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The Doctrine of Inspiration of Scripture As Affected by the Jonannine-Synoptic Problem

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THE DOCTRINE OF INSPIRATION
OF SCRIPTURE AS AFFECTED BY THE JOHANNINE-SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Assumptions. The Bible is the authority for the Christian faith. To it, in some way, all conservative Christian groups refer for the justification of doctrine and a way of life.

Problem. The theory which stresses that inspiration is at the level of words alone has caused problems to arise as textual and literary criticism is applied to the Bible. These problems focus attention on the nature of Biblical inspiration. It is the quality of inspiration which gives authority to the Bible. An authority must speak a word which is final and cannot be controverted. It must be, in some real way, inerrant and infallible. The nature of authority demands this. Thus, by logical necessity the Bible has been declared inerrant and infallible in order to sustain its' authority in respect to truth and a way of life. Because of the relationship between authority and inerrancy, the basic question raised by these problems is, in what does Biblical inerrancy consist?

Relation of the Johannine-Synoptic Problem to the Doctrine of Biblical Inspiration. A complete answer to the problem would involve much wider study than is possible here. For the sake of clarity and in the interest of brevity in keeping with adequacy, only one problem was studied. This one is fairly central, being one of the oldest recognized problems and yet one which is considered today; namely, the Synoptic-Johannine differences. In this particular problem lie all

the essential elements of the general problem. There are the obvious differences in chronology, interpretation of events, and accuracy of reporting. This asks questions about inspiration and, finally, about the dependability necessary to authority.

Procedure. In order to discover the nature of Biblical inspiration by answering the basic question, in what does Biblical inerrancy consist, the procedure has been to open up the problem first by noting and analyzing the Johannine-Synoptic differences. This method was undertaken in order that a sound approach be maintained by dismissing, in a tentative manner at least, that which, after all, might not be problematical. By devoting an entire chapter to the Johannine-Synoptic differences it was hoped that a greater comprehension and a more vivid scope of the reality of the problem would be realized.

Since the problems of Biblical scholarship have always been with the Church in some measure, it would be difficult to answer the basic question without reference to the way the Church handled these problems in the light of its' unquestioned acceptance of Scripture as authority. Chapter three therefore covers the historical attitude of the Church toward the Scriptures.

There are many theories of inspiration in our day. These were investigated in chapter four to determine which view most adequately represents the doctrine of Biblical inspiration in the light of the Johannine-Synoptic differences.

Through this procedure of thoroughly recognizing the problem, of investigating the historical attitude toward the Scriptures, and of analyzing modern views of inspiration, it was purposed that the nature of Biblical inerrancy and Biblical inspiration would be established.

CHAPTER II

THE CHANMINE-SYNOPTIC PROBLEM

CHAPTER II

The Johamine-Synoptic Problem

The differences which exist between the first three Gospels and the fourth have been recognized to the extent that they have been given the designation of "a problem."¹

Scholars, present and past, have been aware that the Fourth Gospel has characteristics which set it apart from the other three. Matthew, Mark, and Luke conform nearly enough to the same pattern that the term Synoptic is given to them. Particularly in John there are differences in the incidents narrated, differences in the telling of the same incident, and a difference in style, but the average lay person is so accustomed to harmonizing the Gospels because of his predisposition of mind, any disharmony causes him little, if any, difficulty. There are those instances which have, especially since the rise of Biblical criticism, served as "reasons" for discrediting either the Johannine or the Synoptic accounts.

The problem resolves itself to this: Are these differences such as to undermine confidence in the Scripture: What is their significance insofar as our doctrine of inspiration is concerned?

It is the purpose of this chapter to find out just what these differences are. The procedure has been to survey the differences, set forth an answer which might possibly explain the reason for their existence, and then to give an evaluation of that which investigation has uncovered.

¹Webster's definition of a problem: a question proposed for solution; a matter difficult of solution or settlement; a doubtful question.

A Survey Of the Differences

Instances of Omission. John's account is conspicuous because of that which he omits which the Synoptists include. These omissions are extensive to the degree that the character of Jesus' ministry appears as vitally different from the Synoptic picture. Professor C. R. Bowen points out that the author of the Fourth Gospel nowhere uses

the words pity, mercy, compassion, nor suggests the quality; nowhere brings in the poor (only 12:5f.) or the rich; nowhere a publican, a sinner, a widow, a child, a scribe, a Sadducee, nowhere mentions any of the Herods, or Gentiles, no Tyre or Sidon, no Mount of Olives; no unclean demoniacs or reference to their cleansing; no repentance and no forgiveness of sin, neither the words nor the ideas, no prayer or praying ("ask" and "beg" occur), no gospel, no preaching, no apostle (the word in 13:16 is in another sense); no faith, no hope, no wisdom (that is, these words do not appear); no parable, and, most amazingly, no Kingdom of God (3:3-5 being the one exception).¹

The question arises: could an author omit such prominent characteristics of the life of Jesus and do justice to a true presentation of his life and ministry.

Without doubt there are numerous significant activities in the life of Jesus which are not included in this Gospel. John says nothing of the early life of Jesus. He gives no account of his miraculous birth nor announcement by the angels to the shepherds who were watch-

¹From "Comments on the Fourth Gospel," Anglican Theological Review, XII (192-30), 230. As quoted by John Knox, The Fourth Gospel and the Later Epistles (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1945), p. 22.

ing over their flock that night, nor does he relate the activities of the wise men. Mention is not made of Herod's slaughter of the innocent youngsters and the favored family's flight to Egypt, nor of the incident when Jesus' parents found him in the temple with the teachers. These were very important years but John does not include them in his account.

The temptation in the wilderness, the transfiguration, and the "institution" of the Lord's Supper are not mentioned in this Gospel. Excepting his death upon the Cross, the experiences of temptation, transfiguration, and the institution of the Supper are perhaps the experiences of Jesus to which the Church has attached the most significance; yet they are not a part of the Apostle John's writings even though he was a witness to the latter two. John includes more of that which transpired at the Last Supper than any other writer but he does not say a word about the ordinance which has been observed in the greater part of the Church since that time.

John seems to be quite careful to avoid the life of humiliation which the other Gospel writers so vividly portray. As Professor Bowen has observed, there are no publicans, sinners, scribes, widows, children or lepers as far as John is concerned.¹ There is the instance of the woman of Samaria, where the stress is upon Jesus' messiahship rather than upon the woman's sin, and the woman taken in adultery, which incident is quite generally recognized not to be included in earlier manuscripts. Instead, we see Jesus associating with prominent individuals like Nicodemus. We must turn to the other Gospels to realize that Jesus loved the little children, that he ate with the publicans and the sinners, that he humbled himself to the degree that he

¹Ibid.

actually touched a leper.

This Gospel does not locate the ministry of Jesus in Galilee primarily. Unlike the Synoptics, Judea is the locale with a considerable portion being dedicated to the happenings of one night.

Other remarkable and significant exclusions are the disciples' prayer and the Sermon on the Mount. John does not see fit to include the discourses which we find from Matthew, Mark, and Luke that Jesus had with the Sadducees. And throughout the entire account, the writer does not include a single parable, which according to the other writers held so prominent a place in the Lord's teaching. It is interesting to note, too, that though the word for "faith," *πίστις*, is used three hundred and forty times in our New Testament, it does not occur once in the Fourth Gospel,¹ though "believing" is one of its most characteristic words.

Another item which surely is of doctrinal importance and essential to a complete presentation of the good news is the teaching concerning hell. The Apostle does not mention any such place. The coming of the Judge and King is replaced with the coming of the Comforter.

Instances of Inclusion. John's account is also conspicuous because of that which he includes. It has been estimated that ninety-two percent of the contents are peculiar to itself.²

Instead of using imaginative stories to express eternal verities,

¹D. A. Hayes, John and His Writings (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1917), p. 87.

²Ibid., p. 89.

Jesus is found engaging in metaphysical discussions. In fact, Jesus is found to be debating quite often—in contrast to the Synoptic accounts. In these discussions, Jesus is usually very prominent and posits personifications in which such terms as the truth, the vine, the good shepherd, the gate, the door, the bread, and the light either represent or describe some truth identified with him. Many of these conversations are held in private, whereas in the Synoptics, the public discourse is prominent.

Of the eight miracles, or signs as John prefers to call them, six of them are peculiar to this account. Likewise, there are some new individuals in the Fourth Gospel. The miracles are: turning water into wine (chapter two); healing the son of the nobleman (chapter four); healing the infirm man (chapter five); healing the man blind from infancy (chapter nine); raising dead Lazarus (chapter eleven); directing the disciples in the securing of the draught of fishes (chapter twenty-one). The new persons mentioned are: Nathanael, Nicodemus, the woman of Samaria, the impotent man, the blind man (chapter nine), and Lazarus, and whole sections such as the prologue and the Lord's Prayer which occupy the entire seventeenth chapter and are included only by John. There are the references to the Lamb of God, the account of the first disciples, the "first" ~~cleansing of the~~ temple, the various discourses on bread, light, et cetera, the visit of the Greeks, the washing of the disciples' feet, the farewell discourses with his disciples and the two appearances after his resurrection at Jerusalem and the appearances at the Sea of Tiberias.¹

¹Ibid., p. 90.

Chronological Differences. As interesting as these omissions and inclusions might be, in themselves they are not the basic difficulty underlying the Synoptic-Johannine problem especially as the truth of inspiration is affected. It is not that these considerations have not puzzled some scholars for they have done so particularly when they lead into other problems.

A leading problem that one encounters is the apparent lack of development in John's narrative. More particularly the point of controversy centers about the time when the disciples and others became aware of the fact that Jesus was Messiah. In the Synoptics, recognition was a process which occupied several months; in John, the recognition seemed to be almost immediate. In the Synoptics, the identity of this one who was able to still the storm, to raise the twelve year old girl, to make the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak was indeed a mystery to those who beheld the miracles. His identity is not clear until Peter makes his confession. It is then that Jesus begins his teaching that he will be killed and be raised in three days. Furthermore, it is quite apparent that Jesus does not openly declare that he is the Messiah until this time. Instead, he goes to great pains to avoid the cities where his action will lead to notoriety. He makes no early claims to deity or messiahship. He performs his mighty acts and they speak for him, and often even these are performed in the presence of but a favored few.

In John is found quite a contrasting situation. Immediately subsequent to the prologue, John the Baptist declares that he is bearing witness to the pre-existent Christ and later refers to him as the

"Lamb of God." The next day Andrew declares to his brother Simon that they have found the Messiah. Nathanael, on the following day, recognizes Jesus to be "the Son of God; . . . the King of Israel." Whereas, in the Synoptics it is not until the triumphal entry that the public recognizes him as Messiah, in the second chapter of John we are told that "at the passover in the feast day, many believed in his name," ¹ It is in chapter four that Jesus tells the Samaritan woman that the one to whom she is talking is the Messiah, and in chapter five we are told that the Jews sought to kill him because he said that "God was his Father, making himself equal with God." ² Throughout these earlier chapters, teaching which is retained for a later day in the Synoptics, is given apparently earlier in John.

Another event which has been the source of question is the time of the cleansing of the temple. In the Fourth Gospel the story suggests it to be at the beginning of Christ's ministry; in the Synoptics the same or remarkably similar event is placed at the end of Jesus' ministry. ³

The time of the commencement of Jesus' ministry as stated by John is in apparent conflict with the other writers. Mark, Matthew and Luke give the impression that Jesus began his ministry in Galilee immediately following his temptation just after John the Baptist was cast into prison. Luke says (and Matthew and Mark correspond): "And

¹John 2:23.

²John 5:18.

³Matthew 21:12, Mark 11:15, Luke 19:45, John 2:16.

Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: . . ."¹ The previous event presented by Luke was Jesus' temptation, John the Baptist's imprisonment not being mentioned. John's Gospel does not mention the temptation but immediately preceding Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus John relates: "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing. . . . For John was not yet cast into prison."²

In the Synoptics, for instance as Luke relates it, the feeding of the five thousand took place while Jesus was in Galilee. In Luke 6:53, we read that, following the feeding, they passed over the Sea of Galilee and "came into the land of Gennesaret," John relates this event in the sixth chapter and then in the beginning of the seventh chapter, he says: "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee:"

Another very obvious difference that one finds is the scene of ministry. According to John, it would seem that Jesus spent nearly all of his time in the Judaeian area. Especially in Luke, but in Matthew and Mark as well, Galilee is the location with the ministry commencing at Capernaum and only the latter days being spent in Judaea and Jerusalem. From data that the Synoptics supply, one would conclude that the length of ministry was approximately a year, which time was restricted to the north of Palestine, beginning at Jerusalem of

¹Luke 4:14.

²John 2:22-24.

³Luke 7:12

Judaea. Through the information that John supplies, Jesus faithfully attended the feasts at the temple and with this information, one is able to trace his ministry quite well through three years.

The difference which probably has caused more difficulty than other apparent discrepancies is the Passion Week story. There is common agreement as to the day of the week. The point of consideration is: did the slaying of the Paschal lamb coincide with Jesus' death? Did the slaying of the lamb take place prior to his death with the meal which he and his disciples ate being the Passover? In John we are told: "Now before the feast of the passover. . . . And supper being ended,"¹ This would place the Last Supper on the evening of Nisan 13, (to the Jew, the beginning of Nisan 14) and Jesus would have suffered on the Cross on the afternoon of the following day, which would still be Nisan 14, and his death would have taken place at the time devoted to the slaughter of the Paschal lambs (3-5 p.m.).² Mark says, with Matthew and Luke agreeing:³ "And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?"

Literary differences. It has been noted that John writes with a simplicity not characteristic of the Synoptic Gospels. This attri-

¹John 13:1,2.

²William Sanday, The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1914), p. 151.

³Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:12,14, Luke 22:7.

bute makes the book ideal for study by the student and by the new convert as well. D. A. Hayes helps us to see the comparatively limited vocabulary which the author uses:

As examples of the words characteristic of the Johannine vocabulary we subjoin the following, with the number of times they are used in the Gospel: *σάρξ* flesh, eight times; *σκοτία*, darkness, nine times; *σημεῖον* sign, seventeen times; *μένειν* to remain, eighteen times; *κρίνειν* to judge, nineteen times; *ἔργον*, work, twenty-three times; *φῶς* light, twenty-three times; *θεωρεῖν* to behold, twenty-three times. This verb is found only fifteen times in all the synoptics put together *ὄνομα*, name, occurs twenty-five times; *ἀλήθεια*, truth, twenty-five times; *δόξα*, glory, and *δοξαδοσθῆναι* to glory, forty-two times; *μαρτυρία*, witness, and *μαρτυρεῖν* to witness, forty-seven times; *ζωή*, life and *ζῆν*, to live, fifty-two times; *γινώσκειν*, to know, fifty-five times; *κόσμος*, world, seventy-eight times, while in all the synoptics it occurs only fifteen times. *πιστεύειν*, to believe, occurs ninety-eight times in the fourth Gospel, twice as often as in all the synoptics put together. This is all the more remarkable when we remember that the noun *πίστις*, faith or belief, is not found in the Gospel at all.¹

Coupled with this simplicity of expression, John has a peculiar style of presentation. It is often difficult to determine, when he quotes Jesus, just where the quotation ceases and John's comment upon that saying begins. For instance, one cannot be certain whether John 3:16 contains the words of Jesus or John. In the Synoptics, there is never any doubt but what Jesus' words are specifically his own. In John, every character has the same style of expression.

¹Hayes, John and His Writings, p. 105.

One could be uncertain concerning the personality of Jesus were he to compare John and the Synoptics. In the latter, it is his refusal to be bound by their traditions concerning the law which makes him unacceptable to the religious leaders. He broke the Sabbath laws, he ate with unwashed hands, associated with "sinners," and did not observe the fasts, thus making him an enemy to the law of Moses—the true religion. In John he is seen as one who faithfully attended the feasts and the dispute about the law is nearly forgotten. The point at issue is that he claims to be the Son of God. In the Synoptics, the question is about what he did; in John, about who he was.¹

In the Synoptics Jesus talks about the kingdom of God and its righteousness, whereas in John he talks mostly about himself, trying to persuade people to receive him as the Son of God.² The following quotation pictures the contrasting light in which the Synoptic and Johannine accounts present Jesus:

"Follow me" vs., "I am the way." "Enter by the narrow gate," vs., "I am the door." "I have compassion on the multitude," vs., "I am the good shepherd." "Ye shall receive. . . eternal life," vs., "I am the resurrection and the life." "Take, eat, this is my body," vs., "I am the bread of life." "I am the light of the world." "I am the true vine." "I am the truth and the life." The Samaritan woman said, "I know Messiah comes." Jesus answered, "I who speak to you am he."³

¹W. A. Smart, The Spiritual Gospel (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1946), p. 25.

²Ibid., p. 33.

³Mildred Wynkoop, A Study of the Differences Between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel, a research paper, May, 1955, p. 7.

These are but a few of the positive expressions which Jesus makes concerning himself in John's account. These expressions become significant when we realize the totally different picture which our accounts portray of Jesus. As was noted previously and as is noted from these quotations, Jesus' messiahship is a secret, his identity is a mystery in the Synoptics. This is not so in John's Gospel where Jesus takes every opportunity to proclaim his identity, and he proclaims his deity and messiahship in "the most bold and forthright manner." In the Synoptics he is very human and has everything in common with mankind. He hungers, he thirsts, he is tempted, he feels a need for prayer and he prays often. He is a friend to the forsaken and to the needy. His good deeds are performed because of a deep love for those concerned. He has no desire for display and his acts of mercy are often done in secret. In John's Gospel, Jesus, the stranger among men, is God. His company is with the seekers of truth rather than the simple men of the Synoptics. When he prays, it is not because of a personal need for strength but that those standing by might believe. He is human but he is most obviously divine. "His deeds are performed to display his power and authority. The contrast is radical and psychologically irreconcilable."¹ The point in John is to "get over" to the people who this one performing the mighty miracles is. The expression *ὁ πέμψας με* (the one who sent me) occurs twenty-six times and the Greek for "witness" and "to witness" occurs forty-seven times. John the Baptist, the Father, Jesus' works, the

¹Ibid., p. lll.

Scriptures, his disciples, and the Holy Spirit all witnessed to the claims of Jesus.

In the Synoptics the information is given that "without a parable, spake he not unto them," and the Synoptics have many of these simple teachings from the soil, from the plants, from the family, and from conversations in which Jesus engaged, which would appeal to the untrained peasant. These short, pithy sayings would remain in his mind and he could "chew them over" as he went about his daily tasks. In John, in contradistinction to the Synoptic teaching, Jesus used no parables, but "signs" are used instead to symbolize spiritual truths. Jesus is the "Way," the "Door," the "Truth," the "Bread," the "Resurrection and the Life." The new birth is the symbol of the life in Christ. The temple was a symbol of his body. The turning of water into wine was a "sign" of Jesus' identity. This was a type of teaching which would not appeal to the masses but a distinctly philosophical appeal to the educated and sophisticated mind.

