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ARTICLE II.

THE AUTHORITY AND INSPIRATION OF THE
SCRIPTURES.

BY PROFESSOR FRANK HUGH FOSTER, D.D.

V.

THE NATURE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE AUTHORITY OF
THE SCRIPTURES.

GIVEN the authority of the Scriptures, the nature and limitations of that authority will be found, not by some *a priori* principle, which must amount to a mere guess, but by an examination of the phenomena presented by the Scriptures, or of their statements about themselves, if there are any such to be found.

Upon the general claim of the Scriptures to possess authority, there can be no doubt to the most superficial reader. The command, Search the Scriptures, and the further command; Obey the Scriptures, are implicitly or explicitly written upon their every page. But if they were not, the whole impression of the Bible is a claim to authority. Its different books constitute a unit in their supreme impression of sin, of ruin, and of salvation by God through spiritual union with himself. In this single impression made by these different writings, there is an air of entire certainty and absoluteness, which constitutes in and of itself a claim to authority.

But, now, where does that authority lie? For what is authority claimed? The reply is, For the final form which the teaching and institutions of the Scriptures take.

Between the Old Testament and the New, the relation is that of the preparative and rudimentary to the final and com-

plete. The law was a "schoolmaster" to bring us to Christ. Within this twofold and progressive book, the revelation which God made was progressive. His triune nature, his love, the universal purposes of his mercy, the method of salvation, were all only gradually revealed, and hence only partially apprehended at first. The conceptions of the people as to truth and duty were consequently progressive, and hence necessarily imperfect in the early stages of the revelation. For example, polygamy was practised by David without thought of wrong, and was even sanctioned by God (2 Sam. xii. 8), but it was not contemplated in the original constitution of things, nor can it be regarded in one instructed in the lofty morality of the New Testament as permissible. So the commendation lavished upon the deed of Jael in slaying Sisera could not be bestowed upon one who should in this day, when we possess the teaching of the New Testament, commit a similar deed, which, because committed under so great light, would be nothing better than a foul murder. The sentiments expressed in the so-called "imprecatory Psalms"—"Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the rock"—are not upon the level even of the book of Proverbs, which utters the warning, "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he is overthrown"; to say nothing of the New Testament, "Thou shalt love thine enemies."

To be sure, these psalms have been variously defended as normal expressions of right feeling. Some of the explanations are ingenious; but they do not satisfy the mind. Apart from the notion that it is necessary to maintain the perfection of Scripture by such arguments, they would never have been made. They are a kind of steadying of the ark. Not every expression of the Bible taken in isolation from its place in the sacred volume is perfect. The grand onward sweep of revelation, and the ultimate form of the teaching, are elements which must never be left out of the account.

For revelation comes to its apex in Jesus Christ. He fulfils—fills full—the Law and the Prophets. Nothing surpasses him. Here the Bible reaches its culmination of teaching and impression. It is for this culmination that absolute divine authority is to be claimed for the Scriptures.

There is another statement to be made. The authority claimed is authority as to the central message of salvation and the things involved in it, and is, therefore, authority in the moral and religious sphere.

It cannot be doubted that so much at any rate is claimed. The only question is, whether much more is not also claimed. Particularly, does not the Bible claim authority for its history?

Undoubtedly, in the main, it does. It states a great number of historical facts in a way to demand our acceptance of them. They are so inextricably bound up with the central message of the Bible, that they must be accepted if that is, and implicitly the same claim is made for them as for it. If Jesus Christ never lived, if the miraculous birth, the temptation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the mission of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the conversion of the first church, the missionary labors of Paul, and those great preparatory facts of the Old Testament—the call of the Jewish people, the deliverance from Egypt, the sacrificial system, the establishment of the Kingdom, the captivity, the return—are not facts, no one would be so foolish as to try to maintain the claims of evangelical Christianity. And if the appeal be made to historical criticism to ascertain whether these statements of the Scriptures can be maintained before that tribunal,—since the whole method of treating the general theme pursued in these articles consists in an appeal to facts,—it may be declared, though time cannot here be taken to substantiate the statement, that no sufficient reason can be alleged for doubting the historical character of these great facts related by the Scriptures.

As to this position little question will be raised. But the further question rises, Whether the Scriptures claim for themselves historical *infallibility*, so that every historical statement which they make, of however little importance and however remote a bearing upon the central message of the Bible, is to be received, simply because they make it, as infallibly true?

It is first to be noted that the biblical writers make no express claim to any such infallibility. True, it is taught by some theologians that such a claim is involved in the very word "inspired" which is employed of the Scripture. The consideration of this reply to our statement may properly be deferred till the subject of inspiration is reached in the regular development of the theme. But certainly, aside from such considerations, there is no claim for historic authority as such. The whole treatment of historic themes in the Bible may be said to be unhistoric, to be governed, that is to say, by other considerations than those which govern the mere historian. All biblical history is history with a purpose,—didactic history,—and the purpose is always one, to promote the salvation and sanctification of men. Should the Chronicler be shown, in magnifying the prosperity of a faithful Israel, to have exaggerated the size of her armies or the importance of her victories, the main object of his contention, that faithfulness to God's commands exalteth a nation, would not be impaired, except the entire structure of his historical statements were disproved, and it were shown, for example, that the nation was really retrograding while he said, for sake of proving his point, that it was advancing.

