

HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE And WHY WE BELIEVE IT IS GOD'S WORD

by

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CHAPTER TEN

INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

(Continued)

FORMER considerations have shown that the Bible as a revelation of divine truth occupies a unique position, and that this uniqueness is due to some action of GOD whereby we are assured of the reality of the divine communication. This action is called Inspiration and in further study of it some important principles emerge.

1. Varieties of Inspiration - It is of supreme importance to realize that Inspiration does not always mean the same thing, and for this reason it is essential to use the term with the greatest care and the strictest possible accuracy. Several vital and important distinctions must be made and kept in view.

(1) *Sometimes Inspiration means a direct communication from GOD.*

When Paul said, "**I have received from the Lord,**" he evidently claimed to have had a communication of truth direct from above. This corresponds exactly with the frequent claims made, as already seen, by prophets and others, when they said, "**The Lord spake to me,**" etc. And such a direct revelation is obviously necessary, because many truths of the Bible are above and beyond human ken and must be revealed because they could not be discovered by man.

(2) *Sometimes Inspiration means "the inspiration of selection."*

It is clear that the historical books of the Old Testament give mere fragments of the events out of the complete annals of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, and in view of the emphasis indicated by the substance and arrangement of these books, a selection must have been made.

In like manner, John selected materials out of our Lord's life to form the Fourth Gospel (John 20:31), and Luke's preface points in the same direction. Inspiration here is associated with the selection of materials.

(3) *Sometimes Inspiration means only the guarantee of an accurate record.*

In the Bible:

- We find the words of the Devil. They are not true, although they are found in the Bible.
- We find the words of Job's friends. They are not true, but they are in the Bible.
- We find the words of GOD's enemies in the Bible. They are not true.

The sentiment is wrong, but the record of them is true. The sentiment may be full of imperfection, but the record is always perfect. This is the meaning of the inspiration of accurate record. We have to be very careful, therefore, that if a man preaches from a particular text, he first inquires who said it.

An old Welsh preacher once gave out his text this way: "**Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life**"; and then said, "That is a lie!"

Of course it was. It is the word of Satan. Although it is in GOD's Book, it is not true of itself, but the record of it is true. There may be, there often is, imperfection in the sentiment, but there is no imperfection in the account of it.

This aspect of the subject calls attention to the distinction between Revelation and Inspiration.

- Revelation is the substance of GOD's truth, *the what*;
- Inspiration is the expression of that truth, *the how*.

We can see this in I Corinthians 2:10-13, where we have revelation in verse 10, and inspiration in verse 13. And so, not all the Bible is revealed, because much of it is history and refers to all sorts of men. But all in the Bible is inspired, because the record is given at every point in words that are trustworthy.

This distinction helps us to understand how it is that the Bible, while fully inspired, is not of the same spiritual value at every point. The revelation of truth is, as we have seen, progressive, but the record is accurate throughout.

2. Inspiration and Difficulties - How is Inspiration to be regarded in the face of Bible difficulties? People often say the Bible is so difficult. It is. But when once we have decided, on the grounds of proper evidence, that the Bible is the Word of GOD, then every difficulty must be judged in the light of that antecedent fact. In the words of Tregelles, the great textual critic: "No difficulty in connection with a proved fact can invalidate the fact itself."

Some difficulties are inherent in a revelation, otherwise it would not be a revelation. We cannot expect that which comes from the infinite GOD to finite man to be without difficulty.

Revelation means to "*draw back the veil*," and if there were no veil to draw back, we should not have any revelation. Therefore, we are not surprised if, as Butler taught us nearly two hundred years ago, there are difficulties in revelation, for there are difficulties in nature also, and yet nature is from the same GOD.

Difficulties are either scientific, historical, or ethical.

Scientific difficulties for the most part turn upon differences of interpretation between man's views of the Bible and man's views of science.

Difficulties of history have to be tested one by one; and we have yet to find any real statement in the Bible in terms of history that has been found to be unhistorical.

And with regard to ethical difficulties, what has been said about progressive revelation may be applied at this point. GOD has revealed more and more of his will as man could bear it. There is, therefore, such a thing as, progress in the ethics of the Bible, but there is no progress beyond the ethics of CHRIST and his apostles. Not a single new ethic has been given to the world since JESUS CHRIST and his apostles lived on this earth.

Then let us remember that none of these difficulties affect any fundamental Christian doctrine.

Dean Farrar, who was no slave of conservatism, once said that no demonstrable error has ever been discovered in the Bible.

We are not called upon to answer every objection. It is quite sufficient for us to prove the truth of Christianity. Why should a man take leave of his common sense when he reads the Bible? There are scores of things in life that we cannot understand.

A man says, "I will not believe what I do not see." Then what about his brains? So in regard to life. No one can tell us what life is. We cannot define life, and since we cannot, we ought not to be surprised if we find difficulties in the Bible that we cannot solve.

Let us make use of the Bible as fully as we can, and see how far that will take us. A man once went to Moody and said: "Mr. Moody, I cannot accept your Bible, because there are so many difficulties in it."