John's literary style is also manifested in the type of "signs" which he chose. The setting of the miracles mentioned in the Synoptics is quite simple. As a matter of fact, one might often easily explain the healings, et cetera on a psychosomatic or some other naturalistic basis. This would not be true concerning the miracles which John records. It would seem that he chose to include those events which could not possibly be explained other than having been performed by "one who was sent from God." At the wedding in Cana, the best wine was made from plain water. The impotent man on the Bethesda porch had been in his condition for thirty-eight years. The blind man was

born blind. Lazarus had been dead four days before Jesus raised him, which time would allow for decomposition in the Palestinian climate, and not only so, but this was twenty-four hours past the time that the spirit could return to the body according to local superstition. After the resurrection, Jesus came into the room where the disciples were gathered through closed doors. This particular emphasis is a contrast to the Synoptic manner of presentation, not that the Synoptics do not stress the setting, but in John this feature is the "trade mark" of the Gospel.

A source of difficulty which is just as much of a Synoptic problem as it is a Johannine-Synoptic problem is the differing reports given by the Gospel writers of the same occurrence. These variations are quite important if absolute literalism is demanded. It is quite obvious that at least three of these accounts and possibly all four do not accurately record the precise words of Jesus. Were verbal differences compared within the Synoptic account where comparisons can more readily be made, more instances would be found. In Matthew is given Jesus' accusation, "This is Jesus the king of the Jews."¹ Mark says that it was, "The king of the Jews."² Luke records, "This is the king of the Jews."³ John reports that the superscription upon the cross was, "Jesus of Nazareth the king of the Jews."⁴ A case of varying reports of the same conversation is found

¹Matthew 27:37.

²Mark 15:26.

³Luke 23:38.

⁴John 19:19.

in the feeding of the five thousand. John records that Andrew said, "There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many?"¹ Mark relates, "He saith unto them, how many loaves have ye? Go and see. And when they knew, they say, Five, and two fishes." Matthew says, ". . . give ye them to eat. And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes."² Luke says, "Give ye them to eat. And they said, We have no more but five loaves and two fishes: except we should go and buy meat for all this people."³

Jesus' announcement of betrayal is recorded by Matthew in these words: "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me;"⁴ by Mark, "Verily I say unto you, One of you which eateth with me shall betray me;"⁵ by Luke, "But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table;"⁶ by John, "Verily, verily, I say unto you; that one of you shall betray me."⁷

The instances of omission and inclusion cited and chronological and literary differences observed are among the peculiarities possessed by the book of John to constitute this account a problem. It is a

¹John 6:9.

²Matthew 14:16,17.

³Luke 9:13.

⁴Matthew 26:21.

⁵Mark 14:18.

⁶Luke 22:21.

⁷John 13:21.

problem in that it has forced students of the Scriptures into awkward positions. If one demands a precise agreement in the statements of Jesus, in the literary quality and in the chronological presentation, there are many problems that must be answered if one's faith is to be given rest.

Contemporary New Testament Criticism and the Johannine-Synoptic Problem

Contemporary New Testament criticism is a method of research which has grown up in Germany since 1919. It seeks to strip the accumulated layers of tradition from the supposedly original story unit and recover the situation which created the story. The accumulation especially includes "the great miracle tales." Though anticipated by such as Johannes Weiss and Herman Gunkel, this method came into its own with Martin Dibelius and Rudolph Bultmann.

The critic feels that since the differences between John and the Synoptics are so great and so numerous that the Synoptics must be of a differing class of literature than John. Anthony C. Deane pictures the position of his theological opponents as rank skepticism. Generally, the critic says, according to Dr. Deane, that the Synoptics have a historical basis and are authentic but that John was written much later, and is not compatible, and that a person must accept one tradition or the other. The critics feel that John's trustworthiness, he continues, is discounted when he includes so many characters and events of prominence which the other Gospels do not include. The outstanding event which they are impressed illustrates this fact is the

raising of Lazarus. On the negative side, John cannot be historic in that he excludes so many incidents of vital import such as the virgin birth, the temptation, and the transfiguration of Jesus. The contrast between the methods of teaching--the parable versus the mystical discourses, and the time of the Messianic disclosure, the style of writing which is quite uniform no matter which character is speaking further prove that John is not history but a "devout fantasy."¹

The following statement of F. C. Burkitt indicates that he is one of those who deny historical accuracy to John:

This (disparity) is something more than mere historical inaccuracy. It is a deliberate sacrifice of historical truth; and as the Evangelist is a serious person in deadly earnest, we must conclude that he cared less for historical truth than for something else. . . . It is inconceivable that the historical Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels would have argued and quibbled with the opponents as he is represented to have done in the Fourth Gospel. The only possible explanation is that the work is not history but something else cast in historical form.²

Dr. Smart sees this particular position in form criticism as a development of the recent past with "more modern New Testament study" having narrowed the gulf between the Synoptics and John:

. . . but the gulf has been narrowed, not by reasserting the historic accuracy of John,

¹Anthony C. Deane, How to Understand the Gospels (London: Hodder and Stoughton, n.d.), p. 211.

²F. C. Burkitt, The Gospel History and Its Transmission (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1906), pp. 225, 228. As quoted by M. C. Tenney, The Genius of the Gospels (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company), p. 37.

but by denying it to the Synoptics. . . . It is now a common-place that none of the authors thought of themselves as biographers or historians. Careful checking of facts and scrutinizing of evidence was farthest removed from their thoughts. They had none of the passion for accuracy which marks the historian. They were preachers. As the very word "gospel" reminds us, they were declaring good news, not merely preserving records of past events.¹

Neither Burkitt nor Smart agree in that they do not see any reconciliation on the basis of historical truth, although their approach is different.

Dr. C. H. Dodd maintains yet another view. He believes that John is primarily a theological work rather than history, but that the author believed in the historicity of the accounts which he includes. In fact, he prefers the historical accuracy of John over that of the Synoptics. In bringing out the symbolical value of the facts which he narrates he has used freedom. He says:

Like many ancient writers, he has put into the mouth of his characters speeches which, since they bear not only the stamp of his own style, but also the stamp of an environment different from that in which the recorded events took place, cannot be regarded as historical. This use of freely composed speeches to elucidate the significance of events does not in itself impugn the historical character of the narrative in the Fourth Gospel, any more than in Thucydides or Tacitus. . . . He accepts with qualification the general tradition of the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. . . . He has meditated deeply upon the meaning of the Gospel story, taken as a whole. He then turns back upon the details of the story, and seeks in each particular incident the meaning of the whole, expressing that meaning partly by the way in which he reports

¹Smart, The Spiritual Gospel, p. 14.

the facts, partly by the order in which they are placed, and partly through carefully composed discourses and dialogues.¹

He believes that the theology of the Gospel is not simply John's personal views but that it represents the early Christological thought of the Church.² According to Dr. Headlam, the aim and purpose of the Fourth Gospel is theological and apologetical, not biographical, but that it is good apologetic based on good history.³

Dr. Smart expresses at least a somewhat similar view when he says:

These speeches of Jesus . . . reflect, like the Platonic Dialogues, what the Master had come to mean to our author . . . we . . . have the things which he said in the heart of this great follower, and they are priceless. Whatever else Jesus was he was food and drink to a hungering soul, he was light when all around was darkness, he was the vision of the glory of God. These are the things our author would tell us. No one else had said them as he felt them in his life, and so he wrote for us not merely another Gospel, but the Gospel as it was in the life of John.⁴

Dr. Smart feels that each of the New Testament writers were interpreters. Each expressed what Jesus meant to him. And he makes, it seems, a very pungent statement when he says, "As a simple matter

¹C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (London: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 444.

²C. H. Dodd, Interpreting the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1953), p. 7.

³A. C. Headlam, The Fourth Gospel As History (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1948)

⁴Smart, op. cit., pp. 33-36.

of fact, there is no salvation without interpretation; for bare facts, uninterpreted and therefore unrelated to contemporary life, have no saving value."¹

Conservative Solutions

There have been explanations offered for the differences noted, these solutions having come particularly from those who believe that in the final analysis a thorough consistency will be found to exist in the Gospel accounts. Eusebius gives reasons for the writing of each of the Gospels and adds:

Last of all John perceiving that the bodily (or external) facts had been set forth in the (other) Gospels, at the instance of his disciples and with the inspiration of the Spirit composed a spiritual Gospel.²

And again,

. . . there was only wanting to their record their narrative of what was done by Christ at first and at the beginning of His preaching.³

The author of the Muratorian Fragment, dating about 170 A.D. says that John wrote at the request of his fellow disciples and the bishops in Asia Minor, the divine request having been made through a vision given to the Apostle Andrew. The early Church Father, Jerome, gives approximately the same information but adds the following:

¹Ibid.

²Sanday, The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel, p. 67.

³Ibid., p. 68.

. . . . When he was in Asia, at the time when the seeds of heresy were springing up (I refer to Cerinthus, Ebion, and the rest who say that Christ has not come in the flesh, whom he in his own epistle calls Anti-Christ, and whom the apostle Paul frequently assails), he has urged by almost all the bishops of Asia then living, and by deputations from many churches, to write more profoundly concerning the divinity of the Saviour, and to break through all obstacles so as to attain to the very Word of God (if I may so speak) with a boldness as successful as it appears audacious. . . .¹

Dr. Smart gives us some very acceptable reasons for the writing of the Fourth Gospel:

. . . . He defended his Gospel against the dualism of the Gnostics which would have reduced the earthly life of Jesus to a mere myth, against the Jews who represented Jesus as merely a Jewish heretic and against the Baptist sect which represented Christianity as an illegitimate descendant of the great Baptizer. All of these were in Ephesus. . . . But we must remember that the author's purpose is not negative but positive . . . to bring people to the life that is in Christ Jesus.²

In answer to the objection that the Gospel is one-sided in giving undue prominence to the divine side of the life of Christ, Sanday comments that the standard of measurement of such a criticism is the modern biography. The author of the Gospel did not intend to do what the modern biographer does, but he did do what he had in mind to do, and that was to supplement the accounts which had already done justice to the physical and external side, the human side of the life of Christ, by stressing the divinity of Christ. He had no desire to

¹Hayes, John and His Writings, p. 111.

²Smart, The Spiritual Gospel, p. 29.

add to accounts which were already in existence but he did add that which he was qualified to do and that was a fuller delineation of the divine side. Sanday cannot understand that he be blamed for doing the very thing which he proposed to do.¹

In view of the fact that John saw the need for supplementing the Synoptic accounts and that he was acquiescing to the demands of the Church, and no doubt the Holy Spirit, to set forth a Gospel with a "spiritual" stress, one cannot wonder that he includes material which is not familiar to the Synoptics. A natural result is that much information vital to the life of Christ would be excluded. Without question there were many miraculous works which Jesus did² which none of the writers utilized in their accounts.

Concerning the lack of development in the Johannine narrative, there are several things which we might consider. The Fourth Gospel does present the reception of Jesus in somewhat of a contrast of that pictured by the other Gospels. It is altogether possible that John did put into the mouths of his fellow-disciples and of Jesus expressions which they did not actually utter exactly as recorded. This possibility will be considered later. But the comment is made in passing that even if this were the case, there is the confidence that John's account was considered to be equal in authority with Matthew, Mark, and Luke at least as early as the end of the second century.³

¹Sanday, op. cit., p. 72.

²John 20:30.

³Deane, op. cit., p. 190

An alternative to the solution that John put words into the mouths of the characters, granting that both the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel are selective in their choice of material, is that the time of the messianic disclosure does not conflict between the apparent early disclosure of John and the later disclosure of the Synoptics. Dr. Sanday wonders if we do not read into the confessions of various persons in the early ministry of Jesus, as recorded by John, more than is intended.¹ Without doubt, there was great anticipation among the Jews concerning the coming of the Messiah and it was widely held that he would soon make his appearance. His appearance in any village community would have been no great surprise to anyone. Simeon in the temple² was one "waiting for the consolation of Israel. . . ." Anna³ also was among those who "looked for redemption in Jerusalem." These people readily attached themselves to a leader⁴ and if their enthusiasm was easily aroused, as John pictures it to have been, it would have been in keeping with the spirit of the day. John the Baptist introduced "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world."⁵ Dr. Sanday suggests that John the Apostle might have looked back over the years sixty or seventy years later and interpreted a factual statement of the Baptist: "Behold, the Lamb of God," by "which taketh away the sin of the world." In the ancient manuscripts there were no

¹Sanday, op. cit., p. 153.

²Luke 2:25.

³Luke 2:36.

⁴Acts 5:36.

⁵John 1:29.

quotation marks, and without their assistance it is sometimes very difficult to determine where direct speech ends and reflection begins.¹

The confessions which the Prophet, Andrew, and Philip made could have been made as recorded, and yet be in harmony with the Synoptics. To have a conviction that an individual has a certain mission in life is quite a different thing from the realization that one has come into the presence of One who is able to give sight to the blind, to raise the dead, and to still the storm.

In other words, they may have been convinced that Jesus was a prophet and have given witness to that conviction without having realized the greatness of that prophet, that he was God manifest in the flesh.

In reference to the word "believe," Dr. Sanday felt that one of the reasons that the Gospel of John does not picture the identity of Jesus gradually dawning upon the minds of the people in accord with the Synoptic version is the ambiguity of this word.² Perhaps the early believers were like the man with the afflicted boy who exclaimed in answer to Jesus' stipulation for the desired healing, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." When the writer relates that his disciples and others believed in him, the conjecture is made that that "belief" was of the same quality as that of the mature Christian of today. Some might suggest that it was even greater since

¹Hayes, op. cit., p. 97.

²Sanday, The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel, p. 161.

they were actual physical associates of Jesus. Dr. Sanday recognizes that in the Greek there is but one word to denote all of the different stages of belief. The reader must then attend closely to the context if he is to interpret properly and thus realize whether the believer was going through the dawning stages of such an experience or whether he had attained to full conviction:

. . . as applied to members of the Twelve the word denotes successive stages of acceptance, culminating—but even then only provisionally—in St. Peter's confession. As applied to the Samaritans and to the mixed crowds in Galilee and Jerusalem, the word probably does not cover more than faint stirrings of curiosity and emotion which lightly came and lightly passed away. One example of the use of the word is especially interesting. The writer is speaking of the visit of Peter and the unnamed disciple to the tomb, and he tells how, after Peter had entered, the other disciple also entered, 'and he saw and believed' (xx,8); but the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.' . . . The first step towards a full belief had been taken, though the full belief itself was still in the future.¹

A consideration which is often neglected in the criticism of the Gospel is that there are traces of development in faith. In the forepart of the seventh chapter Jesus' brethren implied that he had failed to manifest his mission to the people—and, in support of our last consideration, it is added: "for neither did his brethren believe in him." They were saying that if he expected public recognition, the logical procedure was for him to declare himself openly. His reply in verse six is that the time for disclosure

¹Ibid., p. 161.

had not arrived. In the relation of this episode, there is a parallel with the Synoptic development.

The time of the cleansing of the temple appears in the Johannine account at the beginning while in the Synoptic Gospels it is at the last of Jesus' ministry. Many scholars are convinced that we must make a choice between the one or the other.¹ Some would give preference to John's placement of the event² and others to the Synoptic.³ Another answer is that there were two temple cleansings. This is entirely possible but in conjunction with this solution there is the additional problem of the results of the event. Mark⁴ especially gives the cleansing as that work which finally settled the Jews in their determination to slay Jesus. In John,⁵ the raising of Lazarus was the final event which sealed the Jewish plan. A reconciliation of the dilemma can be made by means of supposing that the possibility that both the "second" cleansing and the raising of Lazarus caused the Jews to decide to kill him. In either case, a situation presents itself which materially affects the expression of a doctrine of Biblical inspiration.

It could be that the location and the time of the commencement of Jesus' ministry has often been exaggerated. Quite obviously, John

¹W. F. Howard, Christianity According to St. John (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), p. 152.

²Sanday, op. cit., p. 149.

³Howard, op. cit., p. 155.

⁴Mark 11:18.

⁵John 11:47-53.

wrote for the purpose of supplementing what had already been written. Too, in all accounts there are, admittedly, gaps, since none of the writers present us with a complete biography, but were selective. Mark relates: "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God."¹ Mark does not say that this was the beginning of his preaching. There is no reason to suppose that the Judaean campaign had not been in progress previous to this time. Nor is there necessarily conflict with the Matthewan account in that the phrasing: "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent. . . ."² could have been intended to bridge a gap and thus introduce a new phase of Jesus' ministry. However, one cannot deny that if John's account were excluded there would be given an inadequate scope of Jesus' activities.

Dr. Sanday notes that there is much to indicate that the Last Supper in which Jesus and his disciples participated was not the Passover meal.³ The Synoptics clearly relate that the Sanhedrin considered it wise not to arrest Jesus during the feast lest a tumult arise among the people.⁴ Yet, it was after this meal, which the reader would gather from the Synoptic accounts was the Passover, that Jesus was arrested. Also, the events of the night would involve sacrilege if these events were actually participated in during the sacred

¹Mark 1:14.

²Matthew 4:12,17.

³Sanday, op. cit., p. 153.

⁴Mark 14:2.

day of the feast. On such a holy day, the pious Jew would not be bearing arms as Peter was, and if the servants of the High Priests were not doing so, they were in the company of those who did. Nor would the Sanhedrin have arisen from the Paschal meal to rush to their hurried meeting. To enter the praetorium of the Roman governor would cause defilement, yet Jesus was taken there on the most sacred day of the feast, according to the implication of the Synoptics. The haste to take the bodies of Jesus and the thieves from the cross would indicate that there was a desire to keep sanctified a day which was about to begin and not one that had just ended.¹ Joseph of Arimathea could not have purchased the linen cloth in which Jesus' body was lain if it had been the latter. It was a special point of emphasis that at the Passover meal each person bring his own cup, but in the accounts of this meal, only one cup is mentioned as having been partaken of by all of those present.

Dr. Chwolson challenges the Synoptic statement: "the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the passover." Dr. Chwolson maintains that throughout Jewish History the expression "the first day of unleavened bread," has reference only to the 15th of the month, and never the 14th.² In other words, it is possible to harmonize the accounts by allowing the Synoptic writers a "laxity of expression."³ Rev. Box is quoted as saying he found agreement

¹Mark 15:42.

²Quoted by Sanday, op. cit., p. 152.

³Ibid.

between the two accounts ". . . on the hypothesis that the meal of which our Lord and His disciples partook was really the ceremony of Kiddush, a solemn 'sanctification' which preceded the weekly Sabbath and great festivals like the Passover."¹ It would appear that John sought to clarify the events of the last week. If that was his intention, certainly he was one who was well qualified to do so. Whatever the answer, again there is a situation which materially affects a proper theory of Biblical inspiration. If absolute consistency in the accounts is demanded, a problem presents itself which cannot be easily explained on the basis of textual facts.

The latitude of expression in the Passion Week incidents would equally apply to the discrepancies which exist in the reports of the accusation of Jesus, the conversation which took place at the time of the feeding of the five thousand, among other examples. The alternative to this answer is that in the original manuscripts there would be no differences between the accounts in these cases. Scholars have said, however, that the present Greek texts so closely approximate the original writings that if the latter are found or if any earlier manuscripts are found, changes of any significant nature are not anticipated. Thus, the problem remains.

