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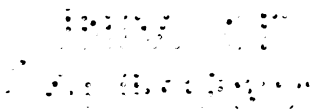
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## THE TESTIMONY OF THE APOSTLES TO INSPIRATION.

T. C. JOHNSON.

THE Apostles have given us no special treatise on the subject of inspiration, but they have not failed to leave on record a number of clear and direct statements regarding it, while many things in their writings are assumptive of a definite position on the subject. Their evident uprightness of character, consistency with themselves, loftiness of aim, honesty of purpose, and independence of each other, give the highest value to their testimony. It is incredible, under the circumstances, that they should all claim inspiration for themselves and each other, did they not possess it. And if they were inspired, their testimony as to the Old Testament Scriptures must be accepted. We shall consider *first*, what they testify as to the *fact* of inspiration; *second*, as to its extent; and *third*, as to its nature.

### I.—AS TO THE FACT OF INSPIRATION.

The Apostles testify that the Scriptures are given by inspiration of God. According to their evidence, we have a Bible that was given us under the special guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit.

First. *They testify that the Spirit was promised and given them in such a way as to make them authoritative teachers.* John affirms that Jesus promised them this "other comforter," who should bring all things to their remembrance that he had taught them, should guide them into all the truth, and show them things to come. Peter,

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as reported by Luke, testifies that the Pentecostal experience was an actual reception of the Holy Ghost, whereby they were endued with power, and spoke and acted as they were moved. In all the testimony as to the gift of the Spirit, it is positively implied, that it would at least enable the Apostles to become infallible teachers of the truth. It was not intended to render them infallible as men. When they taught orally or in writing, it was their privilege and their bounden duty to do so under the direction and guidance of the Holy Spirit. They would naturally be most careful in what they committed to writing, and pen no word that was not prompted and approved by the Spirit. Thus, we are authorized to expect inspired Scriptures from teachers who enjoyed the special gift of the Holy Ghost.

Second. *The Apostles claim inspiration for their own personal writings.* This is true of them all, if we may regard an evident assumption as a claim. It seems that the Apostles are either directly or indirectly the human authors of the whole New Testament. Now, they invariably write with the authority and assurance of infallible teachers. They never theorize, or express mere opinions. They assert facts, proclaim doctrines, and give commandments that could only proceed from the Holy Spirit, or else expose them to the charge of being mere dogmatists, if not positive blasphemers. Like their Master, they teach as those having authority, and not as the scribes.

Paul and Peter evidently mean to give more directly the force of inspired authority to their epistles, by writing expressly in the character of Apostles of Jesus Christ. To write as an Apostle, was to write with authority; and to write with authority was to write under the guidance of the Spirit. To add force to this truth, we find Paul signing his name with his own hand as a token in every epistle (2 Thes. iii. 17). This would seem to imply that

unauthorized and erroneous epistles were being written to the churches, to which 2 Thes. ii. 2, 3, may refer. "Nor yet be troubled . . . by epistle *as from us*, as that the day of the Lord is now present: let no man beguile you in any wise." Paul was recognized as the true teacher and prophet, and his own name, written in his own hand, was the token both of the genuineness and inspiration of his epistles. In some instances we find the Apostles boldly asserting the truthfulness and perfection of what they have written, which, under the circumstances, would be the highest presumption and folly if they were not conscious of their own inspiration. John, at the close of his gospel, says, referring to himself: "This is the disciple which beareth witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true" (Jno. xxi. 24). How could he *know* that the sublime statements in the very first verses of his gospel were true, if he had not penned them under the guidance of the Spirit; and that his record of the Saviour's most wonderful and mysterious teachings were accurate, if the Spirit had not brought these things to his remembrance? At the end of the Revelation he pronounces a most fearful anathema on any person who should add to or subtract from the words of that wonderful book which had almost wholly to do with the future. Could there be a stronger claim to its infallibility or inspiration?

Paul says, as to the directions he gives in the First Epistle to the Corinthians: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. xiv. 37). And in his Epistle to the Galatians he wishes it understood at the beginning, that he writes by direct, divine authority, and he pronounces the curse of God upon any man who should preach a different Gospel from that which he had preached, which

in this epistle he restates in detail. He must believe or know himself to write as instructed and moved by the Holy Ghost. But this Apostle's testimony is still more direct in 1 Cor., second chapter. He there shows that the subject-matter of apostolic teaching is something the natural man can neither understand nor teach. "But unto us," he says (ver. 10-13), "God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. . . . That we might know the things that are freely given to us by God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth." Here Paul plainly declares that the Holy Spirit is the author of the truth he teaches, and that it is under His guidance that he proclaims it whether orally or in writing.

