scripture, baptism, the church, grace, repentance, worship, the Lord's Supper, the virgin birth, the Deity of Christ, the Lord's resurrection, the Lord's Second Coming, Heaven, Hell, and many other subjects is sufficient to remind us that men have utterly abandoned the Scriptures concerning them.

However, the consequences of abandoning some doctrines are greater than those of abandoning others. For example, one may devoutly believe in all of the above-listed doctrines of Scripture except that New Testament worship excludes the use of mechanical instruments of music. While this unauthorized worship is by no means a minor issue and is a sin that will cause one to be lost (worshiping with an instrument constitutes "strange music" as surely as the unauthorized fire of Nadab and Abihu constituted "strange fire" [Lev. 10:1–2]), if one is genuine in his belief in the authority of the Bible, he may be taught out of this error.

No subject, however, is more significant and far-reaching than the subject of the inspiration of the Bible. Rejection of the Bible's **inspiration** equals rejection of the Bible itself because it claims to be peculiarly and uniquely revealed, inspired, and delivered to men by God. It further follows that rejection of the Bible is tantamount to rejection of God and His Son, even as it is also a rejection of the one true religion. If one surrenders the conviction that the Bible is inspired—as the Bible defines and describes *inspiration*—then he divorces himself from any accountability to its authority and its doctrine. Can one envision the folly of trying to convince an infidel that the use of instrumental music in New Testament worship (or any other erroneous doctrine or practice) is unauthorized by appealing to the Bible, when he denies the very existence of its Author? One who denies the taproot of Divine inspiration as the Bible's source can only conceive of it as a dead, fruitless tree—a historical curiosity piece at best.

Not all who deny the inspiration of Scripture are avowed Atheists or Humanists. Skeptical, unbelieving theologians by the thousands do not accept the Bible's claim of inspiration, and they have invented various theories in support of their denial. A real antagonism exists between what the Bible says about its origin and what faithless theologians say on the subject.² This antipathy is not merely imagined or a matter of "semantics." The threat of these

theological theorists can be answered and deserves to be challenged. They long ago captured most Protestant seminaries and schools and have for several decades been spewing out their faithless vomit upon unsuspecting auditors in their pews, destroying whatever measure of belief in the Word of God that once resided in the sectarian masses. The same skepticism has also begun to infiltrate the body of Christ.

Those faithless theologians who substitute their naturalistic theories of "inspiration" for true inspiration remind us somewhat of another stripe of faithless theologian—the "theistic" evolutionist. He does not want to be labeled an "Atheist," but he respects the unprovable theories of infidel scientists on origins more than he does the Biblical account. He thus tries to merge the two by saying that God produced everything by means of evolution over millions of years. The result is the denial in the full implications of both evolution and belief in God (and in the Bible).

Likewise, certain theologians (likely most of whom are also theistic evolutionists, incidentally) do not want to be accused of not believing in inspiration, but neither can they stand to be ostracized by their skeptic peers who subscribe to the most vicious forms of Biblical criticism. Thus, they compromise by saying that they believe in "inspiration," but by the time they get through defining it, it bears no resemblance to what the Bible teaches on the subject.

I have organized this study of Biblical inspiration as follows:

1. Inspiration—the Scriptural claims
2. Inspiration—the skeptical contradictions
3. Inspiration—the skeptical history
4. Inspiration—the skeptical voices in the church
5. Inspiration—the Scriptural evidence

Inspiration—the Scriptural Claims

The Bible's claims about itself involve three important words: *inspiration*, *plenary*, and *verbal*. One does not read much of the Bible before he comes to understand that it claims for itself the very concepts of origin and quality embodied in these three words.

The Inspiration Claims

Ironically, while the **concept** appears consistently throughout the Bible, the **word** *inspiration* is found only twice in the KJV Bible. Job 32:8 reads: "But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."³ Most are more familiar with 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." In Job 32:8 *inspiration* is the rendering

of the Hebrew word *neshamah*, meaning to breathe, and, accordingly, the ASV reads "the breath of the Almighty...." In 2 Timothy 3:16 (in the KJV) *inspiration of God* becomes *inspired of God* in the ASV, the only occurrence of this term in any form in this version. The Greek word behind *inspiration/inspired* in 2 Timothy 3:16 is the compound word *theopneustos*, meaning God-breathed or breathed out by God. From this passage we derive the term, *the doctrine of inspiration*, to describe the origin of the Bible.

Kenneth Kantzer remarks as follows on the significance of *theopneustos*: "By this word, therefore, Paul is asserting that the written documents, called Holy Scripture, are a divine product.⁴ Benjamin Warfield wrote concerning the meaning of *inspire* and *inspiration*:

Underlying all their use, however, is the constant implication of an influence from without, producing in its object movements and effects beyond its native, or at least its ordinary powers.... The Biblical books are called inspired as the Divinely determined products of inspired men; the Biblical writers are called inspired as breathed into by the Holy Spirit, so that the product of their activities transcends human powers and becomes Divinely authoritative. Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.⁵

J.I. Packer notes a further implication of the use of *inspiration* by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16: According to 2 Timothy 3:16, what is inspired is precisely the Biblical writings. Inspiration is a work of God terminating, not in the men who were to write Scripture (as if, having given them an idea of what to say, God left them to themselves to find a way of saying it), but in the actual written product. It is Scripture—**graphe**, the written text—that is God-breathed.⁶

We may summarize the meaning of *inspiration* as it relates to the Bible as that teaching that God is the actual source and author of the Bible throughout all of its parts, having made use of various chosen men in various ages to write the message he wished to communicate to man. By this means, although the Holy Spirit used fallible men as the instruments of writing, they were preserved from error in every respect in everything they wrote. Therefore, the Bible is the inerrant (it **does not** err), infallible (it is **impossible** for it to err) Word of God. If God gave us the Bible, and if "it is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18), then the Bible is trustworthy and true in every respect. A necessary corollary to the trustworthiness of Scripture—because it is from God—is the **authority** of Scripture. We will set forth evidence for the Bible's claim of inspiration later, but the foregoing statement of the Biblical doctrine will give us a beginning point for discussion of some of the theories that seek to supplant it.

The Plenary Claims

Plenary does not appear as a word in the Bible, but the meaning this word connotes concerning the Bible's inspiration is certainly found therein. This word is derived from a Latin

word which means "full." When one speaks of "plenary inspiration" he means that the Scriptures are inspired throughout, in every part, fully, completely. The inspired psalmist wrote: "The sum of thy word is truth; And every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever" (Psa. 119:160). This statement could not be true apart from plenary inspiration. We must not forget that Paul taught the plenary inspiration of Scripture in his familiar statement: "**All** scripture is given by inspiration of God..." (2 Tim. 3:16, KJV; emph. DM).

Paul further emphasized just how full and detailed the Bible's inspiration is in his statement concerning the Abrahamic promise: "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). His argument here hinges upon the singular form of the noun, *seed*, that Moses had written fifteen centuries earlier and that God had spoken to Abraham four centuries before Moses (Gen. 22:18). If the Bible is inspired to this degree, then it is inspired entirely, fully—plenarily. The doctrine of plenary inspiration therefore implies that every kind of subject matter (historical, geographical, scientific, ethical, "religious," etc.) found in the Bible is from God. God's guidance of the inspired men extended to the minutest parts—even to the very words they wrote **in the original books**.