In the realm of literary differences John's vocabulary is quite distinct. If one is committed to a doctrine of verbal inspira-

¹Ibid., p. 153.

tion at the point of words, only, a problem is posed. Whatever may be the reason for John's use of a relatively limited vocabulary and simple grammatical construction, the original communication in a richer vocabulary and more complex grammatical construction could not have been fully recorded. If a certain range of words were demanded in the original instance, verbal accuracy would demand an equal range in the reproduction. In conjunction with this verbal peculiarity there is need to explain the similarity in the words of Jesus and the comment which John makes upon these statements.¹ Hayes suggests that this unity of spirit and conversational style is a result of John's close association with Jesus.² Thus the words are either those of John or of Jesus, though it cannot be ascertained of which of the two. The problem may be solved in this manner for the Fourth Gospel, but it is just as great for the matter of harmony. The explanation can be given that Jesus spoke in that style, excepting that in the Synoptics he did not. Coupled with this matter there is the disuse of the parabolic method and instead the substitution of philosophical teaching which would appeal to the educated mind. There is the further differences of Jesus being presented as the personification of certain truths and the highly prevalent use of the symbol in John. It could be, Judaea being the primary location of the ministry which the Fourth Gospel records, that John used this sophisticated presentation where his audiences would be more highly

¹Tenney, The Genius of the Gospels, p. 109.

²Hayes, John and His Writings, p. 98.

educated than would be true in northern Palestine. This would be to say that in Judaea he said, "I am the Way," but in expressing this same truth to the Galilean audiences he gave the simpler teaching, "Follow me." The only other answer, it would seem, is that John did put words into the mouths of his characters but with all confidence that the words were true to the spirit of that which they actually said.

This alternative points out the contribution which form criticism has made to the Johannine-Synoptic problem in the area of interpretation. In the survey of the views of different form critics, we have seen that their attitude towards John's Gospel ranges from a consideration of it to be completely void of historical accuracy to a theological and apologetic work based on good, even superior, history. That upon which this school of criticism does agree is that John, besides being history (if this is admitted), is interpretation. To many this poses no particular problem:

. . . The author of the Gospel was himself a convinced Christian—a Christian so convinced that he could hardly recall the time when he had been anything else. It was natural to him to think of his comrades in the faith as he thought of himself. And if he puts into their mouths stronger expressions than they actually used, it was only a little antedating the fact.¹

Dr. Deane's reaction to such a position is typical of a large school of thought:

¹Sanday, The Criticism of the Fourth Gospel, p. 158.

This Fourth Gospel comes to us in the guise of history. It was accepted as historically true from the second century onwards. It affirms that Jesus Christ in the course of His life on earth did certain things and spoke certain words. Either He did and said those things, in which case the Fourth Gospel is the record of fact, or He did not, in which case it is a work of fiction. The latter alternative does not imply, of course, that its author wrote with any idea of deception. But the difference is immeasurable. Instead of preserving for us the words of Jesus Christ it contains merely (in Dr. Inge's candid phrase) "free composition by the writer himself"—the kind of things he imagined our Lord might have said. He is not merely interpreting or expanding, but inventing. And, as Dr. Bernard remarks, "It is one thing to spiritualize history; it is quite another to put forth as history a narrative which is not based on fact."

When therefore, we try to picture to ourselves the historic Christ and to study His teaching as a whole, may we use the material provided by the Fourth Gospel, or must we limit ourselves to the synoptic writings?¹

It will be recalled that there are a number of scholars who consider John to be good history in spite of the recent skepticism concerning the Gospel. In fact, many have said that it is the most internally consistent of any of the accounts. It is the only record which claims that the author himself was an eye-witness. He knew Jewish practices. He was familiar with the geography of Palestine. He understood the intimacies of the Jewish feasts. He gives accurate references to ceremonies and he was particularly acquainted with the double Sabbath. John includes detail which in itself is not essential but adds to one's conviction that he was an actual witness to the incidents of which he wrote. He knew Jerusalem well enough not to

¹Deane, How to Understand the Gospels, p. 182.

err in saying that the people cut the branches from the palm trees when they threw them in the way.¹ He knew palm trees did not grow in the city and would need to have been cut previous to the entry, having been brought from elsewhere. He recalled the length of time that it took to build the temple. He knew that Solomon's porch was used at certain seasons of the year because of the weather. And in the relating of the events of the Passion Week he was more consistent than the other authors.²

Dr. H. Latimer Jackson, since all Johannine characters speak in John's style, is convinced that John put words into their mouths. Dr. Jackson cannot understand how John could have known the conversation which transpired between Jesus and Nicodemus, between Pilate and Joseph of Arimathea concerning Jesus' body, between Christ and Mary Magdalene at the empty tomb.³ Dr. Wynkoop finds no difficulty in this particular case in light of the fact that there were numerous Christians in that part of the world and in their worship services, and as a part of their services, they exchanged accounts freely. "That John records them in his own words simply means that he regarded them as equal in reliability with what he himself had heard and seen."⁴ John authenticates the events by his own word of honor.

¹Mark 11:8.

²Wynkoop, A Study of the Differences Between the Synoptics and the Fourth Gospel, pp. 21, 22.

³H. Latimer Jackson, The Problem of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: At the University Press, 1918), p. 49.

⁴Wynkoop, op. cit., p. 23.

Dr. Smart makes a statement which is quite applicable at this stage, especially in reply to Dr. Deane's question:

. . . It has been assumed by some that allegory means fiction, and that the author of John's Gospel did not use allegory because he was not creating fiction but had such an obvious interest in the historic facts of Jesus' life. . . there is confusion here between writing an allegory and allegorizing a fact. . . . The question . . . was not "What actually happened?" but "What lesson does it contain for me?"¹

It has been noticed previously that Dr. Smart does not regard John to be good history. But for those who do regard this Gospel as history, the questions arise: "What actually did happen?" and "What lesson does it contain for me?" It seems safe to conclude that the Fourth Gospel is good history, but that, equally important, it is inspired interpretation. The symbol is used in the stress of the spiritual side of Jesus' life. Such is necessary because the spiritual has no language of its own. As a matter of fact, John's Gospel is unique in that he alone sees the life of Jesus in symbolic relationships. The sign reveals the spiritual nature of Jesus' works. This was true in the feeding of the five thousand when Jesus declared himself to be the Living Bread.² Numerous other instances, such as the healing of the blind man, bring out the same observation.³ This interpretative function of the Gospel does not in the least abrogate the teaching of the Synoptics but enriches that teaching and brings

¹Smart, The Spiritual Gospel, p. 40.

²John 6:1-13.

³John 9:1-34.

Christian truth into touch with the philosophical thought of that day. John was able to take the philosophical concepts such as that of the Logos and thoroughly Christianize them.¹

Summary

In the investigation of this problem, observations have been noted which are significant in the formulation of a doctrine of Biblical inspiration. It has been the desire of this student to be open-minded and, at the same time, to give every inch of ground possible to the traditional fundamental view of John's Gospel. Proceeding on this principle, nearly all—but not all—of the difficulties encountered have been tentatively dissipated. John leaves much out of his account which is included by the Synoptic writers. Likewise, many incidents are peculiar to this Gospel. These inclusions and exclusions are significant in that the reader is given an entirely different idea of Jesus than is pictured in the Synoptics. Although there are some who would discredit one or both versions of Jesus, it is possible to reconcile the accounts by explaining the purpose of John to be different. In fulfilling his purpose of presenting a "spiritual" Gospel, he chose those incidents which were most adapted to this end. Some of the chronological differences might have their solution in intentional gaps in the presentation of the ministry of Jesus. Perhaps there were two temple cleansings and perhaps the development of John's narrative has not been given adequate consider-

¹Wynkoop, op. cit., p. 26.

ation. Some of the literary problems can be solved by concluding that Jesus spoke differently to the educated audiences of Judaea than he did to those to whom he ministered in areas covered by the Synoptic account.

Conclusion

There are some conflicts which remain. These can be fairly well resolved into one: it is quite apparent that there are numerous instances in the Scriptures where we are not in possession of a precise record of that which was spoken or actually occurred. How can one account for the seeming discrepancy in reference to the last meal which Jesus and his disciples ate together before his death. John designates the meal as other than the Passover meal; the Synoptic writers infer, at least, that it was the Passover. If John was correcting the Synoptic account and the latitude of expression, and since there are differing reports of the actual words of Jesus in particular instances, upon what basis can the doctrine of Biblical inspiration be established? Since there is the vital relationship between inspiration, authority, dependability, and inerrancy, the basic question is, in what does Biblical inerrancy consist?

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SCRIPTURES

CHAPTER III

Historical Attitude Toward the Scriptures

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate briefly the history of the doctrine of inspiration. This can best be accomplished by noting the attitude which various groups and individuals have had. The first consideration is the formation of the Old Testament writings as an authoritative body of literature. The attitude of ancient Jews and then of Christ and his disciples toward the Old Testament will be followed by observation of the New Testament Canon formation and the attitude of the Church fathers and some of the later leaders toward the Scriptures. As the attitudes of religious leaders throughout the centuries are observed it is hoped that some clue shall be received to help us arrive at a proper doctrine of inspiration in view of the differences which exist between the Synoptic and Johannine accounts of the ministry of Christ.

Particular attention must be paid to the doctrine during its formative period which closed about the year 400 A.D.¹ Dr. Sanday observed that the modifications which the doctrine has undergone since that time are negligible until the present time when the matter has again become the source of interest. Dr. Sanday wrote during the latter part of the nineteenth century, but it would seem that the controversy is still raging. The significance of the

¹William Sanday, Inspiration (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1896), p. 3.

problem for our day is manifested by the recent press release of Inspiration and Interpretation, edited by John W. Walvoord,¹ in which contributions have been made by a number of evangelical scholars.

The Old Testament Scriptures. To be noted first is the fact that through the centuries there came to be a group of writings which were considered to be authoritative. These books came to hold a place of reverence in the heart of the Jew and, later, likewise to the Christian who designates these writings "the Old Testament." However, as Dr. Sanday mentions, the discussions which were conducted at the Rabbinical School at Jamnia imply a completed canon. Provisionally the canon had been completed in that the question was whether certain books should be admitted into a collection already existing. It was not a question of forming a collection.² The canon of the Old Testament was not established by the decision of the council but by the constant use in the synagogues, the Council of Jamnia only setting the final seal of approval to the choice already made.³ After this, there were a few sporadic doubts appearing occasionally concerning the canon, but, so far as the Jews were concerned, these made no serious imprint upon the settled issue.⁴

Many reasons have been given for the selection of the particular

¹John W. Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957).

²Sanday, op. cit., p. 96.

³Grant, An Introduction to New Testament Thought, p. 80.

⁴Sanday, op. cit., p. 7.

books which comprise the Jewish canon. "Antiquity" is one of the criteria which is perhaps foremost. We learn from Numbers 21:14 that as far in the distant past as the days of Moses that "the Book of the Wars of the Lord" existed. Lee notes that occasionally it has been proposed that any book written by one recognized as a prophet would naturally be included. But this did not necessarily give a record the needed prestige for in II Chronicles 26:22 we realize that "the acts of Uzziah first and last" was written by "Isaiah the Prophet, the son of Amoz." (See Harris' contention below.) To have been written in the Hebrew language even by one claiming to be a prophet did not secure for a writing a place in the canon. The author of Ecclesiasticus in chapter 30:28,29 closes with these words: "Blessed is he that shall be exercised in these things: and he that layeth them up in his heart shall become wise. For if he do them he shall be strong to all things: for the light of the Lord leadeth him." It is recognized that this book was written in the Hebrew language but still the Jews have not regarded Ecclesiasticus as being in their sacred canon. Those who have studied the Old Testament even hastily cannot but marvel that these against whom the writings testify, which record is to their disgrace, have zealously guarded these books through the centuries.¹ Dr. Lee urges that the explanation of these facts lies in the very nature of the books themselves, that their style, manner, and contents gives

¹William Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture (New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, pp. 54,55.

them the preference over all other writings.¹ He, and others as well, contends that that which gives these books their superiority is the fact that they have been inspired of God.²

The test of canonicity applied by Harris is that of prophecy: "What was prophetic was regarded as the Word of God. What was not prophetic was, as we know from I Maccabees 4:46, et cetera, not regarded as the Word of God." The canon grew as the prophets succeeded one another in their ministry; it was finished, Josephus says, when the Holy Spirit ceased speaking. There was no question in the minds of the Jews concerning which books belonged to the canon and which did not. When the explicit tests for determining a true prophet were applied³ and he was acknowledged as true, then his writings were received as being from God.⁴

The canon of the Old Testament arose in three stages: the Pentateuch, the Prophets, (includes the "Earlier Prophets," the older historical books, and the "Later Prophets," those which are recognized as the works of the writing prophets), and the Writings, or Hagiographa which includes the Psalms. During this time, in the Greek-speaking Diaspora, especially at Alexandria, there were other

¹Ibid., p. 60.

²Ibid., p. 302.

³Deuteronomy 13 and 18.

⁴R. Laird Harris, Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), p. 183.

books in use. Some of these books were translations from the Hebrew;¹ others had originally been written in the Greek. These books were never admitted into the Hebrew canon but they did find wide use among those Jews who were unacquainted with the Hebrew but were familiar with the universal language of that day, the Greek. These books are recognized as canonical even today in the Roman Catholic Church. There are still other writings referred to as the "Pseudepigrapha" which did not and have not gotten into either the Hebrew, Greek, or Latin canon.²

The Greek word, *ἀπόκρυφος* is a late Hebrew or Aramaic word meaning "hidden" or "withdrawn from publicity." Originally this word had a much more gentle significance than that which is attached to it at the present. It was used by the Jews to refer to the rolls which were possessed of faults in the writing or were torn or worn out. Metaphorically, the sense of the word conveyed the idea that a book was not suitable for public reading.³ The English word "Apocrypha" designates the writings which are found in the Septuagint version but are not found in the Hebrew canon. These are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Baruk, First Maccabees and Second

¹In reference to the scope of the original Septuagint, Harris says: "Granted that the Septuagint . . . contains the Apocryphal books, does this imply that the Alexandrian canon was larger than the Palestinian? That our present Septuagint copies have a variant canon really proves nothing about the Alexandrian canon of 50 A.D. much less . . . of around 200 B.C."

²Grant, op. cit., p. 80.

³Sanday, op. cit., p. 105.

Maccabees. Added also are six chapters to the book of Esther. Prefixed to the book of Daniel is the History of Susannah, and inserted in the third chapter the Song of the Three Children, and added to the end of the book is the History of Bel and the Dragon. Found also in the early Greek Scripture and in the Latin translations are the third and fourth books of Esdras, a third book of Maccabees, the 151st Psalm, an appendix to Job, and a preface to Lamentations.¹

Whereas later Christian writers spoke of books as being apocryphal, using the word in the strong sense, the Jews referred to them as being "outside" the canon. This term is applied to the First Book of Maccabees, the two Wisdoms, and to Christian and other heretical writings.² There is a difference, however, in that the latter were not to be read at all because of their contaminating influence, but a book such as Ecclesiasticus may be read for pure enjoyment.³ Only in the cases of Ecclesiasticus and First Maccabees are there traces of an attempt of "outside" books to gain entrance into the Jewish canon. Ecclesiasticus is quoted in the Talmud on two occasions with the formula which is usually reserved for the citation of Scripture. According to Ryle, there is other evidence that it was held in high honor.⁴ Later, in New Testament times, Tertullian argued for the ad-

¹A. A. Hodge, Outlines of Theology (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1860), p. 93.

²Ryle, p. 128, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 109.

³R. Akiba, quoted by Buhl, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 109.

⁴Ryle, p. 124, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 109.

mission of the Book of Enoch, but it appeared to be but the thought of the moment and his effort gained serious attention from no one, including himself after the initial effort.¹

Attitude of the Jew Toward the Old Testament. The ancient Jew had a deep reverence for the Jewish Scriptures. The care with which they counted every verse and letter in every book of the Old Testament, with which they retained every large or small letter, every letter above or below the line, their conviction that lurking in every abnormal state of a letter, jot, or tittle was a mystery was undoubtedly the result of the most extreme reverence for every word.² Dr. Thomson believes that the distinction which there exists among some Jews esteeming the Prophets superior to the Hagiographa, and the Law superior to the Prophets, was at least greatly magnified, if not wholly an invention, by the later Jews. As far as the early Jew was concerned, the Scriptures were the express word of God Himself. He would subscribe the tradition among the Alexandrian Jews concerning the Septuagint translation, in which tradition it was maintained that the seventy translators working in seventy separate cells came to a perfect agreement as they emerged from their cells and compared their work, to the same estimate of Scriptural inspiration.³ Dr. Sanday agrees with this regard of the Jew toward the Old Testament and adds, "their

¹Sanday, op. cit., p. 112.

²William Thomson, Aids to Faith (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1862), p. 333.

³Ibid.

whole exegesis is based on the assumption that the text must be taken strictly as it stands."¹ Dr. Grant says, ". . . their view of scripture was atomistic—every verse, every phrase, every single word could stand by itself, as an independent oracle or medium of revelation;" ²

The Jewish historian Josephus, in his work against Apion, maintains that the records of no nation can compare in historic veracity with those possessed by the Jews. To substantiate this contention he brings to his attention the care taken to preserve the writings and the strict rules to which adherence was given in regard to their composition. He relates to Apion that the books were given to the High Priest, whose purity of descent was guarded by the most stringent laws, and whose genealogy on the male side was recorded in the public archives and could be traced as far back as two thousand years. Josephus observed that such precautions were necessary to guard the purity of the race. It was not in the power of just anyone to draw up such records, but this privilege belonged to only those who were prophets. They alone were acquainted with the facts of early date, which they learned by the direct inspiration of God. And the history of their own day, they recorded with "unerring certainty."³

With us there is no endless series of works, discordant and contradictory; two-and-twenty books contain the annals of all time, and are justly believed to be divine. . . . From the age of Artaxerxes, it is true,

¹Sanday, op. cit., p. 187.

²Grant, op. cit., p. 83.

³Quoted from Cont. Apion. i.7, Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 68.

narratives of events extending to our day have been written, but they have not been counted of equal credit with books composed at any earlier period, because there has been no accurate succession of Prophets. Facts clearly prove how great trust we repose in our Sacred Books, for, although so many ages have passed away, no man has dared to add to, or take away from or alter aught in them. Nay, it is implanted in every Jew, from the hour of his birth, to esteem as the ordinances of God, and to stand fast by these writings, and in defence of them, if need be, cheerfully to die.¹

On another occasion Josephus made this statement: "He causes us to utter words such as He wills and speeches without our knowledge. . . ."2

Philo's conception of inspiration is likewise that the one receiving inspiration is passive:

. . . For a prophet gives forth nothing at all of his own but acts as interpreter at the prompting of another in all his utterances, and as long as he is under inspiration he is in ignorance, his reason departing from its place and yielding up the citadel of his soul, when the Divine Spirit enters into it and dwells in it and strikes at the mechanism of his voice sounding through it to the clear declaration of that which He prophesieth.³

The Jewish doctors expressed the same view of the divine origin of Scripture by the decision at which the schools of Hillel and Shammai arrived about 65 A.D. when they agreed that certain books "defile the hands," i.e., anyone who touched these books defiled themselves and had to undergo the rite of purification. The object

¹Cont. Apion. i.8, quoted by Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 69.