In the seventh chapter, verse 25, the Apostle says: "Now, concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; but I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful." Also in verse 40, speaking of a widow in the "present distress," previously referred to, he says: "But she is happier, if she abide as she is, after my judgment, and I think that I also have the Spirit of God." These passages show: *First*, that the epistle, as a whole, consists of doctrines, commandments, etc., received directly from the Lord by revelation. *Second*, that the directions referred to in these passages are from his own judgment; but, *third*, that he *thinks* or *believes* himself to be giving them under the guidance of the Spirit. This modest claim to inspiration where he gives his judgment, does, in reality, emphasize the full inspiration of all his epistles.\*

The term, "*think*," in the last passage above, does not imply a doubt in the Apostle's mind. The original word, *dokeo*, is ordinarily used as a modest and courteous way of expressing a strong conviction. So Paul writes and teaches

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\* Compare Dr. Brookes' Paper on this subject, p. 159.—ED.

as one who has the Spirit of God, and has obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.

Third. *The Apostles bear testimony to the inspiration of each other.* This they do in recognizing each other as of equal authority in their works and teaching, and classing the apostolic college with the prophets as the foundation upon which the Church is built, Jesus Christ being the chief corner-stone. But Peter bears direct testimony to the inspiration of Paul's epistles. In his Second Epistle, iii. 15, 16, he says: "Account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." Here, *first*, Peter classes *all* Paul's epistles with "*the other Scriptures*," referring, doubtless, to the Old Testament, and probably, also, to other apostolic writings. *Second*, he states that Paul wrote according to the *wisdom given* to him. This most evidently refers to supernatural wisdom. *Third*, he states that there are some things in these epistles "hard to be understood," which is not a reflection on Paul's perspicuity, but a recognition of the supernatural nature of the teaching. *Fourth*, he states that certain persons wrest them to their own destruction. Such could not be the case were the epistles not inspired by the Holy Ghost. This testimony is conclusive as to Paul's epistles, which make up such a large portion of the New Testament. And it might be noted that in that little word "also,"—"Our beloved brother Paul *also* wrote,"—Peter suggests that his own and other apostolic writings come under the same head. Thus, inasmuch as all the New Testament was written by the Apostles or under their direction, we have their own very clear testimony to the inspiration of this portion of our Bible.

Fourth. *The Apostles testify to the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures.* Their Old Testament was certainly identical with ours. Wherever they use the term Scripture or Scriptures, they refer to this collection of writings.

*First.* They refer to them as "the *Holy Scriptures*," which points to God as their author. Also their human authors are spoken of as holy men, which would indicate that in addition to being upright in character, they were under the special influence of the Holy Spirit.

*Second.* The Apostles refer to them and quote them in such a way as to assert their infallibility. There was an end of all controversy when they could say "*it is written.*" "What saith the Scriptures?" was Paul's ultimate appeal, and the strongest argument for the truth of the Gospel was that its great facts were "according to the Scriptures." They make their quotations from all parts of the Old Testament, and refer them to the Holy Spirit and to their human authors interchangeably. Quite frequently the Holy Spirit is referred to as the principal, while the human author is not mentioned at all, or is mentioned as the agent or organ through which the Spirit speaks.

*Third.* They positively assert their inspiration. Peter testifies that "no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." This at least asserts the inspiration of the Old Testament as a whole, since the prophetic element is the very soul and substance of it. And Paul says (Rom. xv. 4) that "*Whatsoever* things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope." They were all written for the use of the Church, and no one but the "Spirit of the prophets" was competent to guide in their writing. Also the familiar passage in 2 Tim. iii.



15-17, declares to Timothy, as in the new version, that "from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." Here the *sacred writings* are evidently all the Old Testament Scriptures and the "every Scripture inspired of God" is certainly no less comprehensive, while it would also include the apostolic writings. The Apostles, like ourselves, applied the term "Scripture" to none but the sacred writings, and they nowhere speak of any Scripture as uninspired, and there is no reason for supposing that Paul implies such a thing in the passage above. But this point will come up again.