And when we look at the facts, there is evidence of historical fallibility in the Bible. Dr. Charles Hodge himself admits that this fact, if shown to be such, would invalidate his doctrine of inspiration. "It is, of course," he says, "useless to contend that the sacred writers were infallible, if in point of fact they err. Our views of inspiration must be determined

by the phenomena of the Bible as well as from its didactic statements." And he also implicitly admits that they do err, for he says that many of the confessed apparent discrepancies "may fairly be ascribed to errors of transcribers." Of course, in the view of most Christians, these errors are, as Dr. Hodge suggests, like specks of sandstone, the existence of which, here and there, would not disprove the fact that the Parthenon was built of marble. Still, it cannot be maintained that the Bible is historically *infallible*, if there be such errors, any more than it can be maintained that the Parthenon is built of *nothing but* marble, when small specks and pieces of sandstone are to be found in its walls. On the whole, then, as all confess, the Bible, as we have it to-day, even when every attempt has been made to obtain the very best text of the originals which is within our reach by critical processes, contains some errors, however unimportant they may be. Dr. Shedd has a curious theory that from our list of such errors must be deducted "all such as Scripture itself enables the reader to correct." Thus the fact that one part of the Scriptures proves another part to be in error, is, according to Dr. Shedd, proof that it is not in error. But this will scarcely commend itself to the ingenuous student.

What the limits which have been set to error in the Scripture are, and whether it is proper to call the Scriptures errant or not, are points which will be treated at a later stage. Enough at present to note that neither the biblical writers claim absolute historical infallibility for themselves, nor do their strongest defenders, when their words are carefully weighed, make this claim.

To summarize the course of the argument for the authority of the Scriptures as it has been here presented, and to come to a concise definition of the position maintained, it may be said that—

The internal harmony of the system of doctrine contained in the Scriptures; its usefulness in solving difficulties

suggested but not removed by natural reason; at many other points, its agreement with the independent conclusions of the reason; and its relation to Christian experience and to the history of the race;—all unite to give ground for the affirmation of the truth of the Scriptures: and since it has already been proved that they are the Word of God by the testimony of the Spirit, it follows that their truth is divinely designed, or that it carries the divine authority. An examination of the facts of the Scriptures themselves leads to the restriction of these statements to the Scriptures as a whole, that it may not be implied that they apply to every separate portion as such; and there are additional grounds for restricting the final definition to the moral and religious elements of the message of the Scriptures. Accordingly the authority of the Scriptures is to be thus defined:—

The Christian Scriptures as a whole possess divine authority; that is, the ethical and religious teaching of the Bible as a whole is without error and is designed by God for the instruction of man.

VI.

REVELATION.

The whole argument up to the present point rests upon the idea of the supernatural origin of Christian experience and Christian knowledge. From the beginning, therefore, the general proposition has been implied that the Scriptures are given by revelation of God. This idea is now to be more strictly defined.

The discussion of the theme must again suffer somewhat from the fact that it is presented as a separate topic, whereas it belongs in the midst of the whole system of Christian doctrine. The person and offices of Christ must be supposed to have been already considered in the development of that system. The positions must be supposed to have been advanced and satisfactorily sustained, that all revelation of God to men

is made ultimately through the agency of the Logos; that the Old Testament revelation was made by the pre-existent Christ; that even the heathen were in some degree taught by him; and that, when at last he had come in the flesh, he taught by his personality and character, by his formal discourses, by his suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension, truth as to God and man in the most perfect way, so that, beholding him, we behold the Father.

Such being the fundamental position of Jesus Christ in reference to both the Old Testament and the New, it is not surprising to find claims made in various forms in both parts of the Bible of a special revelation as the actual basis of the authority of the message delivered. Sometimes these are restricted in form to special cases, but their total impression is to convey the claim of divine authority for the general teaching of the person in question, as, for example, Moses, Isaiah. Moses receives special revelations upon the mount, but whenever he spake in the name of the Lord, every Israelite was inclined to ascribe to what he said the same authority which he at other times expressly claimed. Isaiah begins his prophecies with a "vision"; and such phrases as "the word of the Lord," "saith the Lord," etc., and the form of personification employed in Isa. v., convey but one impression of an invariable claim to divine teaching. And so the other prophets, as it is not necessary more fully to exhibit.

The New Testament, in the parts which do not record the personal teaching of the Saviour, is no less explicit in claiming divine authority upon the basis of divine revelation. The Apostle Paul says in 1 Cor. ii. 10, "Unto us God revealed them [viz., the things which may be comprehended under his term of 'wisdom'] through the Spirit." He relates how, upon one occasion, he was caught up into Paradise and heard "unspeakable words" (2 Cor. xii.). His word was in truth "the word of God" (1 Thess. ii. 13), and, indeed, the Old Testament and the New were one "foundation," which

was the "apostles and prophets," the indispensable cornerstone of both being "Jesus Christ" (Eph. ii. 20).

