

Western Theological Seminary

Discourses Occasioned
by the
Inauguration of B.B. Warfield


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Discourses occasioned by the
inauguration of Benj. B.



DISCOURSES

OCCASIONED BY THE

INAUGURATION OF BENJ. B. WARFIELD, D. D.

TO THE CHAIR OF

New Testament Exegesis and Literature,

IN

WESTERN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

DELIVERED ON THE EVENING OF

Tuesday, April 20th, 1880.

IN THE

NORTH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, ALLEGHENY, PA.

PITTSBURGH:

PRINTED BY NEVIN BROTHERS, 115 LIBERTY STREET,
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ORDER OF EXERCISES.

HYMN.

PRAYER.

By REV. DR. THOMPSON, Third Church, Pittsburgh.

STATEMENT.

By REV. DR. C. C. BEATTY, President of the Board.

READING AND SIGNING OF THE PLEDGE.

By the Professor Elect.

CHARGE.

By REV. DR. ELLIOT E. SWIFT, First Church, Allegheny.

HYMN.

INAUGURAL DISCOURSE.

By PROF. WARFIELD.

DOXOLOGY.

BENEDICTION.

By REV. DR. COOPER, of the U. P. Seminary.

C H A R G E

TO

BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD, D. D.

BY

ELLIOT E. SWIFT, D. D.

My Dear Brother :—

The scene which has just been witnessed, is one of the most solemn and impressive, on which an assemblage of Christian people can look. And you, with all your conscious insufficiency for your great work, have been the central figure.

A very high honor has been conferred, in that you have been selected, so early in life, to occupy this position. The Church, through her directors of this institution, is committing to you a very high and sacred trust, and you have just come under the accustomed obligation to be faithful.

This assemblage of interested people, the presence of these alumni, these reverently standing directors, the explicitness and comprehensiveness of the pledge, the breathless stillness of the moment, have added to the impressiveness of the occasion.

With your inauguration, the five professorships in this honored institution, are filled with competent and trusted men.

We know of no great advantage resulting from discussions, as to the relative importance of the several branches in our curriculum. Each appears as necessary to a thorough preparation, as are the several sides which constitute the figure we call a pentagon ; and in these later times, we wonder how either the directors, instructors, or students, of thirty years ago, could be content with but three professors.

We all have times, however, when we are impressed with the importance of some one department. It may be that of Sacred Rhetoric. And we are ready to ask, what more necessary to a theological student, than discipline in the composition and delivery of sermons? What will all the precious fruits of three years study avail, if he cannot present them acceptably and impressively to the people?

But, anon, we gravitate toward Systematic Theology as the department of superlative importance. For, in an age like this what will the most graceful and attractive delivery avail, without well arranged and profitable matter? We can only compare it to the elaborate frame, suspended on the wall, with its profusion of gilt, worthy of some painting correspondingly elegant, and yet filled with an unartistic daub, such as are manufactured by dozens, with river and mountain, and castle and cloud, as unfailing elements in the scene.

Your professorship, my dear Brother, is that of New Testament Literature and Exegesis.

We hope that, as directors, we have some adequate sense of the dignity of the office of a theological professor. And next to a sense of its dignity, we desire to have adequate impressions of the importance of your department. And it may not be improper to state some of the grounds on which our estimate is based.

1st. The importance of your work appears from the character of the God, by the inspiration of whose Spirit the Scriptures have been given.

As the happy inheritors of Westminster teachings, we cannot be sufficiently thankful for that inimitable answer in our catechism, "God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal and unchangeable; in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth." After the test of more than two hundred years, this answer is accepted by increasing multitudes. How comprehensive and yet how concise! What depths of unfathomed mystery in each of its terms! What better prescription for divesting a man of his pride, and reducing

him to the minutest point of conscious insignificance, than to bid him take that answer and meditate upon its attributes consecutively, devoting but a year to each.

God is infinite. Go one thousand million of miles beyond the farthest fixed star, and he is there. He is there by no diffusion of his essence. "The whole Godhead, in his one undivided essence, is present at the same moment, in every point of infinite space."

God is eternal. His existence is without beginning, succession or end. His thoughts, emotions, purposes and acts do not chase each other in the activities of his infinite mind. "They are one and inseparable, without succession ; the same forever." It is the glory of our God that he is no wiser, nor holier, than he was a million of ages before the earth was made.

Well may we exclaim : "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me ; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."

Now, if this God has made a revelation to men of earlier times and other tongues, what nobler office can be assigned to any, than to become the interpreter of it ? And the importance of the service is greatly magnified, if there is anything in the character and expression of the revelation, to show that "the things which were written aforetime, were written for our learning." If it were condescension in him to reveal his will, it were exaltation to us to be permitted to become the expositors of it. And though we come not to it, as Daniel did, with breathless haste, at a moment of supreme interest, amid wild excitement and paralyzing fear, the work is the same. It is to be the interpreter of what God has written.

Do not the very appointments of our academies and colleges indicate the importance of this work ? If the productions of poets and orators, philosophers and historians of Greece and Rome have been preserved ; if the text of each has been made the matter of critical study ; if class books have been supplied with notes and explanations ; if it be a proud distinction of some professors, that they are perfectly familiar with every section and every verse ; is

nothing due to the communication which the eternal God has made? Shall not the noblest intellect and the richest stores of learning be consecrated to the task of putting in clearest light before the minds of men, the things that God hath said?

2d. The importance of your work appears from the preparation and discipline which it affords for the great missionary enterprise of the church.

There are few things which impress one so much with the progress of the gospel, as to be conducted into the depositories of one of our great national Bible Societies, the British or the American, and into the apartment where specimens of the two hundred and fifty languages into which the Bible has been translated are arranged. And it might not be without some salutary effect if a list of languages into which, in coming years, the Scriptures must be rendered, were also provided. Thus, in a new and curious form, one might have an exhibit of the work accomplished, and the work now waiting for competent and willing hands.

It is not assumed that every one who reads the Scriptures in the original is prepared to be what is technically known as a translator, nor is it probable that every student of this Seminary will be called to such a service. Still, this institution has never been without a measure of the missionary spirit, and we trust it never will. And it is quite certain that some who have sat and will sit under your instructions, will go to heathen lands. Perhaps it will be your privilege, when you have attained to fifty or sixty years, as you hear of this one and that who has accomplished the magnificent work of translating the Bible into some new tongue, to say, with expanding heart, he was a boy of mine. I taught him to see the force and beauty of the Greek. If he has only mastered this new and unpronounceable dialect, as he did the old and familiar Greek, I will guarantee the excellence of his work. Those hungering, perishing tribes have gotten an equivalent for every term by which the Holy Ghost has revealed his mind. And who can estimate the influence of that translation as the ages roll on?

3d. The importance of your work will appear from the relation which it sustains to the department of Systematic Theology.

If we conceive of the system of Christian doctrine as a stately, well-proportioned structure, then your share of the work in its up-building is well defined. It is for you to provide the material. The only source of supply is the word of God. Outside of this, you dare not go. It is the quarry, in the working of which your stones are to be had. It is your mountain of Lebanon, from whose heights your timber is to be secured. And as the noble structure rises, you will often find resting side by side the materials which you have secured from different parts of the Bible. There will be solidly inwrought, in close proximity, statements from its prophecy and its history, from its gospels and its epistles, from the Acts of the Apostles and from the Apocalypse of John. And each of these statements will be giving its support to all the rest.

It is sometimes objected to the teaching of theology in a systematic form, that it is indicative of a presumptuous spirit, and must be offensive to God. It is intimated that He can take no pleasure in such books as our catechism and confession of faith; that if God had desired that these doctrines should be so taught, He would have revealed them in systematic form. It is said that He could have inserted little compends of doctrine in the midst of the books of the Bible, making each exact and sufficient for the dispensation of religion for which it was designed, the last to be the most complete, exhaustive, and satisfactory of all.

But God has not given a revelation, say they, in any such form. And shall men arrogate to themselves superior wisdom? Shall they undertake to improve upon God's plan? Shall not such pretentious efforts be offensive to Him, especially when these books are elevated to a position of superiority to His word?

The answers to this objection are numerous and overwhelming. We do not elevate our books of systematic theology to the dispar-

agement of the Word. We do not place them in positions of co-ordinate importance. The Word of God stands alone, in high supremacy, as our source of doctrine. Your own professorship is an answer to all such mere assertion.

Might not the same objection be urged to any disturbance of the original arrangement of the physical world ?

The hardy pioneers, settling on these very grounds some eighty years ago, found them in all their native wildness. They were just as God had made them and the face of the natural world, we all accept, as a revelation from Him.

Is it not presumptuous in man then, to project towns, cut down trees, grade streets, rear edifices and prepare parks ?

Is it not an ostentatious improvement on God's work, when men bridge the Susquehanna and tunnel the Alleghenies and bind the eastern and western portions of the State by a splendid railway ?