²Ant. iv. 6.5, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 77.

³De Special. Legg. iv. 8, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 74.

was to prevent irreverent use of the scrolls. To quote verses of Scripture lightly or profanely was also forbidden. In the superstitious use of verses as charms and amulets one likewise sees a high regard for Scripture.¹ Philo tells a story of a person who was judged with terrible death because he scoffed at apparently trivial details in Scripture.²

Philo, in referring to the Prophet "like unto Moses" in Deuteronomy 18:18, observes that when this one would appear his words were not to be his own, and "each utterance with which he had been inspired was to proceed from the suggestion of another."³ He says on another occasion:

Moses alone has fully realized the qualities of a legislator. All know this who are verses in the sacred books, which none could have written without the guidance of God,—those most glorious of possessions, the image and copy of models stamped upon his soul. That these laws are truly Divine, and omit nothing needful, is our surest trust. The words of Moses alone, steadfast and unshaken, stamped, as it were, with the seal of nature itself, remain fixed since the day they were written until now; and our hope is that for all future time they will abide immortal as long as sun and moon, and the universal heaven, and the world itself endure.⁴

It is quite apparent that his entire method of exegesis is undergirded

¹Weber, Allysmagogale Theologie, p. 82, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, pp. 78, 79.

²De Mutat. Nom. 8, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 79.

³Quis. Rer. Div. Haeres. t.i., p. 510, quoted by Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 70.

⁴De Vita Mosi, t.ii, p. 136, quoted by Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 71.

with a view of inspiration which is verbal. Little words that seem to be unnecessary, just because they appear to be so, have the greater significance.¹

What is of particular interest to the purpose of this paper is that the Alexandrian Jew made his interpretations on the basis of the Septuagint version and not upon the Hebrew original. He contended that Moses made use of the most exact and most expressive words possible.² Philo emphasized the perfection of language and drew certain inferences from the language, but the language is Greek and not Hebrew. According to Sanday, it was Philo who added to the story of Aristead, who said that the Septuagint translators produced their harmony by a comparison of results, the contention that the harmony was realized by divine aid. The translators were inspired prophets who did not produce one one rendering and another another, but all the same words and expressions "as though some invisible prompter were at the ear of each of them."³ In spite of the fact that he even goes beyond attributing inspiration to the Septuagint translators and maintains the same for Greek philosophers⁴ Philo desists from quoting any but the books of the Hebrew canon as authoritative, giving to them a reverence not regarded other writings.⁵

¹Sanday, Inspiration, p. 85.

²De Agricult. 1, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 87.

³Vit. Mos. ii. 7, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 87.

⁴Quis Rer. Div. Haeres, p. 52, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 94.

⁵Cf. Drummond, Philo Judaeus, i. 15, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 94.

Likewise, we find Josephus making reference to the material of the Apocrypha in his history but he is quite definite in holding to twenty-two books as being canonical—five of the Law, thirteen Prophets, and four which contain hymns and patterns of life.¹ This listing corresponds to the recognized Hebrew canon in that the writings of the twelve minor prophets are considered to be one book, Lamentations are included with the Book of Jeremiah, and Ruth is associated with Judges.

Attitude of Christ and the New Testament Writers Toward the Old Testament. In New Testament times, the writings considered to be sacred were in the two forms, the Palestinian collection which was in the Hebrew language and the Alexandrian collection which was in the Greek. The Jewish doctors adhered to the Hebrew canon but it was the Alexandrian collection, the Septuagint, which came into general use. The Hebrew had become a dead language somewhere along the way, perhaps during the time that the Jews were undergoing captivity in Babylon. It was, however, used in the services of the temple, as Latin is the language of the Roman Catholic Mass. Jewish scholars studied and understood the Hebrew, but this was not true of the common people. They used the Aramaic which is similar to the Hebrew and was sometimes referred to as the later Hebrew. When "the Hebrew tongue" is mentioned in the New Testament it is the Aramaic which is meant and not the ancient Hebrew. In contrast to the Hebrew, the Greek was a living language. It was the language of commerce,

¹Sanday, Inspiration, p. 94.

much as the English is in our day, and most Jews were as "at home" with it as they were with their Aramaic vernacular.¹

It is for this reason that the Septuagint version acquired the use that it did. This collection differed not only in its content, but also in its phraseology and in the arrangement of its books. The apocryphal books were not separated from the books found in the Hebrew canon as we usually find them today. This would seem to indicate that they were regarded with at least some degree of prestige. Following are some passages which would seem to indicate the familiarity of the New Testament writers with these books:

James 1:19: "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak." Sirach 5:11; 4:29: "Be swift to hear." "Be not hasty in thy tongue."

Hebrews 1:13: "Who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power." Wisdom 7:26: "For she (Wisdom) is the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness."

Romans 9:21: "Hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" Wisdom 15:7: "For the potter, tempering soft earth, fashioneth every vessel with much labor for our service; yea, of the same clay he maketh both the vessels that serve for clean uses and likewise also such as serve to the contrary; but what is the use of either sort, the potter himself is the judge."

I Cor. 2:10,11: "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth save the Spirit of God." Judith 8:14: "For ye cannot find the depth of the heart of man neither can ye perceive the

¹Washington Gladden, Who Wrote the Bible? (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1896), pp. 9,10.

things that he thinketh; then how can ye search out God, that hath made all these things and know his mind, or comprehend his purpose?"¹

Although these are not express citations, the writers have apparently appropriated the thought and some of the words of the apocryphal verses.

That Paul exercised liberty surpassing that which would be true of any Jewish rabbi, is a fact by which Dr. Grant is impressed. He notes his freedom in paraphrasing, in substituting synonymous terms which are clearer or of more use to his argument, and in generally disregarding the exact wording of the Old Testament text. Grant attributes this to his use of the Septuagint, "but which he recognized was only a translation; the sacred text was in the Hebrew."² He continues to consider Paul's use of the Septuagint:

It is sometimes proposed to explain Paul's freedom in his use of the Old Testament text as due to rabbinic education; but, . . . this is not a rabbinic characteristic, but the opposite. Nor can it be due to failure of memory, or to variant readings in the Septuagint translation, or to that carelessness of the letter of scripture which Jerome pointed out as characteristic of the apostles and evangelists. Instead the alterations Paul makes seem deliberate, and to be based upon his typological theory; he at least does not set out intentionally, like the rabbis, to find his view supported in scripture, at whatever expense to the literal meaning.³

Dr. Philip Schaff makes note of the fact that "the great

¹Ibid, pp. 305, 306.

²Grant, An Introduction to New Testament Thought, pp. 336, 337.

³Ibid., p. 86.

majority of the citations of the Old Testament in the New, which amount to about 280, are taken from the Septuagint, or at all events agree better with it than with the Hebrew original."¹ Dr. Lee admits this use of the Septuagint, but is convinced that although the translation is of great value, it is "not inspired."²

Dr. Lee supports his contention at some length. When the passages are quoted literally from the Septuagint version where it differs from the Hebrew, this he sees to be because the Greek translation exhibits the true perception of the meaning intended by the language of the Hebrew. As an example of such an instance, he cites Psalm 40:6 in Hebrews 10:5. Wherever the Septuagint does not represent the true sense of the Prophet's words, the writer abandons the Septuagint and gives his own translation of the Hebrew. Zechariah 12:10 in John 19:37 is given as an example of such an instance.³ Another class of quotations are those in which, although the Greek version and the Hebrew agree, neither is followed. An illustration of this is Psalm 68 in Ephesians 4:8. Here "gave," as Dr. Lee interprets, is used instead of "received" because if God is to "take"

¹Philip Schaff, "Companion to the Greek Testament," p. 23, as quoted by E. B. Kephart, Apologetics (Dayton: Press of United Brethren Publishing House, 1901), p. 31.

²Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 302.

³S. John quotes the prediction, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced," which presents a literal version of the Hebrew of Zechariah, with the alight but, as S. John quotes, necessary change of "Him" for "Me." These words the Seventy had translated: "They shall look upon Me, because they have mocked Me,"—a translation which not only was unsuited to the Evangelist's object, but is also irreconcilable with our Hebrew text. Ibid., pp. 318, 319.

to Himself, he must first "give" certain graces to man. Through this form of exegesis, Dr. Lee is satisfied that he has solved the difficulty and realized that there really is a near literal translation. The fourth classification is a combination of the other three.¹

Harris does not feel that Christ and the apostles accepted the Septuagint but rather that they accepted the common Jewish canon—that which is determinative for Protestants this day. He points out that the quotations of the Old Testament in the New are often preceded by "it is written," "God said," et cetera. As concerns the Apocrypha, on the other hand, though allusions may have been made to them, these books and additions "are never quoted in any way."² Harris does not show how he comes to these conclusions on the basis of the evidence, apparently to the contrary.

Most writers agree that Jesus and the apostles considered the Scriptures to be inspired. There is abundant evidence from the New Testament that this is true. In Mark 14:49 Jesus asserts that "the scriptures must be fulfilled." In John 5:39, he proclaims that the scriptures testify of him. John 10:35 records Jesus as saying that "the scripture cannot be broken." To the fact that the law of Moses, the writings of the prophets, and the Psalms contain that which was fulfilled through Christ, he in Luke 24:44 readily testifies. Paul in 2 Timothy 3:15,16 verifies the redemptive purpose of Scripture and that it is inspired. Peter, in Acts 1:16, recognizes that there is

¹Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 302.

²Harris, Inspiration and Canonicity of the Bible, p. 183.

a fulfilling of Scripture, seemingly attributing to it a supernatural source. He quite assuredly does so in 2 Peter 1:20. In Matthew 22:29, Jesus saw that the error of the Sadducees lay in part in the fact that they did not know the Scriptures. Jesus said in Matthew 5:17 that he "had not come to destroy the law, or the prophets," but that, instead, he had come "to fulfill." He further stipulated in the next verse that "till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." That he had a very deep regard for these writings, we cannot doubt. There have been those critics who have contended that he contradicts these writings and was supplanting them with a new teaching. The Jews had come to violate the teachings of the law and of the prophets through their traditions, Jesus tells them in Matthew 15:3-6. The Gospel was disturbing to their traditions. He was destroying them but was fulfilling the law "by transmuting it into a new energy of the Spirit, which would proceed by a quite different method from that of minute enactments."¹ Sanday observes the same truth when he says that Jesus seized the spirit of the Old Testament legislation and ensured that even the letter would be kept more effectively by "striking down to the root of motive which the law could not reach."² In reference to the rich man and Lazarus we see his opinion of the practical value of the Scriptures: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear

¹Charles Gore, The Reconstruction of Belief (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), p. 877.

²Sanday, Inspiration, p. 411.

them."¹ Sanday interprets the statements of Jesus in Matthew 5:18 and John 10:35 as giving to "the Scriptures of the Old Covenant, not only authority in matters of faith and life, but a kind of ultimate and inviolable perfection."²

Grant makes mention of the fact that throughout the Greek world there were many ancient books which were looked upon as containing a hidden wisdom and that particular skill was required to glean the meaning therefrom—apparently, the more ancient the writing was, the greater was its content of wisdom. He is of the opinion that the New Testament writers did not take this extreme view of the Old Testament, that the latter was regarded as more historical and less pedantic than the Stoic allegorization of Homer or than Philo's exegesis of the hidden sense of the writings. "But," he comments, "the fact of the inspiration of the Old Testament, and its source in divine revelation, is everywhere taken for granted in the New."³

The difficulty which faces us is not that Jesus and the writers did not regard the Scriptures to be inspired and thus authoritative. The problem is: to which writings were they making reference? Dr. Cladden feels that when Paul wrote his letter to Timothy and made mention of the "Scriptures" having been in Timothy's possession, he could have reference to none other than the Greek collection containing the Apocrypha.

¹James H. Fairchild, Elements of Theology (Oberlin: Pearce and Randolph, 1892), p. 88.

²Sanday, op. cit., p. 88.

³Grant, op. cit., p. 63.

Whatever Paul says about the inspiration of the Scriptures must be interpreted with this fact in mind. To find in these words of Paul the guarantee of the inspiration and infallibility of the books of the collection which are translated from the Hebrew, and not those which are written in Greek, is a freak of exegesis not more violent than fantastic. We know that Paul read and used some of these apocryphal books and there are several of the books in our Hebrew Bible that he never quotes or refers to in the remotest way. The attempt which is often made to show that the New Testament writers have established, by their testimony, the Old Testament canon, as containing just those books which are in our Old Testament, and no more, is a most unwarrantable distortion of the facts.¹

On the other hand, Dr. Hodge is equally convinced that the Hebrew canon, as we know it to be today, is that which was authenticated by Jesus and his apostles. In support of his view, he gives the following points:

- (1) The New Testament writers quote as Scripture almost every one of the books we now recognize and they quote no other as Scripture. The number of direct quotations and implied allusions to the language of the Old Testament occurring in the New have been traced in upwards of 600 instances.
- (2) The Septuagint, . . . which was itself frequently quoted by Christ and his apostles, embraced every book we now recognize.
- (3) Josephus, who was born A.D. 37, in his first book in answer to Apion, enumerates as Hebrew Scriptures the same books by their classes.
- (4) The uniform testimony of the early Christian writers, e.g. "Melito, A.D. 177; Origen, A.D. 230; Athanasius, A.D. 326; Jerome A.D. 390; Augustine A.D. 395."
- (5) Ever since the time of Christ, Jews and Christians have been severally custodians of the same canon. Their agreement with us today demonstrates the identity of our Scriptures with those of the Jews of the first century.²

¹Gladden, Who Wrote the Bible? pp. 306, 307.

²A. A. Hodge, Outlines of Theology, p. 92.

The particular point which Dr. Gladden has raised in regard to 2 Timothy 3:16, brings to the fore a possible solution. The Greek rather than being translated to read, "All scripture is inspired. . ." can just as well be translated, "Every scripture which is inspired" Luther preferred to translate the passage according to the latter alternative. Others have not.

Being aware of the influence of the Apocrypha, Sanday makes another observation, in that he notes that there are quotations existing in the New Testament which cannot be identified. Ancient statements locate their source in lost Apocrypha or Pseudepigrapha. He would contradict Hodge in contending that one express quotation from the Apocrypha is found in the Book of Jude and has its origin in the Book of Enoch. ". . . the quotation from the Book of Enoch is quite unequivocal and it definitely prevents us from saying that no Apocryphal Book is recognized by a Canonical writer."¹ Harris says that "Jude does not by this sanction the Book of Enoch any more than Paul sanctions the writings of the Greek poets Aratus, Menander, and Epimenides, from each of which he quotes a sentence (Acts 17:28; I Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12)."² Sanday adds, ". . . the use of the Apocrypha bears a very small proportion to that of the Old Testament and in respect to spiritual authority enters into no sort of competition with it."³ The statement is posited that the relationship

¹Sanday, op. cit., p. 95.

²Harris, op. cit., p. 183.

³Sanday, loc. cit.

which stands between the Old and the New Testament writings seems to indicate that the Hebrew canon was almost entirely relied upon for authoritative teaching.¹

The New Testament Scriptures. As the concept of the canon had become established through dealing with the problem in relation to the Old Testament, the question as the New Testament was approached was, thus, not a new one. Discussions arose from time to time concerning which book was worthy to be included in this body of writings, but as to the establishment of the collection itself, there does not seem to be any trace whatsoever. This, of course, does not refer to the opposition of the Jews who would be expected to react to such an activity.² The process of the forming of the canon was that of deciding which writings were to be placed in the same category as the Old Testament Scriptures. In the case of the New Testament the mould, the fully formed conception, was already in existence, and the only question was, what writings should be put into it and why they should be put there.³ Being placed on the same footing as the Old Testament Scriptures, led, in the course of time, to the conviction that the New Testament writings were equally inspired.⁴

As the various authors wrote, they were not consciously adding

¹Ibid.

²Abraham Kuyper, Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), p. 462.

³Sanday, op. cit., p. 5.

⁴Grant, op. cit., p. 63.

to the older writings.¹ On the basis of the previous revelation and that which had been revealed to them, they wrote to meet the needs which presented themselves in the churches and in individual lives. They were consciously supplementing the Old Testament in the light of the new revelation which had been realized through the coming of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Throughout, the New presupposes the Old. "It was the simple and natural process of writing down what needed to be presented--a necessity which even the apocalyptist felt (Rev. 1:11)--or of writing when direct communication by speech was out of the question (I Cor. 11:34b), which led to the production of the New Testament."² They were not an independent body of literature, but the writings which were necessary to inform completely concerning the truth, to round out that revelation and that truth which had primarily and partially been presented in the Old Testament. They were the writings which were necessary in order that the oral records of the life of Jesus be protected, that proper instruction be given, for a correct interpretation of the Old Testament Scripture, and for a knowledge of the fullness of salvation that was possible through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.³ It was only a gradual, although in relation to the Old Testament quite rapid, process whereby the writings came to be regarded with their sacredness. This

¹Kuyper, op. cit., p. 472.

²Grant, op. cit., p. 81.

³Ibid.

reception would seem to presuppose the gradually growing contemporary regard of the inspiration of these books.

It has been observed that the Bible of Jesus' time was the Septuagint. Most scholars are agreed that the New Testament books were written in Greek, excepting perhaps the Gospel of Matthew. Gladden quotes Papias as testifying that this book was originally written in the Hebrew, by which Gladden feels that he meant the Aramaic, since it was the vernacular of the Jew.¹ Dr. Gladden is cognizant that Palestine was a bilingual country but he ventures the possibility that Jesus and his disciples spoke in the Aramaic. As Jesus opened the ears of the deaf man, told the girl to arise, and as he cried out upon the cross, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" he was only speaking the language of the people, and the writer recorded the words because he thought they were memorable. These words might have been confusing to the Roman soldiers standing by, so reasons Gladden, but not to the people of his own race. If this be true, then Matthew is the only Gospel writer who could have consistently recorded the words of Jesus: the other made a Greek translation of that which he spoke.² If such be true, of course a doctrine of inspiration is pertinently affected by such a fact.

The process of deciding which books should be included in the canon continued, especially regarding some of the books, for many years. Concerning others the recognition came quite readily. Basic-

¹Gladden, op. cit., p. 247.

²Ibid., pp. 247-249.

ally the question which was considered was whether or not a certain book was the work of the Apostle or his companion to whom it was attributed. Gore says, "It is a matter of constant assumption that the standard of sound doctrine, to which the Church must always conform, is to be found in the Old Testament as supplying the foundation on which the Church is built, and in the New Testament as containing the fullness once for all."¹ In some instances, such consideration appears to have been secondary.