The farther position may, therefore, be laid down that—

The divine authority of the Scriptures rests upon the fact that its truths have been communicated by God to the teachers by whom they have been communicated to us. The Scriptures as they thus appear in their historic form are the record and the vehicle of revelation.

VII.

INSPIRATION.

Whatever may be true as to inspiration, nothing further is necessary to secure to man the blessings of the Christian religion than that there should have been a real revelation of himself by God to chosen men, and that the writers of the Bible who bring this revelation to our knowledge should have been honest men, competently informed, and sincerely endeavoring to convey to future generations the knowledge which they had themselves received. There might be, under such circumstances, an error of understanding here or there, memory might have slipped now and then, subjective modifications of the Master's doctrine might have blurred its reproduction by the disciple, but upon the whole the picture of the life and teachings of Christ, and of every other prophet and biblical teacher, would be substantially correct. We know something about Socrates and his teachings upon which we can depend, though Xenophon was not inspired, and though Plato presents us with an ideal, as well as an historical, Socrates. The Bible uninspired would have been as true to the divine original in its picture of Christ, as these books to Socrates, or even truer. Inspiration is therefore not absolutely necessary to the existence of Scripture.

This position need not be regarded a radical one. It has been acknowledged by theologians of so different standpoints as President Fairchild, upon the one hand, and Pro-

fessor Warfield, on the other. The President says: "The truth of Christianity—its claim upon us as a revealed religion, does not turn upon the inspiration of the Scriptures. If one of the Gospels be true, as ordinary history, Christianity is true. God has revealed himself to men. Jesus Christ, the Emmanuel, has come into the world."¹ And the Professor: "Were there no such thing as inspiration, Christianity would be true, and all its essential doctrines would be credibly witnessed to us in the generally trustworthy reports of the teachings of our Lord and of his authoritative agent in founding the church, preserved in the writings of the apostles and their first followers, and in the historical witness of the living church. Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. It is the last and crowning fact as to the Scriptures. These we first prove authentic, historically credible, generally trustworthy, before we prove them inspired. And the proof of their authenticity, credibility, general trustworthiness would give us a firm basis for Christianity prior to any knowledge on our part of their inspiration, and apart indeed from the existence of inspiration."²

Our position is, then, not revolutionary. It merely represents the lowest terms to which the doctrine under discussion may be reduced. It has thus a value for the thinker as showing what is, and what is not, the citadel which the Christian apologist must defend at all hazards. But it does not represent the sum total of Christian truth which the church needs for its own edification. It has never satisfied the great teachers of the church, and never seemed to come up to the high level of biblical truth. There is a doctrine of inspiration.

The fact of inspiration is not proved by merely rational arguments. Were the style of the Bible as high above the

¹ *Elements of Theology*, p. 77.

² *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, April, 1893, p. 208.

possibilities of human composition as its thoughts are above human thinking, and were it without a blemish of any sort, these considerations would form a striking argument for its immediate inspiration. But it is a very human book, its style is rugged, its excellences are of thought rather than of form.

Nor are we to advance from the fact of revelation to inspiration on the supposition that inspiration alone can secure us a revelation. Such a supposition at this point of the discussion would be an unfounded assumption, and would not rise in rank above a mere guess. We must derive both the proof of inspiration, if there is such a thing, and the concept of it from the Bible itself. How does it claim to have been written? What are the considerations derived from the teachings and the phenomena of the book which determine the boundaries of the idea? These are the only questions which promise to give us much light upon our problem.

The claims of the Scriptures that their writers were inspired, or had special divine assistance in writing the books which have come down to us from them, may be analyzed into various elements. They are contained, first, in the promises of such assistance found in the discourses of Jesus to his apostles. "The Comforter . . . shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John xiv. 26). "The Spirit of truth . . . shall guide you into all the truth, . . . and he shall declare unto you the things which are to come" (John xvi. 13). It is unnatural to believe that such help should have been given for their oral teaching or for their defence in court (Matt. x. 19, 20), and not for the performance of a work which was, under the divine providence, to influence the most distant times. The fundamental promise of inspiration is therefore rightly found in such promises as these.

But, second, the promises met their fulfilment in the work of the apostles, which work is said to have been founded

upon special divine guidance, or inspiration. "We [the apostles] received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given to us by God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth. . . . We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 12, 13, 16). "Them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven" (1 Peter i. 12).

The Old Testament is joined with the New in those passages which ascribe to it also inspiration, and treat it as inspired. "Men [i. e., the ancient prophets] spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter i. 21). "Every Scripture, inspired of God, is also profitable for teaching," etc. (2 Tim. iii. 16).

It is not necessary to multiply such passages. They are not, in fact, very numerous in the Scriptures, since comparatively little emphasis is laid upon Inspiration in comparison with Revelation. The latter is the principal thing: the former is less important. We thus have reached the general position that the Scriptures are given by inspiration, but a more precise definition of this inspiration, which shall mark out its limits, is still to be gained. This is to be sought, again, by an appeal to the facts. Does the biblical inspiration cover every word of the written Scriptures, so as to exclude every error, though never so small? The answer to that question is not to be gained from the mere idea of inspiration, which is quite general and vague, as heretofore obtained, but by a scrutiny of the facts pertaining to its extent as they are found upon the pages of the Scriptures.

