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THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT
IN RELATION TO THE
AUTHORITY AND THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE*

BY
WILLIAM MACLAREN,
Knox College.

THE authority and the inspiration of Scripture are closely connected, but they can be conceived of as separate. There is a measure of authority due to writings to which we ascribe no inspiration, in the theological sense; but entire inspiration necessarily carries with it complete authority.

Nearly all the most intelligent defenders of plenary inspiration are careful to inform us that inspiration can be taken up and discussed in its proper logical order only when the work of the Christian apologist has been accomplished. It presupposes that there is a personal God, the Creator and Moral Governor of the universe, and that He has made a supernatural revelation of Himself to mankind, of which the Scriptures are a record historically trustworthy; that is to say, they were written by men of competent information and thorough honesty. Apart from inspiration, it is evident that if the books of the Bible are the record of a supernatural revelation, written with as much accuracy as we ascribe to the best class

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of ordinary writings, they must have for us a considerable measure of authority. Before we have arrived at any doctrine of inspiration they speak to us with authority, for God speaks in them as He speaks nowhere else. They make known to us what we are to believe and do, with as much accuracy as the facts of history are handed down to us by the best class of writers.

On the other hand, it is evident that when we discover that the Scriptures give us not merely a credible record of a supernatural revelation, written by intelligent and reliable authors, but written by men who were supernaturally guided to embody correctly in language what God had supernaturally given to them, they must necessarily have for us the highest authority. While, therefore, these books might have a measure of authority apart from inspiration, their highest authority is linked with plenary inspiration.

All Christians assign to the Bible a position and authority which they accord to no other book, and Protestants are wont to regard them as the only rule of faith and practice. If we cherish this view, we should seek to know the grounds which warrant us to entertain it.

The Westminster divines and the Reformers laid great stress on the testimony of the Holy Spirit, as the crowning and conclusive evidence which assures us of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. Lee, in his valuable work on Inspiration, criticizes, we think, not very wisely, the position of the Westminster divines and the Reformers. Without discarding the witness of the Spirit as a species of evidence which is available, he maintains that it can only be employed to confirm the authority of Scripture when that has been sufficiently attested by other evidence. He assumes that it can be employed only when the divine authority of Scripture has been established by proofs drawn from sources external to itself.

Another class of writers run to the opposite extreme. The witness of the Spirit seems to be the only evidence to which they attach any value. When radical criticism has overturned all the old views of Scripture, and led thoughtful men who have come under its spell to question whether the sacred writers can any longer be regarded as even historically trustworthy, they point to the witness of the Spirit as giving us ample assurance

in the absence of all other evidence. When criticism has overturned the traditional foundations of our faith, we are comforted by the thought that the only thing of real value, the divine element that runs through the books of Scripture, is certified to us by the witness of the Spirit in our hearts. Robertson Smith says: "If I am asked why I receive the Scripture as the Word of God, and as the only perfect rule of faith and life, I answer, with all the fathers of the Protestant church, because the Bible is the only record of the redeeming love of God; because in the Bible alone I find God drawing near to man in Christ Jesus, and declaring to us in Him the will of God for our salvation. And this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul."

Another divine, with, at least, partial affinities for the same school, assures us that he uses the Bible as an authority in matters of religion, not "because of an antecedent conviction that it is inspired; we are convinced it is inspired because it so asserts its authority over us as we read that we cannot but use it in that way. This, I am confident, is the only rational and experimental way of reaching and stating the truth." This author informs us that it is as we use the Bible, without any presuppositions whatever, that we find "it has power to lodge in our minds Christianity and its doctrines as being not only generally, but divinely true; and its power to do this is precisely what we mean by its inspiration." This witness of the Spirit does not guarantee the accuracy of the details of Bible history, nor even that what has been commonly regarded as history is not myth or legend, but it enables us to recognize the divine element which pervades Scripture and culminates in Christ. We are so brought in contact with the divine element that by the power of the Spirit it begets faith in us, and this is all we need. "The gospels," we are told, "have every quality which they need to put us in contact with the Gospel; they do put us in contact with it, and the Spirit makes it sure to our faith. Why should we ask more from them?"

This is plausible, and it relieves us from the necessity of a careful inductive study of what the Scriptures teach respecting their own authority and freedom from error. It supersedes all inquiry into the nature and extent of inspiration as taught in

Scripture. For the only inspiration which is recognized becomes known to us by personal experience. The power of the Scriptures to lodge Christianity and its doctrines in the minds of those in whom the Spirit works is what is meant by inspiration.