In the book of Acts, we find that Barnabas was a close companion of the Apostle Paul, that he was looked upon with favor by the church at Jerusalem, and that he was used by the Holy Spirit in the missionary endeavor of the early Church. Clement of Alexandria attributed the Epistle of Barnabas to Barnabas and (A.D. 192) referred to him as "the Apostle," "an Apostolic man," "one of the Seventy Disciples, and fellowlabourer of St. Paul." This letter which he ostensibly wrote appeared in the New Testament collection for approximately 400 years. That he authorized the Epistle is attested to by Clement of Alexandria seven times, at least three times by Origen and by other writers. The most ancient manuscript which is known to exist, the Tischendorf Manuscript, contains the Epistle of Barnabas. One reason that scholars believe it to be quite aged is that it does contain this letter.² Surely this book had every opportunity to prove itself. Curtis sees the reason for its eventual

¹Gore, The Reconstruction of Belief, p. 865.

²O. A. Curtis, The Christian Faith (New York: The Methodist Book Concern, 1905), p. 120.

exclusion from the New Testament as being that it did not deserve to be there and dropped out because of its inferior quality.

. . . being tried by Paul's test, it was found not to be profitable for doctrine, reproof, or anything else. . . . It was received on testimony, and discarded after experience. It had authority at first, because of its supposed author; it lost it afterwards, by means of its empty self.¹

The book written by Mark, Barnabas' sister's son, was readily received and withstood the test. In contrast to the claim of the Roman Catholic Church that the early ecclesiastical organization chose certain writings which became the established canon, the evidence substantiates the view that, as in the case of the Old Testament, the synods confirmed those Scriptures which had come to be recognized in the individual churches. The writings had attained to this position because of the character of their contents and not in any arbitrary manner whatsoever. Dr. Curtis, as the result of deep insight into the qualifications which canonical books were required to meet, says:

. . . The criterion of canonicity was essentially spiritual. It is true that there was, in considering any given writing, the question of historical connection; but the historical question was really a means to an end. What the Christian church was after all the time was to discover and sanction those writings which to the Christian consciousness revealed the person of Christ and the doctrines and facts of redemption. Had any writing whatsoever antagonized Christian experience, had any book failed to win the inner Christian amen, such a book would have been rejected. Therefore, we can affirm that every step in the obtainment of the Bible was not arbitrary but dynamic.²

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 169.

The forming of the canon was not so much a process of collection as of reduction. In the introduction to Luke's Gospel we read that many had undertaken the task of presenting a narrative of the historical events which were the basis of the Christian faith. Irenaeus relates that the Gospels in existence were "countless in number."¹ There were the Gospels according to the Hebrews, according to the Egyptians, according to Peter. Garbett tells us that there were no less than thirty of these gospels known to have existed; in addition there were sixteen books of Acts--the so-called "Travels of Apostles," the Preaching of Peter, the Acts of Paul, the Acts of Paul and Thecla, and others, five epistles, and the Apocalypse of Peter. A total of eighty books have been presented for entrance into the canon and have been rejected.²

Almost from the beginning there was a solid nucleus of accepted writings, referred to as the homologoumena or universally received.³ Other than these there were two groups. One of these, spoken of as the antilegomena or controverted, included 2d Peter, James, Jude, 2d and 3d John, Revelation, and Hebrews.⁴ That some of these books in question go back to the apostolic age is proven by the fact that the Epistle to the Hebrews is quoted by First Clement which is regarded as a first century production. Papias commented on Revelation, along

¹Cont. Hoer., lib. I. xx, p. 91, quoted by Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 56.

²Edward Garbett, God's Word Written (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), p. 53.

³Sanday, Inspiration, p. 24, and Hodge, Outlines of Theology, p. 95.

⁴Hodge, op. cit., p. 95.

with the name of its author. The Epistle of James appears to have left traces of style and content in Clement, the Didache, and the Shepherd of Hermas. Thereafter, for a time, the popularity of these three waned. Sanday believes the reason to be that they had the disadvantage of circulating individually and not under the protection of a collection. Humanly speaking, it would seem that Hebrews was saved by the scholars of Alexandria, Revelation by the value set upon it by the West, and James by the value placed especially by the church of Jerusalem.¹

Second and Third John, and Jude apparently suffered because of their size and the fact that they might have been addressed only to an individual. Jude, however, had good support from Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian and from the listing of the Muratorian fragment. Second Peter was the source of extended controversy because of its content and questioned authorship.

Indications present themselves that by the end of the second century a serious process of elimination had begun. The Muratorian list is one of the signs that the claims of the various writings were being weighed and considered. Another is Tertullian's comparison of Hebrews and the Shepherd of Hermas and his comment on the rejection of the latter by a synod. Clement of Alexandria and, later, Origen discussed the character of Hebrews. Also, the Book of Revelation was the source of much controversy about this time. Sanday sees the

¹Sanday, op. cit., p. 25.

end of the second century as the true turning point in the history of the canon.¹

The fourth century was a time of reemphasized evaluation and elimination. The struggle took place in the first half; the latter half confirmed the results. That which instigated the reexamination of the canon at this time was the persecution by Diocletian of the Church and his zealous effort to destroy the Christian Scriptures. After the persecution, those who had given up their writings to be destroyed were called "traditores," and were denied membership in the Church. Garbett believes personal interest more than religious duty to have been the reason that James, Second Peter, Second and Third John and Jude were found "on examination, not to be universally received as authoritative."² "But even this exception was but of short duration, for in the middle of the same century the whole of our present books were enumerated by Athanasius as belonging to the New Testament canon."³ And, he is impressed by the fact that:

The large number of spurious books rejected, proves the severity of the inquiry. The fact that it issued in affirming the inspired character of all the books now received without exception, supplies an historical testimony of the highest value to their genuineness, authenticity, and credibility.⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 26, 27.

²Garbett, op. cit., p. 99.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

Even in the middle of the sixth century the Syrian Church recognized only three epistles, and nearly a millenium later the Nestorian Church did not exceed this number. An adequate answer to this varying content among the canons in different areas is that at the time of translation only those books were translated which had an established footing at that particular stage of history.¹ The Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Alexandrinus which were of somewhat later time still included apocryphal writings but "only because they were copies from older originals and so perpetuated the conditions of a bygone time."² Grant would disagree with Sanday's sense of finality in regard to the New Testament canon and say that the process is never complete, and as Luther felt free to reject the Epistle of James, there are other books, namely, Revelation, which might conceivably be rejected in the future.³

Attitude of the Church Fathers Toward the Scriptures. Insofar as the inspiration of these writings were concerned, a high degree of harmony prevailed. Lee comments: "The absence, indeed, of dogmatic teaching on this question (of inspiration) during the first fifteen centuries of the Church affords a clear illustration of the harmony of opinion which prevailed respecting it; . . ."⁴

Without doubt, these early Christian fathers held an extremely

¹Sanday, op. cit., p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 12.

³Grant, op. cit., p. 92.

⁴Lee, op. cit., p. 81.

high view of Scripture, following in the steps of their Jewish predecessors.¹ The usual style of introducing Scripture was either to omit the author's name and say, "Thus saith the Holy Ghost," or to include it and say, "Thus saith the Spirit by Paul," or by Solomon, by Moses. Gregory the Great said, "It is needless to seek who wrote the Book of Job, since we may faithfully believe that the Holy Ghost was its author."² "What avails it," said Theodoret, "to know whether all the Psalms were written by David, it being plain that all were composed under the influence of the Divine Spirit?"³

Tertullian described the writers of Scripture as having their minds "flooded" with the Holy Ghost,⁴ and regarded inspiration as determining the choice of particular words and phrases.⁵ Yet he pointed out that the Apostle Paul recognized different degrees of inspiration when he spoke in his own name and not that of Christ.⁶ Sanday comments that this opinion was introduced in Tertullian's writing in an apparent consciousness that such a view, running counter to popular opinion, was unlikely to meet with any general reception.

Clement of Alexandria refers a saying of Paul in I Corinthians

¹William Thomson, Aids to Faith (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1862), p. 333.

²Praef. in Moralia in Lib. Job. t.1., p. 7, quoted by Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 82.

³Prothecia in Psalmos, t.1., p. 35, quoted by Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 82.

⁴Apol. 18, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 32.

⁵Sanday, Inspiration, p. 34.

⁶Ibid., p. 42.

3:2 to the Holy Spirit in Paul "using mystically the voice of the Lord."¹ He also speaks of obeying the Scriptures as "obeying the Lord."² On another occasion he asserts that "not one tittle" of the Scriptures can pass away, because they are spoken by the Holy Ghost.³

Justin replied to an adversary, "I dare not either imagine or assert, that the Scriptures contradict each other; but were any passage to be adduced which has even the semblance of being opposed to another, being altogether persuaded that no such opposition really exists, I will rather confess that I myself do not understand what is said."⁴

Julius Africanus proposed a most ingenious method of harmonizing the genealogies of Christ and concluded, "Whether this explanation be correct or not, the Gospels in all points state the truth."⁵

Origen, defining the process of inspiration, says that "the Sacred Books are not the works of men," but that they "were written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, at the will of the Father of All, through Jesus Christ."⁶ In adopting a phrase from the Gospel of Matthew, he expresses his conviction that "there is not one jot or one tittle but is charged with divine lessons."⁷ Origen implies that there

¹Paed. 1.6, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 32.

²Strom. vii. 16, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 33.

³Protrept. 9, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 37.

⁴Dial. cum Tryph. c. 65, p. 162, quoted by Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 89.

⁵Routh, Reliq. Sacrae, t. ii., p. 234, quoted by Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 89.

⁶De Princip. iv. 9, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 32.

⁷Comm. in Ev. Matt. xvi. 12, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 35.

were those in his day who thought it possible that the Scriptures contain discrepancies due to failure of memory or inaccuracy.¹ He did not accept this explanation, but on another occasion, where in Matthew 27:9 a quotation from Zechariah is attributed to Jeremiah, he ventures the possibility of clerical error.²

Irenaeus contended that, "It is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed perfect knowledge."³ He saw inspiration to reach to the very words which were chosen by the writers when he said, ". . . the writings of Moses are the words of Christ, . . ."⁴ ". . . the Scriptures are indeed perfect, since they were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit, . . ."⁵

Augustine wrote to Jerome: "This I have learned to do: to hold only those books which are called the Holy Scriptures in such honor that I finally believe that not one of the holy writers ever erred."⁶ With respect to inspiration, Augustine declares that the Scriptures are "the revered pen of thy Spirit."⁷ On another occasion,

¹Comm. in Ev. Jo. vi. 18, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 46.

²Lommatzsch, v. 28, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration.

³Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, contribution by J. Barton Payne, "Irenaeus."

⁴Ibid., p. 20.

⁵Ibid., p. 18.

⁶Theodore Engelder, Scripture Cannot Be Broken (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), p. 33.

⁷Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, contribution of D. W. Kerr, "Augustine of Hippo," p. 72.

he said, "Faith will totter if the authority of Scripture begins to shake."¹ Kerr sees the course of his reasoning to be that the Bible should be believed because of its authoritative character, which is a result of its inerrancy, issuing from its inspiration, "because holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."²

Augustine solves the use of "Jeremiah" in the quote from Zechariah³ by holding that Matthew was inspired to write "Jeremiah" in order to manifest the harmony between the two prophets, so that each might claim the sayings of the other.⁴

The evidence is considerable that at first the Gospels were copies with freedom. Individuals were happy to record in the margins of their accounts any interesting oral information which they heard, even though it may not have been in the copy which they owned. Sanday warns us not to overestimate the influence of this practice on our present-day versions because scholars have, within narrow limits, through comparison of numbers of early manuscripts, been able to come to agreement as to what the Evangelists wrote. (He commends us to the American Revised Version as an expression of that "average opinion.")⁵

¹Ibid., p. 75.

²Ibid.

³Matthew 27:9.

⁴De Cons. Evang. iii. 29, 30, quoted by Sanday, Inspiration, p. 46.

⁵Ibid., p. 297.

The tolerance of the early Church in this respect can be illustrated through citing the case of the Alogi, a party in Asia Minor towards the end of the second century which denied the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The Alogi were inclined to reject Johannine writings because of the citadel which they provided Montanists and Gnostics in the defense of their peculiar tenets. The significant factor is that they were not excluded from the Church as Marcion and Valentinus were, and exemplifies the difference between the year 200 and the year 400. At the later date, no one would have thought to question one of the four Gospels, or, at least if he had done so, he would soon find that he had been dropped from the Church rolls. At the earlier date, it was possible to question and raise a doubt about a certain book and still be considered orthodox.¹

As in earlier times, the Bible of the Church was the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, to which had been added the New Testament books, also written in Greek. Among the Christian fathers, there were some who understood the Hebrew, but the greater majority relied upon the Greek manuscripts. Westcott gives us a table in Smith's "Bible Dictionary," of citations made from the apocryphal books by fifteen of the Greek fathers, from Clement of Rome to Chrysostom, and by eight Latin writers, from Tertullian to Augustine. Each of the apocryphal books is quoted with some such inscription as, "The Scripture saith," or "It is written," by one or more of the listed writers. ". . . the Book of Wisdom is quoted by

¹Sanday, Inspiration, pp. 15, 16.

all of them except Polycarp and Cyril; Baruch and the Additions to Daniel are quoted by the great majority of them; Origen quotes them all, Clement of Alexandria all but one, Cyprian all but two."¹

Payne attributes Irenaeus' use of the Apocrypha to his use of the Septuagint version, and says that he "departed from Apostolic precedent" in doing so. Irenaeus quotes from Wisdom 2:28,29, from Bel and the Dragon and Susanna, which are quoted as the true words of Daniel (IV:5,3 and 26,3), and passages from Baruch are imputed to Jeremiah. (V:35,1)²

This does not becloud the fact that some of the fathers were doubtful about these books. Melito and Origen made investigations and the latter, especially, came to the conclusion that they should be considered outside the canon. Kerr is interested that Augustine seemed to reject the real canonicity of some apocryphal books. He conceded that that which was not included in the Hebrew canon could not be used with confidence in controversy with opponents.³ Jerome was perhaps the first to challenge their worthiness and consistently to oppose their validity. The others, in spite of the doubts which they harbored, continued to quote and refer to the questioned writings as sacred Scripture.⁴

¹Cladden, Who Wrote the Bible? p. 312.

²Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, contribution of J. Barton Payne, "Irenaeus," p. 21.

³De civitate Dei, quoted by Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, contribution of D. W. Kerr, "Augustine of Hippo," p. 81.

⁴Cladden, op. cit., p. 313.

The Council of Hippo convened in 393. At this meeting, the African bishops under the leadership of Augustine discussed the Old Testament canon. The list agreed upon included the Hebrew canon, plus Wisdom, Ecclesiasticus, Tobit, Judith, and the two books of Maccabees. This list was reaffirmed by another council at Carthage which met in 397, also under the leadership of Augustine. Jerome, and through the later centuries, other scholars fought valiantly to negate these decisions but the conclusions maintained themselves until the Council of Trent, when the lengthy debate was concluded insofar as the Roman Catholic Church has been concerned with the adoption of the Augustinian canon, guarded with a concluding anathema: "If any one will not receive as sacred and authoritative the whole books with all their parts, let him be accursed."¹

In respect to the canon, the Council of Trent marks the parting of ways between the Protestant reformers and the Roman Catholic Church. Up until this time there was some skepticism over certain books, but after this, the ranks of both parties became closed against each other. This did not happen immediately. When Luther translated the Scriptures, he included Judith, Wisdom, Tobit, Sirach, Baruch, First and Second Maccabees, the Greek additions to Esther and Daniel, with the Prayer of Manasseh. In the prefaces which he inserted with each book, he commented upon their value. Some he regarded quite highly; the Book of Esther had little value as far as he was concerned. With the exception of Esther he estimated the books of the Hebrew

¹Gladden, Who Wrote the Bible? pp. 313, 314.

canon to occupy a higher plane than those of the Apocrypha. This view gradually gained acceptance among the Protestant churches and, although some have included the books of the Apocrypha as of value for reading, they no longer were considered to be authoritative sources of doctrine. For the past 350 years there has been the inclusion in the Protestant Bibles of only those books which comprised the Hebrew canon.¹

The Attitude of Some Later Leaders Toward Scripture. The Reformation re-introduced much thought and controversy about Scripture. It was the Scriptures, not the traditions of the Church which had its headquarters in Rome, which were sufficient for salvation. And though the conflict of the period naturally led to the high estimation of the Scriptures, there was a boldness of speech and a freedom of inquiry which was a contrast to the age of the Church Fathers and is a contrast to our own age.

Erasmus, the forerunner of Luther, had, through his critical inquiries, come to a much less strict view of the Scriptures than was true of the age immediately preceding him. He did not think it necessary to ascribe everything in the New Testament to the miraculous. It was conceivable to him that the Holy Spirit had even allowed the Apostles to err even after the descent of the Paraclete so long as that error did not endanger the basic principles of the faith.²

Luther is famous for his high esteem of Scripture. In giving his reply at Worms on April 18, 1521 to the charges which had been

¹Ibid., pp. 314-316.

²Thomson, Aids to Faith, p. 338.

brought against him, he said:

Unless I am convinced by testimony from Scripture or evident reasons—for I believe neither the Pope nor the councils alone, since it is established that they have often erred and contradicted themselves—I am conquered by the writings cited by me, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. Therefore I will not and cannot recant anything since it is neither safe nor honest to do anything against conscience.¹

We can picture his estimate of the Bible when he writes: "The Scriptures have never erred,"² and, "It is impossible that Scripture should contradict itself; it appears so only to the senseless and obstinate hypocrites."³

In spite of such statements, Luther, bolstered by "indomitable boldness," proceeded to subject the Scriptures to the criterion of his judgment. The letters of Paul struck a responsive note in his inner being, and the Epistle of James seemed to contradict Paul's writings. Thus the Epistle of James "was rejected as an Epistle of straw."⁴

Thomson says there is reason to believe that Luther afterwards "regretted and recanted." "But," he proceeds with the proven observation, "words once spoken reach far and wide, and can never be unsaid again."⁵ It is no doubt on the basis of the "repentant" Luther that Carl F. H. Henry makes the statement: "Whatever Luther's questions

¹Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 106, contribution of J. Theodore Mueller, "Luther."

²Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 99, contribution of Mueller, St. L. XV: 1481.

³Engelder, Scripture Cannot Be Broken, p. 33.

⁴Thomson, op. cit., p. 338.

⁵Ibid.

may have been about the canonicity of certain books . . . he had no question whatever about the authority and inerrancy of the books viewed as canonical."¹

Calvin rejected the subjective tendency of Luther and adhered to the scholastic approach. In doing so, he found a place for the verbal inspiration of Scriptures so that some of the Swiss Confessions hold to dictation by the Holy Spirit.² "The Holy Spirit," declares Calvin, "dictated to the prophets and the apostles" the writings so that his exact desires were realized in the final production.

(Jeremiah, IV, 229) This message was not only in reference to the divine message received, but also the written document comprising the Holy Scripture.³ The part which the human author plays in the writing of Scripture is relatively insignificant since he brings "forth nothing from his own brain," his task being to deliver "what the Lord has commanded" without adding anything. Thus the content of Scripture does not proceed from the minds of its human writers, but rather comes directly from the mind of God.⁴ Calvin places errors in the translations; only the original manuscripts are without error because they alone are inspired. In the manuscripts which we possess Calvin is quite willing to admit mistakes.⁵

¹Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 101, Pieper, "Christliche Dogmatik," p. 251, quoted by Mueller.