We do not know why God made the Scriptures, to be composed of sixty-six different treatises, by forty different authors. But we do know that you are in the line of duty, even in the judgment of these superficial objectors. You are taking the doctrines directly from the Word.

4th. The importance of this department will appear from the rich and abundant material which it affords in preaching.

We are not now thinking of material, for the frame work of a discourse, by which its masses of beauty and fragrance are to be sustained.

Nor are we thinking of material for expository remark, to which a place is assigned, before announcing the proposition or purpose of the sermon. The discourse must be built upon the text and the latter must sustain the same relation to the former, that a foundation does to the superstructure. Expository remarks are designed to exhibit the breadth and security of the basis. Of course the doctrine or duty must be gotten from the Word.

The thought we wish to emphasize is, that the Scriptures afford the most abundant material for all the details of a sermon. They

afford the richest and best matter for the amplification, illustration and enforcement of the subject.

Doubtless there may be faults in the use of illustrations. They may be too numerous or too humorous. They may occupy space to the exclusion of a direct and adequate statement of the truth. They should be like the gas-lights in our cities. They should be numerous enough to help the hearer in pursuing the avenues of thought, in which you are trying to lead him, and they should not be like the *ignis-fatuus*, which engages the attention and then diverts the traveler from the straight way and the solid track. Nothing is more unfortunate in the handling of the illustration than to allow it to engross the thought of the listener to such an extent that he forgets the truth which it was intended to impress. The effect is quite as though a man should use a spike for the purpose of nailing up a notice on the highway, and in the vigor of his effort in driving his spike, never miss the hand-bill which his awkwardness has torn and the winds have caught and carried away.

Some years ago we had a president in one of our most venerable collegiate institutions whose earlier studies had largely been in classic literature. Nothing could surpass the exquisite elegance and taste with which, from his familiar field, he embellished an address of dismissal to the students of this institution.

But after all what source of illustration like the Bible itself.

How often the preacher going aback of our common version, can see in the original a force and beauty of conception, which the English does not express, and, without disparaging our common version, he can proceed to develop, at length, a thought, which no one word of our translation could fully express.

Perhaps the experience of Albert Barnes will have value in corroborating our position. Some remember how much the Christian world was taken by surprise when he announced the process by which his voluminous "Notes" had been prepared. He had commenced his studies early and had always laid down his pen at nine o'clock in the morning; and after he had accomplished what

many would regard as a good day's work, he commenced the preparation of his sermons. But the point of special interest just now, is his testimony, that his studies in the Scriptures, supplied material so ample that this other service was reduced to a minimum of labor.

One of the most interesting and attractive speakers this institution has ever had among its professors, was in the department which you now fill.

5th. The importance of your work appears from the peculiar opportunities which it affords for promoting the spiritual life of candidates for the ministry.

There can be no question that this Seminary is designed as a place of discipline in quick, accurate, vigorous thought. Its professors aim to secure the largest amount of study from the eight months in which students are with them. This is just as it should be. The curriculum is exhaustive. The departments are in the hands of competent men. The demands of the age are excessive. Young men may be actuated by an ambitious spirit, and time is rapidly passing.

But, the jaded condition of mind and body, to which students may be reduced, with a maximum of study, and a minimum of exercise in the open air, may not be the most favorable for lively devotional feeling. And the serious question in all our seminaries has, therefore, been, how shall the cultivation of the heart be kept in pace with the improvement of the intellect? How can we produce a class of men, of the representative of whom, the fathers and mothers in Israel will say: He is a man of devout spirit and it is his piety which gives strength, beauty and efficiency to all his intellectual stores. Without doubt, he will be useful among us.

A solicitude with regard to this matter is the more necessary, because students may reason thus: My duties as a Christian are completely covered by the employments of my higher character as a student of theology, my whole thought is given to religion.

These are no secularizing studies. These are no writings of heathen poets and sages. These are no works on natural or mental philosophy. We are busied about religion by the month. We have no time for any thing else, even if we had the taste.

All this may be admitted. And yet there have been men who have passed through the Seminary. They have been licensed and ordained by discriminating Presbyteries, and then have preached to large congregations for twenty or thirty years, only to be cast-aways.

Your department affords peculiar opportunities for promoting the spiritual life of the students. If there be any power in the Word, under the operation of the Spirit, you are sure as you traverse the gospels and the epistles, to come upon most suitable and suggestive passages. And your searching remarks, injected in the midst of instruction will not fail of some salutary result.

I solemnly charge you, my dear Brother, ever to give prominence to the thought, that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice. I charge you to maintain the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. I charge you to be conscientiously honest in your handling of the Word, endeavoring to give the mind of the Spirit, unmodified by any speculations or fancies of men. I charge you to maintain that sacred enthusiasm which you have already discovered in your work and to infuse it, if possible, into your classes. I charge you to find your chief reliance in the proferred help of the Holy Ghost, that great Interpreter, who takes the things of Christ and shows them unto us. I charge you to be unfalteringly loyal to our beloved church, venerating her standards and cherishing a becoming respect for all her deliverances; and, finally, I charge you to leave no opportunity unimproved, of promoting among the young men, the spirit of honest and unreserved consecration to the service of Christ.

We are not ignorant of your feeling, as you assume this great responsibility. You are to mold the characters of those who

shall go out, in years to come, to preach the gospel in the growing cities and the unoccupied wastes of our own country ; in Asia and Africa, and the islands of the ocean. Let me assure you of the earnest sympathy of these directors and alumni. They feel an interest in you, because your theological studies and scholarly habits, have given promise of some distinction in this department ; because you have entered upon your work so early in life, and because there flows in your veins, the blood of one of those majestic old characters, of whose name the Presbyterian Church will ever be proud.

Though you have had no long experience in the pastoral work, it has perhaps already occurred to you, that your present position is less satisfying in one regard. There is less to meet the cravings of a social nature. You are without the loving sympathies of a flock, ever ready to notice variations in physical condition, to make financial provision for your comfort, to express their appreciation of your efforts, and to do a dozen other things, which a devoted and loyal people can do.

But should not the Presbyterian people of these cities and of the densely settled country around, be taught to take a deeper interest in this institution. Should they not be taught to remember it in their prayers, to make provision for it in their benefactions, to rejoice in the popularity of its professors, and to glory in the acceptance and favor, with which its graduates are received. They should be taught that this institution is a stronghold of our Zion ; a stronghold to be made still stronger in the completeness of its financial basis, in the intellectual vigor of its teachers, in its hold on the sympathies of the people, in the commanding positions of its alumni and in the increasing gracious favor of the Head of the Church, in whose name it has been founded.

Let us remember the time for devising and doing, will soon be over. Soon we shall have crossed the river, and have been lost to mortal view.

It is not yet fifty-two years since the first inauguration was witnessed in this institution. Jacob L. Janeway was the professor. Elisha P. Swift preached the sermon. Matthew Brown delivered the charge, and John McMillan, the pioneer in Western Pennsylvania one hundred years ago, made the introductory prayer and gave the people the benediction at its close. Perhaps there is no one here, who was present on the evening of October 16, 1828, in the First Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh. Our venerable President of this Board, was a member of it then. He was then in the freshness and vigor of his early ministry, and he may have been present.

But all other members have passed away. Yet their work abides, and they are having the ecstatic visions of our exalted Redeemer.

May the Head of the Church make us faithful in preserving, strengthening and transmitting this sacred trust.



INAUGURAL ADDRESS

BY

PROF. BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD.

Fathers and Brothers :

It is without doubt a very wise provision by which, in institutions such as this, an inaugural address is made a part of the ceremony of induction into the professorship. Only by the adoption of some such method could it be possible for you, as the guardians of this institution, responsible for the principles here inculcated, to give to each newly-called teacher an opportunity to publicly declare the sense in which he accepts your faith and signs your standards. Eminently desirable at all times, this seems particularly so now, when a certain looseness of belief (inevitable parent of looseness of practice) seems to have invaded portions of the Church of Christ,—not leaving even its ministry unaffected;—when there may be some reason to fear that “enlightened clerical gentlemen may sometimes fail to look upon subscription to creeds as our covenanting forefathers looked upon the act of putting their names to theological documents, and as mercantile gentlemen still look upon endorsement of bills.”* And how much more forcibly can all this be pled when he who appears before you at your call, is young, untried and unknown. I wish, therefore, to declare that I sign these standards not as a necessary form which must be submitted to, but gladly and willingly as the expression of a personal and cherished conviction; and, further, that the system taught in these symbols is the system which will be drawn out of the Scriptures in the prosecution of the teaching

* Peter Bayne in *The Puritan Revolution*.

to which you have called me,—not, indeed, because commencing with that system the Scriptures can be made to teach it, but because commencing with the Scriptures I cannot make them teach anything else.