The Verbal Claims

Verbal obviously refers to words. To say that the Scriptures are verbally inspired is to say that the words themselves, **as they were originally written**, are the words God chose and directed the Bible writers to set down, as Packer emphasized above. Numerous Old Testament statements thus testify. Moses prefaced the initial record of the Decalogue by declaring: "And God spake all these **words**, saying..." (Exo. 20:1, emph. DM). Later Moses stated: "And Jehovah said unto Moses, **Write** thou these **words**: for after the tenor of these **words** I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel" (34:27, emph. DM). God gave the same directions to Jeremiah: "Thus speaketh Jehovah, the God of Israel, saying, **Write** thee all the **words** that I have spoken unto thee in a book" (Jer 30:2, emph. DM). Notice in each case that it was not mere general ideas, themes, or concepts, but **specific words** that God gave to these inspired men. This procedure constitutes **verbal inspiration**.

Paul's statements to Timothy and to the Galatians, as noted above, imply inspiration of the very words the Holy Spirit revealed to the Lord's chosen vessels. The apostle was very specific about the extent of revelation/inspiration in writing to the Corinthians. After referring to the wisdom of God, which not even wise and powerful men of the world could decipher on their own, he then stated: "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth

all things, yea, the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2:10). But to what extent did the Holy Spirit reveal these mysteries? "Which things also we speak, not in **words** which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual **words**" (v. 13, emph. DM). This verse explicitly states the Bible's claim of verbal inspiration. In effect, to contend for **verbal** inspiration implies **plenary** inspiration and vice versa.

Inspiration—the Skeptical Contradictions

Those who deny what the Bible teaches about its own inspiration have propounded several theories to explain "inspiration." All of these have as their necessary design the lowering of one's view of Scripture below what Scripture claims for itself. No such alternate views of how the Bible came to be would ever have been proffered had all men accepted the noble view of inspiration the Bible itself sets forth. Various expositors classify these several theories of inspiration differently, and accordingly, the number of actual theories they identify varies. Warfield subsumes them all under two, one of which he calls "Rationalistic" and the other "Mystical."⁷ McClintock and Strong likewise list two principal views (besides what they term the "orthodox" or "dynamical" view: (1) "Mystical" (apparently meaning about the same as Warfield by this term), and (2) "Latitudinarian" (identified with Warfield's "Rationalistic").⁸ However, in the same context, McClintock and Strong mention two other variant views, which they do not label. I will now list the respective theories I have discovered and briefly discuss their principal errors.

The "General Inspiration" Theory

This theory uses *inspiration* and *inspired* in reference to the Bible and its writers in the same way that men speak of the "inspiration" of renowned authors such as Shakespeare or Homer. A preacher may do an outstanding job in a particular sermon and someone may say, "He was really inspired today." By this is meant that the one thus "inspired" had demonstrated an exceptional ability of some sort. While Biblical writers demonstrated exceptional ability in their writing, the Bible's own claim goes far beyond this. They were not merely "inspired" by mere innate talent, a poet's muse, a multi-hued sunset, some great man or woman, nor by any other naturalistic element. The Bible was given "by inspiration of **God**" (2 Tim. 3:16). The writers of the Scriptures were "moved [lit., borne along] by the Holy Spirit" rather than by their own imaginations or "private interpretations" (2 Pet. 1:20–21).

The "Bible Contains the Word of God" Theory

This theory may at first sound innocent, for indeed, no Bible-believer would deny that the Bible **contains** the Word of God. However, the aim of those who promote this theory is to actually deny that the Bible **is** God's Word. In saying that it **contains** God's Word, they also

leave room for it to contain myths, fables, legends, and various human errors. Of course, the liberal theologians are the only ones qualified to "demythologize" the Sacred Text, whereby all the human element is separated from the Divine! This theory cannot be harmonized with Paul's declaration that "**All** scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Tim. 3:16, emph. DM). If God gave us **all the Bible**, then **all of it is the Word of God**. Thus the Bible is not merely a bucket or box that has **some** of the Word of God in it, mingled with errors, myths, and such like. Should we accept this theory, who but fallible, biased, subjective men will decide which contents of the Bible are inspired and which are not? The lover of alcoholic beverages might be sorely tempted to disallow the proscriptions against drunkenness and the fornicator might easily rationalize the prohibitions against fornication as "uninspired."

The "Theme and General Thoughts Are Inspired" Theory

As with the *Contains* theory discussed above, no Bible-believer would deny that the general thoughts and concepts of the Bible are inspired. However, also, as with the *Contains* view, this view does not go far enough to satisfy the claim of Scripture for its origin. It is not merely inspired in its general direction or in its broad subject matter and themes, but as 2 Timothy 3:16 plainly declares, it is **wholly** inspired—God gave **all** of it. As with the theories of evolution, this theory of inspiration would never have been thought of had men been content to accept what the Bible teaches (and everywhere demonstrates) concerning this subject. We were both surprised and disappointed to find that McClintock and Strong, generally reliable as conservative scholars, advance this view with considerable vigor as the teaching of Scripture.⁹ Warfield correctly classifies this view as a part of the "Rationalistic" approach to inspiration.¹⁰

The "Personal Inspiration" Theory

This theory holds that the Bible writers were enlightened in various degrees, purified morally, and brought into an intimate and immediate communion with God by the Holy Spirit. This new life "on a higher spiritual plane" was then expressed in the things they wrote, and these writings (the Bible) served as God's revelation of His will to man. The emphasis in this view is upon the moral and religious quality of the writers rather than upon the words they wrote.¹¹ While agreeing that the men who wrote the Bible were for the most part men who sought to live morally pure lives and who had a close relationship with God, this is hardly sufficient to explain the Scriptures. If this were all that was required to produce Scripture, then men of such qualities would have continued to produce authorized additions to the Bible since the close of the first century. The emphasis in Scripture is not on the **men who wrote** the Bible,

but upon the **words which they wrote**: "All **scripture** [i.e., the words written] is given by inspiration of God . . ." (2 Tim. 3:16, emph. DM).

The "Partial Inspiration" Theory

This theory is similar to the "Contains" theory discussed above, but instead of making allowances for errors in the Bible in the form of myths, legends, and the like, it allows for errors in matters of science, geography, history, and other such subjects. In this view, only the "religious" teachings of the Bible in the areas of doctrine and practice can be attributed to inspiration. Warfield classifies this as another one of the offshoots of the Rationalistic theory.¹² This theory obviously ignores or denies the stubborn claim of 2 Timothy 3:16 that **all** Scripture—including its statements on every subject—is from God. In the final analysis, any theory of inspiration that denies plenary or verbal inspiration is a mere "partial inspiration" theory.

Numerous other variations of these false theories exist, but those above are the most pronounced. Quite possibly these counterfeit views of inspiration have done far more damage than all of the open and obvious assaults against the inspired Word could or will ever do. They come from theologians who purport to be scholars as well as men of religion. A Biblically ignorant, trusting, and gullible public has been easily deceived and has had its faith stolen away by them. We must reject and expose for the damnable doctrines they are, every suggestion concerning inspiration that denies, ignores, or in any way contradicts what the Bible itself teaches.