²Thomson, op. cit., p. 338.

³Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 137, contribution of K. S. Kantzer, "Calvin and the Holy Scriptures."

⁴Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 138, contribution of Kantzer, Minor Prophets, II, 205, 206.

⁵Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 144, contribution of Kantzer, Pentateuch, II, 304; Acts, I, 263-4, 297; Joshua, pp. 206-7; John, II, 297; Harmony, III, 272; et passim.

In treating the historical element of Scripture, Calvin argues that if the chronology of one book is not the same as that of another Gospel that the Holy Spirit is not interested in chronology and thus there is no contradiction. If numbers are not precisely accurate one must not find fault if the Holy Spirit prefers to give us round numbers. Calvin maintains that the quotation of a passage from the Old Testament by a New Testament writer is no guarantee of its correctness. The correct element is always used, however, in bringing out the particular point to which the writer has reference. Luke, for example, quotes from the inaccurate Septuagint version because it is the Scripture with which the people are familiar. That part of the quotation which is pertinent is "absolutely correct."¹ It will be noted that these modifications are not consistent with the view of verbal inspiration as understood by later Calvinists.

Wesley, rather than dealing with the matter of authority as Luther did, was concerned with an indifferent Church. We therefore do not find Wesley involved in the comparative value of different books; to him they were all equally inspired and authoritative. Although he was not reactionary in regard to Biblical scholarship, he did not agree with those who held to the possibility of error in the Scriptures. "May, if there be any mistakes in the Bible there may as well be a thousand. If there be one falsehood in that book it did not come from the God of truth."² His lack of position in this regard

¹Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 147, contribution of Kantzer, Acts, I, 263-64.

²Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 161, contribution of George A. Turner, "John Wesley," Journal, VI, 117.

is understood in his admittance of the possibility of error in the genealogies. As Dr. Turner puts it, "To state it more precisely, Wesley was a 'lower' (textual) but not a 'higher' critic. He readily adjusted his beliefs to the evidence, but he instinctively reacted against any rationalistic bias inimical to evangelical faith."¹

Summary

The attitudes toward Scripture of religious groups and leaders through the centuries has been investigated in this chapter. The analyzation was undertaken to determine the regard toward Scripture which was held historically in view of the fact that there are literary, chronological, and verbal differences in the Johannine and Synoptic accounts. The hope was nourished that there would be found those who, fully recognizing the need of Bible inerrancy and fully recognizing the aforementioned differences, had carefully formulated a theory of Biblical inspiration.

There came to be a group of writings considered authoritative. The reason for certain books being considered worthy to be included in the Old Testament has been widely discussed. The antiquity, the prophetic character, and the inherent character of the writings are qualities which have been held as essential.

Nevertheless, there did come to be a quite firmly established canon. The attitude of the Jew toward these writings was one of extreme reverence. Utmost care was used to guard even the punctuation

¹Turner, op. cit., p. 162.

for they were considered to have been, in a very real sense, the product of God. The human author was passive in their production.

The Alexandrian Jew maintained this same attitude of Scriptural verbal perfection but his interpretations were on the basis of the Septuagint version and not the Hebrew original. Although reference was made to material in the apocryphal writings, Philo and Josephus both had less regard for these than for those books in the Hebrew canon.

In the time of Christ and the New Testament writers, the Septuagint was the group of writings in use. There is considerable evidence that the thought of this version was appropriated quite often. Christ and the New Testament writers had a deep regard for the Old Testament. They usually did not refer to these writings in the strict sense of quoting verbatim but rather by appropriating the thought of a particular passage. In so doing, they departed from views held by the Jewish doctors. For authoritative teaching reliance was almost entirely upon the Hebrew canon.

In the formation of the New Testament canon the process was one of determining which books were worthy to be included along with the Old Testament Scriptures. Synods later confirmed those writings which had gained recognition through their use in the individual churches. The writings most used and confirmed as canonical were those which revealed Christ and the truths of redemption.

The Church Fathers, following in the steps of their Jewish predecessors, held to an extremely high view of Scripture. The writers of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures wrote quite mechanic--

ally and every marking was packed with significance. Although at first doubts were exercised toward certain books, time and persecution contributed to an estimation of Scripture which would allow no questioning. Some of the books so considered were apocryphal. Generally, apocryphal writings were not revered in the same respect as canonical books.

Particularly since the Reformation has this been true among Protestantism.

Luther questioned some books of the accepted canon but only for a time.

Conclusion

In the formulation of their convictions toward Scripture, the Jewish attitude toward the Old Testament and that of the Church Fathers and later leaders toward both the New and the Old Testament do not appear to have taken into consideration the characteristics of Scripture manifesting themselves in the Johannine-Synoptic differences.

It does appear that the use which Christ and New Testament writers made of the Old Testament exemplifies the same latitude of expression noted in the Gospels.

CHAPTER IV

THEORIES OF INSPIRATION

CHAPTER IV

Theories of Inspiration

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze modern theories of Biblical inspiration having in mind the latitude of expression characterizing the Johamine-Synoptic differences. It was observed in the previous chapter that this same latitude of expression was notable in Jesus' and the New Testament writers' handling of the Old Testament Scriptures. An attempt will be made to determine which theory has been formulated with this fact under consideration.

That the Scriptures are valuable is an admission which has been made even on the part of those who have denied to the Bible the quality of divine inspiration. Their excellence is a thing apart from the ability to prove their source.¹ Too, their truthfulness is a question distinct from their inspiration. They might give us a true record of the communications between God and His people, as conveyed through the prophets; and of the life, deeds, and teachings of Jesus and the Apostles and still only be a record such as might be contained in a secular historical work. In this respect, the Scriptures have been verified, insofar as possible, as a true historical work.²

However, the Scriptures have always been held by the Judeo-Christian groups to be in a unique way, inspired of God. Inspiration

¹James H. Fairchild, Elements of Theology (Oberlin, O.: Edward J. Goodrich, 1892), p. 86.

²Ibid., pp. 77, 78.

as a theological term was not in the minds of these early people but the divinely-authorized character of the literature was zealously believed. No theory of inspiration was formulated.

The New Testament writers handled the Old Testament Scriptures as sacred literature. In this Jesus concurred.

The question as to how God inspired and what inspiration is become a matter of theological study only after the Reformation. Following the Reformation, the spirit of the Renaissance, with its exaltation of that which man was able to do through his own unaided powers, entered the field of religion. The stress upon individual liberty struck at the authority of the Scriptures and the stress upon freedom of inquiry led to an investigation of the foundation of authority, that of the inspiration of the Scriptures—that they were God-breathed (ΘΕΟΠΡΕΪΣΤΟΣ). As a result of the sparring back and forth, theories evolved which gave emphasis in one way or another to the divine and the human element in the Scriptures. Each kind of theory stresses some variation of the divine-human element in the Bible.

The confusing multitude of theories which have been proposed fall into very "broad classification:" (1) Humanistic theories. (2) Theories recognizing the divine element, or Plenary theories. (a) Verbal theories—recognizing only the divine element. (Usually verbal-plenary are used interchangeably in this view.) (b) Mediating—recognition of an interaction of both divine and human.

The Humanistic Theories. The humanistic theories are the extreme which give emphasis to the human element. Most advocates hold

that there is no difference between the inspiration of the authors of the Bible and that which is experienced by believers of our own day. Some term their position as the divine illumination theory, and this seems to give a degree of recognition to the divine element:

Its advocates hold to the view of different degrees of inspiration just in proportion as the light of the divine Spirit quickened and illuminated the understanding of the sacred writers from the highest degree of splendor to the faintest glimmer of light.¹

The genius theory is self-explanatory and will also be classed as a humanistic theory. According to the latter, John Wesley was just as much inspired as the Apostle Paul.²

To adequately categorize these theories would be almost an impossible task. There are some such as Strauss who maintain that the Scriptures are nothing more than a collection of pre-historic myths. Others say that those who recorded the facts were honest men but they were subject to error in the recording of these facts just as anyone else would be. Others have confined infallibility to the personal teachings of Christ and have regarded the Apostles as competent but fallible reporters. Adherents of this theory are on the search for the historical Christ in order that, behind all of the supernatural myths which accumulated about this "extraordinary teacher," they may find Jesus as he really lived and taught. Others feel that the writers of the books of the Bible were possessed with that spiritual

¹Ezekial B. Kephart, Apologetics or a Treatise on Christian Evidences (Dayton: Press of United Brethren Publishing House, 1901), p. 47.

²O. A. Curtis, The Christian Faith (New York: Eaton and Maine, 1905), p. 178.

illumination which is common to all Christians. Some see the Scriptures to be the result of highly endowed human faculties.¹

A perusal of the thinking of Dr. Washington Gladden will be presented because it expresses the essentially humanistic view. He is convinced that the writers of the Bible (he apparently is restricting his remarks to the New Testament) were inspired men and "that these men possessed a degree of inspiration far exceeding that vouchsafed to any other religious teachers who have lived on the earth. . . ." He states that this inspiration enabled them to present to us with "sufficient fullness and with substantial verity" the doctrine of the Church. But, he vehemently decries the attribution to them of infallibility. He declares that they made mistakes, and that the Scriptures (for instance Galatians 2) testify to the fact. If they were so grievously wrong in maintaining that Gentiles must first become Jews before they became Christians, and when one Apostle condemns another for his course of action as Paul did Peter, he feels that it is clear that for a period of time someone must have ceased to be infallible in the administration of the Gospel. And if they made such mistakes, "How can we be sure that they never made a mistake when they sit down to write, that then their words are always the very word of God? We can have no such assurance."² I Corinthians 7 and 2 Corinthians 11 are referred to as express citations that their words are not the words of God. Gladden maintains that the special

¹Hodge, Outlines of Theology, pp. 69, 70. Adapted.

²Gladden, Who Wrote the Bible? pp. 209-219.

assistance which they were promised was as much for their administration and the daily conduct of their lives as it was for the authoring the books of the New Testament. In that they made mistakes in these former areas, it is plain to him that the help received likewise did not protect them from error when writing. He feels that they were equally inspired when standing up to speak, when planning a missionary journey, or when taking the pen to write—"just as much and no more."¹

Gladden feels that the writers were not consciously writing for future generations but for needs as they saw them in the contemporary Church, "and God who gives life to the seed gave vitality to these true words, so that they are as full of divine energy to-day as ever they were." He is convinced of the value of the New Testament writings, that there is a treasure there—even though it is a treasure in earthen vessels—and the open mind can readily perceive "that the excellency of the power is of God, and not of men."²

The following is quoted to portray his unhappiness with the adherents of the verbal theory of inspiration:

The old rabbinical theory, as adopted and extended by some of the post-Reformation theologians, that the Bible was verbally dictated by God and is absolutely accurate in every word, letter, and vowel-point, and that it is therefore blasphemy to raise a question concerning any part of it, is a consistent theory. Between this and a free but reverent inquiry into the Bible itself, to discover what human elements it contains and how it is affected by them, there is no middle ground. That

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 235, 236.

it is useless and mischievous to make for the Bible claims that it nowhere makes for itself,—to hold and teach a theory concerning it which at once breaks down when an intelligent man begins to study it with open mind—is beginning to be very plain. The quibbling, the concealment, the disingenuousness which this method of using the Bible involves are not conducive to Christian integrity. This kind of "lying for God" has driven hundreds of thousands already into irreconcilable alienation from the Christian church. It is time to stop it.¹

That the writers of the New Testament had no special endowment other than that which is realized by all other Christians is the contention of James Freeman Clarke. The verse: "By one spirit we have all been baptized into one body and have been all made to drink into one spirit," to his mind, repels the idea that other than this was true. The inspiration by which they taught, preached, or wrote was "an inward sight of Christ, an inward sight of his truth and love, which enabled them to speak and write with authority—the authority of those who saw what they said, and knew it to be true."² He sees 2 Timothy 3:16 to refer not to the Jewish canon or the Septuagint translation but to all sacred writings. In this, the Bible is not an exceptional book in the supernatural realm. It differs from books in the natural realm such as Newton and Milton were inspired to write. The Bible is authoritative but not because it is blessed with extraordinary inspiration; it is authoritative in that the writers were an authority relating to that which is unfamiliar to us. They had spiritual experiences through their "insight or inspiration" which we

¹Ibid., pp. 354, 355.

²J. F. Clarke, Orthodoxy: Its Truths and Errors (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1866), pp. 106, 107.

have not and so they are authorities to us "provided we have enough of their spirit in us to enable us to see and know their inspiration."¹ Clarke says we can distinguish between the truth and error in the accounts which they relate to us by the varying confidence and authority with which they speak.²

Carvie is another who views the Scriptures to be the result of human endeavor. The Apostles were able by means of moral insight and spiritual discernment to discover the condition of the people and the intent of God in relation to that condition. It was not because they were "mysteriously" endowed but because they were believers who were in possession of the inspiration common thereto, but raised to a higher degree because of the fullness of their consecration to Christ. He comments:

If the Church of Christ to-day were as a whole cleansed and renewed, so that a like receptivity for the divine truth and grace were secured, who can doubt that the divine activity in the presence and power of the Spirit of God in man would once more be manifest?³

Thomson quotes Morell as contending that the idea of the New Testament Scriptures having been written by any special command of God, or verbally dictated by the Spirit, was one entirely foreign to the mind of the primitive Christian. On the other hand, they were setting down truths which had intuitively come to them by extraordinary means. Accordingly, inspiration is entirely consistent with the

¹Ibid., pp. 107-117.

²Ibid., p. 121.

³A. E. Carvie, A Handbook of Christian Apologetics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), pp. 63-66.

operation of the natural laws of the mind. It is only a higher kind of ability which every one does possess. Morell thinks that this view of inspiration adequately explains the "minor discrepancies" to be found in the Bible. The immediate intuition of divine things comes as the moral nature is purified, and a harmony of the spirit of man with the mind of God is realized, as all outward disturbances are removed from the heart: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Thomson observes that in this view the value of Scripture depends not upon that which has proceeded from God—from direct commands or the "infallible" guidance of His Spirit—but in that they comprise the teachings and experiences of men whose hearts were lifted and thus had their understandings enlightened "to this being added, in the case of the New Testament, that the writers were such as were specially qualified to represent the Apostolical Church, and so to transmit its spirit and teaching to us."¹

Such a challenge—that inspiration varies with the dedication of the individual—is Scripturally answered, it is the opinion of Thomson, when we realize that Balaam, though disobedient to God; that Jonah, though reluctantly carrying out his mission to the people of Nineveh; that Caiaphas, though helping lay the strategy for Christ's crucifixion—all were used by God to reveal events which were being planned in the heavenly realm. Scripture testifies to the fact that God prefers to use instruments that are dedicated to Him, but such is not always the case. God did use those to reveal His will, whose

¹Thomson, Aids to Faith, pp. 345, 346.

hearts were far from Him. Thomson asserts that a man may have "the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge," may "speak with the tongues of men and angels," and yet lack love and be nothing.¹ The principle which is presented here may very well apply to those whom God selected to be the medium for the writing of the books of the Bible. It appears that Thomson has confused revelation and inspiration. Balaam, Jonah—at the time that he preached to the people of Nineveh, and Caiaphas were prophesying but they were not writing. In this connection, Alexander observes that perhaps the mistake that those make who hold that the inspiration of all Christians is like to that experienced by the Apostles and the Prophets is the failure to distinguish between illumination and inspiration. Involved in the latter is the communication of spiritual truths "directly from heaven," and proper guidance in the relating of these truths. Illumination by the Holy Spirit communicates no new truths but only enables one to comprehend those truths which have already been revealed,² which may be new to the hearer but are old to the Church.³ Lee makes the observation that when the writers of Scripture were not acting in the official capacity, they did not seem to possess divine guidance which was distinct in kind, at least, from that in which all Christians share.⁴ He goes on to say, however, that the incident

¹Ibid., p. 364. Also Matthew 7:22, 23.

²Archibald Alexander, Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, n.d.), p. 223.

³Thomson, op. cit., p. 367.

⁴William Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 220.

which arose between Paul and Peter relative to the error of the latter, would have been error only if it had been inserted as truth. The exposure, he contends, proves the purity and maintains the authority of the divine record. On other occasions also, God used the instrumentality of others to provide a corrective to error. (2 Samuel 7 and 1 Samuel 16:6-12)¹

The tendency, Miley holds, of the positions which give such undue prominence to the human element is to tone down to the point of obliteration the agency of the Holy Spirit. There is no provision for the communication of truth from God to man. The mediate agent is left to his own resources, with but the advantage of a subjective illumination which is insufficient for a knowledge of the higher truths and the guidance necessary for their publication.² Christ did promise the Apostle special assistance we are told in John 14:20; 14:25,26; 15:26,27; 16:12-15. Thomson is of the belief that what actuates those who hesitate to distinguish between the endowment of the Scripture writers and other Christians is a reluctance to acknowledge the miraculous. He is convinced that the inspiration of the Scriptures enters into the realm of the miraculous, "and so its rejection follows upon the rejection of miracles in general."³

Verbal Theory. There is an expressed desire on the part of

¹Ibid., pp. 222, 223.

²John Miley, Systematic Theology, Vol. II (New York: Eaton and Maine, 1894), p. 438.

³Thomson, op. cit., p. 349.

those who maintain verballity to be the Biblical theory that this position not be confused with the mechanical theory. "Mechanical" has to do with the recording of the work. It suggests that the person writing was in some way a passive tool only, contributing nothing by way of personal limitations. In this view, style and vocabulary are separated from the personality so that God's dictation through a person could be in the pattern of a person's thought without partaking of the human personality.

Most discount this view in that it is considered not to take into account the different styles of the various authors. Lee quotes Bishop Warburton's objections: (1) In the recording of historical details and material which was readily available to the authors, the Holy Spirit was put to an unnecessary employment since the writers did not need His "immediate" assistance in such instances; (2) If this theory be true, it would necessitate precise agreement among the four Evangelists, and this agreement we do not have; (3) The phraseology would need to have been the same throughout all those books which were written in the same language.¹

This theory, held and taught as dogma, by Quenstedt and Voetius and Calovius, asserts that

. . . not only the substance of truth and the views proposed in the minutest detail, but even the identical words, all and in particular, were supplied and dictated by the Holy Ghost. Not a word is contained in the Holy Scriptures which is not in

¹Lee, op. cit., p. 142, quoting "A Discourse on the Office of the Holy Spirit," ed. 1788, vol. iv., p. 566.

the strictest sense inspired, the very inter-punctuation not excepted. . . .¹

Dr. Miley does that which would be to the chagrin of verbal exponents, he used the term "verbal" and "mechanical" synonymously apparently regarding neither theory as being adequately reconciled to the human element which is manifest in Scripture.²

The verbal theory is the position which is generally identified with conservative Christianity. It stresses the divine element to the almost total exclusion of the human function. Inspiration is thought to be at the level of words—at the point of the pen rather than partaking in any measure of the understanding or through the mediation of the intelligence of the human author. Sometimes this position is called the verbal-plenary theory. "Plenary" simply emphasizes that fact that inspiration extends to every part of Scripture, guiding both the person who wrote and the product of the person's thinking and pen.

