

ILLUSTRATIONS OF BIBLE TRUTH

by

Harry A. Ironside

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CHAPTER TWELVE

~ V - W ~

VERBAL INSPIRATION

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (I Corinthians 2:12-13).

Those who object to the use of the term “verbal inspiration” is applied to the Holy Scriptures, often speak of it contemptuously as the stenographic theory of inspiration, implying thereby that it puts God in the position of a business or literary man dictating to a secretary, who in turn transcribes the exact words the employer has uttered. In opposition to this, they point to the diversities of style among Old and New Testament writers and gather from this that such a theory as verbal inspiration is utterly absurd. They rather believe, if they accept inspiration at all, that God revealed the truth to different individuals and they set it forth in their own language according to the measure of understanding which they had.

Needless to say, this latter view would do away altogether with exactness in divine revelation, and any thinking person who has had experience in dictating to stenographers will realize how readily individual attainments of culture and understanding may be taken into account when using secretarial help.

It has been part of my responsibility for a great many years to dictate literally hundreds and thousands of letters, and also manuscript for many books, pamphlets and periodicals, and I have invariably found that it was important to keep in mind the mentality and education of my secretaries.

I recall how, a number of years ago, I was preparing a book on the epistle to the Philippians. It was coming out serially in a monthly magazine. My publishers wired me that they were out of material and would like more within a few days. I was holding special meetings in a western city at the time and staying in a hotel. Having no other stenographic help at hand, I sought out the public stenographer in the hotel and she agreed to take dictation on a chapter or two of my book.

I gave it to her as I would have done to my own well-taught secretary had she been with me. It was the first time I had ever used one in this capacity who knew absolutely nothing of the Bible, and I did not realize how strange many biblical terms must have seemed to her.

When she brought the manuscript to me it was with difficulty that I could conceal either my mirth or indignation. I was paying her by the hour and the manuscript was almost worthless. I had to go over all of it, making scores of corrections on every page, and then she had to do it all over again and, of course, I paid double for it. In the very beginning I noticed she had entitled the manuscript "Paul's Epistle to the Philippine Islands." Every theological term was misconstrued. "Propitiation" had been changed into "prostration" and other terms were represented by words that could not by any possibility have any reference to the subject in question. This taught me a great lesson. From that time on, when giving dictation, I have always taken into account the capabilities and the knowledge of Scripture of my secretaries.

It is impossible to be too grateful for a secretary who knows the Word of God herself and readily appreciates religious terminology. On the other hand, it is often exasperating when circumstances are different; and yet I have found that by a little care I can generally adapt myself to the understanding of the amanuensis. For instance, it is not necessary to say "propitiation" if the word "atonement" will do instead. I do not have to speak of "sanctification" if I can express the same thought by the words "set apart." And so it would be actually possible for my various secretaries to exhibit a style of their own in the matter which they prepared my dictation!

In a far higher sense than this, may we not think of God accommodating Himself to the intelligence and culture of the writers of sacred Scripture, so that He expresses Himself in one way through a poet like David or Isaiah, and in an altogether different manner through a farmer like Amos, or a fisherman like Simon Peter. Thus you have remarkable diversity in Scripture, coupled with marvelous unity of thought, because "**holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.**"

WASHING OUT THE SCENT

"Some men they follow after" (I Timothy 5:24)

To a Scotsman, the name of Robert, the Bruce, always brings a quickening of the heartstrings as he contemplates the recorded exploits of that heroic personality. I remember well how my young heart was stirred as I read the story of that Scottish chief and liberator. We are told that, on one occasion, Bruce was hiding in a mountain glen from King Edward's soldiers. Suddenly he heard the baying of hounds upon the scent, and he recognized them as his own pack which the English had loosed and set upon their master's trail. Though worn with sleepless nights and foodless days, Bruce struggled to his feet and ran as fast as his weary limbs could carry him, with the hounds hot on his track. Nearer and nearer came the sound of baying, and the royal fugitive was almost in despair when he suddenly heard the trickling of a mountain rill.

He hastened on and leaped into the stream and down through the waters he sped. Soon he heard the hounds at the brookside. They were barking excitedly as they ran hither and thither, unable to find the scent. Bruce successfully eluded his enemies because the running water made it impossible for the hounds to follow any further.

Surely this is a picture of the Gospel. There is but one way by which any man can escape the judgment of God. That is to plunge into the stream that flows from Calvary's hill, where our blessed Lord made peace by the blood of His Cross. Divine wrath will never reach you there. All sin-stains are washed away and **“there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”** It was Bruce's own hounds that were tracking him down. Our own sins follow after us, calling for judgment, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, **“cleanseth us from all sin.”**

WHO CAN PAY?

“When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both” (Luke 7:42).

Years ago, Nicholas, the First, Czar of Russia, was occasionally in the habit of throwing aside the garb of royalty, attiring himself in the uniform of a lower officer, and going about to find out how things were going with his soldiers.