This much of personal statement I have felt it due both to you and myself to make at the outset; but having done with it, I feel free to turn from all personal concerns.

In casting about for a subject on which I might address you, I have thought I could not do better than to take up one of our precious old doctrines, much attacked of late, and ask the simple question: What seems the result of the attack? The doctrine I have chosen, is that of “Verbal Inspiration.” But for obvious reasons I have been forced to narrow the discussion to a consideration of the inspiration of the New Testament only; and that solely as assaulted in the name of criticism. I wish to ask your attention, then, to a brief attempt to supply an answer to the question:

IS THE CHURCH DOCTRINE OF THE PLENARY INSPIRATION
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ENDANGERED BY THE ASSURED
RESULTS OF MODERN BIBLICAL CRITICISM?

At the very out-set, that our inquiry may not be a mere beating of the air, we must briefly, indeed, but clearly, state what we mean by the Church Doctrine. For, unhappily, there are almost as many theories of inspiration held by individuals as there are possible stages imaginable between the slightest and the greatest influence God could exercise on man. It is with the traditional doctrine of the Reformed Churches, however, that we are concerned; and that we understand to be simply this:—*Inspiration is that extraordinary, supernatural influence (or, passively, the result of it,) exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of God, and, therefore, perfectly infallible.* In this definition, it is to be noted: 1st. That this influence is a supernatural one—something different from

the inspiration of the poet or man of genius. Luke's accuracy is not left by it with only the safeguards which "the diligent and accurate Suetonius" had. 2d. That it is an extraordinary influence—something different from the ordinary action of the Spirit in the conversion and sanctifying guidance of believers. Paul had some more prevalent safeguard against false-teaching than Luther or even the saintly Rutherford. 3d. That it is such an influence as makes the words written under its guidance, the words of God; by which is meant to be affirmed an absolute infallibility (as alone fitted to divine words), admitting no degrees whatever—extending to the very word, and to all the words. So that every part of Holy Writ is thus held alike infallibly true in all its statements, of whatever kind.

Fencing around and explaining this definition, it is to be remarked further :

1st. That it purposely declares nothing as to the mode of inspiration. The Reformed Churches admit that this is inscrutable. They content themselves with defining carefully and holding fast the effects of the divine influence, leaving the mode of divine action by which it is brought about draped in mystery.

2d. It is purposely so framed as to distinguish it from revelation;—seeing that it has to do with the communication of truth not its acquirement.

3d. It is by no means to be imagined that it is meant to proclaim a mechanical theory of inspiration. The Reformed Churches have never held such a theory:* though dishonest, careless, ignorant or over-eager controverters of its doctrine have often brought the charge. Even those special theologians in whose teeth such an accusation has been oftenest thrown (*e. g.*, Gaussen) are explicit in teaching that the human element is never absent.† The Reformed

* See Dr. C. Hodge's Systematic Theology, page 157, volume 1.

† Compare GAUSSEN'S THEOPNEUSTY, "New York, 1842; pp. 34, 36, 44 *sq et passim*. In these passages he explicitly declares that the human element is never absent. Yet he has been constantly misunderstood: thus, Van Oosterzee (Dog. i. p. 202), Dorner (Protestant Theol. ii: 477) and even late English and American writers who, if no others, should have found it impossible to ascribe a mechanical theory to a man who had abhorrently repudiated it in an

Churches hold, indeed, that every word of the Scriptures, without exception, is the word of God; but, alongside of that, they hold equally explicitly that every word is the word of man. And, therefore, though strong and uncompromising in resisting the attribution to the Scriptures of any failure in absolute truth and infallibility, they are before all others in seeking, and finding, and gazing on in loving rapture, the marks of the fervid impetuosity of a Paul—the tender saintliness of a John—the practical genius of a James, in the writings which through them the Holy Ghost has given for our guidance. Though strong and uncompromising in resisting all effort to separate the human and divine, they distance all competitors in giving honor alike to both by proclaiming in one breath that all is divine and all is human. As Gausson so well expresses it, “We all hold that every verse, without exception, is from men, and every verse, without exception, is from God;” “every word of the Bible is as really from man as it is from God.”

4th. Nor is this a mysterious doctrine—except, indeed, in the sense in which everything supernatural is mysterious. We are not dealing in puzzles, but in the plainest facts of spiritual experience. How close, indeed, is the analogy here with all that we know of the Spirit’s action in other spheres! Just as the first act of loving faith by which the regenerated soul flows out of itself to its Saviour, is at once the consciously-chosen act of that soul and the direct work of the Holy Ghost; so, every word indited under the analogous influence of inspiration was at one and the same time the consciously

English journal and in a note prefixed to the subsequent English editions of his work. (See: “It is written,” London: Bagster & Sons, 3d edition, pp. i-iv.) In that notice he declares that he wishes “loudly to disavow” this theory, “that he feels the greatest repugnance to it,” “that it is gratuitously attributed to him,” “that he has never, for a single moment, entertained the idea of keeping it,” &c. Yet so late a writer as President Bartlett, of Dartmouth, (Princeton Review, January, 1889, p. 34,) can still use Gausson as an example of the mechanical theory. Gausson’s book ought never to have been misunderstood: it is plain and simple. The cause of the constant misunderstanding, however, is doubtless to be found in the fact that his one object is to give a proof of the existence of an everywhere present divine element in the Scriptures.—not to give a rounded statement of the doctrine of inspiration. He has, therefore, dwelt on the divinity, and only incidentally adverted to the humanity exhibited in its pages. Gausson may serve us here as sufficient example of the statement in the text. The doctrine stated in the text is the doctrine taught by all the representative theologians in our own church.

self-chosen word of the writer and the divinely-inspired word of the Spirit. I cannot help thinking that it is through failure to note and assimilate this fact, that the doctrine of verbal inspiration is so summarily set aside and so unthinkingly inveighed against by divines otherwise cautious and reverent. Once grasp this idea, and how impossible is it to separate in any measure the human and divine. It is all human—every word, and all divine. The human characteristics are to be noted and exhibited; the divine perfection and infallibility, no less.

This, then, is what we understand by the church doctrine:—a doctrine which claims that by a special, supernatural, extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, the sacred writers have been guided in their writing in such a way, as while their humanity was not superseded, it was yet so dominated that their words became at the same time the words of God, and thus, in every case and all alike, absolutely infallible.

I do not purpose now to undertake the proof of this doctrine. I purpose rather to ask whether, assuming it to have been accepted by the Church as apparently the true one, modern biblical criticism has in any of its results reached conclusions which should shake our previously won confidence in it. It is plain, however, that biblical criticism could endanger such a doctrine only by undermining it—by shaking the foundation on which it rests—in other words by attacking the proof which is relied on to establish it. We have, then, so far to deal with the proofs of the doctrine. It is evident, now, that such a doctrine must rest primarily on the claims of the sacred writers. In the very nature of the case, the writers themselves are the prime witnesses of the fact and nature of their inspiration. Nor does this argument run in a vicious circle. We do not assume inspiration in order to prove inspiration. We assume only honesty and sobriety. If a sober and honest writer claims to be inspired by God, then here, at least, is a phenomenon to be accounted for. It follows, however, that besides their claims, there are also secondary bases on which the doctrine of

the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures rests, and by the shaking of which it can be shaken. These are:—first, the allowance of their claims by the contemporaries of the writers,—by those of their contemporaries, that is, who were in a position to judge of the truth of such claims. In the case of the New Testament writers this means the contemporary church, who had the test of truth in its hands: “was God visibly with the Apostles, and did he seal their claims with his blessing on their work?” And, secondly, the absence of all contradictory phenomena in or about the writings themselves. If the New Testament writers, being sober and honest men, claim verbal inspiration, and this claim was allowed by the contemporary church, and their writings in no respect in their character or details negative it, then it seems idle to object to the doctrine of verbal inspiration on any critical grounds.

In order, therefore, to shake this doctrine, biblical criticism must show: either, that the New Testament writers do not claim inspiration; or, that this claim was rejected by the contemporary church; or, that it is palpably negated by the fact that the books containing it are forgeries; or, equally clearly negated by the fact that they contain along with the claim errors of fact or contradictions of statement. The important question before us to-day, then, is: Has biblical criticism proved any one of these positions?