It has recently been said that this style of investigation is vicious. The Bible itself contains a distinct doctrine of Inspiration in the sense that the biblical writers themselves define what their inspiration is. If they are trustworthy as religious teachers at all, they are trustworthy here. There-

fore, when their doctrine of inspiration is learned, all discussion for Christians stops.

Upon this point it will be necessary to delay a little. Professor Warfield defines the doctrine of inspiration which he believes the biblical writers to teach as follows: "That the sacred writers were under the influence of the Spirit of God in the whole process of their writing in such a sense that, while their humanity was not superseded, the Holy Spirit so co-operated with them in their work that their words were made to be at the same time the words of God, and are to be esteemed by us therefore, in every case, and in all their implications alike, absolutely true, entirely infallible, and simply authoritative."¹ The evidence for this definition is briefly given in the following context, and when compared with the treatment of the same subject in Dr. Charles Hodge's "Systematic Theology," this presentation will give, doubtless, the strongest case that can be made out for the doctrine defined. Certainly, no contemporaneous writer has excelled, or is likely to excel, Professor Warfield in the ability with which he has defended the traditions of his school.

In the following criticism of this definition, it should be distinctly borne in mind that objection is not made to every element of it. The authority of the Old Testament in the minds of the writers of the New, their own authority, and also their inspiration, are not questioned. The question is only whether Professor Warfield makes out his point when he contends that the *biblical words* are "at the same time *the words of God*," indifferently to be viewed under either one of these two lights, and "in ALL [not MOST, not ESSENTIAL] implications alike, *absolutely* true, *entirely* infallible, and simply authoritative."

We agree therefore with the Professor when he claims that the assertion beginning the Gospel, "It is written," "is

¹ "The Bible Definition of Inspiration," a paper before the "Summer School of the American Institute of Christian Philosophy," 1893, p. 166.

an assertion of the authority of Scripture," but we shall disagree with him, if he claims that this is equivalent to saying what the definition says. If the New Testament writers attached the kind of importance to the words of Scripture that is implied in the definition, we should see a very different use of Scripture from that which we actually find in the New Testament. On the one hand, we find such a use as that of Matt. ii. 23, He "came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, that he should be called a Nazarene." But there is no such passage in the Prophets. Amid the various explanations, that probably is to be preferred which connects the verse with Isa. xi. 1, "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit," where the Hebrew for branch is *neser*. That Christ was a *Neser* was taken as a prophetic intimation of his residence at *Nazar-eth*. Now this may seem the height of verbal reliance upon the Scriptures, and may be thought to substantiate Professor Warfield's claims. But other passages must be taken in connection with it, such as Heb. ii. 8, "Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet," in which the phrase "all things" is used in its *full meaning* and the argument is dependent on that meaning, whereas in the original Psalm it is immediately *restricted* by the following context, "all sheep and oxen," to a significance which would rob the passage of all force as a proof of the writer's proposition, if it were to be interpreted according to the laws of modern exegesis. I do not mean to say that the writer to the Hebrews made an illegitimate use of the Psalm, but it is evident that he did *not* make such a use as a writer would who thought that every word of the Old Testament was in effect the word of God, and was to be handled with the exactness and reverence which are due to God's words. The New Testament writers, on the contrary, used the ancient Bible freely, interpreted it with great liberty, now insisting upon a special word, now arguing on a

“tense,” or the “number” of a word, as Professor Warfield says, now finding hidden allusions, now quoting in a way to show they were merely clothing their own thought in biblical language without stopping to ask whether it was the original meaning or not, now abandoning the literal meaning of prophecy to find a larger meaning in its words, because the spirit of the whole Old Testament was larger than any one passage seemed to express. No sane man could believe that Isa. xi. 1 was ever meant to prophesy the residence of Jesus in Nazareth, or if he did he was altogether wrong. A literalist in theory would never have thus employed it. We have a right to use the treatment of the Scriptures found in these writers to explain their meaning when they quote them authoritatively. So while we may accept Dr. Warfield’s statement that the titles applied to the Scriptures in the New Testament, and the formulas of quotation “imply their conception of it as a Book of God, to every word of which man must yield belief and obedience,” we must deny the implication that belief was to be accorded to every historical detail. To get this farther element of his defined doctrine, he must go on, as he does, to attempt to show that “for them to say ‘Scripture says’ is equivalent to their saying ‘God says’ (Rom. ix. 17; x. 19; Gal. iii. 8).” Examine the last of these passages, which is the strongest of them. It runs: “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed.” This is a bold figure of speech to say that God taught the same method of justification in the Old Testament as in the New. But does it amount to putting the WORDS of Scripture upon the level with God’s words, so that, because a word is in the Bible, it has all the truth which would attach to it as if it were audibly uttered by God? Professor Warfield must bring more cogent proof than this, and he attempts to do so by advancing to the statement: “It is God who speaks their words (Matt. i. 22; ii. 15).”