Inspiration—The Skeptical History

The false theories previously discussed arose out of the various hypotheses of Biblical criticism. The advent of modern Biblical criticism is traceable to some theologians in the middle part of the eighteenth century. These critics (who obviously had too much time on their hands) began speculating that the Pentateuch was written by a plurality of men, instead of by Moses. A century later, Karl H. Graf, and Julius Wellhausen popularized the modernistic critical theories on the Old Testament, and F.C. Bauer and his Tübingen School in Germany did the same concerning the New Testament.¹³ These men and their disciples began calling in question almost every previously accepted assurance concerning every part of the Bible as to textual purity, authorship, dating, historicity, and authenticity. The theories of these pseudo-believers attributed the Bible to a process of literary evolution at the hands of mere men, undirected by God. The most radical critics gave up even a pretense of belief in inspiration in any degree.

While the outlandish ideas of the critics did not sway all of the theologians, they most certainly had a telling effect. The modernistic tenets of Biblical criticism had captured much of

the theological scholarship (as the world views it) by the close of the nineteenth century. Benjamin B. Warfield's monumental book, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (quoted from earlier) was the outgrowth of this great controversy. At the same time, J.W. McGarvey was waging war on those same theological termites in his still-valuable book, *Biblical Criticism*. It should seem obvious that one cannot stand in doubt of the authenticity of Scripture and at the same time believe in its inspiration in any full sense at all. Therefore, the critics and their disciples put forth the counterfeit theories of inspiration discussed above in an effort to hold on to some semblance of the doctrine. Again, disappointingly, McClintock and Strong go out of their way in an attempt to overthrow the use of *plenary* and *verbal* in reference to inspiration.¹⁴

A study of *inspiration* as a historical subject reveals that the rejection of plenary/verbal inspiration has been relatively recent. R. Laird Harris comments on the recency of this rejection as follows:

The Bible has withstood many attacks through the centuries from enemies of all sorts. But in the last century, it has been called upon to withstand repeated attacks in the house of its friends. The Bible is now freely doubted by the preachers in the pulpits and the teachers in the seminary classrooms of our land.... For centuries the Church had believed what lies upon the face of the Biblical evidence, that the various books of the Bible were written by the authors whose names they bear and were contemporary more or less with the events they narrate, just as they claim to be. The unity of the various books was not questioned, except, perhaps, by an occasional ancient and extreme heretic like Celsus. These views were not seriously challenged until the late eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century quite opposite views came to the fore.... It is safe to say that there is no doctrine, except those of the Trinity and the deity of Christ, which has been so widely held through the ages of Church history as that of verbal inspiration.¹⁵

Warfield devotes an entire chapter (24 pp.) to "The Church Doctrine of Inspiration," in which he gives irrefragable documentation of the contention of Harris quoted above. A brief summary statement will suffice to show the animation with which he sets forth his documentation (notwithstanding his denominational terminology):

This church-doctrine of inspiration differs from the theories that would fain supplant it, in that it is not the invention nor the property of an individual, but the settled faith of the universal church of God; in that it is not the growth of yesterday, but the assured persuasion of the people of God from the first planting of the church until today; in that it is not a protean shape, varying its affirmations to fit every new change in the ever-shifting thought of men, but from the beginning has been the church's constant and abiding conviction as to the divinity of the Scriptures committed to her keeping. It is certainly a most impressive fact—this well-defined, aboriginal, stable doctrine of the church as to the nature and trustworthiness of the Scriptures of God, which confronts with its gentle but steady persistence of affirmation all the theories of inspiration which the restless energy of unbelieving and half-believing speculation has been able to invent in this agitated nineteenth century of ours.... Nor do we need to do more than remind ourselves that this attitude of entire trust in every word of the Scriptures has been

characteristic of the people of God from the very foundation of the church.... The earliest writers know no other doctrine.¹⁶

In spite of the most persistent and overwhelming evidence proving that Bible believers universally held to a plenary/verbal concept of inspiration until the advent of modern skeptical criticism, some still brazenly deny this fact. After commenting on how universal the doctrine of verbal inspiration has been through all of the centuries of church history until the past century, Harris wrote: "This, however, is by no means the common conception of the situation. Occasionally an effort is made to picture this doctrine as a recent growth...."¹⁷ In their attack on plenary/verbal inspiration, McClintock and Strong sought to revise history with the following extreme (and equally erroneous) statement:

The theory of verbal inspiration is comparatively recent in the history of theology. There is no such theory stated in the Scriptures.... The passages adduced in its favor have no pertinence.... The fathers had no definite theory of inspiration at all.... It was in the 17th century that the notion of verbal inspiration, which had before only floated about from one individual to another, took the shape of a definite theory, and received proper ecclesiastical sanction.¹⁸

Apparently the purpose of opponents of plenary/verbal inspiration in affirming a recent advent of the doctrine is to give credibility to their flawed modernistic theories of inspiration. Biblical critics would have the naïve believer accept their assertion that their blasphemous views were held by the ancients and that the elite critics therefore hold the "orthodox" view and occupy the "mainstream of Christian thought." Nothing could be further from the truth. The very term, *Modernist*, by which we commonly identify all such destructive critics, provides a clue to their late arrival. If their claim were true, *Ancientists* would fit them much better than *Modernists* would. One simply has to ignore or deny the shouting voice of church history to hold such a view. While the length of time a particular doctrine has been believed does not guarantee its truthfulness, both the antiquity and the universality with which men down through the centuries have believed in the plenary/verbal inspiration of the Scriptures most surely should cause one to be slow to abandon it except for overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Besides rejection of plenary/verbal inspiration by destructive critics on the claim that it is neither taught in Scripture nor anywhere else until fairly recently, Modernists have also rejected it on the grounds that it requires a process of "mechanical dictation" whereby God used the writers as no more than "stenographers." The critics reason that the writing talents and styles of the various authors are clearly distinct from each other, which they allege could not be so were their very words dictated by God. However, the "mechanical dictation" charge is a straw man

invented by faithless men in an attempt to discredit what the Bible actually teaches about its own origin. Harris remarks on this calumny as follows:

Some caricature the doctrine [of verbal inspiration] by saying that they cannot believe so rigid and mechanical a "dictation theory." Now, rigid the doctrine may be; but it is not mechanical, unless it be held that the Spirit of God has no ways to work except mechanical ways.¹⁹

Likewise, Warfield answered this charge: "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."²⁰ Now, if the Scriptures set forth "dictation" as the consistent or exclusive mode of plenary/verbal inspiration, then we would have no hesitancy in accepting, advocating, and defending it. (There are, in fact, some places in the Sacred text where it appears that God did directly "dictate" the words to be written at a given moment [e. g., Rev. 2:1, 8, 12, 18, et al.].) However, for the most part we are not told **the means by which** God provided the words of Scripture, but that **He did provide them** is most plainly taught, as we shall later demonstrate.