I. Note, then, in the first place, that modern biblical criticism does not in any way weaken the evidence that the New Testament writers claim full, even verbal, inspiration. Quite the contrary. The careful revision of the text of the New Testament and the application to it of scientific principles of historico-grammatical exegesis, place this claim beyond the possibility of a doubt. This is so clearly the case, that even those writers who cannot bring themselves to admit the truth of the doctrines, yet not infrequently begin by admitting that the New Testament writers claim such an inspiration as is in it presupposed. Take, for instance, the twin statements of Richard Rothe: “To wish to main-

tain the inspiration of the subject-matter, without that of the words, is a folly; for everywhere are thoughts and words inseparable," and "It is clear that the orthodox theory of inspiration [by which he means the very strictest] is countenanced by the authors of the New Testament." If we approach the study of the New Testament under the guidance of and in the use of the methods of modern biblical science, more clearly than ever before is it seen that its authors make such a claim. Not only does our Lord promise a supernatural guidance to his Apostles, both at the beginning of their ministry (Matthew x : 19, 20) and at the close of his life (Mark xii : 11; Luke xxi : 12, cf. John xiv and xvi) but the New Testament writers distinctly claim divine authority. With what assurance do they speak—exhibiting the height of delirium, if not the height of authority. The historians betray no shadow of a doubt as to the exact truth of their every word,—a phenomenon hard to parallel elsewhere among accurate and truth-loving historians who commonly betray less and less assurance in proportion as they exhibit more and more painstaking care. The didactic writers claim an absolute authority in their teaching, and betray as little shadow of doubt as to the perfectly binding character of their words (2 Cor. x : 7, 8). If opposed by an angel from heaven, the angel is indubitably wrong and accursed (Gal. i : 7, 8). Therefore, how freely they deal in commands (1 Thes. iv : 2; xi : 12. 2 Thes. iii : 6-14; iv : 2); commands, too, which they hold to be absolutely binding on all; so binding that it is the test of a Spirit-led man to recognize them as the commandments of God (1 Cor. xiv : 37), and no Christian ought to company with those who reject them (2 Thes. iii : 6-14). Nor is it doubtful that this authority is claimed specifically for the written word. In 1 Cor. xiv : 37, it is specifically "the things which I am writing" that must be recognized as the commands of the Lord; and so in 2 Thes. ii : 15; iii : 6-14, it is the teaching transmitted by letter as well as by word of mouth that is to be immediately and unquestionably received.

Now, on what is this immense claim of authority grounded? If a mere human claim, it is most astounding impudence. But that it is not a mere human claim, is specifically witnessed to. Paul claims to be but the transmitter of this teaching (2 Thes. iii: 6; ii: *παρὰ*); it is, indeed, his own (2 Thes. iii: 14, *ἑμῶν*), but still, the transmitted word is God's word (1 Thes., ii: 13). He speaks, indeed, and issues commands, but they are not his commands, but Christ's, in virtue of the fact that they are given through him by Christ (1 Thes. iv: 2). The other writers exhibit the same phenomena. Peter distinctly claims that the Gospel was preached in (*ἐν*) the Holy Spirit (1 Peter, i: 12); and John calls down a curse on those who would in any way alter his writing (Rev. xxii: 18, 19; cf. 1 John, v: 10). These, we submit, are strange phenomena if we are to judge that these writers professed no inspiration.

"But," we are asked, "is this all?" We answer, that we have but just begun. All that we have said is but a cushion for the specific proof to rest easily on. For here we wish to make two remarks:

1. *The inspiration which is implied in these passages, is directly claimed elsewhere.* We will now appeal, however, to but two passages. Look at 1 Cor. vii: 40, where the best and most scientific modern exegesis proves that Paul claimed for his "opinion" expressed in this letter direct divine inspiration, saying, "this is my opinion," and adding, not in modesty, or doubt, but in meiotic irony, "and it seems to me that I have the Spirit of God." If this interpretation be correct, and with the "it seems to me" and the very emphatic "I" staring us in the face, drawing the contrast so sharply between Paul and the impugners of his authority, it seems indubitably so; then it is clear that Paul claims here a direct divine inspiration in the expression of even his "opinion" in his letters. Again look for an instant at 1 Cor. ii: 13: "Which things, also we utter not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit; joining spiritual things

with spiritual things ;” where modern science, more clearly even than ancient faith, sees it stated that both the matter and the manner of this teaching are from the Holy Ghost—both the thoughts and the words—yes, the words themselves. “ It is not meet,” says the Apostle, “ that the things taught by the Holy Ghost should be expressed in merely human words ; there must be Spirit-given words to clothe the Spirit-given doctrines. Therefore, I utter these things not in the words taught by human wisdom—not even in the most wisely-chosen human words—but in those taught by the Spirit, joining thus with Spirit-given things (as was fit) only Spirit-given words.” It is impossible to deny that here there is clearly taught a *suggestio verborum*. Nor will it do to say that this does not bear on the point at issue, seeing that *λόγος* and not *ῥῆμα* is the term used. Not only is even this subterfuge useless in the face of what we have still to urge, but it is even meaningless here. No one supposes that the mere grammatical forms separately considered are inspired : the claim concerns words in their ordered sequence—in their living flow in the sentences—and this is just what is expressed by *λόγοι*. This passage thus stands before us distinctly claiming verbal inspiration. The two together seem reconcilable with nothing less far reaching than the church doctrine.

2. But we must turn to our second remark. It is this: *The New Testament writers distinctly place each other's writings in the same lofty category in which they place the writings of the Old Testament ; and as they indubitably hold to the full—even verbal—inspiration of the Old Testament, it follows that they claim the same verbal inspiration for the New.* Is it doubted that the New Testament writers ascribe full inspiration to the Old Testament ? Modern science does not doubt it ; nor can anyone doubt it who will but listen to the words of the New Testament writers in the matter. The whole New Testament is based on the divinity of the Old, and its inspiration is assumed on every page. The full strength of the case, then, cannot be exhibited. It may be called to our

remembrance, however, that not only do the New Testament writers deal with the Old as divine, but that they directly quote it as divine. Those very lofty titles, "Scripture," "The Scriptures," "The Oracles of God," which they give it, and the common formula of quotation, "It is written," by which they cite its words, alone imply their full belief in its inspiration. And this is the more apparent that it is evident that for them to say, "Scripture says," is equivalent to their saying, "God says," (Romans ix : 17 ; x : 19 ; Galatians iii : 8.) Consequently, they distinctly declare that its writers wrote in the Spirit (Matthew xxii : 43 ; cf. Luke xx : 42 ; and Acts ii : 34) ; the meaning of which is made clear by their further statement that God speaks their words (Matthew i : 22 ; ii : 15, &c.), even those not ascribed to God in the Old Testament itself (Acts xiii : 35 ; Hebrews viii : 8 ; i : 6, 7, 8 ; v : 5 ; Eph. iv : 8), thereby evincing the fact that what the human authors speak God speaks through their mouths (Acts iv : 25). Still more narrowly defining the doctrine, it is specifically stated that it is the Holy Ghost who speaks the written words of Scripture (Hebrews iii : 7)—yea, even in the narrative parts (Hebrews iv : 4). In direct accordance with these statements, the New Testament writers use the very words of the Old Testament as authoritative and "not to be broken." Christ, himself, so deals with a tense in Matthew xxii : 32, and twice elsewhere finds an argument on the words (John x : 34 ; Matthew xxii : 43) ; and it is in connection with one of these word arguments that his divine lips declare "the Scriptures cannot be broken." His Apostles follow his example (Galatians iii : 16). Still, further, we have, at least, two didactic statements in the New Testament, directly affirming the inspiration of the Old (2 Timothy iii : 15, and 2 Peter i : 20). In one of these it is declared that every Scripture is God-inspired ; in the other, that no prophesy ever came by the will of man, but borne along by the Holy Ghost it was that holy men of God spoke. It is, following the best results of modern critical exegesis, therefore, quite certain that the New Testament writers held the

full verbal inspiration of the Old Testament. Now, they plainly place the New Testament books in the same category. The same Paul, who wrote in 2 Timothy, "Every Scripture is God-inspired," quotes in its twin letter, 1 Timothy, a passage from Luke's Gospel calling it "Scripture" (1 Timothy, v: 18),—nay, more,—parallelizing it as equally Scripture with a passage from the Old Testament. And the same Peter, who gave us our other didactic statements, and in the same letter, does the same for Paul that Paul did for Luke, and that even more broadly, declaring (2 Peter, iii: 16) that all Paul's Epistles are to be considered as occupying the same level as the rest of the Scriptures. It is quite indisputable, then, that the New Testament writers claim full inspiration for the New Testament books.

Now none of these points are weakened in either meaning or reference by the application of the principles of critical exegesis. In every regard they are strengthened. We can be quite bold, therefore, in declaring that modern criticism does not set aside the fact that the New Testament writers claim the very fullest inspiration.