For this view of the witness of the Spirit this author claims the authority of the Westminster divines, as we have seen Robertson Smith alleges that of "all the fathers of the Protestant church."

In emphasizing the witness of the Spirit, these authors have directed attention to an important truth which has often been too much overlooked in modern times in this connection; but we cannot admit that it should be allowed to supersede the careful discussion of inspiration, or that these writers have presented the doctrine in its proper relations, or that they are entitled to claim for their views the sanction of the Westminster divines.

What we shall attempt in this lecture is to examine the Confessional doctrine of the authority of Scripture, consider what is involved in the witness of the Spirit of which the Confession speaks, and, lastly, inquire into the relation which the witness of the Spirit sustains to the authority and the inspiration of Scripture.

I. THE CONFESSATIONAL DOCTRINE OF THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE.

It is stated with great clearness and care in the Confession of Faith, chapter i. 4-5: "The authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon any man or church, but wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the Author thereof; and therefore it is to be received, because it is the Word of God. We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the church to a high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture, and the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all its parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God; yet, notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."

In the Belgic Confession, Article V., and in the Gallican Confession, Article IV., the same doctrine is distinctly stated, and it is certainly sanctioned by the common consent of nearly "all the fathers of the Protestant church."

Turning, however, to the statement of the Westminster divines, you will observe that it teaches: (1) Negatively, in opposition to the Church of Rome, that "the authority of the Holy Scripture, for which it ought to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man or church." (2) Positively, that it "depends wholly upon God (who is truth itself), the Author thereof." It is self-evident that, if God speaks to us in the Scripture, the authority of Scripture, in itself considered, must depend on God. On that supposition, no theist can refuse to admit its right to our faith and obedience. The real point on which an issue can be raised is, How can we recognize God as speaking to us in His Word? If we can certainly know that it is God who speaks to us in the Scriptures, we need search no farther for grounds why we should yield to them the homage of our faith and obedience. (3) The evidence to which this section refers, which warrants us in ascribing divine authority to Scripture, or in regarding God as speaking to us in the sacred books, is threefold: external, internal, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. These three lines of evidence are recognized as valuable, although not all of equal weight. The witness of the Holy Spirit does not stand alone, even when a careful examination of the other evidence might lead us to doubt whether the books deserved to be ranked as historically trustworthy. The three lines of evidence concur in the conclusion at which we arrive.

According to the Romish view, which this ~~action~~ *action* was specially designed to antagonize, we are entirely dependent on the church for the knowledge that God speaks to us in the Bible. A case in some measure parallel will illustrate the difference between the Romish and the Protestant methods. A son receives what purports to be a letter from his father, long absent in a distant country. How can he know who wrote it? We may imagine that, when he reads the letter, he is entirely unable to discover, either from the handwriting, the style, or the contents, any decisive evidence of its authorship. For anything he can ever learn of that, he is dependent on external testimony. In these circumstances, the messenger who brought it to him assures him that

he received it from his father. His acceptance of the letter as from his father depends wholly on the character and credentials of the messenger. If these are satisfactory, he accepts the letter, because he has confidence in the messenger. This parallels the Romish view of the proximate ground of the authority of the Bible. It comes to us through the church, and the church certifies us that it is from God. Christians believe the church, and, therefore, they accept the Bible. But, with regard to the letter, a second supposition may be made. While the son values highly the testimony of the messenger through whom it reached him, when he reads the letter, the handwriting, the style, the intimate knowledge which it displays of his character, history, and circumstances, the spirit which breathes through it, and, indeed, the entire contents of the letter, assure him that it was written by his father. This illustrates the Protestant position in regard to the external and the internal evidences of the divine authorship of the Bible. Both are recognized, and both concur in producing the estimate which we put upon the Scriptures.

“The testimony of the church” may very properly move us “to a high and reverend esteem of the Holy Scripture.” This specification may not cover all the external evidences, but it excludes none. And, if the testimony of the church is viewed, as we think it should be, as embracing not merely the corporate testimony of the church, but that of its individual members, then it certainly includes all that is most important in the external evidences.