Obviously, the inspired writers were able to use their own vocabularies and writing styles, but why should this be thought to conflict with plenary/verbal inspiration? Indeed, it does not, any more than plenary/verbal inspiration demands "mechanical dictation." Hear Warfield again:

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.... By a special, supernatural, extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, the sacred writers have been guided in their writing in such a way, as while their humanity was not superseded, it was yet so dominated that their words became at the same time the words of God, and thus, in every case and all alike, absolutely infallible.²¹

Significantly, the inspired men themselves understood that they wrote in different styles, all the while claiming guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. Steve Gibson made the following significant observations concerning this fact:

The Bible does not teach that the minds of its writers were suspended or entirely passive ("it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us" [Acts 15:28]; "after my judgment: and I think also that I have the Spirit of God" [1 Cor. 7:40—a statement using irony]; "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" [14:32]). Far from being a recent discovery, the Bible acknowledges such stylistic phenomena in the same breath as it claims inspiration. Peter recognized Paul's style as more difficult than his own, yet classed both as Spirit-controlled writers of Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15–16; cf. 1:20–21)...

...As sailboats appear to drive themselves, so do inspired men, but in each case there is an unseen propulsion (men "carried along" [2 Pet. 1:21];... It is helpful to illustrate inspiration by

means of a wagon driver guiding horses by reins. The instincts and inclinations of the animals are not extinguished, but employed by the driver's guiding hand to take him just where he wants to go. So it is with the Holy Spirit who controlled the style and thought-patterns of inspired men to give God's very Word (1 Cor. 2:13; 1 The. 2:13). If God could borrow the words and constructions of Hebrew and Greek, could He not also employ the manners and style of their speakers?²²

We have demonstrated that the **rejection** (rather than the **advocacy**) of plenary/verbal inspiration is a relatively recent phenomenon, emanating from the poisonous soil of modern, unbelieving, destructive Biblical criticism. We have also seen that the critics' objection to plenary/verbal inspiration on the grounds that it constitutes "mechanical dictation" from God is no more than a subterfuge concocted to excuse their humanistic theories of "inspiration."

Inspiration—The Scriptural Evidence

We come now to consider in more detail some of the Biblical claims for inspiration and to survey a small portion of the vast amount of evidence concerning those claims. By even a mere sampling of this plenitude of evidence, however, the unbiased reader will have no difficulty perceiving what the Bible claims about its own origin.

Primary Passages

I have already given some attention to *theopneustos* in 2 Timothy 3:16, so my comments here will but briefly supplement that material. The passage simply says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God" (KJV). As earlier noted, the phrase, *inspiration of God* is from *theopneustos*, but let us turn our attention to other key words in the passage. It is not "part of," "some of," "much of," or "most of" Scripture that is inspired of God, but "**all**," referring to every part, the whole, or entirety of that which constitutes "Scripture." The other key word in the passage is *Scripture*, (almost exclusively from *graphe* throughout the New Testament [from which we get all of our English *graph* words]). This word appears some fifty times, with about half of the occurrences in the Gospel accounts and half in Acts through Revelation. Warfield wrote concerning this term:

In every case it bears that technical sense in which it designates the Scriptures by way of eminence, the Scriptures of the OT.... We need to note in modification of the broad statement, therefore, only that it is apparent from 2 Peter 3:16 (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18) that the NT writers were well aware that the category "Scripture," in the high sense, included also the writings they were producing, as along with the books of the OT constituting the complete "Scripture" or authoritative Word of God.²³

Theological Dictionary of the New Testament observes the following applications of *graphe* in the New Testament (which I paraphrase):

(1) Of the (Holy) Scriptures, or the collection of individual books (e.g., Mat. 21:42; 22:29; et al.); (2) Of individual passages of Scripture (cf. Mark 12:10; Luke 4:21; et al.); (3) Of the totality of the Old Testament, with emphasis upon the unity of Scripture (e.g. Gal. 3:8, 22; 2 Pet. 1:20; et al.).²⁴

It is clear then that the "Scriptures," all of which Paul said were inspired by God, describes all of the Old Testament books.

However, we should carefully note that, while the primary application of Paul's immortal statement concerning inspiration was to the Old Testament, by extension, his statement applies to any and all other books that should likewise come to constitute "Scripture." We have already demonstrated (see Warfield above) that the New Testament writers were conscious that their writings also constituted Scripture and were also therefore, inspired (1 Tim. 5:18; 2 Pet. 3:16). The very promise that Christ gave the apostles in the upper room necessarily implied that what they taught, whether by tongue or pen, would be inspired (i.e., provided for them by the Holy Spirit) and would thus constitute "Scripture" (John 14:26; 16:13; cf. Mat. 10:19–20; 16:19).

Another passage that sets forth the doctrine of inspiration with unmistakable clarity is 2 Peter 1:20–21: "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." Note several features of this statement:

1. *Prophecy of scripture* is a phrase referring to the entire body of Scripture (just as *all scripture* does in 2 Tim. 3:16). Prophecy sometimes includes the predictive element, but its primary meaning is of one person's speaking for another (cf. Exo. 4:15–16). To refer to the "prophecy of scripture" is to declare that it is a message whose messengers have written it, not from and for themselves, but from and for another.
2. No part of Scripture came from within man or from man's private, unaided imagination, reasonings, or "interpretations." This statement further emphasizes the very meaning of "prophecy" as just noted.
3. All the Scriptures, rather than coming from men, came from God, who spoke **through** men.
4. These men who produced Scripture were "moved" (*phero*, carried or borne along) by the Holy Spirit to produce the Scriptures. In this fact we have the explanation of the **source** of the "prophecy of scripture" (primarily referring to the Old Testament) and the way fallible men could produce an infallible book.

With McClintock and Strong I heartily agree concerning the application of both of these key passages: "These passages relate specially to the Old Testament, but there is at least equal reason to predicate divine inspiration of the New Testament."²⁵ A more definitive and simple explanation of inspiration could not be desired than that which is set forth in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20–21. To those who have trusted the Bible through the centuries these

have been quite sufficient. However, the evidence abounds far beyond these straightforward claims.

Old Testament Claims

What Paul and Peter declared concerning the source of the Old Testament Scriptures in the passages just discussed, the Old Testament authors everywhere claimed for their writings—their message was from God. God spoke to Moses "mouth to mouth, ...not in dark speeches" (Num. 12:8). God told Isaiah: "And I have put my words in thy mouth..." (Isa. 51:16). Jeremiah explained the source of his message: "The Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jer. 1:9). Likewise, Ezekiel declared: "And he [the Lord] said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them" (Eze. 3:4). These claims are representative of all of the thirty-nine Old Testament documents. One person has calculated the occurrence of the expression, "Thus saith the Lord," or one similar, no less than 3,808 times in the Old Testament. How truly the majestic opening statement of Hebrews summarizes what the Old Testament says of its own origin: "God...at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (Heb. 1:1).

The Way Jesus and the New Testament Writers Viewed the Old Testament

What our Lord believed and taught about inspiration is crucial. If He expressed doubt concerning the Old Testament Scriptures or if he openly taught that they were a collection of uninspired documents which had evolved to their present state, and included myths, fables, historical errors, and such like, we would be forced to sit up and take notice. In fact, if this were the case, we could not believe in Him without rejecting the Old Testament claim of inspiration. Further, if He had known the Old Testament to be fraudulent concerning its claims of authorship, authenticity, and inspiration, but accommodated Himself to the "superstition" of His day which held the books to be from God, He would Himself have been dishonest and a deceiver of others. Such a man could be neither Son of God nor Savior.