"Plenary" is a broader term; it does not necessarily mean "verbal." Verbal is always plenary. Sometimes the words are interchanged and they are often united. On the part of many guardians of the faith, whether or not one adheres to the verbal theory of inspiration is an adequate indication of the genuineness of that person's faith. In the comments of different leaders of the conservative field which accompanied the recently released edition of Inspiration and Interpretation, in behalf of this book, Dr. H. N. Ockenga makes this distinction:

This symposium by evangelical scholars is a must in the reading of every minister. The watershed of modern theology is one's viewpoint

¹Grant, An Introduction to New Testament Thought, pp. 355-356, quoted from Doctrine of Sacred Scripture, ii., p. 209.

²Miley, op. cit., p. 484.

of the Scriptures. He who accepts the plenary, organic inspiration of Holy Writ is on one side of that watershed and he who rejects it is on the other, regardless of the attitude of those individuals toward specific doctrines contained in the Word.¹

Hodge, a representative of this view, defines inspiration as "that divine influence which, accompanying the sacred writers equally in all they wrote, secured the infallible truth of their writings in every part, both in idea and expression, and determined the selection and distribution of their material according to the divine purpose."² Field sums up a similar definition: "While the words of Scripture are truly and characteristically the words of men, they are at the same time fully and concurrently the words of God."³

Carbett goes to some length—in fact, the 372 pages of his book—to lay the foundation of a logical argument supporting the necessity for verbal inspiration. His logic proceeds something like this: Christianity, in its outward aspects, consists of a series of definite—a perfect revelation;⁴ Christianity is identified with the Christian Scriptures;⁵ the Bible is the source, and the only source of information of Christian truth;⁶ therefore, the Bible contains a perfect

¹Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, contribution by H. N. Ockenga.

²Hodge, Outlines of Theology, p. 67.

³Benjamin Field, The Student's Handbook of Christian Theology (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1887), p. 75.

⁴Edward Carbett, God's Word Written (New York: American Tract Society, n.d.), p. 24.

⁵Ibid., p. 25.

⁶Ibid., p. 30.

revelation and since no work can be perfect unless all of its parts are perfect, the revelation, the body of Christian Scripture, is perfect in every detail.¹

Alexander presents a reasonable argument too: The end of revelation is to convey a certain knowledge of truth; if the information is conveyed through erring fallible men we can never be certain that we have this knowledge of truth even though they are honest faithful men; therefore men must be so infallibly inspired that they will present to us this revelation without mistake.²

As evidence that the Scriptures do attest to their own infallibility, Garbett cites Psalm 119:160; 19:7; 119:142; 2 Timothy 3:16; John 10:35; Revelation 19:9. If one should happen to object that these portions apply to only particular portions of Scripture, Garbett points them to the conclusion to which he has previously arrived in the course of his argument that:

We are justified in extending the character claimed for one part of the Bible to all the other parts issued under the same sanction, contained in the same plan, and united as the greater and lesser links in the same chain of truth."³

In the words of Christ that it would "not be ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost,"⁴ he sees further promise that verbal assistance would be given in time of special difficulty, and "we can scarcely believe"

¹Garbett, God's Word Written, pp. 62-66.

²Alexander, Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures, p. 235.

³Garbett, op. cit., p. 93.

⁴Matthew 10:20.

that when they were writing the books through which he was going to speak to the ages to come that he would give any less help. He believes Paul to assert positively this verbal inspiration in 1 Corinthians 2:12 when he says: "Which things also we speak not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

Alexander cites certain Scripture as "clear and abundant proof" that Christ promised "infallible guidance" to his disciples: John 14:16,17; 15:26,27; 16:13-15. He also uses similar reasoning to that of Garbett in reference to Christ giving at least equal help in writing Scripture as he did when they stood before kings and rulers to give an answer for their faith.¹

The peculiarity of the verbal theory is the stipulation that inspiration is at the level of the word, only. It assumes that words, apart from the activity of mental effort, or interpretation, is capable of expressing truth. Hodge reasons, as do most supporters of this theory, that since the purpose of inspiration was to secure an "infallible record of the truth;" and a record consists of language; and a language consists of words; and the more definite and precise the thought, the more closely is the thought associated with an exact set of words; therefore, an infallible record of truth can be secured only through an exact set of words.²

C. F. H. Henry says, in support of the view which has been expressed that a particular thought can be precisely conveyed only by

¹Alexander, op. cit., pp. 235, 236.

²Hodge, op. cit., pp. 71, 72.

the definite wording employed:

. . . (The identification of written sentences and propositions with special divine revelation—the recognition, that is, of the Word in the form of words—evangelical Christianity holds to be not merely the historic Christian view, but an indispensable element in a proper Biblical theology.¹

One particular realm in the providence of Scripture where this extent of inspiration is seen to apply is that of prophecy. In John 14:29 Christ intimated to the Apostles that they would not realize the full significance of what he was telling them until those events had transpired. Also in Psalm 22 where we read of "the piercing of the hands and the feet," and in Zechariah 9:9 and 11:13 where is described the Messiah's entering Jerusalem "upon an ass," and where mention is given to the "thirty pieces of silver." In such instances, the necessity is seen for divine guidance extending to the precise wording of the phrase. Without such protection, and because of the writer's lack of understanding of the significance of what has been revealed, omission or misstatement might have resulted. Though definite wording may have seemed unnecessary or trivial to the writer, other than an exact verbal rendering of the thought would have nullified the prophecy.²

It is the contention of the advocates of the verbal theory that "had any other word been used than the one particular word actually

¹Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, contribution of C. F. H. Henry, "Divine Revelation and the Bible," p. 256.

²See, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, pp. 198-201.

employed, the sacred narrative would have been inaccurate."¹ In those direct communications which are stipulated to be from God, they are introduced with "said" or "saying" or the like. What God said he must have said in words and if any other are recorded than what He actually used, they are not the words which God spoke. It is impossible to Garbett that an impression of the thought of God could have been made upon the writer and then he be left to record that impression in his own words. The expressions such as "God said" purposely omit such a possibility.²

Galatians 3:16 is an oft-used illustration that inspiration reached even to the letters that were employed: "He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one, and to thy seed, which is Christ." Exact wording of Old Testament passages which are quoted in the New is not seen to be essential. What is essential and what is proven by the evidence, it is claimed, is that "that particular phrase or particular word on which the stress of authority is laid is invariably accurate."³ The apparent indifference with which the remainder of the passage is quoted is only to more emphatically lay stress upon the phrase or word which is singled out. "The exclusive attention thus fixed on particular words can only have arisen from the belief that these single words are God's words, selected by his intention, and therefore clothed with his authority."⁴

¹Garbett, God's Word Written, p. 289.

²Ibid., p. 303.

³Ibid., p. 315.

⁴Ibid., p. 316.

Lee says that "it is invariably assumed that the words of Scripture are no less divine than the doctrines which they convey."¹

Evidence is posited by Garbett that it is sometimes possible to quote the sense of a passage without quoting the words. Matthew 2:23 reads: "He came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene." That no definite passage is referred to, Garbett feels is evidenced by the use of the plural word "prophets" rather than the singular. He believes that the use of *dia* with the genitive which would be translated "through" indicates that the whole scope of the writings of the prophets is meant. John 6:45, 7:38, and 19:28 are similar instances that he gives to illustrate this point. He concludes:

. . . It might not be easy for us to separate the sense from the words; indeed I believe it not possible for us to do so. But it was possible to inspired apostles whose minds were guided to interpret by the same Holy Ghost by whom the ancient writers were guided to write. With this teaching they could pass infallibly through the words to the sense. If, on the contrary, it was their ordinary method to use the words, there must have been reason and intention in it. What could the reason be, but that the words had God's authority upon them, and were themselves sacred? What could the intention be, but to witness to the church of all ages the verbal inspiration and therefore verbal authority of the Scriptures?²

Alexander believes in the verbal theory but he somewhat uniquely contends that inspiration did not result in the selection of

¹Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 337.

²Ibid., p. 309.

the right words, but that it did keep the writers from selecting the wrong words.¹

The agreement of adherents is nearly, if not entirely, unanimous that the manuscripts which we now have in our possessions do contain errors. These have arisen from fallible transcribers and translators who, not being under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, made mistakes which are common to human frailty, such as the copying of wrong dates, numbers, misspelling of words, omission of words, et cetera. For this reason, verbal inspiration is identified with the original manuscripts only. "We take the text as identified with the original autographs, and we affirm that it contains truth, and nothing but truth."²

It is not to be thought, however, that verbal theorists feel that variations from the originals which have entered in have destroyed the authoritativeness of the copies. It is realized that although numerous variations (Gladden says 150,000)³ exist between the early manuscripts which we know to be in existence, these discrepancies are felt in no case to affect any major doctrine of conservative Christianity. Carbett, upon investigation of 515 variations, has come to the conclusion that they are "not only utterly unimportant, but they are inappreciable." He is impressed that in no case do they affect a single word or even a single phrase which is important.⁴

¹Alexander, Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures, p. 228.

²Field, The Student's Handbook of Christian Theology, p. 71.

³Gladden, Who Wrote the Bible? p. 352.

⁴Carbett, op. cit., pp. 338-342.

The insistence upon a trustworthy and an authoritative Scripture, Henry realizes, poses a problem for "evangelical Christianity." (He here uses the term synonymously with the advocates of the verbal theory.) The term "fallible translation" is one coined by "biased liberalism," and is in actuality a misnomer since the deviations which have crept in affect but "a thousandth part of the whole New Testament." "The doubts concern mainly grammatical forms, and in no case is a major doctrine imperiled." Insofar as authoritative translations are concerned, Henry would have us note the attitude of Jesus toward the Old Testament. He says that the Bible of Jesus' day was in use centuries before the completion of the Old Testament, and because of mistakes which translators and copyists both made, "and from the fact that inspiration did not extend beyond the original writers," the Scriptures which Jesus made use of undoubtedly contained variations from the original just as ours do.¹

The fact that the Old Testament in ordinary use was the Septuagint form removes this from doubt. . . . Yet one does not find in the teaching of Jesus, despite His constant appeal to the law and the prophets, in details as well as in the large, the peculiarly contemporary tension between the original writings and the particular text at hand.²

He notes that there are textual difficulties in the parallel sections of Kings and Chronicles which are similar to those which occur in the Synoptic Gospels, but these were

¹Walvoord, Inspiration and Interpretation, p. 272, "Divine Revelation and the Bible," contribution by Carl F. H. Henry.

²Ibid., p. 273.

not made the basis of an argument against the authority and reliability of the Old Testament. . . . The Church's Founder and Lord bequeathed to it, in His manner of appeal to the Old Testament writings as authoritative, a confidence that the authority of the original resides also in copies and translations and that, while the original writings alone are inspired.¹

He goes on to say that

. . . the copies may with propriety be regarded as the veritable Word of God. When a translation so obscures the sense of the original, whether through theological bias or linguistic incompetence, is perhaps a delicate question. But the distrust and depreciation of the sacred writings has no parallel in the example of Jesus, nor of the apostles, nor of the long ages of Christian faith until the rise of modern higher criticism.²

Rather than being a doctrine which arises from the study of the Bible, opponents of this position see its strength to lie in that it is "a theological inference from the doctrine of God." Sanday and Gladden³ are among those who do not regard this to be a valid approach to the truth of inspiration, but they argue that the Bible should be allowed to speak for itself. Needless to say, they interpret 2 Timothy 3:16, John 10:35 and John 17:17, the verses oft-quoted by verbal theorists, differently. Fairchild says that "the Scriptures do not affirm their absolute inspiration in the sense the verbal theory claims."⁴ Gladden sees this theory to be deduced from a

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 273, 274.

³Gladden, op. cit., p. 360.

⁴Fairchild, Elements of Theology, p. 83.

theory of God: If God is the kind of person that we think He is, He will do what seems good to us—"The Bible is an inspired book. God is the source of inspiration. He cannot inspire men to write error. Therefore every word of the inspired book must be true." He feels that we might with equal confidence deduct that since God has wished to have His truth taught in the world, He would send infallible teachers, but He has not.¹

Clarke sees the a priori argument, the term that he uses, running in this fashion: "Unless every part of the Bible is believed to be fully inspired, some part of it may be believed to be erroneous; and if we admit error in any part, the Bible loses its authority, and we do not know what to believe."²

The fact that is quickly admitted by nearly all, if not all, parties, as we have noted, is that we do not have access to the original autographs. Some of those we possess go back to the third or fourth century. Many variations have crept in, just how many no one knows for certain, but it is likewise admitted by nearly all that more than likely no major doctrine is adversely influenced by any deviations from the original. But these variations cause the verbal theorist to proclaim that only the originals are inspired. The opponent of this theory maintains that we need divine authority for the translations.³ To say that the original conveys absolute truth

¹Cladden, op. cit., pp. 358, 359.

²J. F. Clarke, Orthodoxy: Its Truths and Errors, p. 95.

³Fairchild, op. cit., p. 84; Hughes, Basic Beliefs, p. 16.

has its theoretical value, but insofar as we are concerned who are not blessed with those autographs such a contention is of little practical value.

The logic of the theory, Miley holds, is to deny us a present possession of a divine revelation. Since the theory stipulates that the very words which were to be used were determined, then only those words which were originally inspired can constitute a revelation. But the original writings apparently are no longer in existence, the most trustworthy manuscripts and versions are not in verbal agreement, and the best of scholars are not always agreed as to the true text. He brings out the point also that the great majority of the peoples of the world must always be dependent upon translations which cannot be the precise verbal equivalent of the original, even if they were existent. He concludes: "These facts are entirely indifferent to a real and sufficient inspiration; but on the verbal theory, they deny us the possession of a revelation."¹

This theory developed as a polemic necessity in the conflict with the Roman Catholic theologians, so Gladden holds. He does not believe that with Christ and the Apostles quoting Scripture with the freedom they did, with Reformation leaders boldly scrutinizing Scripture concerning its worthiness, and the Septuagint translators transcribing with the freedom which they did, this theory could not have been held other than by the later rabbis and the early Church Fathers who were inclined to accept the rabbinical theory but

¹Miley, Systematic Theology, Vol. II, p. 485.

avoiding its difficulties "by a theory of an inner sense which is faultless, frankly admitting that the natural meaning cannot always be defended."¹ He quotes the German theologian, Professor Tholuck:

In proportion as controversy, sharpened by Jesuitism, made the Protestant party sensible of an externally fortified ground of combat, in that same proportion did Protestantism seek, by the exaltation of the outward authoritative character of the Sacred Writings, to recover that infallible authority which it had lost through its rejection of infallible councils and the infallible authority of the Pope. In this manner arose, not earlier than the seventeenth century, those sentiments which regarded the Holy Scripture as the infallible product of the Divine Spirit—in its entire contents and its very form—so that not only the sense but also the words, the letters, the Hebrew vowel points, and the very punctuation were regarded as proceeding from the Spirit of God.²

Mediating theories. The first mediating theory which we approach is that which says, instead of saying that "the Bible is the Word of God," that "the Bible contains the Word of God." Kephart, whom this writer would interpret to hold to the dynamic theory, refers to it as the essential theory. Advocates which he lists are Archdeacon Palsey, Dr. Doddridge, Van Oosterzee, Baxter, Erasmus, Leclerc, F. W. Farrar, and Dr. Dörner; also, Alford, Calvin, and Lange.³

Writers of this persuasion hesitate to declare what is and what is not inspired, although Hodge says they believe the sacred writers to be rendered infallible "when teaching religious and moral truth

¹Gladden, Who Wrote the Bible? p. 355.

²From Theological Essays, collected by George R. Noyes, quoted by Gladden, Ibid., p. 358.

³Kephart, Apologetics or a Treatise on Christian Evidences, p. 47.

only."¹ Usually there is the admission of the possibility of mistakes or imperfections in "unimportant matters" when they were not under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.²

In explaining his concept of inspiration, Grant quotes 2 Peter 1:21: ". . . holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." He feels that this indicates that only those words which were spoken when they were "moved by the Holy Ghost" were inspired. The record contains much more than that which was spoken under this particular influence of inspiration:

In the midst of their judging and deciding, their preaching and prophesying, their teaching and their singing, would come a divine word, a word of direct and immediate inspiration. They might themselves be aware of this, or it might be recognized only by others as inspired; in fact, some words were recognized as inspired only by posterity. The inspiration was occasional, not constant; and it is pure rabbinism and bibliolatry to claim that every word in the Bible is inspired--the Bible itself makes no such claim.³

The difficulty which others often see in this theory is that of distinguishing between what is inspired and what is not, the effect then being to introduce skepticism toward all Scripture.⁴ "And," reasons Alexander, "could it be shown that the evangelists had fallen into palpable mistakes in facts of minor importance, it would be

¹Hodge, Outlines of Theology, p. 69.

²Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 34.

³Grant, An Introduction to New Testament Thought, pp. 65, 66.

⁴Lee, op. cit., p. 237.

impossible to demonstrate that they wrote anything by inspiration."¹

Garbett has this same hesitancy toward this position:

If inspiration be confined to subjects beyond the scope of human knowledge, we neither have nor can we possibly have any means whatever of verifying the whole revelation.²

The argument is presented, which has been presented in behalf of the necessity of the absence of error by adherents of the verbal theory,³ that historical facts such as the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ carry the most important doctrinal truths. The Old Testament especially, and the New as well, includes many portions which might be supposed to be destitute of doctrinal significance, but upon further illumination there is the realization that they carry important truths of revelation.⁴

There is no reason to restrict inspiration to supernatural truths, Wiley contends. The Scriptures apparently indicate that this characteristic is common to the whole.⁵ There is the possibility that the difficulty is traceable to a failure to distinguish properly between revelation and inspiration. Hodge would think so. Revelation is that communication of truth from God to man which had not previously been known. The means may be the instrumentality of words, signs,

¹Alexander, op. cit., p. 229.

²Garbett, God's Word Written, p. 301.

³Hodge, op. cit., p. 71.

⁴Lee, op. cit., pp. 334, 335.

⁵Wiley, op. cit., p. 480.

visions, through a prophet, or mediate to the mind of the recipient. Inspiration, on the other hand, refers to that divine influence which was provided in order that certain men could properly record that which would "make men wise unto salvation." Some of these truths which would be expressed in the record would have been previously known, others would not.¹ Inspiration refers to that influence under which all parts of the Bible have been put into writing, is the position of Lee.²

The other position which mediates between those which give extreme prominence either to the human or to the divine element is the dynamic theory of inspiration. The definition that Kephart gives, which is fairly typical, is:

The Holy Spirit so moving, influencing, controlling, and using the sacred writers as to make them his mediums through which to give a written revelation of his will to man of the plan of salvation, the ideas communicated being inspired, true in point of fact, but the writers being left free to clothe those ideas in their own language, but so restricted by the Holy Spirit in the use of language as not to use words that would misrepresent those ideas.³

Wiley defends this theory in that he feels that an exact set of words is not necessary to a truthful expression of the divine mind. Not only Scripture but other writings will admit the change of wording without affecting the sense. We find this when we see different words expressed to relate the same events and truths. He is impressed that this was also true when Christ and the Apostles referred to the

¹Hodge, op. cit., pp. 67, 68.