II. We must ask, then, secondly, if modern critical investigation has shown that this claim of inspiration was disallowed by the contemporaries of the New Testament writers. Here again our answer must be in the negative. The New Testament writings themselves bristle with the evidences that they expected and received a docile hearing; parties may have opposed them, but only parties. And again, all the evidence that exists coming down to us from the sub-apostolic church—be it more or less voluminous, yet such as it is admitted to be by the various schools of criticism—points to a very complete reception of the New Testament claims. No church writer of the time can be pointed out who made a distinction derogatory to the New Testament, between it and the Old Testament, the Divine authority of which latter, it is admitted, was fully recognized in the church. On the contrary, all of them treat the New Testament with the greatest

respect, hold its teachings in the highest honor, and run the statement of their theology into its forms of words as if they held even the forms of its statements authoritative. They all know the difference between the authority exercised by the New Testament writers and that which they can lawfully claim. They even call the New Testament books, and that, as is now pretty well admitted, with the fullest meaning, "Scripture." Take a few examples: No result of modern criticism is more sure than that Clement of Rome, himself a pupil of Apostles, wrote a letter to the Corinthians in the latter years of the first century; and that we now possess that letter, its text witnessed to by three independent authorities and therefore to be depended on. That epistle exhibits all the above-mentioned characteristics, except that it does not happen to quote any New Testament text specifically as Scripture. It treats the New Testament with the greatest respect, it teaches for doctrines only for what it teaches, it runs its statements into New Testament forms, it imitates the New Testament style, it draws a broad distinction between the authority with which Paul wrote and that which it can claim, it declares distinctly that Paul wrote "most certainly in a spirit-led way" (*ἐπὶ ἀληθείας πνευματικῶς*, c. 47.) Again, even the most sceptical of schools place the Epistle of Barnabas in the first or at the very beginning of the second century, and it again exhibits these same phenomena,—moreover quoting Matthew definitely as Scripture. One of the latest triumphs of a most acute criticism has been the vindication of the genuineness of the seven short Greek letters of Ignatius, which are thus proved to belong to the very first years of the second century and to be the production again of one who knew Apostles. In them again we meet with the same phenomena. Ignatius even knows of a collected New Testament equal in authority to the Divinely inspired Old Testament. But we need not multiply detailed evidence; every piece of Christian writing which is even probably to be assigned to one who knew or might have known the Apostles, bears like testimony. This is absolutely without exception. They

all treat the New Testament books as differentiated from all other writings, and no single voice can be adduced as raised against them. The very heretics bear witness to the same effect; anxious as they are to be rid of the teaching of these writings they yet hold them authoritative and so endeavor to twist their words into conformity with their errors. And if we follow the stream further down its course, the evidence becomes more and more abundant in direct proportion to the increasing abundance of the literary remains and their change from purely practical epistles or addresses to Jews and heathen to controversial treatises between Christian parties. It is exceedingly clear, then, that modern criticism has not proved that the contemporary church resisted the assumption of the New Testament writers or withstood their claim to inspiration. Directly the contrary. Every particle of evidence in the case exhibits the apostolic church, not as disallowing, but as distinctly recognizing the absolute authority of the New Testament writings. In the brief compass of the extant fragments of the Christian literature of the first two decades of the second century we have Matthew and Ephesians distinctly quoted as Scripture, the Acts and Pauline Epistles specifically named as part of the Holy Bible, and the New Testament consisting of evangelic records and apostolic writings clearly made part of one sacred collection of books with the Old Testament.* Let us bear in mind that the belief of the early church in the inspiration of the Old Testament is beyond dispute, and we will see that the meaning of all this is simply this: The apostolic church certainly accepted the New Testament books as inspired by God. Such are the results of critical enquiry into the opinions on this subject of the church writers standing next to the Apostles.

III. If then, the New Testament writers clearly claim verbal inspiration and the apostolic church plainly allowed that claim, any objection to this doctrine must proceed by attempting to undermine the claim itself. From a critical standpoint this can

* See Barn, 4, Poly. 12. Test. xii., Patt. Benj. 10. Ign. Phil. 5, 8, &c.

be done only in two ways: It may be shown that the books making it are not genuine and therefore not authentic, in which case they are certainly not trustworthy and their lofty claims must be set aside as part of the impudence of forgery. Or it may be shown that the books, as a matter of fact, fall into the same errors and contain examples of the same mistakes which uninspired writings are guilty of,—exhibit the same phenomena of inaccuracy and contradiction as they,—and therefore, of course, as being palpably fallible by their very character disprove their claims to infallibility. It is in these two points that the main strength of the opposition to the doctrine of verbal inspiration lies,—the first being urged by unbelievers, who object to any doctrine of inspiration, the second by believers, who object to the doctrine of plenary and universal inspiration. The question is: Has either point been made good?

1. In opposition to the first, then, we risk nothing in declaring that *modern biblical criticism has not disproved the authenticity of a single book of our New Testament*. It is a most assured result of biblical criticism that every one of the twenty-seven books which now constitute our New Testament is assuredly genuine and authentic. There is, indeed, much that arrogates to itself the name of criticism and has that honorable title carelessly accorded to it, which does claim to arrive at such results as set aside the authenticity of even the major part of the New Testament. One school would save five books only from the universal ruin. To this, however, true criticism opposes itself directly, and boldly proclaims every New Testament book authentic. But thus two claimants to the name of criticism appear, and the question arises, before what court can the rival claims be adjudicated? Before the court of simple common sense, it may be quickly answered. Nor is it impossible to settle once for all the whole dispute. By criticism is meant an investigation with three essential characteristics: (1) a fearless, honest mental abandonment, apart from presuppositions, to the facts of the case, (2) a most careful, complete and unprejudiced collection and examination of the facts, and (3) the most

cautious care in founded inferences upon them. The absence of any one of these characteristics throws grave doubts on the results; while the acme of the uncritical is reached when in the place of these critical graces we find guiding the investigation that other trio,—bondage to preconceived opinion,—careless, incomplete or prejudiced collection and examination of the facts,—and rashness of inference. Now, it may well be asked, is that true criticism which starts with the presupposition that the supernatural is impossible, proceeds by a sustained effort to do violence to the facts, and ends by erecting a gigantic historical chimera—overturning all established history—on the appropriate basis of airy nothing? And, is not this a fair picture of the negative criticism of the day? Look at its history,—see its series of wild dreams,—note how each new school has to begin by executing justice on its predecessor. So Paulus goes down before Strauss, Strauss falls before Baur, and Baur before the resistless logic of his own negative successors. Take the grandest of them all,—the acutest critic that ever turned his learning against the Christian Scriptures, and it will require but little searching to discover that Baur has ruthlessly violated every canon of genuine criticism. And if this is true of him, what is to be said of the school of Kuenen which now seems to be in the ascendant? We cannot now follow theories like this into details. But on a basis of a study of those details we can remark without fear of successful contradiction that the history of modern negative criticism is blotted all over and every page stained black with the proofs of work undertaken with its conclusion already foregone and prosecuted in a spirit that was blind to all adverse evidence.* Who does not know, for example

* We hear much of "apologists" undertaking critical study with such preconceived theories as render the conclusion foregone. Perhaps this is sometimes true, but it is not so necessarily. A Theist, believing that there is a personal God, is open to the proof as to whether any particular message claiming to be a revelation is really from him or not, and according to the proof, he decides. A Pantheist or Materialist begins by denying the existence of a personal God, and hence the possibility of the supernatural. If he begins the study of an asserted revelation, his conclusion is necessarily foregone. An honest Theist, thus, is open to evidence either way; an honest Pantheist or Materialist is not open to any evidence for the supernatural. See some fine remarks on this subject by Dr. Westcott, *Contemporary Review* xxx: p. 1070.

of the sustained attempts made to pack the witness box against the Christian Scriptures?—the wild denials of evidence the most undeniable,—the wilder dragging into court of evidence the most palpably manufactured? Who does not remember the remarkable attempt to set aside the evidence arising from Barnabas' quotation of Matthew as Scripture, on the ground that the part of the epistle which contained it was extant only in an otherwise confessedly accurate Latin version; and when Tischendorf dragged an ancient Greek copy out of an Eastern monastery and vindicated the reading, who does not remember the astounding efforts then made to deny that the quotation was from Matthew, or to throw doubt on the early date of the epistle itself? Who does not know the disgraceful attempt made to manufacture,—yes, simply to manufacture,—evidence against John's gospel, persevered in in the face of all manner of refutation until it seems at last to have received its death blow through one stroke of Dr. Lightfoot's trenchant pen on "the silence of Eusebius?"* In every way, then, this criticism evinces itself as false.

But false as it is, its attacks must be tested and the opposition of true criticism to its results exhibited. The attack, then, proceeds on the double ground of internal and external evidence. It is claimed that the books exhibit such contradictions among themselves and errors in historical fact, as evince that they cannot be authentic. It is claimed, moreover, that external evidence such as would prove them to have existed in the Apostolic times is lacking. How does true criticism meet these attacks?

Joining issue first with the latter statement, sober criticism meets it with a categorical denial. It exhibits the fact that every New Testament book, except only the mites Jude, 2 and 3 John, Philemon and possibly 2 Peter, are quoted by the generation of writers immediately succeeding the Apostles, and are thereby proved to have existed in the Apostolic times; and that even these four brief books which are not quoted by those earliest authors in

* Contemporary Review XXV: 169.

the few and brief writings which have come down from them to us, are so authenticated afterwards as to leave no rational ground of doubt as to their authenticity.