However, if He, as the sinless Son of God—Truth personified (John 14:6)—always treated the Old Testament canon in all of its parts with reverence and respect, ever ascribed them to His Father, and ever upheld their authority as the Word of God, then **we cannot believe in Him without the fullest belief in the inspiration and veracity of those Scriptures.** What did He teach concerning the Scriptures? We may summarize by saying that every word He spoke in reference to them was one calculated to credit them to God and to attribute to them the authority of God. In the temptations of the Lord and on numerous other

occasions He quoted Scripture, with the significant introductory phrase, *It is written* (Mat. 4:4, 7, 10; Mark 7:6; Luke 19:46; et al.). Warfield commented on this formula as follows:

The implication [is] that what is thus said or written is of Divine and final authority.... The simple adduction in this solemn and decisive manner of a written authority, carries with it the implication that the appeal is made to the indefectible authority of the Scriptures of God, which in all their parts and in every one of their declarations are clothed with the authority of God Himself.²⁶

Jesus made another significant statement concerning the Old Testament in the early part of the Sermon on the Mount:

Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven (Mat. 5:17–19).

Note that He identified the entire Old Testament by the customary title, *Law* and *Prophets*. Then, concerning them, He said His purpose was not to destroy, but to fulfill them. This statement at the same time shows His love, respect, and even protective attitude toward them, and His acknowledgement that they contained predictive statements concerning Himself and His coming into the world. Further, He expressed His unmitigated confidence in every portion of them, not only in every single word or letter, but also even down to the **parts** of the individual letters in the words (for so *jot* and *tittle* signify). Further still, He proclaimed the absolute authority of the Old Testament (until such a time as He would fulfill it) by pronouncing a curse upon anyone who should presume to break even the "least" of its commandments or teach others to do so. He then pronounced a corresponding blessing upon those who would do and teach its precepts. Behind this remarkable statement of confidence in and respect for the "Law and the Prophets" is the implicit thesis that those books were (and are) from God and must be hallowed as His authoritative Word.

The statement of Jesus in John 10:34–36 cannot be omitted even from a brief survey of His attitude toward the Old Testament:

Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?

The entire appeal of Jesus in answering the calumny of the Jews (who were accusing Him of blasphemy and were threatening to stone Him) was to Scripture. **First**, He called the Scripture "law," although the passage to which He pointed them is in the Psalms (82:6). In so

doing, He attributed legal authority to Scripture in its entirety. Nor is this the only place in which He did so (see John 15:25; cf. Psalms 69:4). Thus, just as Peter characterized all of Scripture as "prophecy" (2 Peter 1:20), the Lord characterized all of it as "law" (cf. I Corinthians 14:21; Romans 3:19).

Second, the Lord in this statement made the categorical affirmation, *The scripture cannot be broken*. This fact was the basis of His appeal to the law in his argument with the Jews. He meant that no man or men could annul, overturn, or break the Sacred Writings. Men could not withstand their authority. This being so, His accusers must accept the statement from the Psalm He cited as absolutely authoritative. **Third**, notice that the statement to which He appealed in the Psalm is one of (and here I intend no irreverence for any word of Scripture) remoteness and insignificance, relatively speaking. Jesus' reference to such a seemingly remote statement therefore indicates with great force that His confidence in the Scriptures applied to their most casual statements and parts as all being infallibly God-given.

We must not pass from this summary without giving at least brief attention to some of the last words Jesus spoke to the apostles before His Ascension:

And he said unto them, These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:44–47).

Note the following:

1. That which he designated "the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms" (v. 44) He likewise identified as "the scriptures" (v. 45), referring to the entire Old Testament.
2. *All things...which are written* (v. 44) and *it is written* (v. 46) (as earlier noticed) are phrases referring to that which God has said and which was to be accepted as unquestionably reliable and authoritative. Where were these things written? In "the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms," "the scriptures," which He had just mentioned.
3. He said that **all** things would be fulfilled which the Scriptures spoke concerning Himself (v. 44). His confidence in the Old Testament could not be so perfect did He not attribute all of it to God.

Space allows only the mention in passing that all of the New Testament writers followed the Lord perfectly in their evaluation of the Old Testament as from God. Just as Jesus insisted that the Scriptures must be fulfilled, so did the writers of the Gospel accounts and of Acts (e.g., Matthew 25:56; Mark 15:28; Luke 3:4; John 12:38; Acts 1:16). Paul's letters are so rife with

quotations from the Old Testament—on the basis that it was an inspired document—that we need not even cite examples. Additionally, he stated his unabashed and unambiguous declaration of the inspiration of Scripture, which I have already discussed at some length (2 Tim. 3:16). Likewise, Peter quoted extensively from the Old Testament (cf. Acts 2:16–35, et al.), besides making his comprehensive claim as to their source (2 Pet. 1:20–21), which I have also previously discussed. Neither James nor Jude neglected to refer frequently to the Old Testament records with the fullest confidence in their statements. I say without fear of successful contradiction that the Lord and all of the New Testament writers— no exceptions— treat the Old Testament as the Very Word of God, even to its most minute portions of alphabetic markings and to its most apparently remote and casual statements. This is precisely what **plenary/verbal inspiration** means.

The Inspiration of the New Testament

Does the New Testament acknowledge and claim God as its source, as does the Old Testament? It does so in most certain and absolute terms. Two passages that I have only cited now deserve fuller attention. The first passage is Paul's statement in I Timothy 5:18: "For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his hire." Notice that Paul identifies both of these proverbial statements as "Scripture." Interestingly, however, is the fact that one can find only the first of them in the Old Testament (Deu. 25:4). The second is from Jesus (Mat. 10:10; Luke 10:7). Clearly, Paul called these words of Jesus—**which had been recorded in two New Testament books**—"Scripture." Hendriksen is correct: "The two sayings are clearly co-ordinate. If the first is "Scripture," so is the second. Thus a word spoken by Jesus [and recorded in two New Testament books, DM] is here placed on a par with a saying from the Old Testament canon."²⁷

The second passage is 2 Peter 3:15–16:

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Peter referred to the letters of Paul as difficult to understand in places. He said that certain ones even twisted some of his statements, as they did "the other scriptures." It is manifest that Peter here designated the epistles of Paul "Scripture" on a par with all of the Old Testament. Note that he also stated that Paul wrote, not out of his own human wisdom, but "according to the wisdom given to him."

The New Testament writers were thus conscious that their writings were not merely their own opinions, but the words and commands God gave them to deliver. Were this not so we would not have any authoritative commands, only polite suggestions, in the epistles. Yet, not a one of the epistles (excepting Philemon) is free of authoritative orders. Paul was not only conscious of the authority of his letters, but of the source of that authority—He was speaking/writing for God, the Very Word of God. He makes the definitive claim that the words (not the mere thoughts or ideas) which he spoke (whether by tongue or pen) were not from men: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:13). Not only is this a claim of inspiration, but of "word" (verbal) inspiration, else words mean nothing at all. He again stated to the Corinthians the authority behind his words: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (14:37).

Paul made the same sort of claim in 1 Thessalonians 2:13: "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe." Note that the message Paul preached (and wrote) was not the "word of men," but "in truth, the word of God." No wonder he was not hesitant to write as follows in his second letter to them: "Now we **command** you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after **the tradition which they received of us**" (2 The. 3:6) (emph. DM). First, he issued a firm command, but on the authority of Christ, not his own (three other times in the same chapter he referred to commands he had given them [vv. 4, 10, 12]). Additionally, the standard of behavior set before them was none other than "the traditions" Paul had delivered to them, that is, the message Paul had taught them by pen and tongue.