But, while the *external* evidences are recognized, they are not regarded as of equal importance with the *internal*. They are not accessible to the great mass of mankind. But the Bible demands faith and obedience, wherever it comes. Were a copy picked up on a lonely island by a man who had never seen a Bible nor heard of a church, and who was entirely ignorant of the external evidences of its divine origin, he could not read it without discovering that it demands of him immediate faith in Christ and obedience to His will. To every human being it speaks with all the urgency of divine authority, and sets before him the choice of life or death. Its words run: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him,” John iii. 36. This feature of the Scriptures can be accounted for only by the

fact that there is a self-evidencing power in their message which leaves those who reject them without excuse. They carry with them their credentials wherever they go. It is assumed that men need to prosecute no course of learned and laborious research in order to verify their divine origin. When we read the book we may discover the impress of deity and the signature of its divine Author.

The internal evidences are specially dwelt upon by the Westminster divines, no doubt, because they are accessible to all, and are the most decisive. The enumeration of particulars is very fine, but it is not intended to be exhaustive. "The heavenliness of the matter" must impress every thoughtful reader. "The efficacy of the doctrine," which, during all the centuries, has proved the power of God unto salvation to men of every clime and character, bespeaks God as its author. "The majesty of the style" is worthy of the claims made on its behalf. "The consent of all the parts" demands a supernatural intelligence to mould all its parts into unity. It is made up of sixty-six writings, the work of some forty authors, who wrote in almost every conceivable style of prose and poetry at intervals during sixteen centuries, yet one ripening plan steadily unfolds itself from age to age, and gives to these diverse compositions a unity so marvellous as to constitute them one book. "The scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God."

These arguments appeal to the understanding, the conscience, and the heart, and do often beget a strong rational conviction of the divine authority of the Word of God, and but for the perverting and darkening power of sin would lead us to a full assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures. But we cannot forget that man is fallen. Hence the need of something more than the most cogent arguments which address our rational nature from without. These, however valuable in their place, when they encounter the deadness and the insensibility of a carnal heart, fail to accomplish their work. In moral reasonings, arguments on the one side are liable to be met with arguments on the other, which, if they do

not overthrow the argument, at least weaken its impression. And the difficulties which attend any book which touches on so many mysteries and impinges on such momentous practical interests as the Bible can easily be magnified so as to shut out the proper impression which the argument is fitted to make. The impression, moreover, made by the marks of divinity found in Scripture depends largely on the moral and spiritual condition of the person who studies them. In the purely intellectual sphere, the strength of conviction is regulated by the nature and amount of the evidence presented to the understanding; but in the moral and spiritual sphere, the strength of the conviction is often in the inverse ratio of the evidence. It is a proverbially bootless task to convince a man against his will. It is only the pure in heart who see God. And except a man be born again he cannot *see* the kingdom of God. A mind swayed by pride, prejudice, and passion, does not perceive "the heavenliness of the matter" found in Scripture. It is only the musical ear that perceives the beauties of musical harmonies, and it is only the heart which, by "the inward work of the Holy Spirit," has been made receptive of the truth to which the truth is unveiled in its beauty. This is the explanation why men with ample evidence, external and internal, before them fail to reach a divine faith, until the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the truth in their hearts, overcomes their questionings and enables them to rest with full persuasion and assurance in the infallible truth and divine authority of the Holy Scriptures.

II. WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT TO THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE?

It may aid us in answering this question to remember that this witness is just one phase of the inward work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. And it is admitted by all Christians, with, perhaps, the exception of a few enthusiasts, that the Spirit does not now give objective revelations to men. His work in our day is to enlighten the mind and renew the will, so that men perceive, in its real significance and in its relation to themselves, what has already been revealed in the Word, and rest upon it as an undoubted verity.

"The Bible reveals and verifies its authority only to regenerated men. Only they are competent to judge it, and pronounce upon its true character, its purpose and its value." (Rooke,