It is admitted on all hands that there is less evidence for 2 Peter than for any other of our books. If the early date of 2 Peter then can be made good, the early date of all the rest follows *a fortiore*; and there can be no doubt but that sober criticism fails to find adequate grounds for rejecting 2 Peter from the circle of apostolic writings. It is an outstanding fact that at the beginning of the third century this epistle was well known; it is during the early years of that century that we meet with the first explicit mention of it, and then it is quoted in such a way as to exhibit the facts that it was believed to be Peter's and was at that time most certainly in the canon. What has to be accounted for, then, is how came it in the canon of the early third century? It was certainly not put there by those third century writers; their notices utterly forbid this. Then, it must have been already in it in the second century. But when in that century did it acquire this position? Can we believe that critics like Irenaeus, or Melito, or Dionysius would have allowed it to be foisted before their eyes into a collection they held all-holy? It could not, then, have first attained that entrance during the latter years of the second century; and that it must have been already in the New Testament, received and used by the great writers of the fourth quarter of the second century, seems scarcely open to doubt. Apart from this reasoning, indeed, this seems established: Clement of Alexandria certainly had the book, Irenaeus also in all probability possessed it. If, now, the book formed a part of the canon current in the fourth quarter of the second century, there can be little doubt but that it came from the bosom of the Apostolic circle. One has but to catch from Irenaeus, for instance, the grounds on which he received any book as scripture, to be convinced of this. The one and all-important *sine qua non* was that it should have been handed down from the fathers, the pupils of the Apostles, as

the work of the Apostolic circle. And Irenaeus was an adequate judge as to whether this was the case; his immediate predecessor in the Episcopal office at Lyons was Pothinus, whose long life spanned the whole intervening time from the Apostles, and his teacher was Polycarp, who was the pupil of John. That a book formed a part of the New Testament of this period, therefore authenticates it as coming down from those elders who could bear personal witness to its authorship. This is one of the facts of criticism apart from noting which it cannot proceed. The question, then, is not: do we possess independently of this, sufficient evidence of the Petrine authorship of the book to place it in the canon? but: do we possess sufficient evidence against its Petrine authorship, to reject it from the canon of the fourth quarter of the second century authenticated as that canon as a whole is? The answer to the question cannot be doubtful when we remember that we have absolutely no evidence against the book; but, on the contrary, that all the evidence of whatever kind which is in existence goes to establish it. There is some slight reason to believe, for instance, that Clement of Rome had the letter, more that Hermas had it and much that Justin had it. There is also a good probability that the early author of the Testaments of the XII. Patriarchs had and used it. Any one of these references, independently of all the rest, would, if made good, throw the writing of the book back into the first century. Each supports the others, and the sum of the probabilities raised by all, is all in direct support of the inference drawn from the reception of the book by later generations, so that there seems to be really no room for reasonable doubt but that the book rightly retains its position in our New Testament. This conclusion gains greatly in strength when we compare the data on which it rests, with what is deemed sufficient to authenticate any other ancient writing. We find at least two most probable allusions to 2 Peter within a hundred years after its composition, and before the next century passes away we find it possessed by the whole church and that as a book with a secured position

in a collection super-authenticated as a whole. Now, Herodotus, for instance, is but once quoted in the century which followed its composition, but once in the next, not at all in the next, only twice in the next, and not until the fifth century after its composition is it as fully quoted as 2 Peter during its second century. Yet who doubts the genuineness of the histories of Herodotus? Again the first distinct quotation from Thucydides does not occur until quite two centuries after its composition; while Tacitus is first cited nearly a century after his death, by Tertulian. Yet no one can reasonably doubt the genuineness of the histories of either Thucydides or Tacitus.* We hazard nothing then, in declaring that no one can reasonably doubt the authenticity of the better authenticated 2 Peter.

If now such a conclusion is critically tenable in the case of 2 Peter, what is to be said of the rest of the canon? There are some six writings which have come down to us, which were written within twenty years after the death of John; these six brief pieces alone, as we have said, prove the prior existence of the whole New Testament, with the exception of Jude, 2 and 3 John, Philemon and (possibly) 2 Peter, and the writers of the succeeding years vouch for and multiply their evidence. In the face of such contemporary testimony as this, negative criticism cannot possibly deny the authenticity of our books. A strenuous effort has consequently been made to break the force of this testimony. The genuineness of these witnessing documents themselves has been attacked or else an attempt has been made to deny that their quotations are from the New Testament books. Neither the one effort nor the other, however, has been or can be successful. And yet with what energy have they been prosecuted! We have already seen what wild strivings were wasted in an attempt to get rid of Barnabas' quotation of Matthew. That whole question is now given up; it is admitted that the quotation is from Matthew; and it is admitted that Barnabas was written in the immediately sub-apostolic times. But Barnabas quotes not only Mat-

*See Rawlinson's *Hist. Evid.*, p 376.

thew, but 1 Cor. and Eph., and in Keim's opinion witnesses also to the prior existence of John. This may be taken as a type of the whole controversy. The references to the New Testament books in the Apostolic fathers are too plain to be disputed and it is simply the despair of criticism that is exhibited by the invention of elaborate theories of accidental coincidences or of endless series of hypothetical books to which to assign them. The quotations are too numerous, too close, and glide too imperceptibly and regularly from mere adoption of phrases into accurate citations of authorities, to be explained away. They therefore stand, and prove that the authors of these writings already knew the New Testament books and esteemed them authoritative.

Nor has the attempt to deny the early date of these witnessing writers fared any better. The mere necessity of the attempt is indeed fatal to the theory it is meant to support; if to exhibit the unauthenticity of the New Testament books, we must hold all subsequent writings unauthentic too, it seems plain that we are on a false path. And what violence is done in the attempt! For instance, the Epistle of Polycarp witnesses to the prior existence of Matthew, Luke, Acts, eleven Epistles of Paul, 1 Peter and 1 John; and as Polycarp was a pupil of John, his testimony is very strong. It must then be got rid of at all hazards. But Irenaeus was Polycarp's pupil, and Irenaeus explicitly cites this letter and declares it to be Polycarp's genuine production; and no one from his time to ours has found cause to dispute his statement until it has become necessary to be rid of the testimony of the letter to our canon. But if Polycarp's letter be genuine, it sets its own date and witnesses in turn to the letters of Ignatius, which themselves bear internal testimony to their own early date; and these letters of Ignatius testify not only to the prior individual existence of Matthew, John, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and 1 John; but also to the prior existence of an authoritative Divinely-inspired New Testament. This is but a specimen of the linked character of

our testimony. Not only is it fairly abundant, but it is so connected by evidently undesigned, indeed, but yet indetachable articulations, that to set aside any one important piece of it usually necessitates such a wholesale attack on the literature of the second century as to amount to a *reductio ad absurdum*. We may, then, boldly formulate as our conclusion that external evidence imperiously forbids the dethronement of any New Testament book from its place in our canon.

What, then, are we to do with the internal evidence that is relied upon by the negative school? What, but set it summarily aside also? It amounts to a two-fold claim: (1.) The sacred writers are hopelessly inconsistent with one another, and (2.) they are at variance with contemporary history. Of course, disharmony between the four gospels, and between Acts and the Epistles is what is mainly relied on under the first point, and it must be admitted that much learning and acuteness has been expended on the effort to make out this disharmony. But it is to be noted: (1.) That even were it admitted up to the full extent claimed, it would be no proof of unauthenticity; it would be no more than that found between secular historians admitted to be authentic, when narrating the same actions from different points of view. And (2.) in no case has it been shown that disharmony must be admitted. No case can be adduced where a natural mode of harmonizing cannot be supplied, and it is a reasonable principle, recognized among critics of secular historians, that two writers must not be held to be contradictory where any natural mode of harmonizing can be imagined. Otherwise it amounts to holding that we know fully and thoroughly all the facts of the case,—better even than eye-witnesses seem ever to know them. In order to gain any force at all, therefore, for this objection, both the extent and degree of the disharmony has been grossly exaggerated. Take an example: It is asserted that the two accounts (in Matthew and Luke) of the events accompanying our Lord's birth are mutually exclusive.