On one occasion he had a favorite, a young man, the son of an intimate friend of his, to whom he had given a position in a border fortress in charge of the money used for paying off the soldiers. This young man fell into bad habits; he took to gambling, and by and by, led on and on by the will-o'-the-wisp that lures the gambler to his doom, had gambled away all his own wealth and then had taken from the government funds entrusted to him. He had taken just a few rubles at a time and had no idea of the amount abstracted.

He received notice that on the following day, an official was coming from the court to examine the records and to count the money he had on hand. He felt he never could face the exposure of that day and so the night before, closed his door and sat there with his books before him. He opened the safe, took out the pitifully small amount of money, counted it carefully, jotted down the amount on a sheet of paper, made notes of the various puculations that he had abstracted, and when he had added it, he sat looking at it, and finally wrote under the figures, “A great debt; who can pay?”

He knew it was impossible for him ever to settle; looking at the small amount of money, he thought, “What a failure I have been!” He made up his mind that he would not live to face the disgrace of the morrow; he would blow his brains out as the clock struck twelve that night and leave all the papers so that the agent would understand all that had happened. As he sat there reflecting upon the way he had thrown away his opportunity, suddenly he felt himself overpowered with drowsiness and in spite of the horror of his situation, went off to sleep.

It so happened that night, the Czar Nicholas, attired as a lower officer of the guard, entered the gate of that fortress by giving the proper password, and moved down through the halls.

Every light should have been out according to regulations but as he came down the main hall, he saw the light shining under a door. He went up to the door and listened but there was not a sound. He tried the knob, the door opened; he looked inside and saw the sleeping officer and then the money and the open safe, the papers, the books, and he wondered what it meant. He tiptoed in and stood behind the man, and looking over his shoulder read the paper before him. The whole thing became clear in a moment. The young man had been stealing systematically for months.

The Czar's first thought was to put his hand on his shoulder and tell him that he was under arrest. The next moment his heart went out to him in compassion; he remembered his boyhood; he remembered the father; how broken hearted he would be if the son should be arrested! Then he happened to see that pitiful question, "A great debt; who can pay?" Moved by generous impulse, he reached over, picked up the pen that had fallen from the hand of the sleeping man, wrote just one word under that line, tiptoed out, and closed the door.

For an hour or so the man slept, then, wakened suddenly, he saw it was long past midnight. He sprang to his feet and picked up his revolver, put it to his forehead, and was just about to pull the trigger when his eye caught sight of that one word on the sheet of paper which he knew was not there when he went to sleep. It was the name, "Nicholas."

Dropping his gun, he said, "Can it be?" He went to one of his files and got hold of some documents that had the genuine signature of the Czar and compared them with the one word written under the line, "A great debt; who can pay?" It was the real signature of the Czar and he said, "The Czar has been here tonight, he knows all my guilt and yet he has undertaken to pay my debt, I need not die."

And so instead of taking his life, he rested upon the word of the Czar as indicated by that name written upon the paper, and he was not surprised when, early the next morning, a messenger came from the royal palace bringing a sack of gold which he counted and found to be exactly the amount of the missing money. He placed it in the safe and when the inspector came and went over the books, everything was found to be all right. Nicholas had paid in full.

In it only a human illustration but it pictures what the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

"Jesus paid all my debt
Oh, wondrous love;
Widest extreme He met,
Oh, wondrous love.
Justice is satisfied,
God now is glorified,
Heaven's gate thrown open wide,
Oh, wondrous love."

One word spoke peace to that man's heart, "Nicholas." One word has spoken peace to my heart, the name, "Jesus." For through Him and His work upon the cross satisfaction has been made for all my sins. And for you, there is the same salvation, the same absolution, the same pardon, the same forgiveness, for God,

“Hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (II Corinthians 5:21).

WHY THE TRAIN WAS WRECKED

“It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul” (Leviticus 17:11).

Some years ago a fearful railroad wreck took a dreadful toll of life and limb in an eastern state. A train, loaded with young people returning from school, was stalled on a suburban track because of what is known as a “hot-box.” The Limited was soon due, but a flagman was sent back to warn the engineer in order to avert a rear-end collision. Thinking all was well, the crowd laughed and chatted while the train-hands worked on in fancied security. Suddenly the whistle of the Limited was heard and on came the heavy train and crashed into the local, with horrible effect.

The engineer of the Limited saved his own life by jumping, and some days afterwards was hailed into court to account for his part in the calamity. And now a curious discrepancy in testimony occurred. He was asked, “Did you not see the flagman warning you to stop?”

He replied, “I saw him, but he waved a yellow flag, and I took it for granted all was well, and so went on, though slowing down.”

The flagman was called, “What flag did you wave?”

“A red flag, but he went by me like a shot.”

“Are you sure it was red?”

“Absolutely.”

Both insisted on the correctness of their testimony, and it was demonstrated that neither was color-blind. Finally the man was asked to produce the flag itself as evidence. After some delay he was able to do so, and then the mystery was explained. It had been red, but it had been exposed to the weather so long that all the red was bleached out, and it was but a dirty yellow!

Oh, the lives eternally wrecked by the yellow gospels of the day – the bloodless theories of unregenerate men that send their hearers to their doom instead of stopping them on their downward road!

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