p. 112.) When the divine Spirit regenerates the soul, the subject of His grace sees the Bible with new eyes, and perceives a beauty, meaning, and significance in it which he never saw before. To the unrenewed mind there is no "form nor comeliness" in Christ, but to those renewed by grace He is the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. The difference is not in Christ, but in the eye that sees Him. If the witness of the Spirit is conceived of as partaking of the same general character as the rest of his inward work, it must be regarded, not as imparting fresh knowledge from without, but as so touching the springs of thought and feeling within us, and so quickening the inner man, that we perceive in the Word features which were always there, and were seen by others, but which had never before arrested our attention. No fresh objective revelations, whether by voices, dreams, or visions, are involved in this witness of the Spirit. It is a witness which the Spirit bears "by" the Word as His instrument, and "with" the Word as the standard with which He leads Christians to compare and test their experience and life. When we see the sun shining in his strength, we need no other evidence of his existence. And when the divine Spirit, by His secret and inscrutable inward working, opens our eyes to apprehend the real import of Scripture, and to recognize its practical influence in the hearts and lives of men, we need no other witness of the divine origin of the Holy Scriptures. The truth shines with self-evidencing power into our hearts, and there springs up within us, we scarcely know how, a "full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority" of the written Word.

Man's spiritual blindness, deadness, and insensibility, which render such an inward work of the Holy Spirit absolutely necessary, do not render it useless to ply unrenewed men with arguments for the divinity of Scripture, or to point them to those marks of God's workmanship which are wrought into its structure. Dr. Lee seems to think that the witness of the Spirit is so unintelligible to skeptics and unbelievers that we might as reasonably "discourse with the blind upon the varieties of colors" as speak of this kind of testimony to them. But there are two remarks which this objection calls forth, viz.: (1) If men can attain a "full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority" of the Holy Scriptures, without any

inward work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, for what purpose do they need the inward work of the Holy Spirit? Can any step in the matter of human salvation be more difficult than this which is supposed to be taken without the aid of the Spirit? Why should we not fall back at once on bald Pelagianism? (2) Bible analogies which hold in one point do not necessarily hold in everything. Christ, on account of His stability and firmness, may be compared to a rock; but it does not follow that He can be broken in pieces and trampled under foot. And if unrenewed men, on account of their spiritual insensibility and moral impotency, are represented in Scripture as blind, deaf, and dead, it does not warrant us to infer that it is useless urging upon them motives, or plying them with means. It does not entitle us to infer that their wills have ceased to be "endued with that natural liberty that is neither forced, nor by any absolute necessity of nature determined to good or evil." The Scriptures explain their own analogies; they call upon the blind to see, the deaf to hear, and the dead to arise that Christ may give them light.

When we enquire, How does the Spirit witness in our hearts? the Confession answers "by" and "with" the Word. This phraseology is clearly designed to indicate two distinct ways in which the inward work of the Holy Spirit bears testimony that the Bible is from God. But some difficulty has been found in stating the exact difference indicated in bearing witness "by" and "*with*" the Word.

The specifications of the internal evidences enumerated in this section may give a clue to the distinction. They are not all of one order. There is one class of these marks which we discover as we study the Bible itself. We have only to read and meditate on what is spread before us there in order to see the foot-prints of deity; but there is another class of marks which involve a comparison between what is revealed in the Word and what is observed in man, in a state of nature, and in a state of grace.

In order to discover "the heavenliness of the matter," "the majesty of the style," "the consent of all the parts," "the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), and the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection of the whole," we have only to examine the book with hearts receptive of the truth. It is seen to be radiant throughout with the divine

glory. As the sun evidences his existence to all who open their eyes to see his light, so the divine authorship of the Scriptures is patent to every heart taught of the Spirit. This is the witness which the Spirit bears *by* the Word as His instrument.

But when we turn to what is here spoken of as “the full discovery which it makes of the only way of man’s salvation,” we require to study both the book of God and the book of the human heart. We have to compare the remedy with the disease, as set forth in the Word, as made known in our experiences, and as revealed in the records of the race. And when we examine “the efficacy of the doctrine,” we have not only to study our Bibles, in order to discover the claims to potency which it puts forth for its teaching, claims which even a false religion might advance, but we have to compare the efficacy asserted for it with the results actually attained in the lives of those who have embraced it.

We place side by side the efficacy claimed for the Gospel message in the Word and the results achieved in the history of the church and in our personal experience, and we find the one is the counterpart of the other; and the efficacy of the doctrine is proclaimed by the record of its triumphs. The central message of God’s Word has, in all ages, been to the Jew a stumbling-block, and to the Greek foolishness; but it has held on its way, doing its work unmoved, and wherever it has come it has proved the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. It has brought a consciousness of peace and pardon to the guilty. It has transformed hearts impure and vile into the divine image; and lives fast sinking into moral degradation, it has ennobled with lofty aims, with Christian virtues, and with high achievements.