But even a cursory examination will show that there is not a single contradiction between them. How then is the charge of disharmony supported? In two ways: First, by erecting silence into contradiction. Since Matthew does not mention the visit of the shepherds, he is said to contradict Luke who does. Since Luke does not mention the flight into Egypt he is said to contradict Matthew who does. And secondly, by a still more astounding method which proceeds by first confounding two distinct transactions and then finding irreconcilable contradictions between them. Thus Strauss calmly enumerates no less than five discrepancies between Matthew's account of the visit of the angel to Joseph and Luke's account of the visit of the angel to Mary. On the same principle we might prove both Motley's "Dutch Republic" and Kingslake's "Crimean War" to be unbelievable histories by gravely setting ourselves to find "discrepancies" between the account in the one of the brilliant charges of Egmont at St. Quentin and the account in the other of the great charge of the six hundred at Balaclava. This is not an unfair example of the way in which the New Testament is dealt with in order to exhibit its internal disharmony. We are content, however, that it should pass for an extreme case. For it will suffice for our present purpose to be able to say that if the New Testament books are to be proved unauthentic by their internal contradictions, by parity of reasoning the world has never yet seen an authentic writing. In fact so marvelously are our books at one that, leaving the defensive, the harmonist may take the offensive and claim this unwonted harmony as one of the chief evidences of Christianity. Paley has done this for the Acts and Epistles; and it can be done also for the Gospels.

Perhaps we ought to content ourselves with merely repeating this same remark in reference to the charge that the New Testament writers are at variance with contemporary history. So far is this from being true that one of the strongest evidences for Christianity is the utter accord with the minute details of contemporary history

which is exhibited in its records. There has been no lack indeed of "instances" of disaccord confidently put forth; but in every case the charge has recoiled on the head of its maker. Thus, the mention of Lysanias in Luke, iii: 2, was long held the test case of such inaccuracy and sceptics were never weary of dwelling upon it; until it was pointed out that the whole "error" was not Luke's but—the sceptic's. Josephus mentions this Lysanias and in such a way that he should not have been confounded with his older namesake; and inscriptions have been brought to light which explicitly assign him to just Luke's date. And so this stock example vanishes into the air from which it was made. The others have met a like fate. The detailed accuracy of the New Testament writers in historical matters is indeed wonderful, and is more and more evinced by every fresh investigation. Every now and then a monument is dug up, touching on some point adverted to in the New Testament; and in every case only to corroborate the New Testament. Thus not only has Luke long ago been proved accurate in calling the ruler of Cyprus a "proconsul," but Mr. Cesnola has lately brought to light a Cyprian inscription which mentions that same Proconsul Paulus whom Luke represents Paul as finding on the island.—(Cyprus, p. 425.) Let us but consider the unspeakable complication of the political history of those times;—the frequent changes of provinces from senatorial to imperial and *vice versa*,—the many alterations of boundaries and vacillations of relation to the central power at Rome,—which made it the most complicated period the world has ever seen, and renders it the most dangerous ground possible for a forger to enter upon;—and how impossible is it to suppose that a book whose every most incidental notice of historical circumstances is found after most searching criticism to be minutely correct,—which has threaded all this labyrinth with firm and unflinching step,—was the work of unlearned forgers, writing some hundred years after the facts they record. Confessedly accurate Roman historians have not escaped error here; even Tacitus himself has slipped.* To think that a

* Cf. *Annal* xi: 23.

second century forger could have walked scathless among all the pitfalls that gaped around him, is like believing a blind man could thread a row of a hundred cambric needles at a thrust. If we merely apply the doctrine of probabilities to the accuracy of these New Testament writers they are proved to be the work of eye-witnesses and wholly authentic.*

We can, then, at the end, but repeat the statement with which we began: Modern negative criticism neither on internal nor on external grounds has been able to throw any doubt on the authenticity of a single book of our New Testament. Their authenticity, accuracy and honesty are super-vindicated by every new investigation. They are thus proved to be the productions of sober, honest, accurate men; they claim verbal inspiration; their claim was allowed by the contemporary church. So far modern criticism has gone step by step with traditional faith. There remains but one critical ground on which the doctrine we are considering can be disputed. Do these books in their internal character negative their claim? Are the phenomena of the writings in conflict with the claim they put forth? We must, then, in conclusion consider this last refuge of objection.

2. Much has been already said incidentally which bears on this point: but something more is needed. An amount of accuracy which will triumphantly prove a book to be genuine and surely authentic, careful and honest, may fall short of proving it to be the very word of God. The question now before us is: granting the books to be in the main accurate, are they found on the application of a searching criticism to bear such a character as will throw destructive objection in the way of the dogma that they are verbally from God? This inquiry opens a broad—almost illimitable—field, utterly impossible to fully treat here. It may be narrowed somewhat, however, by a few natural observations. (1). It is to be remembered that we are not defending a mechanical theory of inspiration. Every word of the Bible is the word of God

* See this slightly touched on by Dr. Peabody, Princeton Rev., March, 1880.

according to the doctrine we are discussing ; but also and just as truly, every word is the word of a man. This at once sets aside as irrelevant a large number of the objections usually brought from the phenomena of the New Testament against its verbal inspiration. No finding of traces of human influence in the style, wording or forms of statement or argumentation touches the question. The book is throughout the work of human writers and is filled with the signs of their handiwork. This we admit on the threshold ; we ask what is found inconsistent with its absolute accuracy and truth. (2). It is to be remembered, again, that no objection touches the question, that is obtained by pressing the primary sense of phrases or idioms. These are often false ; but they are a necessary part of human speech. And the Holy Ghost in using human speech, used it as He found it. It cannot be argued then that the Holy Spirit could not speak of the sun setting, or call the Roman world "the whole world." The current sense of a phrase is alone to be considered ; and if men so spoke and were understood correctly in so speaking the Holy Ghost, speaking their speech would also speak. No objection then is in point which turns on a pressure of language. Inspiration is a means to an end and not an end in itself ; if the truth is conveyed accurately to the ear that listens to it, its full end is obtained. (3). And we must remember again that no objection is valid which is gained by overlooking the prime question of the intentions and professions of the writer. Inspiration, securing absolute truth, secures that the writer shall do what he professes to do : not what he does not profess. If the author does not profess to be quoting the Old Testament *verbatim*,—unless it can be proved that he professes to give the *ipsissima verba*,—then no objection arises against his verbal inspiration from the fact that he does not give the exact words. If an author does not profess to report the exact words of a discourse or a document—if he professes to give, or it is enough for his purposes to give, an abstract or general account of the sense or the wording, as the case may be,—then it is not opposed to his claim

to inspiration that he does not give the exact words. This remark sets aside a vast number of objections brought against verbal inspiration by men who seem to fancy that the doctrine supposes men to be false instead of true to their professed or implied intention. It sets aside, for instance all objection against the verbal inspiration of the Gospels, drawn from the diversity of their accounts of words spoken by Christ or others, written over the cross, &c. It sets aside also all objection raised from the freedom with which the Old Testament is quoted, so long as it cannot be proved that the New Testament writers quote the Old Testament in a different sense from that in which it was written, in cases where the use of the quotation turns on this change of sense. This cannot be proved in a single case.

The great majority of the usual objections brought against the verbal inspiration of the Sacred Scriptures from their phenomena, being thus set aside, the way is open to remarking further, that no single argument can be brought from this source against the church doctrine which does not begin by *proving* an error in statement or contradiction in doctrine or fact to exist in these sacred pages. I say, that does not begin by *proving* this. For if the inaccuracies are apparent only,—if they are not indubitably inaccuracies,—they do not raise the slightest presumption against the full, verbal inspiration of the book. Have such errors been pointed out? That seems the sole question before us now. And any sober criticism must answer categorically to it, No! It is not enough to point to passages *difficult* to harmonize; they cannot militate against verbal inspiration unless it is not only *impossible* for us to harmonize them, but also unless they are of such a character that they are clearly contradictory, so that if one be true the other cannot by any possibility be true. No such case has as yet been pointed out. Why should the New Testament harmonics be dealt with on other principles than those which govern men in dealing with like cases among profane writers? There, it is a first principle of historical science that any solution which affords a possible

method of harmonizing any two statements is preferable to the assumption of inaccuracy or error—whether those statements are found in the same or different writers. To act on any other basis, it is clearly acknowledged, is to assume, not prove, error. We ask only that this recognized principle be applied to the New Testament. Who believes that the historians who record the date of Alexander's death—some giving the 28th, some the 30th of the month—are in contradiction? * And if means can be found to harmonize them, why should not like cases in the New Testament be dealt with on like principles? If the New Testament writers are held to be independent and accurate writers,—as they are by both parties in this part of our argument,—this is the only rational rule to apply to their writings; and the application of it removes every argument against verbal inspiration drawn from assumed disharmony. Not a single case of disharmony can be proved.