This same consciousness of authority and of Divine inspiration is clearly behind Peter's statement: "That ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles" (2 Pet. 3:2). Peter here put the words of the apostles on equal footing, not only with the prophets of old, but with the words of the Lord. When Jude exhorted the brethren to "Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), he touched on at least three points relating to inspiration:

1. "The faith" (i.e., the whole body of New Testament teaching, the Gospel) was not thought up nor invented by mere men. Rather, it was "**delivered** to the saints."

2. "The faith" was "once for all delivered to the saints." This statement means that once the body of literature denominated "the faith" was completed, there would be no more. Like the Old Testament, so "the faith" (the New Testament) would be confined only to those documents thus "delivered."
3. "The faith" was to be defended and protected with great energy. This was so because of its priceless worth, due both to its origin and its content, not being **produced by** the saints, but being **delivered to** the saints by the Lord through the Holy Spirit.

With one final passage I will conclude this brief survey of the indications of New Testament inspiration. Almost the closing words of the New Testament (and of the Bible) are a resounding testimony to the inspiration of the entire Bible:

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18–19).

It is obvious that these warnings primarily apply to the book of Revelation itself, which warnings constitute a powerful and positive declaration that this book is not the message of a man (John), but of God. In this and this alone is the explanation of such stringent warnings not to tamper with a single word (yes, "verbal" inspiration is most surely implied). It is called a book of "prophecy" twice, in the same sense that the Old Testament is composed of books of prophecy—books penned by men who wrote/spoke for God with His message for men.

However, I just as appropriately apply this sober dual warning to the entire Bible. All of its other books, like the book of Revelation itself, are "prophecy" in the sense that the men who wrote them were delivering God's message. They all, in one way or another, promise plagues (eventuating in eternal torment) and exclusion from the paradise of Heaven to those who would dare tamper with a single word of the inspired text so as to change its teaching. Like the Revelation, the actual words of the Bible in their entirety were given by God and must be preserved unchanged throughout.

Inspiration—The Skeptics in the Church

The first step the liberals took in trying to destroy the church was either to ignore or deny the Bible's authority where it limited their change agenda, while continuing their lip service to the doctrine of inspiration. The next great battle we face—and it is already upon us—involves the second crucial step: denial of the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible. The second step is but the natural byproduct of the first. Is the Bible the very Word of God, or is it the mere words of men? After all, if one is not going to respect its authority in all things, there is little practical value in affirming or defending its inspiration claims.

We have for some time had among us our own class of "advanced thinkers," and their numbers are growing. Several years ago a Herald of Truth television sermon delivered by Harold Hazelp contained the following assessment of the Bible: "We are assuming that it [the Bible] is the inspired word of God, though this certainly is also an area in which we should be open to whatever facts are pertinent. Any observer of religion is aware that our problem is a legitimate one."²⁸ As early as 1975, Leroy Garrett referred to "jars and conflicts" that were "abundant in scripture" and depicted the Bible as a book that was not "some sort of heavenly document that escapes man's imperfect handiwork." However, he assures us, "there are no errors or mistakes that really matter."²⁹

John T. Willis, a teacher in the religion department of Abilene Christian University, affirms that "the Bible **contains** the word of God, but not ordinarily or absolutely as it is ordinarily read [emph. DM]."³⁰ In another swipe at inspiration, he declares: "The Bible claims to be inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16). There is **no way to prove or disprove this claim** absolutely, although arguments have been advanced on both sides of the issue [emph. DM]."³¹

At least one man who still claims to be part of the Lord's church has gone much further than those quoted above. A fellow religion faculty member of Willis for many years was Carroll D. Osburn, who this year (2005) announced his retirement after seventeen years at ACU. His comments are both revealing and radical relative to the subject of inspiration, for which reason I feel compelled to quote him at length and respond to his statements at length." Let us begin with his "history lesson" on the rise of "Fundamentalism":

This emerging "liberalism" [i.e., of Existentialist Rudolf Bultmann, early 20th century, DM] so restructured the contours of the Christian faith that a vigorous reaction developed to reaffirm traditional postures, and "Fundamentalism" gathered momentum. Emphasis was placed upon Biblical infallibility. The "plenary verbal inspiration" of the Bible was mandated. Truth was equated with the King James Version. Evolution was denied angrily and science became viewed as a threat to the faith. Against literary-historical criticism, interpretations derived by "proof-texting," i.e., understandings derived apart from historical and literary criticism, emerged due to doctrinal necessity.... Denunciation of culture abounded, along with strong anti-philosophical, anti-theological, and anti-educational stances....

In more recent times, a debate has raged over the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture. The debate involves the question whether inspiration necessitates the truth of virtually everything in the Bible, whether scientific, geographic, historical, or doctrinal. Some argue that inspiration need only involve inerrancy in those matters vital for salvation. Others countered that "limited inerrancy" is impossible.... So, doctrinal necessity determines literary and historical conclusions....³²

Please observe the following from Osburn's statements:

1. Like McClintock and Strong, he wants us to believe that “plenary” and “verbal” claims for inspiration are latecomers, arising in the early twentieth century. Warfield and Harris demonstrated that his assertion is false.
2. He apparently wants us to believe that the doctrine of Biblical infallibility arose from an extreme reaction to Bultmann’s existentialism. (He disparages *Fundamentalism* and mentions it with seeming disgust.) Rather, men who believed this doctrine (as for nineteen centuries almost everyone who vested any faith in the Bible had done) began reemphasizing it in response to Bultmann’s radical influence.
3. He likewise alleges that “plenary verbal inspiration” was “mandated” in response to Modernism and Existentialism. He is wrong again. This doctrine was “mandated” (for all who professed faith in the Bible as God’s Word) because the Bible teaches it and it was under severe attack.
4. His averment that “truth was equated with the King James Version” is a straw man. While I, along with many others, hold the KJV in high esteem as completely reliable and trustworthy, only an infinitesimal number of extremist brethren equate it exclusively with the Truth.
5. He impugns the motives of those who arrive at their understanding of the Bible by searching out all that it says on every subject. He accuses us of arriving at our conclusions “due to doctrinal necessity.” Perhaps it would be better to wonder if Dr. Osburn may not have arrived at some of his conclusions “due to doctrinal necessity,” having learned them from Modernists at Vanderbilt and St. Andrews. He certainly did not arrive at them from studying the Bible.
6. He accuses “Fundamentalists” of denouncing culture, philosophy, theology, and education. I plead guilty to opposing all of these items as they stand in opposition to God’s Word. Paul warned against conforming to current culture (Rom. 12:2), which is striving to remake our nation in a mold of absolute secularism (read “hedonism”). Philosophy consists mainly of the vain, transient, godless reasonings of men, which Paul warned could raid our faith as the war spoils of our arch enemy (Col. 2:8). For more than a century, “theology” has largely been synonymous with Rationalism, Modernism, Existentialism, and now, Postmodernism, all of which are fancy words for infidelity. “Education” is bane or blessing, depending on what one teaches and/or learns. It is one of the great and tragic ironies of modern times that most of the institutions of higher education founded and operated by brethren to strengthen the faith of young people, have been prostituted so as to tear down their faith. The leaders in the Change-Agent movement are mostly those who have obtained so much “education” in pursuit of their advanced degrees that they have become too educated to listen to God anymore, as I will discuss below. One would have to oppose God to favor the current crop of culture, philosophy, theology, and education.
7. He implies that which he later stated explicitly: “Biblical inerrancy” does not demand inerrancy for the Bible throughout. He again impugns motives when discussing the inerrancy debate. Our faith in Biblical inerrancy does not rest upon some external “doctrinal necessity,” but upon the “doctrinal necessity” of believing what the Bible teaches about its own origin and nature.