²Lee, op. cit., p. 147.

³Kephart, op. cit., p. 49.

Scriptures as being authoritative, as being the Word of God, and "often" had in view the Septuagint translation which is recognizably not a true rendering of the Hebrew. This would explain to Miley the fact that quotations from the Scriptures were made "without any attempt at verbal accuracy." The concession is made that "it need not be questioned that sometimes inspiration was such as to determine the very words of Scripture."¹

All that we can desire in the sacred narrative, states Kephart, is certainty and he is confident that we have this. "The Bible is emphatically God's book, divine and infallible as a rule of morals, doctrines, and faith."²

This does not involve the matter of the importance of certain portions compared with others, but it does involve, it is held, a difference in the relation of various Scripture to the minds of the writer. For instance, in relation to that information which could be known through the author's own powers of mind, there would be no need for the illumination of the mind nor for the communication of truth by the Holy Spirit. There would be "need of such an agency as should determine what should go into the Scriptures."³

That this last mentioned factor is not a view held exclusively by dynamists, we observe as we note that Alexander holds to the position. Quite generally, though, it seems that this is an element of

¹Miley, op. cit., pp. 485, 486.

²Kephart, op. cit., p. 49.

³Miley, op. cit., pp. 481, 482.

the dynamic theory of inspiration. Alexander breaks inspiration down into three kinds: that of superintendence, of suggestion, and of elevation. In superintendence, revelation is not necessary since the material is that which can be known through natural means but guidance is essential. At this point, Alexander and Sanday, for instance, would differ. Alexander says that this guidance guards against all error and mistake; Sanday says that it does not seem to do so.¹ The inspiration of suggestion is held to be that which is necessary "to communicate truths before unknown," such as the future revolutions of empires. Elevation is that which describes the divine influence operating upon the natural faculties to raise them to such a degree that they are enabled to bring forth God's Word as they spoke or wrote, which would not have been possible otherwise.²

There is a difference between the "degrees of truth" view expressed by Alexander and that by Thomson, but in essence they seem to be the same. Thomson maintains that inspiration is wholly a matter of degree. "One man has by the teaching or breathing of God's Spirit (underlining that of this writer) greater insight into spiritual truth than another." He feels that the Apostles no doubt were especially endowed but the inspiration which they possessed and Augustine or Plato possessed "is but a difference of degree."³ This writer is of the opinion that many dynamic theorists would restrict the use of

¹Sanday, Inspiration, p. 400.

²Alexander, Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures, pp. 224, 225.

³Thomson, Aids to Faith, p. 354.

"inspiration" to the sense that it is used in the Bible to the production of a special revelation, even though there might be certain agreement with Thomson's thought.

Dr. Ralph Earle of Nazarene Theological Seminary compares parallel passages in the Synoptics, noting differences, and makes this comment:

Personally, I cannot get away from the conviction that the inspiration lay in the realm of thought and ideas, rather than in the exact form of words. I believe that God by His Spirit enabled men rightly to understand His truth and accurately to record it, while at the same time giving them a large measure of freedom in the choice of words. This alone seems to me to account for the phenomena of the Synoptic Gospels.¹

Fairchild is of the opinion that the seeming discrepancies, contradictions, mistakes, in Scripture have no more force than they would in any other writings. He feels that they are to be anticipated in a series of books which were composed over such a long period of time by so many different writers and transmitted by means of so many different individuals. "The marvel is that these discrepancies and errors are so few, and so insignificant. They do not affect, in any appreciable degree, the essential teaching of the Scriptures."² He observes that those who hold to absolute inspiration, however, place themselves at a disadvantage in that their theory will allow no difficulties, whether they be important or unimportant. In a less

¹Ralph Earle, "Verbal Differences in Parallel Passages In the Synoptics," The Asbury Seminarian, Spring-Summer, 1954, p. 28.

²Fairchild, Elements of Theology, p. 88.

mechanical theory, he relates, these slight differences can be admitted "without essential detriment."¹

"Absolute inerrancy in the Bible is not required," is the position of Curtis.² It is essential, as far as he is concerned, that the true picture of Christ, the facts and doctrines of redemption, and the principles of Christian conduct be "supplied in sufficiency for the Christian consciousness." To the objection that this would introduce doubt and skepticism toward the entire body of Scripture, Curtis answers that Christian consciousness, given time "for comparison and practical test, will draw the line with unfailing clearness and firmness."³

Hughes emphasizes that all that is essential is inspiration for moral and religious purposes which would not give "scientific or philocophic or historical infallibility." Man, being a personality, cannot possibly eliminate those "personal factors," by which Hughes apparently means errors.

Insofar as the "slight diversities of statements in trifling matters of detail" are concerned, Thomson sees definite value. This display of the human element is evidence that the writers were not mere machines in God's hands, nor that they were party to a plan to deceive the world, but that they were "earthly instruments for giving heavenly blessings, human means for communicating Divine truth." He

¹Ibid.

²Curtis, O. A., The Christian Faith, p. 175.

³Ibid.

does not mean to imply that this is a mere human record in laying this stress upon the human element. There is the element of the miracle in which we "cannot fail to see the working of a present, personal God." He adds:

Take away the miraculous element, and we may easily get into any kind of philosophical abstraction. Admit it, and we are brought back again into the intelligible region of common, plain sense.¹

Though conceiving that God might allow "slight discrepancies in statement" to enter into His revelation, Thomson is convinced that since the purpose of the Bible is "for communicating His will to mankind," God would not allow the Apostles and the prophets to err "in things pertaining to God." He can see the possibility of an inaccuracy in matters of science since the language is not scientific, or that a date or other "immaterial" matters might be incorrect; but concerning matters of faith, he is sure that God would not allow them to mislead us:

. . . no proof whatever has yet been given that the testimony of one Apostle is, on points of Christian doctrine, in conflict with the testimony of another, or that the more matured knowledge of any particular Apostle ever led him to contradict, in the least degree, his own former witness to the truth. Certainly they themselves always appeal to the consistency of their own teaching, and denounce all teaching which is inconsistent with their own. Galatians 1:8, 2 John 10.²

Writing in the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, James Orr, using 2 Timothy 3:15-17 as a basis for his remarks, visualizes

¹Thomson, op. cit., pp. 356, 357.

²Ibid., pp. 362, 363.

the ultimate test of inspiration to be: (1) its power to "make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus;" (2) its profitableness for "teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness;" (3) all to the end "that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." Orr mentions that nothing is said concerning inerrancy as to minor geographical, historical, or chronological details which is "where some would wrongly put the essence of inspiration." But he feels that it is implied that there is no error which would hinder the purpose of Scripture. "Who that brings Scripture to its own tests of inspiration will deny that, judged as a whole, it fulfills them?"¹

Dr. Turner of Asbury Theological Seminary states his opinion relative to the existence of errors in Scripture:

The conclusion from Scriptural studies, which we share in common with "fundamentalists," is that the original autographs contained no statements contrary to fact. This conclusion is based upon the expectation that a superintending divine providence was adequate to insure that a genuine revelation from God would contain nothing untrue. The other consideration is that in numerous instances suspected "errors" have, in the light of fuller knowledge, proven to be true. The extant records are such as to warrant the conclusion that the "errors" are due to factors in transmission rather than faulty originals. Such a viewpoint is not necessarily our final word; we are always open to more light. It is not a position adopted because it answers all the questions and solves all problems; it rather appears to present fewer objections than other alternatives thus far presented.²

¹James Orr, "Bible," International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, quoted by Engelder, Scripture Cannot Be Broken, p. 212.

²O. A. Turner, "Biblical Theology Revised," The Asbury Seminarian, Spring-Summer, 1954, p. 5.

The point of weakness which Lee is convinced exists in this view of inspiration, which allows the subject-matter alone of the Bible to have come forth from the Holy Spirit while the choice of language was left to the unaided powers of the various writers, is that two spiritual agencies are involved in the composition of Scripture,

one of which produced the phraseology in its outward form, while the other created within the soul the conceptions and thoughts of which such phraseology was the expression.¹

His contention is that the Holy Spirit embraces the entire activity of the one whom He inspires so that the resulting language is the Word of God. The Scriptures in their entirety, whether the portion be a revelation, or have come as a result of natural knowledge, are thus assimilated into one harmonious whole by energizing of the Holy Spirit.² Perhaps the vivid expressive powers of Kuyper would convey the essential thought.

Inspiration rests upon the antithesis between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man, and indicates that the Spirit of God enlists into His service the spirit of man, disposes of it, and uses it as His conscious or unconscious organ. In this the human spirit is either more active or passive, in proportion as it has greater or lesser affinity to what God will reveal by it. If that affinity is entire, as is the case in some apostolic epistles, the action of the human spirit will seem to be the sole factor, and inspiration will scarcely be observed; while, on the other hand, where this affinity is very limited, as is the case with most of Ezekiel's visions, the human spirit

¹Lee, The Inspiration of Holy Scripture, p. 45.

²Ibid.

appears as little more than a phonograph, which serves to catch the action of the Spirit of God.¹

Hodge is impressed that to stipulate different degrees of inspiration is injurious for it is to imply that portions are God's Word "in different degrees." He sees the truth to be that the whole is "equally and absolutely" God's Word. Distinguishing between inspiration arises from a failure to distinguish between revelation and inspiration, says Hodge. Revelation furnishes material when not otherwise available, while inspiration guides the one writing at every point.²

This paper will not be burdened by the manifold answers that different ones would give to some dynamist's allowance for error in the Bible since this area has been covered in the presentation of the verbal theory which, we recall, does not admit any discrepancy. The privilege will be taken, however, of suggesting an answer to the point that Hughes posits: that existence of the human element necessarily results in error in the sacred narrative. Carbett's answer is well stated:

. . . Many human narratives are wholly true; a thing may be wholly human, and yet not untrue. To be wrong, therefore, is not essential to the human element; and the fact that the Scriptures were written by human instruments does not prove the existence of mistakes in them; all it proves is, that in the absence of any other influence to prevent it, there might be mistakes in them. But this corrective influence is supplied by the

¹Abraham Kuyper, Encyclopedia of Sacred Theology (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1898), p. 506.

²Hodge, Outlines of Theology, p. 69.

Divine element; for to be right is an essential of the Divine nature.¹

Summary

In reviewing what the opinion of the agency of the Holy Spirit was in the authorship of the Scriptures, we noted the positions which stress the human element and those which stress the divine element. Under the latter were analyzed those which consider only the divine element and those which recognize an interaction of the divine and the human elements.

The humanistic theories do not consider the Bible to be infallible in any respect, whether it be a matter of things pertaining to God, or even in matters of historical, scientific, or chronological detail. The men who wrote may have had insight or may have been particularly gifted in the realm of the religious, but they had no particular assistance from a divine being in order to accomplish the task of writing the books of the Bible. Any special qualification would have come only from the human ability that they may have possessed.

The verbal theory lays particular stress upon the words of Scripture and the divine element in the authorship of the Scriptures to the extent that the words of the Bible are the very literal words of God. The agency of the Holy Spirit was to determine the exact words to be used. Since they are the words of God, the Scriptures can contain no error. It is held that inspiration was limited to

¹Carbett, God's Word Written, p. 174.

the original autographs alone, and thus, they alone are without error. However, the translations and copies are sufficiently without error to be authoritative. The verbal theory, in contrast to the mechanical theory, makes allowance for the personalities of the various writers in stipulating that the words of the Bible are the words of God.

The mediating theories consider the Bible to be infallible in that which relates to faith and morals. The essential theory maintains that the writers were under inspiration only when dealing with such matters while the dynamic theory holds that the writers were inspired when composing all of the Scripture but that they were guarded from error only when engaged in redemptive teaching and the revealing of redemptive truths. The dynamic theory holds that the authors were always under the guidance of inspiration when writing but that an exact set of words are not required to express the divine mind although there were times when exact wording was necessary. Inspiration, according to this view, gives us certainty in respect to its adequately expressing the mind of God in matters of morals, truths, and faith. It is the conviction of this position that God at least guarded against the inclusion of errors which would influence the essentials of salvation and Christian living. Some would allow for error; others would not. The peculiarity of this position is that writers were left to express the mind of God in their own words.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

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Summary and Conclusions

It has been the purpose of this study to arrive at an adequate concept of Biblical inspiration. Because the Bible is believed to be inspired, it is considered authoritative. If it is to be authoritative, it must be reliable. Logically, the Bible has been therefore declared inerrant and infallible. The question with which we are faced, we have seen, is, in what does Biblical inerrancy consist? There are apparent contradictions in the Bible which vary in importance according to the theory of inspiration to which one adheres. The one problem which this paper has investigated in an attempt to arrive at the Biblical idea of inspiration is that which involves the Synoptic-Johannine differences. The differences in content, chronology, interpretation of events, and accuracy of reporting were first investigated. The historic attitude of the Church toward the Scriptures was noted in the light of this problem and the unquestioned acceptance of Scripture as authority. Various theories were analyzed with the thought of determining what theory was consistent with Biblical fact in the face of the Synoptic-Johannine differences.

John does leave much out of his account which is included by the Synoptic writers. Also, many incidents are peculiar to this Gospel. These inclusions and exclusions are significant in that the reader is given quite a different picture of Jesus than one received from the Synoptics. It is possible to reconcile the accounts by explaining the purpose of John to be different. In fulfilling his

purpose of presenting a "spiritual" Gospel, he chose those incidents which were most adapted to this end. Some of the chronological differences might have their solution in intentional gaps in the presentation of the ministry of Jesus. Perhaps there were two temple cleansings and perhaps the development of John's narrative has not been given adequate consideration. Some of the literary problems can be solved by concluding that Jesus spoke differently to the educated audiences of Judaea than he did to those to whom he ministered in areas of the Synoptic reporting. These tentative solutions are in some cases not too probable but they are possible solutions. It is highly unlikely that an uncontroverted position can be assumed toward at least some of these difficulties.

One observation made from the study of these differences which presents itself quite plainly is this: There are several instances in the Scriptures where we do not have a precise record of words that were spoken or the event as it actually occurred. The record of the inscription upon the Cross and the account of the last meal which Jesus and his disciples ate together are instances which serve as examples. A possible answer is that the writers were given to a latitude of expression. If the essential truth in each case was permitted to be recorded with a certain amount of freedom, and since there is the vital relationship between inspiration, authority, dependability, and inerrancy, we then face the problem: what is the nature of Biblical inerrancy upon which the inspiration be established.

Chapter three covered the historical attitude of the Church toward the Scriptures. This involved viewing the establishing of the

Old and New Testament canon. The Jewish doctors held an extremely rigid view of inspiration as did the early Church Fathers. There was some recognition by Jesus and the Apostles and by the early Church Fathers of those writings which were not a part of the Old Testament canon. And although there is some question as to the sanction they thus placed upon these writings, they did depart from the strict position of the Jewish doctors in their references to these extra-canonical writings. But Jesus and the Apostles (and others quite generally) relied upon the Hebrew canon for authoritative teaching. The differences which exist between John and the Synoptics are not explained by the view which was held by the Church Fathers and the later leaders in the historic Church. They could be explained by the latitude of expression which seemed to characterize Jesus' and the New Testament writers' reference to the Old Testament writings.

In reviewing the modern theories concerning the agency of the Holy Spirit in the authoring of the Scriptures, we noted the humanistic theories which stress the human element and the verbal, mechanical and the mediating theories which stress the divine element, with the mediating theories recognizing the interaction of the divine and human. The humanistic theories do not consider the Scriptures to be infallible in any respect, whether the matter be one of doctrine or of historical or perhaps chronological detail. Any special qualification with which the writers may have been endowed came as a result of particular human ability and not because of assistance from a greater power. Although the verbal theory in contrast to the mechanical allows for the personalities of the various writers, both stress the words of

Scripture and the divine element in the authorship of the Scriptures to the extent that the words of the Bible are the very words of God. The Holy Spirit determined the exact words to be used. The original autographs are without error because they are the words of God and they alone are without discrepancy but translations are deemed accurate enough to be authoritative. The mediating theories include the essential theory which maintains that the writers were under inspiration only when dealing with doctrinal matters and were guarded from error only at this time. The dynamic theory takes the position that the authors were always under the guidance of inspiration when writing but that an exact set of words is not necessary to express the divine mind although there were times when exact wording was necessary. Some would say that this agency of the Holy Spirit guarded against error affecting redemptive truths alone while others are of the conviction that no error exists (in the autographs at least). This theory is unique in that it is felt that writers were left to their own vocabularies to express the thoughts of God.

Conclusion

Many Bible-believing Christians (including recognized scholars) consider the stand which one takes relative to the theory of inspiration to indicate adequately whether or not that one has remained faithful to "the faith once delivered to the saints." However, honesty demands that we "see" that which there is to see. If there are problems no sincere Christian can blindly rest his faith in that which is not in accord with the facts.

A proper theory of Biblical inspiration must not conflict with the actual elements one finds in the Bible. Problems arise when the theory which is held, no matter what the field of inquiry may be, does not fit the facts. It is possible to accept a theory of inspiration which is satisfying to faith but which is not built upon the facts which the Bible reveals. A system of logic should not be built to defend the Bible but the Bible must speak for itself.

It seems to this writer that we must admit that there is a freedom of expression in the New Testament when referring to the Old Testament. Comparison of parallel passages gives such evidence. This observation would explain John's clarified account of Jesus' last meal. The writers of Scripture were allowed to think the thoughts of God after Him, and express those thoughts in their own words. They were given freedom to express truth in its essence. Only a dynamic theory of inspiration recognizes this. When we realize that inerrancy lies in the realm of thoughts and ideas, latitude of expression is only consistent.

Thus, the following conclusions have been reached from this effort to realize the true concept of Biblical inspirations:

1. There are differences between the Gospel of John and the Synoptics which can be explained by allowing a "latitude of expression."
2. Jesus and the New Testament writers' reference to the Old Testament is characterized by a "latitude of expression."
3. Only a dynamic theory which recognizes inerrancy in the realm of thoughts and ideas is consistent with Biblical fact.

Perhaps the tentative answers given to many of the detailed problems are not the proper ones. When our attitude toward the Bible is based upon evidence issuing from the Bible, should there come a better answer based upon a better interpretation of the facts, our confidence in the Scriptures can only be strengthened. Although there undoubtedly are relatively insignificant errors which have occurred through transmission of the Scriptural record, the theory of inspiration placing inerrancy in the realm of thought and idea does not admit the existence of discrepancy. The context will accurately give us the thought in the mind of the author--as we are careful to be guided by the Spirit.

The theory of Biblical inspiration, even if we were assured of the accuracy of every letter and punctuation mark, does not lay stress on the cold, impersonal letter of the law but upon the full argument of the author.

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