All the proof which these passages give of this broad assertion is that they contain the phrase, "spoken by the Lord through the prophet." But I speak through another man whom I commission and who conveys my thoughts, whether he uses the *words* which I would myself employ or not. The proof is still lacking. The last quoted sentence continues thus: "It is God who speaks their words, even those not ascribed to God in the Old Testament itself (Acts xiii. 35; Heb. viii. 8; i. 6, 7, 8; v. 5; Eph. iv. 8)." The first of these passages is this: "Because he saith also in another psalm, Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see corruption." The connection shows that God's act in raising up Jesus from the dead is presented as the fulfilment of prophecy by Peter. The text means simply that such a prophecy existed, and all prophecy, of course, comes from God. But it does not say that the terms "Scripture says" and "God says" are interchangeable in the sense of the definition which Dr. Warfield has given at the outset. If Peter meant to express the thought which is attributed to him, he was very unsuccessful, for what God did actually "say" in the Psalm was, Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see the "*grave*," and not "*destruction*," which is an unfortunate rendering of the Hebrew by the LXX, misunderstood by Peter. The citation from Heb. viii. 8 seems to be a slip on Dr. Warfield's part, for the quotation is ascribed to God in the Old Testament (Jer. xxxi. 31). The other texts cited do not furnish any new points, nor does what the Professor further says till he makes the statement: "Still more narrowly defining the doctrine, it is specifically stated that it is the Holy Ghost who speaks the *written words* of Scripture (Heb. iii. 7), and that, even in the narrative parts (Heb. iv. 4)." But the first passage does not prove the point. It is: "Wherefore, even as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye shall hear his voice," etc. Now, this passage does not say that those words, *simply because they are written* in Scripture, are the words of the Holy Ghost, for in the Psalm they

are represented as being spoken by God from out the sanctuary, after the congregation has sung his praises — “When your fathers tempted ME . . . I was grieved . . . I swear.” Doubtless in Heb. iv. 4, as well as other passages cited above, and not cited here, the Old Testament scriptures will be found to be ascribed to God as their source, but whenever the further and exact meaning, presented in the definition above given is urged, it will be found that it is not contained in the passage.¹ To pass over some other passages, we may come at once to the strongest which Professor Warfield cites, which is indeed his proper starting-point, as it was with Dr. Hodge, who placed it at the beginning of his discussion, the text, 2 Tim. iii. 16. It is the idea both of Dr. Hodge and Dr. Warfield, though not so stated in the paper from which the above discussion is taken, that by the word *θεόπνευστος*, applied to “scripture” in a way to make it apply to all scripture, that is, the whole Bible, of both testaments, is meant that the scripture is itself inspired, and thus has become the word of God in the sense claimed in the definition. Both of these divines emphasize the fact that it is possible to know what the word *θεόπνευστος* meant by the processes by which the meaning of other words is gained, and that we thus gain a knowledge of what Paul meant by what he said, to which meaning we are bound. Doubtless the lexical method of investigation should be applied to the passage; but Cremer has

¹ In the Presbyterian and Reformed Review for October, 1894, p. 615, Professor Warfield has adduced, in support of the same position, several more passages. Of these the strongest is Matt. xix. 5, “in which our Lord declares that it is to Him who made man that the words are to be ascribed, ‘For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother,’” etc., though they were originally spoken by Adam. But if they are God’s words *because* they are Adam’s words, then the words of Bildad the Shuhite are, or Job’s wife’s, when she says, “Renounce God and die.” No! They are God’s, not because Adam spoke them, nor because they are in the Bible, but because they were the natural conclusion from what God had done, and because Adam correctly interpreted God’s purpose, and spoke the truth, what God intended him to speak.

shown, in his last edition of the "Biblich-theologisches Wörterbuch," that such an investigation into usage and meaning of the word does not favor the theory under discussion. He translates it "endowed with God's Spirit" or "breathing a divine spirit," and expressly rejects the meaning "inspired by God." He declares, in contradiction of various loose claims which have been made in respect to the usage of the word, that it is not found in classic nor in later Greek. The undoubted and independent cases of its occurrence are only six.¹ In two cases, where it is used of men, the most natural meaning is "endowed with God's spirit"; a third case, where it is used of a *fountain*, and a fourth, where it is used of a *sandal*, given the meaning "breathing a divine spirit," which meaning best fits a fifth case. From these last cases the meaning of our text is best determined, and it should read, "Every scripture, since it breathes a divine spirit, is also profitable for teaching," etc. Thus the appeal to usage, for a minuter discussion of which the reader must be referred to Cremer, would seem to take away the last prop upon which the defined doctrine rests. Certainly, a *fountain* or a *sandal* could not be "inspired" in the sense Dr. Warfield claims the scriptures are.

This criticism shows, as I think, that the doctrine which Dr. Warfield claims as the Scripture doctrine, is not its doctrine. It was necessary to meet the claim at its very centre. But there are still farther, and much graver objections to make to his treatment of the subject, and to his denial of the rightfulness of the method which it is proposed to pursue, that of an appeal to the facts of the New Testament to determine what the true doctrine of Inspiration is.