The same principle and with the same results, may be applied to the cases wherein it is claimed that the New Testament is in disharmony with the profane writers of the times, or other contemporary historical sources. But it is hardly necessary to do so. At the most, only three cases of even possible errors in this sphere can be now even plausibly claimed: the statements regarding the taxing under Quirinius, the revolt under Theudas, and the lordship of Aretas over Damascus. But Zumpt's proof that Quirinius was twice governor of Syria, the first time just after our Lord's birth, sets the first of these aside; whereas the other two, while not corroborated by distinct statements from other sources, yet are not excluded either. Room is found for the insignificant revolt of this Theudas—who is not to be confounded with his later and more important namesake—in Josephus' statement that at this time there were "ten thousand" revolts not mentioned by him. And the lordship of Aretas over Damascus is rendered very probable by what we know from other sources of the posture of affairs in that region, as well as by the significant absence of Roman-Damascene

* For methods by which these are harmonized, see Lee "Inspiration," page 350.

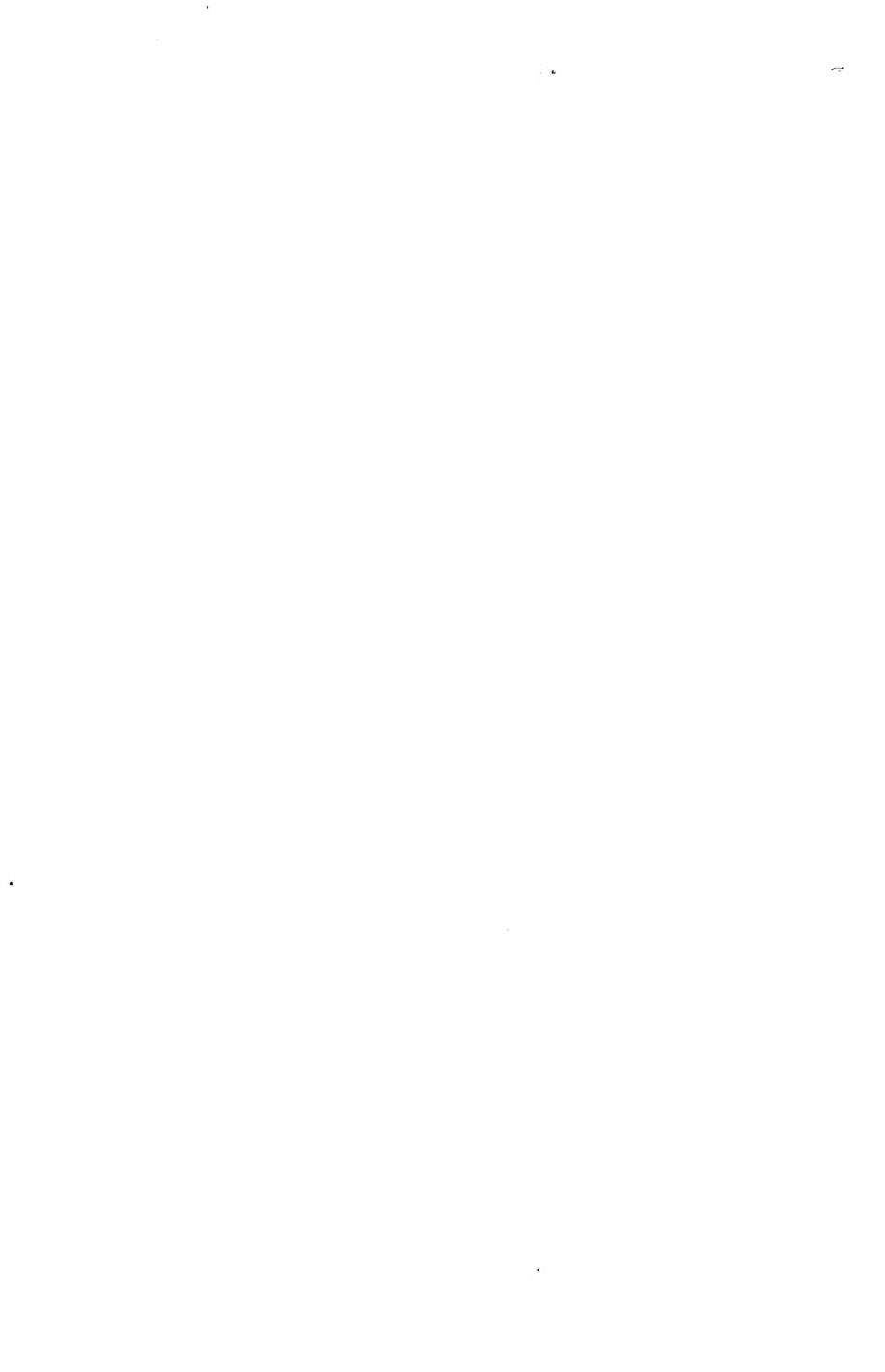
coinage for just this period. Even were the New Testament writers in direct conflict in these or in other statements, with profane sources, it would still not be proven that the New Testament was in error. There would still be an equal chance, to say the least (much too little as it is), that the other sources were in error. But it is never in such conflict; and, therefore, cannot be charged with having fallen into historical error, unless we are prepared to hold that the New Testament writers are not to be believed in any statement which cannot be independently of it proved true; in other words, unless it be assumed beforehand to be untrustworthy. This, again, is to assume, not prove error. Not a single case of error can be proved.

We cannot stop to even mention the fact that no doctrinal contradictions, or scientific errors can be proved. The case stands or falls confessedly on the one question: Are the New Testament writers contradictory to each other or to other sources of information in their record of historical or geographical facts? This settled, indubitably all is settled. We repeat, then, that all the fierce light of criticism which has so long been beating upon their open pages has not yet been able to settle one indubitable error on the New Testament writers. This being so, no argument against their claim to write under a verbal inspiration from God can be drawn from the phenomena of their writings. No phenomena can be pled against verbal inspiration except errors,—no error can be proved to exist within the sacred pages; that is the argument in a nut-shell. Such being the result of the strife which has raged all along the line for decades of years, it cannot be presumptuous to formulate our conclusion here as boldly as after the former heads of discourse:—Modern criticism has absolutely no valid argument to bring against the church doctrine of verbal inspiration, drawn from the phenomena of Scripture. This seems indubitably true.

It is, indeed, well for Christianity that it is. For, if the phenomena of the writings were such as to negative their distinct claim to full inspiration, we cannot conceal from ourselves that

much more than their verbal inspiration would have to be given up. If the sacred writers were not trustworthy in such a witness-bearing, where would they be trustworthy? If they, by their performance, disproved their own assertions, it is plain that not only would these assertions be thus proven false, but, also, by the same stroke the makers of the assertions convicted of either fanaticism or dishonesty. It seems very evident, then, that there is no standing ground between the two theories of full verbal inspiration and no inspiration at all. Gausson is consistent; Strauss is consistent: but those who try to stand between! It is by a divinely permitted inconsistency that they can stand at all. Let us know our position. If the New Testament, claiming full inspiration, did exhibit such internal characteristics as should set aside this claim, it would not be a trustworthy guide to salvation. But on the contrary, since all the efforts of the enemies of Christianity—eager to discover error by which they might convict the precious word of life of falsehood—have proved utterly vain, the Scriptures stand before us authenticated as from God. They are, then, just what they profess to be; and criticism only secures to them the more firmly the position they claim. Claiming to be verbally inspired, that claim was allowed by the church which received them,—their writers approve themselves sober and honest men, and evince the truth of their claim, by the wonder of their performance. So, then, gathering all that we have attempted to say into one point, we may say that modern biblical criticism has nothing valid to urge against the church doctrine of verbal inspiration, but that on the contrary it puts that doctrine on a new and firmer basis and secures to the church Scriptures which are truly divine. Thus, although nothing has been urged formally as a proof of the doctrine, we have arrived at such results as amount to a proof of it. If the sacred writers clearly claim verbal inspiration and every phenomenon supports that claim, and all critical objections break down by their own weight, how can we escape admitting its truth? What further proof do we need?

With this conclusion I may fitly close. But how can I close without expression of thanks to Him who has so loved us as to give us so pure a record of his will,—God-given in all its parts, even though cast in the forms of human speech,—infallible in all its statements,—divine even to its smallest particle! I am far from contending that without such an inspiration there could be no Christianity. Without any inspiration we could have had Christianity; yea, and men could still have heard the truth, and through it been awakened, and justified, and sanctified and glorified. The verities of our faith would remain historically proven true to us—so bountiful has God been in his fostering care—even had we no Bible; and through those verities, salvation. But to what uncertainties and doubts would we be the prey!—to what errors, constantly begetting worse errors, exposed!—to what refuges, all of them refuges of lies, driven! Look but at those who have lost the knowledge of this infallible guide: see them evincing man's most pressing need by inventing for themselves an infallible church, or even an infallible Pope. Revelation is but half revelation unless it be infallibly communicated; it is but half communicated unless it be infallibly recorded. The heathen in their blindness are our witnesses of what becomes of an unrecorded revelation. Let us bless God, then, for his inspired word! And may he grant that we may always cherish, love and venerate it, and conform all our life and thinking to it! So may we find safety for our feet, and peaceful security for our souls.



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