When we are enabled, with true insight, to compare God’s remedy with man’s disease, and to set side by side what the Scripture claims for its teaching and the transforming power which it has exerted in those who believe it, then the Spirit bears witness “with” the Word that the book is of God. When the remedy cures the disease, it proclaims the skill of the physician who prescribed it. And when the wards of the lock respond to the key, we know that both came from the same hand.

III. THE RELATION WHICH THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT SUSTAINS TO THE AUTHORITY AND THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE.

Were we seeking to establish what we regard as the true doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, we would start, as we

have already indicated, at the point where the Christian apologist has successfully completed his work. We would not discuss the doctrine with skeptics, but with those who acknowledge that there is a personal God, and that He has made a supernatural revelation of Himself to mankind, of which the Scriptures are a record historically trustworthy. We handle this question only with men who admit that we have in the Bible a supernatural revelation, recorded by writers of competent information and sterling integrity. This stops short of inspiration. Competent information is not omniscience, and sterling integrity does not exclude all prejudice, bias, and misconception. We cannot, at this stage, appeal to these books as infallible, but as trustworthy and credible writings. Were the appeal made to isolated expressions, or texts found in individual books, the evidence might not be sufficient to establish the inspiration of Scripture. For in writers of the highest character, we recognize the possibility of a measure of unintentional mistake, and perchance these isolated utterances might be the result of honest mistake, or slovenly writing. But if it can be shown, as we think it can, that the claims to inspiration, direct and indirect, put forward by the sacred penmen for their own writings, and the manner in which they recognize it in other sacred books, are so clear, numerous, and emphatic, that we cannot regard the writers as honest, intelligent men unless in very deed the human authors of the Bible wrote under supernatural guidance, then we can construct a rational argument for the inspiration of Scripture from writings which, up to this point, have been viewed as only historically trustworthy.

In this way, even unregenerate men can find a rational basis for the conviction that God has supernaturally guided the sacred writers to put on record what He had supernaturally given them, or prompted them to write. This, without the inward work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts, will not beget in them a true and lively faith; but it will, at least, put them in a better position to study with a reverent and teachable spirit the evidences of its divine origin, and to ponder the way of life which it makes known.

Robertson Smith, and those to whom we have chiefly referred in this lecture, would, perhaps, object both to our method and our conclusion. For we have seen that all they mean by inspiration is the power of the Scriptures "to lodge Christianity and its doc-

trines in our minds as divinely true." This is an experience which the Spirit gives to believers. It supplies no evidence of the truth and accuracy of anything except the divine element which runs through Scripture, and culminates in Christ. All we need to know, and all we really can know, of inspiration is already imparted to us by the witness of the Holy Spirit.

There are several points of importance on which we find ourselves in accord with these authors. (1) We unite with them cordially in the recognition of the fact that through the inward work of the Holy Spirit believers have what is to them a decisive witness to the divine authority of the Bible. (2) We agree with them in thinking that the witness of the Spirit does not prove the inerrancy of the details of Bible history. Whether a given king reigned twenty or forty years, whether a list of names is accurate, and whether variations in the record of the discourses of Christ are due to the freedom with which they were reported, or to the fact that they were repeated on different occasions with variations, are matters in regard to which the witness of the Spirit cannot be wisely invoked. Even good men are sometimes in danger of claiming the Holy Spirit's sanction for their own whims. Luther, who certainly had as much of the Spirit's teaching as most Christians, did not hesitate to speak in very disparaging terms of the epistle of James, and to reject the Apocalypse as neither apostolical nor prophetic, because his spirit could not adapt itself to the production. (*Vide* Lee, p. 46.)

But while the witness of the Spirit does not guarantee the inerrancy of all the details of Scripture, it is equally certain that it does not suggest doubts. If doubts arise, they must come from some other source. The mental attitude natural to those who have felt this witness is that of unquestioning faith in the Holy Scriptures. Indeed, "the consent of all the parts" makes it exceedingly difficult, if not presumptuous, for any one to say what details have an important bearing on the great verities the sacred volume was designed to make known.