He constantly affirms, in the early part of his section upon "Facts versus Doctrine"² that the doctrine which he

¹ Viz., Pseudo-Phocylides, 121; Sibylline Books, v. 308 and 406; 2 Tim. iii. 16; a passage quoted by Wetstein from the Vita Sabæ; and Nonnus, paraphr. ev. Joh. 1, 102.

² Presbyterian and Reformed Review, April, 1893, p. 202.

has defined is to be obtained by plain exegesis from the Bible without any consideration of the "facts" of the Scriptures, as they are styled, that is, without any weighing of the evidence from the use of the Old Testament made by the writers of the New, and without any attention to those results of biblical criticism which are so much pressed upon the attention of Christian thinkers in this day. Thus every attempt to find out what the doctrine of Inspiration is by a large induction from all the facts, and not from a mere verbal argument such as that reviewed above, which is, in the judgment of most exegetical scholars of the present day an entire failure, is "an effort to *modify the teaching of the Scripture* as to its own inspiration," and this is "*not* an attempt to obtain a *clearer knowledge* of what the Scriptures teach, but to *correct* that teaching, and to *correct* the teaching of Scripture is to *proclaim Scripture untrustworthy* as a witness to doctrine." We shall say with all distinctness, in reply, that the appeal to facts IS, in the intention of every sober theologian making it, *exactly* "an attempt to obtain a clearer knowledge of what the Scriptures teach," and that it rests upon a great postulate of all Christian thinking, which Professor Warfield would be the last to deny, that *Christian doctrine is, and must be, in accord with facts*. Ascertained facts are always employed in the settlement of exegetical questions. It is proposed to employ them for this purpose in the settlement of the question what the term "breathing a divine spirit" in 2 Tim. iii. 16 means. That the Scripture has authority, that it conveys to man the voice of God, that it is inspired, are the results of exegesis. But for the purpose of determining how far that inspiration extends, and whether it includes historical facts so as to render the biblical writers infallible in every minutest historical detail, can only be answered by bringing to bear upon the exegesis of the texts the light which comes from the facts embedded in the Bible itself.

In the second part of this section, Professor Warfield gives up, as it seems to us, his whole case. He admits the necessity of a broad induction to the establishment of the doctrine of inspiration, and says: "Nor again is it to be thought that we refuse to use the actual characteristics of Scripture as an aid in, and a check upon, our exegesis of Scripture, as we seek to discover its doctrine of inspiration. . . . No careful student of the Bible doctrine of inspiration will neglect anxiously to try his conclusions as to the teachings of Scripture by the observed characteristics and 'structure' of Scripture, and in trying he may, and no doubt will, find occasion to modify his conclusions as at first apprehended." These sentences amply justify the method of discussion which it is here proposed to adopt. But Dr. Warfield does not squarely allow what he has himself conceded, for he goes on to say: "But it is one thing to correct our exegetical processes and so modify our exegetical conclusions in the new light obtained by a study of the facts, and quite another to modify, by the facts of the structure of Scripture, the scriptural teaching itself, as exegetically ascertained." That is to say: The facts as to the structure of Scripture may *enter in to determine exegetical results*, but the exegetical results *must not be afterwards compared* with the same facts! Why, in the name of all that is rational, not? We should say rather: Therefore, *of course*, they may be so compared, and must necessarily be found harmonious with them. Professor Warfield is landed in this self-contradictory position because he is contending against himself. He cannot deny the appeal to facts, for he regards them himself too highly. His real reply to those who propose to modify the old doctrine of inspiration by an appeal to the facts should be, and finally is: The doctrine, as presented in the biblical forms of statement, is not vague, as you claim; and the facts you propose to adduce are not facts. The "high" doctrine is true, and you have nothing new to bring in. In both of these statements he would be, as we think,

wrong; but he would promote self-consistency by avoiding the line of argument sketched above.

To resume the course of the argument—the actual extent of inspiration is, then, to be learned by an appeal to facts. Now, so soon as this is made, it becomes evident that in historical matters, the writers of the Bible generally gathered their materials as other historians gather them, the prime distinction between sacred and secular history being in the *use* which is made of the materials. Thus Genesis, for example, is a composite book, made up of materials gathered from several distinct sources, put together by a later hand than the authors of the documents themselves. Or, if this be disputed, the books of Kings and Chronicles repeatedly refer by name to the sources whence their writers derived their information. The three synoptic Gospels bear marks of similar dependence upon documentary sources. Luke expressly confesses his dependence.

All this is, however, perfectly consistent with historical infallibility. The writers might have been guided in their use of their sources so as to avoid all error; but an examination of the facts makes it clear that they were not.

In the first place, the narratives display the same kind of variations as are found in the narratives given by fallible men of the same event, even when they are perfectly honest. In one narrative, a centurion comes himself to ask for the healing of his servant, in another he sends his friends. One evangelist says that two possessed men met Jesus at a certain place; another, one. Such discrepancies amount to little or nothing. They do not impair the general credibility of the narrative, but rather strengthen it. They do, however, exhibit the presence of human fallibility. It must be true that either the centurion came to ask the favor, or that he did not come. Both statements cannot be true. In any other narratives, this would be admitted, and it must be admitted here.