Moody said to him: "Do you like fish?" "Yes."

"Do you find any bones in it?" "Yes."

"Do you eat them?" "No, I put them on the side of my plate."

"That is what I do with the difficulties of the Bible, and I find quite enough fish without bones."

That is a good, working, practical rule, though obviously it cannot settle everything. It is called the verifying faculty, and it is worth applying. It will do much to prove the uniqueness of the Bible.

3. Inspiration and Criticism - There are three kinds of criticism, and these should be carefully kept together.

The first is what is called *Lower Criticism*.

This is the technical word descriptive of the criticism which provides a text and a translation. We depend upon scholarship for these. Since very few know Greek and Hebrew, we take our text from scholars, and also their translation. This is the lower or the lowest criticism, and is legitimate, important, and, of course, absolutely essential.

Then, secondly, there is what is called the *Higher Criticism*.

This has to do with the authorship, date, and character of the books; and again it is legitimate, vital, and essential, only it requires to be tested. Let us not call any man master, whether ancient or modern, English or German. Let us simply hold ourselves free to look at these things for ourselves. What is meant is, that we must not merely follow a fashion of scholarship, but test things for ourselves, and get the theory that best fits all the facts.

But there is a third aspect, the *Highest Criticism*.

It is sometimes overlooked. Here it is: "**To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at my word**" (Isaiah 66:2).

This is the criticism of the humble soul.

To the same effect is another text: "**The Word of God is a discerner 'critic' of the thoughts and intents of the heart**" (Hebrews 4:12, Greek).

If the soul of man will allow GOD's Word to criticize it, and if we do a little more "**trembling**" at GOD's Word, this will be the highest criticism, and will provide a criterion that would settle almost everything for us.

The trouble is that people take the lower and the higher criticism, but forget the third, the highest.

Yet, on the other hand, there are numbers of humble souls who know far more of the truth of Scripture than the greatest scholars.

As James Hamilton once said: "A Christian on his knees sees farther than a philosopher on his tiptoes."

When these three are held together there need be no fear about criticism. To appreciate the pictures on stained-glass windows we must go inside a church; and to know the Bible we must go inside, and not judge from the outside. Nor with reason only, but with conscience, and heart, and soul, and will; and when the whole nature responds to the highest criticism, rationalizing critical theories will not be able to do us any serious harm.

4. Inspiration and Spiritual Work - Our view of Inspiration will depend very largely on the use we make of the Bible. If it is employed as a mere reference book our conception of it may be low, but if it is regarded as our daily food and the instrument of our Christian service, our view of it will be correspondingly high.

What does the Bible do for spiritual life and work?

The Bible is spoken of as GOD's seed (Luke 8:11; James 1:21).

- We are born of the Word (I Peter 1:23);
- We grow by the Word (I Peter 2:2);
- We are cleansed by the Word (John 15:3);
- We are sanctified by the Word (John 17:17);
- We are protected by the Word (Ephesians 6:17);
- We are edified by the Word (Acts 20:32);
- We are illuminated by the Word (Psalm 119:105);
- We are converted by the Word (Psalm 19:11);
- We are satisfied with the Word (Psalm 119:103).

Surely a Word that can do all this must have divine power in it. There is a Latin phrase, *solvitur ambulando*, which is equivalent to our proverbial expression, "The proof of the pudding is in the eating."

The Word of GOD in experience is the greatest proof we can have, and if we allow the things now mentioned to become part and parcel of our life, we shall know what the power of GOD's Word means. Then from the work of the Bible in our own souls will come this verification of the Bible in our efforts on behalf of others.

If we wish to verify the Bible, let us go out and win souls for CHRIST - do personal work.

A great number of our problems are theoretical. They come from places where people spin theories absolutely remote from human life. But if we go out into the world and tell a man of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, and get that man to ask, "**What must I do to be saved**" we shall very soon get verification of the Word of GOD; and when we have that, we shall not need much, if any, further testimony to its inspiration.

QUESTIONS

1. Does inspiration always mean the same thing? State and explain several varieties of inspiration found in the Word of GOD. Distinguish between inspiration and revelation.
2. Is all the Bible revealed? Why? Is all the Bible inspired? Why? What is the practical value of this distinction?
3. What was the dictum of Tregelles about difficulties? Are there difficulties in the Bible? Are these to be expected? Explain your answer in the light of the word "revelation."
4. How are the difficulties of the Bible to be classified? Out of what do scientific difficulties in the Bible generally arise?
5. How are historical difficulties to be handled? What proportion of historical statements in the Bible have been found to be defective? How are ethical difficulties to be explained?
6. Describe what is meant by the verifying faculty.
7. What kinds of criticism are there? In what field do the first two kinds labor?
8. What is meant by the "Highest Criticism"?
9. On what will our view of inspiration largely depend?
10. Name seven effects produced by the Word of GOD. How may we with certainty verify the claims of the Bible?

~ end of chapter 10 ~

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