There is another point on which we are in substantial accord with these writers, viz.: (3) The witness of the Holy Spirit must greatly increase the confidence in the Scriptures felt by those who have not yet ascertained their plenary inspiration. Of these we may note two classes, viz.: (a) Those who approach the Scriptures from the side of the Christian apologist. From a careful

examination of the evidences, external and internal, they have been led to the conviction that these books are the records of a supernatural revelation from God, written by men of competent information and thorough honesty. Viewed even in this light, they carry with them a considerable degree of authority. But when these same persons are led by the inward work of the Holy Spirit to see the real significance of the revelation, which argument had commended to their intelligence; when they discover its divine beauty and drink in its message for themselves, and when they find from their own experience that the apprehension of its truth is somehow linked with a sense of peace and pardon and the dawning of a new and higher life, then they have an evidence more conclusive and decisive than any they had before, and whatever confidence they previously reposed in the Scriptures, viewed as historically trustworthy, is greatly increased by this new evidence.

(b) The believing class who approach the Scriptures from the standpoint of the higher criticism must readily admit that their faith depends largely, if not wholly, on the witness of the Spirit. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine to what other evidence they can turn. For when they have examined the historic portions of the Bible, and have subjected them to the usual critical processes, and have gone through them verse by verse, and have sorted out the words and clauses of each verse, according to the centuries to which they belong, and the unknown authors to whom they are assigned, it would require a peculiarly keen and well-trained mind to measure the degree of credit due to the result. Whatever that result may be, it is not history, and it rests on no ascertainable historic basis. It may be myth, legend, or fiction, or all three combined, but it is not history, nor a narration which is historically trustworthy. This is a somewhat momentous conclusion, as both the Mosaic religion and Christianity have always been held to rest on historic facts, and, if these are rendered uncertain, the superstructure cannot be secure. It is not surprising that believing critics are glad to find a refuge for their faith in the witness of the Spirit. They quite agree with us in holding that the witness of the Spirit should greatly increase the believer's confidence in the Bible.

Thus far we can travel on the same road with the writers we are criticizing. We agree with them in holding that the witness

of the Spirit gives conclusive and decisive evidence to believers of the divine authority of the Scriptures. We agree with them in thinking that, by itself, the witness of the Spirit does not prove the inerrancy of Scripture. And we agree with them in the opinion that before we have reached any conviction on the plenary inspiration of the Bible, the witness of the Spirit must necessarily increase the believer's confidence in the sacred volume. But here our road divides.

It is manifest to us that the reality of the Spirit's witness is no reason why we should not seek to ascertain what the Scriptures teach in reference to their own authorship, accuracy, and freedom from error, or, in other words, what they make known in regard to their own inspiration. It rather gives importance and encouragement to such an inquiry. For the witness of the Spirit adds to the value of the *data* from which we reason, and increases the certainty of the conclusion. We have indicated that a thoroughly valid argument for the plenary inspiration of Scripture can be deduced from its books, which, up to this point, have been viewed merely as historically trustworthy; but surely such an argument gathers immense strength when, by the inward work of the Holy Spirit, we are fully assured that the books from which we reason are from God.

But while the writers to whom we allude cannot regard the books of the Bible as in any proper sense historically trustworthy, they maintain that the divine element which pervades them is so attested by the Holy Spirit that they are reliable as teachers of doctrine. They do not acknowledge that their Bible has ceased to be a standard to which men may appeal in matters of religion. It has been supposed by some that this is the position to which they are drifting, but they repudiate the insinuation. The Bible must still rule our faith and practice.

They appeal to the Holy Scriptures for their doctrine of sin, the Trinity, the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection of Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit, and the judgment to come. They have not renounced the Gospel. But if they appeal to the Bible for their doctrine on these momentous questions, why should they not appeal to it for what it teaches in regard to its own character, authority, and freedom from error? There is no reason to accept the authority of the sacred books on some doctrines, and reject it on others.

The real question is, What idea do the Scriptures give of themselves? Do they claim infallible truth and divine authorship for their contents? Do Christ and the writers of the New Testament handle the Scriptures as those who believe in their partial or in their plenary inspiration? These are questions that can be answered only by a careful induction of what the Scriptures teach. The Scriptures supply sufficient material, we believe, to sustain the doctrine of plenary inspiration. They do not teach it in the set phrases of systematic theology, but in the incidental way in which they are wont to set forth all the great doctrines of religion. They make known this doctrine by a body of evidence, direct and indirect, that should satisfy every mind which yields itself to the natural impression which Scripture gives of its own composition and authority. It is certain that the Christian church, from the apostolic age to the present day, has always treated the Scriptures as the supernatural record of a supernatural revelation. And it is unquestionable that the majority of those who, in modern times, have studied the Scriptures inductively in their relation to this doctrine, whether they accept or reject plenary inspiration themselves, have reached the conclusion that Christ and the writers of the New Testament believed and taught this view of Scripture. Kuenen, who cannot be suspected of any leaning towards a high doctrine of Scripture, says: "It is the conviction of all the writers of the New Testament that the Old Testament is inspired of God, and is thus invested with divine authority. It is unnecessary to support these statements by quoting passages. Such passages are, as every one knows, very numerous." ("Prophets," p. 448.)