Again, differences in chronological statements and com-

putations involving error are common. These are, to be sure, unimportant, but they exist. They are unimportant when they are admitted, but the moment they are denied, or an infallibility claimed for such statements which they do not possess, they become important. The apparently systematic chronology of the genealogical tables of Genesis cannot be employed as the basis of a computation of the earth's age. The computation of Paul (Gal. iii. 17), that the law was four hundred and thirty years after the Abrahamic covenant, does not agree with the computation (Acts vii. 6) by which it was made four hundred years. Now, this variation may be explained in various ways so as to preserve the complete trustworthiness and reliability of both writers; but, so long as four hundred and four hundred and thirty remain different numbers, so long will it be true that inspiration did not preserve one or the other of them from error. The numbers in the books of the Chronicles, when compared with the Kings, give a large variety of cases in which divergencies exist, and are scarcely explicable even upon the supposition of errors in transcription. It is common to make this explanation in case of numerical discrepancies. Still, allowing all that can be said, it seems scarcely probable that the divine wisdom would go to the extent of special inspiration to secure in the Bible what the same providence would subsequently permit to be lost. After all, the only real question is about the Bible which we have, and not about some one which we can never have. The present Bible has not been so watched over as to secure immunity from all these various trifling errors.

And lastly, under this head of historical error, if the modern analysis of the Pentateuch be accepted, even in its most conservative form, it will be evident that there was at least some development in the Mosaic codes during the history of Israel, and that consequently the picture presented by the Pentateuch, by which Moses is represented as having given all the Levitical law in the journeyings of Israel, and rehearsed

all Deuteronomy in his address just before his death, is not in every respect correct. It is not necessary to suppose, as some have done, but as no careful reader of the Old Testament can admit, that these incorrect features rest upon fraudulent design, and that there has been a conscious attempt to father upon Moses, for the sake of gaining favor for them, the productions of later centuries. It is simply necessary to suppose that the inspiration of the writers of the Old Testament did not preserve them from all historical error. They attributed to Moses what was, in fact, the growth of ritual tradition far subsequent to him, though very ancient as regarded themselves. This argument will have just so much force as is the credit which the individual thinker ascribes to the critical analysis.

But one more line of evidence need be at present cited, that which is afforded by the use which the writers of the New Testament make of the Old. While, on the one hand, they treat it as of the highest authority, as already sufficiently shown, on the other, they differ as widely from a course natural and indeed inevitable if they had the ideas about its minute infallibility which have been often taught in the church, as it is possible to conceive. They pay little attention to the mere words of Scripture as such. They generally quote from the LXX, a translation made by men "who had forgotten their Hebrew, and who had never learned Greek," and they do this at points where the Greek differs from the Hebrew, even to the extent of basing an argument upon a word from the Greek text not found in the Hebrew (Heb. x. 5, "body"). Equally loose are their quotations from the sayings of our Lord himself, even when just given by themselves. They certainly knew nothing about the doctrine of "verbal inspiration," nor that curious theory of Dr. Shedd's, that thought cannot be inspired without inspiration of words! They were engaged upon the thought, sometimes the thought which was implied rather than expressed, and contrived, in spite of the

“impossibility” of doing so, to convey it in words quite different from the original. And, certainly, all the painful methods of modern exegesis, which are inevitable upon the doctrine of a verbal infallibility, or any sort of universal infallibility, lay absolutely beyond their horizon.

The foregoing considerations, which have been rather hinted than stated, are mostly negative. There remain two passages of a positive bearing upon the subject which should yet be considered. The first of these, 1 Cor. ii. 6-16, may be summarized in the following form. The Spirit of God is the essential and primary factor, with which the spirit of man is co-operative. The contents of inspiration are spiritual realities. They are the deep things of God. They are above and beyond all secular science, the embodiment of a divine philosophy, attained through a divine initiation. They date from a past eternity and fill a future eternity. They are supra-sensual, supra-psychical, supra-rational. They are the peculiar province of the Spirit, are freighted with divine grace, and culminate in spiritual perfection. The processes by which they are apprehended are spiritual, the utterances by which they are expressed are given by the Spirit, and this Spirit is the “mind of Christ.” The second passage needs no summarizing. It is 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17—and it states the object of inspiration, and thus implies the nature of inspiration, to be the *spiritual preparation* of the good man for *spiritual work* in the world.

Putting, now, all these facts together we may say that inspiration is not exclusively supernatural, since it co-exists with a human element in the preparation of the Scriptures; not verbal, since little stress is laid upon verbal accuracy by the biblical writers in their own work and in their use of other scriptures; not a preservative from all error, since certain classes of mistakes are found in the Scriptures; and does not embrace scientific subjects, this phrase being taken of all merely human science, not only historical, as has been

shown more particularly, but also natural, as is involved in this position, and will be admitted without further discussion. It is, however, a connection with God, operating by a spiritual force in the minds of the writers, opening to them spiritual realities, making them trustworthy agents for the correct transmission to men of revelation, and doubtless special with reference to the written books, as distinct from the oral instructions, of the apostles.