Osburn identifies Thomas B. Warren and J.D. Thomas as “representative of the hermeneutical methodology of twentieth-century Churches of Christ.” They are thereby some of those repugnant “Fundamentalists” who have so little sense as to believe “the Bible is the authoritative word of God which must be understood inductively according to principles of rationality” (so, I suppose, Osburn favors approaching the Sacred Text irrationally). Osburn clearly implies that these men are naïve in believing that the Bible “contains God’s own words and is inerrant,” and in viewing “discrepancies as only apparent.”³³

Osburn’s elitist, judgmental, and liberal comments get worse:

Fundamentalist methodology dominated thought in the Churches of Christ in much of the twentieth century. While the Fundamentalist approach stresses the existence of the supernatural and the inspiration of Scripture, it approaches truth more like a giant “grid,” all parts of which must cohere. So, Biblical interpretation is not conducted in terms of literary and historical controls, but in “proof-texting” fashion to provide “proofs” for the various elements in the “grid.” As such, presuppositions control the use of Biblical data. No interpretation can be correct which does not cohere with the “truth grid.” But, citing a passage here and there from any part of the Bible, assuming that one has the mind of God on a matter, leaves much to be desired.³⁴

Please observe:

1. I have never used any sort of “giant grid” in my Bible study, nor had I ever heard of one before reading Dr. Osburn’s comments. Nor have I ever met a brother who knows of, much less follows, Osburn’s mythical “grid.” I freely confess, however, to so approaching my study of the Bible as to make each of its parts “cohere” with the rest of it (which obviously is not a great concern to Modernists and Liberals).
2. Dr. Osburn and his ilk are the ones who have the “grid” into which everything must fit. He even names it the “literary and historical controls.” Any view of the Bible or of any doctrine in the Bible that does not fit this theological grid is just so much ignorant “Fundamentalism,” I suppose.
3. He implies that without consulting the “literary and historical controls” of Modernists (of which he is one), we cannot possibly comprehend the meaning of Scripture. Just what did earnest seekers of Truth do before the skeptical Bible critics came along? By Osburn’s reasoning, those noble Jews at Berea searched the Scriptures in vain, for they could not possibly comprehend them without the Modernistic hermeneutical template (Acts 17:11). Likewise, Paul’s exhortation that brethren understand what he wrote (Eph. 3:4; Col. 2:2) must have left them completely bumfuzzled because they lived eighteen centuries too early to possess and

employ the cocktail of “literary and historical controls” invented by Johnny-come-lately unbelieving critics.

4. He assumes a motive, again, for the “Fundamentalist” approach to the Bible:
“Presuppositions control the use of Biblical data.” I turn this charge back on him and his comrades. I know of none who approach the Bible with more preconceived ideas, biases, and presuppositions than Modernists (e.g., the Bible’s claimed authors are not reliable, it is the product of literary evolution, it contains historical, geographical, and scientific errors, it contains contradictions, it contains myths, it cannot possibly be explained in terms of plenary verbal inspiration, et al.).
5. Osburn’s charge that seeking to understand the Bible by studying every passage that touches on a given subject constitutes “assuming that one has the mind of God” reveals just how elitist he is. I find his statement to be very condescending at best. Has this erudite scholar never heard of exegesis? By searching the Scriptures, I do not assume that I have the mind of God. If I thus assumed, I would hardly need to do any Scripture study. Rather, in my study I am **seeking to know** the mind of God insofar as He has revealed it through His inspired Word. I’ve never met an earnest—and humble—Bible student, preacher or otherwise—who approached the Sacred Text with any other posture. To what source would this professor send us for this information, if not the Bible?

I highly recommend to Dr. Osburn a colloquial proverb that might serve him well: “When one finds himself in a hole, he should stop digging.” He just keeps digging his hole deeper. Under the heading, *Conservatism*, he writes:

Alternatively [i.e., to “Fundamentalism,” DM], within conservative circles, a significant revision of Fundamentalist views has emerged. While retaining belief in the existence of the supernatural and emphasis upon the historicity of the Christian, faith, other matters are viewed differently. The authority of the Biblical text is maintained, for instance, but “verbal” inspiration has given way to “full” inspiration, the use of the Greek text has supplanted the KJV, and texts are studied in their literary and historical contexts.... Rejecting arrogant exclusivism, Christian fellowship is extended to a broader arena.

Conservatives [with whom Osburn identifies himself, DM], then, maintain belief in the existence of the supernatural and take a high view of Scripture, but avoid the propositional truth approach of Fundamentalists. The text, analyzed according to rigorous application of literary and historical controls, is allowed to shape an emerging theology. Truth exists, but conservatives content themselves with the search for truth, laying no unique claim to its possession. Tolerance and constructive interaction with other schools of thought is characteristic of their work.³⁵

I cannot resist a few observations of the foregoing material, also:

1. Homosexuals have wordnapped the good and beautiful word, *gay*, and corrupted it to their own wicked end. Likewise, Osburn and company have taken the honorable word, *conservative*, and warped and corrupted it. Those old Fundamentalists are rascals, but enlightened Liberals have been able morph some of their obsolete and naïve ideas into a new “Conservatism.” Osburn is as near being a conservative (in any Biblical sense) as this writer is to being an Episcopal priest.
2. When he says, “other matters are viewed differently” in this new “conservatism,” he spoke the truth. He freely admits to denying verbal inspiration, while claiming to believe in “full” inspiration. He writes nonsense. Does he not know that the definition of *plenary* is “full”? He contradicts himself. There can be no “full” inspiration in any real sense unless the words themselves are God-given.
3. He may have revealed the motive for his weak view of Scripture in castigating what he perceives to be “arrogant exclusivism.” He just cannot bear for his theological peers to even hint that he is narrow or dogmatic. His “tolerance and constructive interaction with other schools of thought” allow him to find “Christian fellowship” in “a broader arena.” This man has sold his soul and whatever convictions he may ever have had in the Biblical doctrine of inspiration for the camaraderie he craves with denominational theologians. He got even less than Esau’s infamous mess of pottage in the bargain.
4. Osburn gets very close to implying (if indeed he does not) that one cannot discern the meaning of Scripture from the KJV and that one must be able to read the Greek text (we suppose he would demand the Hebrew text for the Old Testament as well) in order to do so. He surely has not thought through the implications of this pronouncement. His “conservative” approach takes the Bible right out of the hands of all but a minuscule number of the populace. He would thereby plunge the believing world into a new Biblical “Dark Age,” reminiscent of what the Roman Catholic Church did to the world when it held God’s Word hostage for centuries by keeping it in a language known only by its clerics.
5. He eschews any “propositional truth” approach to the Bible, but I suppose He forgot that Jesus and the inspired writers filled the Scriptures with just such statements. He claims that this new “conservative” approach will shape an “emerging theology,” and he all but boasts of always searching, but never possessing, the Truth. Is Osburn not aware that Paul identified those of his type (i.e., “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth”) as men who “withstand the truth,” being “corrupted in mind, reprobate concerning the faith” (2 Tim. 3:7–8)?
6. The fumes of superiority, condescension, egotism, and elitism waft freely and unmistakably from Osburn’s blather.