We cannot enter on the wide field of evidence to which Kuenen refers, but we think it is almost impossible for any one to read carefully the Scriptures without perceiving that the books are represented as at once perfectly human and perfectly divine. The writers put forth claims constantly which involve plenary inspiration. They recognize the divine authority of their fellow-writers. They reason from the exact collocation of words, from minute verbal peculiarities or forms. It is, with them, a maxim that the Scriptures cannot be broken. They believed that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

If the Scriptures are not reliable in what they teach regard-

ing themselves, their authority as teachers of doctrine is gone, and we are at sea, without rudder, compass, or anchor.

We are aware that it has been proposed to modify what the Scriptures have been supposed to teach in this regard by an appeal to facts which are supposed to be inconsistent with a high doctrine of inspiration. But this can be legitimate only where the language is ambiguous, or its meaning, for some cause, uncertain. When Christ spoke of rising again on the third day, His disciples kept that saying in their hearts, questioning one with another what the rising from the dead might mean. They evidently did not know whether to construe His language literally or figuratively, and their hesitation is not surprising, as they could find examples in Christ's discourses of both modes of speech, John v. 25-29. If they had put a figurative meaning on His words, His literal rising from the grave, as an outstanding *fact*, might very properly have qualified their interpretation of the words. But it can scarcely be pretended, reasonably, that there is any ambiguity or uncertainty in the teaching of the Scriptures in regard to their own authority and inspiration. The testimony of Christ and the writers of the New Testament is decisive. In these circumstances, to appeal to facts to modify the doctrine is not to treat the Scriptures with respect. It is rather an attempt to discredit their authority as a teacher.

Our work in this discussion has been chiefly expository. We have sought to unfold the Westminster doctrine of the authority of Scripture and of the witness of the Spirit. And, while that doctrine is, we think, in full harmony with the Bible, it does not accord with the sentiments of some who have claimed Confessional sanction for their views.

We have seen that the Westminster divines do not rest the authority of Scripture on the witness of the Spirit alone. They base it on three concurrent lines of evidence: external, internal, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. The last is represented as the element which is decisive in the case of each individual believer, but it does not stand alone. It is not presented as a harbor of refuge to which the despairing mariner may betake himself when he can no longer outride the storm on the open sea of intellectual conflict.

We have seen that what is called the witness of the Spirit is merely the necessary result of the inward work of the Holy

Spirit, by which the eyes of the spiritually blind are opened to see what is in the Word, and to recognize the transformations wrought by its potency in those who believe. When our natural insensibility is overcome and the eyes of our understandings opened, the light of God's Word shines with self-evidencing power into our minds, and we see in the book features which "abundantly evidence it to be the Word of God."

We have seen that, while the authors to whom we have made special reference do not regard the witness of the Spirit as implying the inerrancy of Scripture, they regard it as carrying with it an adequate doctrine of inspiration. If a power to lodge Christianity and its doctrines in our minds as divinely true is all that is meant, as they tell us, by the inspiration of Scripture, we might agree with them. But there is nothing in this peculiar to the Bible. A religious treatise or a good sermon may, with the divine blessing, lodge Christianity and its doctrines in our minds as divinely true. We must read our Bibles with strange inattention if they do not teach us a higher doctrine of inspiration.

Finally, we have seen that, while the witness of the Spirit does not prove the absolute freedom of the Bible from error, it should increase our confidence in its teaching, and lead us to search the Scriptures for the testimony they give and the indications they supply of the nature and extent of their own inspiration. The result of this search is not doubtful. For we have seen that the testimony of those who have made the most careful inductive study of the Word, whether friends or opponents of plenary inspiration, is that, if we do not accept the infallibility of God's Word written, we must part company with Christ and all the writers of the New Testament.

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