Hence inspiration may be thus defined: It is that union of the writers of the Bible with God through his Spirit which enabled them to teach without error, and in the best manner for the permanent instruction of mankind, those things which they intended authoritatively to teach, viz., all ethical and religious things necessary to the salvation and sanctification of men.

VIII.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

The proof of the Scriptures here presented rests fundamentally upon the testimony of the Spirit to the Bible as the Word of God. The subsidiary and collateral proof is derived from the contents of the Scriptures themselves, from the System of Doctrine found there, from the claims which the Scriptures make for themselves. This element is, as already remarked, fundamental to all methods of proof; but in many systems, it is introduced surreptitiously, inasmuch as implications are made as to the contents of the Bible before it has itself been studied, and while professedly ground is being sought which shall justify that study. But a mere mention of this fact is enough for this place.

The argument also presupposes, as a general result of historical criticism, the general genuineness and authenticity of the Bible as a whole. But it makes only this general supposition. Hence place is left for special investigation of individual points, such as the genuineness of Second Peter, of

the Fourth Gospel, of the so-called Mosaic books. And further, since minute historical infallibility is not affirmed of the Scriptures, but is rather refuted by the facts which have passed in review, and this without affecting the foundations of the argument for the Scriptures as here traced, place is also left by the argument for those further inquiries as to the historical credibility of the Old Testament which the labors of the biblical critics have forced upon our attention. Inasmuch as historic credibility does not enter into the argumentative process by which the authority of the Scriptures is proved, investigation in this sphere can be freely pursued without the paralyzing effect of a constant fear lest a certain decision upon some given point may throw the existence of our Bible into jeopardy. Of the authority of the Bible in its spiritual sphere the church has no doubt. The whole discussion of the present day may in this respect be likened to the trinitarian discussions of the fourth century. The whole church believed without exception that Christ was God, but they sought in different ways to show the consistency of this fact with the unity of God. Paul and Lucian, and even Arius, taught that Christ was God, for they had so elastic a conception of the meaning of that word that it was possible to apply it to the Logos, who was himself in the last analysis, in their mind, a creature. The final triumph of the Nicene doctrine was brought about by the fact that it alone, when tried in the agitations and conflicts of the times, finally proved to be sufficient to afford a firm basis for this universal and never relinquished doctrine of the Godhead of Christ. So now, in all the discussions in the church over the Scriptures, their authority, and our dependence upon them for religious light and for our knowledge of the way of salvation and sanctification, are undisputed. The simple question is, What is essential to this main position? and when this is answered, finally and conclusively, then the doctrine of Inspiration will be settled.

Inasmuch, then, as the authority of the Scriptures does

not depend, in our argument, upon the historic infallibility of the Bible, investigation into the issues raised by the critics may be freely pursued without anxiety as to the results. The truth will be consistent with all other truth, and with this of the authority of the Scriptures also.

Whatever may be the result of that investigation, the result of the present is to show the perfect divine authority and reliability of the Bible in its entirety as a source of information upon ethical and religious subjects, as a guide to salvation, and to growth in the knowledge of God. This point is deemed as clearly proved as the existence of God himself. The proof of the Scriptures and of the existence of God both take their rise in facts of certainty of equal rank with our own existence, in the certainty that the Christian has of the new birth as an experienced fact. Both of these doctrines are confirmed by subsequent proofs derived from both the religious and the philosophical sphere; but neither of them has pre-eminence over the other.

Professor Warfield, in his review of the views of Professor Henry Preserved Smith, says, in effect, that the position that the Bible is authoritative in the religious and ethical sphere, but not infallible in the historical sphere, destroys the authority of the Bible even in the religious sphere. We can test its infallibility in the sphere of science, thinks the Professor, but the religious sphere is that in which we have to depend upon authority alone. "How do we know that no error has entered into the description of the future state, for example; or into the definition of the relations of the persons of the Godhead to one another? This is a sphere in which authority must rule: and into which a stringent test by induction cannot enter—for the simple reason that we have no extra-biblical criterion of the facts." But is this so? Is it not rather true that the doctrine of the Trinity, because of its harmony with the rest of the Christian system, and with the ideas of creation and revelation, as well as of redemption, has a proof in

addition to that derived from the mere statements of Scripture, and which may in turn be used, as has been done in the section upon the authority of the Scriptures above, to prove the Scriptures themselves? Professor Warfield surely cannot mean to deny all the proof of the system and the Bible which is derived from the agreement of the different parts of the system with one another, with Christian experience, with philosophy, and with history, for the sake of staking all upon the infallibility of the Bible in every one, even the least, of its statements.

One word more, and that upon "errancy" and "inerrancy." Is the Bible "errant"? Every Christian will at once reply, "No! It will certainly lead every one who follows it to salvation and heaven." The objection to the application of the word "errant" to the Bible is simply this, that it will be understood as implying what the whole church must ever deny. But just so soon as the "inerrancy" of the Bible is employed to deny patent facts, such as this, that 400 and 430 are not the same numbers, then it is important to maintain that the Bible has not THAT "inerrancy."