As mentioned earlier, I repeat for emphasis the fact that each of the men cited and quoted above has occupied classrooms filled with trusting and unsuspecting Christian young people by the hundreds each year for many years. Doubtless, these are not the only such professors in the religion departments of “Christian” universities. They have had boards and administrators who have protected them while they delivered their poison. Additionally, numerous “sophisticated” congregations exist in which, if the preacher preached a strong

sermon advocating the plenary/verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, he would either be laughed out of the pulpit or figuratively "tarred and feathered," if not both—and in that order. There are many who have not yet gone this far, but who nonetheless support and encourage, or at least, refuse to oppose and expose those who have. Those who remain silent may as well deny inspiration themselves as to behave so irresponsibly. Thus we have seen, and are seeing, before our very eyes the "ultimate capitulation" in some who still profess to be members of the church of Christ. Why do folk who have thus capitulated continue any pitiful pretense of religion, much less desire to continue to be in the church of Christ? We are already in the beginning stages of the next great battle among the saints: Is or is not the Bible the plenary and verbally-inspired Word of God?

Conclusion

Warfield summed up the ungodly work of the skeptical theorists well:

Wherever five "advanced thinkers" assemble, at least six theories as to inspiration are likely to be ventilated. They differ in every conceivable point, or in every conceivable point save one. They agree that inspiration is less pervasive and less determinative than has heretofore been thought, or than is still thought in less enlightened circles. They agree that there is less of the truth of God and more of the error of man in the Bible than Christians have been wont to believe. They agree accordingly that the teaching of the Bible may be, in this, that, or the other—here, there, or elsewhere—safely neglected or openly repudiated. So soon as we turn to the constructive side, however, and ask wherein the inspiration of the Bible consists; how far it guarantees the trustworthiness of the Bible's teaching; in what of its elements is the Bible a divinely safeguarded guide to truth: the concurrence ends and hopeless dissension sets in. They agree only in the common destructive attitude towards some higher view of the inspiration of the Bible, of the presence of which each once seems supremely conscious.³⁶

Through the centuries, skeptics of every stripe have waged a relentless battle in their effort to undermine the inspiration of the Bible. Until relatively recent times all such men made no pretense at believing in God or even in being religious. As we have shown, the more recent attacks have arisen from the Biblical critics. These attacks have been all the more dangerous because they have come from supposedly religious men, professed "believers." yea, even from teachers of religion. Their numerous false theories of inspiration, for all their effort, have not weakened, destroyed, or otherwise changed a single piece of evidence upon which the doctrine that the Bible is the plenary, verbally-inspired Word of God has stood and does stand. Although they have robbed many men, women, and young people of their faith, it is not because their case is so strong and the Bible is vulnerable to their ungodly attacks, but because the faith of men and women has been so weak. We must never give up the priceless Truth of inspiration, for, having surrendered that, we will have surrendered all.

If the Bible is not God's inspired Word, we can know but little about the nature of God and nothing about the way to live so as to please Him. Indeed, we can not even know that He desires us to live in a certain way, nor that there are rewards and punishments awaiting all men, depending on how they live. **Those who rob men of their faith in the Bible as God's faithful, infallible, and inerrant Word rob them of everything of essential value!** I beg those who have thus capitulated to restudy the evidence and be converted. Failing this, I urge them to be honest enough to flee to the bogs and swamps of outright infidelity (toward which they are rapidly moving) and leave us alone.

Endnotes

1. I originally wrote some of the following material in a different form for my "Editorial Perspective" in *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL*, Jan. 2001, of which I was editor at the time.
2. I originally wrote some of the following material in a different form for the 1989 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures ("False Theories Versus the Truth on Inspiration," *The Bible—None Like It*, ed. Curtis A. Cates [Memphis, TN: Memphis School of Preaching, 1989], pp. 88–113).
3. All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated (as here).
4. Kenneth S. Kantzer, ed., s.v. "Inspiration," *The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1967).
5. Benjamin B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., 1948), p. 131.
6. J.I. Packer, s.v. "Inspiration," *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1982, 2nd ed.), p. 516.
7. Warfield, pp. 112–13.
8. John McClintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature* (New York, NY: Harper & Bros., 1871; reprint ed., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1969), 4:613–14.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 614–15.
10. Warfield, p. 131.
11. Alfred E. Garvie, s.v. "Inspiration," *Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings (Lynn, MA: Hendrickson Pub., Inc., 1937).
12. Warfield, p. 113.
13. James Orr, s.v. "Criticism of the Bible," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1939), 2:751–52.
14. McClintock and Strong, pp. 614–15.
15. R. Laird Harris, *Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1957), pp. 22–23, 72.
16. Warfield, pp. 106–108.
17. Harris, p. 72.
18. McClintock and Strong, p. 614–15.
19. Harris, p. 20.
20. Warfield, p. 173, fn. 9.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 173, 422.
22. Steve Gibson, *Studies in 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Philemon*, ed. Dub McClish (Denton, TX: Valid Pub., Inc., 1988), pp. 318–19. Gibson wrote this excellent statement when he was a faithful Gospel preacher. Sad to say, he has since abandoned the faith.

23. Warfield, pp. 231–32.
24. Gottlob Schrenk, s.v. "Graphe," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. Geoffrey Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1964), 1:751–54.
25. McClintock and Strong, 4:612. (It is amazing that these scholars can be so lucid on this point, but so irrational on the Bible's claims of verbal and plenary inspiration.)
26. Warfield, pp. 239–40.
27. William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary—Exposition of the Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1957), p. 181.
28. Harold Hazelip, "The Search for Truth," Herald of Truth TV sermon no. 986, as quoted in "Highland Report," *Contending for the Faith*, ed. Ira Y. Rice, Jr., 4 (November 1973): 7. (Hazelip later became head of Harding Graduate School, Memphis, TN, and still later (1986), President of David Lipscomb University, Nashville, TN, from which he since retired (1997). Upon the resignation (2005) of Steve Flatt as DLU president, Hazelip has been appointed "interim president.")
29. Leroy Garrett, *Restoration Review* (October 1975): 150–51.
30. John T. Willis, "Men Spoke from God (3)," *Firm Foundation* (December 16, 1980): 807.
31. John T. Willis, ed., *The World and Literature of the Old Testament* (Austin, TX: Sweet Pub., Co., 1979), p. 11.
32. Carroll D. Osburn, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (Abilene, TX: Restoration Perspectives, 1993), pp. 57–60.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 62.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 63–65.
36. Warfield, p. 105.

[Note: I wrote this MS for and presented a digest of it orally at the Power Lectures, hosted by the Southaven, MS, Church of Christ, July 31–August 4, 2005. It was published in the book of the lectures, *Why Should I Believe the Bible?* ed. B.J. Clarke (Southaven, MS: Southaven Church of Christ).]

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