Thus we have the testimony of the Apostles to the *fact* that the Bible as we have it is inspired. We come now to their evidence as to the extent of this inspiration.

## II.—THE EXTENT OF INSPIRATION.

Some regard certain books and parts of books as inspired and others as not. Others hold that while the Bible as a whole is inspired, it nevertheless contains more or less matter erroneous or otherwise for which the Holy Spirit is not responsible. Some also contend that while the Spirit guided in the selection of matter, the authors were left to themselves in choice of words and sentences through which to communicate it. But the testimony of the Apostles is—

*First.* That inspiration attaches to all the books in all their parts. This appears in the testimony already produced. There is nothing in all they say that would cast a suspicion on any book or any part of a book. To them it

was all "Holy Scripture." Of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament they quote or refer to all but five, namely, Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Song of Solomon, and Obadiah. When we remember that they were not quoting to prove inspiration, nor even to show that they recognized it, this wide range of quotations is remarkable, and demonstrates their settled belief in the full inspiration of all the books. Those they omit to quote represent the historical, prophetic, and poetical portions, proving that no class of writings was especially slighted.

*Second.* That inspiration attaches to each and every thought and expression contained in the Bible as originally given. This means that whatever was written down, even to the smallest details, was in accordance with the will and direction of the Holy Spirit. So that the writers put in nothing that was erroneous, nothing that was irrelative, and nothing that was unprofitable. Each expression had an object which the Holy Spirit wished to conserve. Thus, John testifies that not a word could be added to or taken from his book of Revelation without God's severest displeasure. Peter does not intimate that the "some things hard to be understood," written by Paul, might be erroneous theories of his own, and need give no one any trouble. He clearly implies that he wrote nothing except what the Spirit moved him to write. Paul declares, in a passage noticed above, that "every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable," etc. In the margin of the New Version is the reading: "Every Scripture is inspired of God, and profitable," etc. This translation of "*pasa graphe*"—every Scripture—is undoubtedly the correct one, and must embrace every sentence of all Scripture. According to the marginal rendering, we have Paul's testimony clear and indisputable to the inspiration of everything in detail that the sacred writers penned. According to the rendering in the text, there may be two

interpretations. One is, that every Scripture *that is inspired* is also profitable. The other, every Scripture, *since it is inspired*, is also profitable. The marginal reading, the context, and the general tenor of Scripture, would certainly favor the latter interpretation. The Apostle commends Timothy for his familiarity with the Scriptures, which, being known by him in every part, would make him *wise* unto salvation, and thoroughly furnish him unto every good work. And what he really says in this text is, that every Scripture is profitable, because inspired of God. In the expression, "sacred writings," he refers to what Timothy knew, as a whole. In the "every Scripture inspired of God," he advances to what Timothy knew in detail. The "sacred writings" are the Old Testament, "every Scripture" of which, being inspired of God, is profitable.

The Apostles surely assume this truth in all their quotations. The only evidence needed for the divine authority of a passage of Scripture was, that "it is written." The only criterion for the selection of a passage was, that it was applicable to the point in hand.

*Third.* Their testimony is, that inspiration attaches to the very words of Scripture. That is, that the Holy Spirit "moved" the writers, not only in the selection and production of thought, but also in the choice of language for its expression. This they assume when they quote and insist on particular words as divine authority for a doctrine or statement. Thus, in Galatians, iii. 16, Paul argues that the promise to Abraham and his seed, had reference to Christ, because the term, *seed*, as of one, and not *seeds*, as of many, was used. The Holy Spirit had clothed the thought with its proper word.

It is true they often vary from the original in their quotations. But they vary under the guidance of the Spirit, who, of course, is not always confined to a particu-

lar word or sentence for the expression of a particular thought.

But Paul clearly testifies to verbal inspiration in 1 Cor. ii. 13. "Which things," he says, the things revealed and taught by the Spirit, "which things, also, we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." There it is, plainly. The Spirit taught the words to be used. There are different translations of the last clause of the verse, but the meaning is evidently that of appropriately clothing thought given by the Spirit in words given by the Spirit. John, also, in warning against addition to or subtraction from the Revelation, makes his warning apply to the very words. None must be added. None must be taken away. None must be changed, for that would be taking away some and adding others. Why such warning, if the very words were not divine?

### III.—THE NATURE OF INSPIRATION.

We consider, finally and briefly, the testimony of the Apostles as to the nature of inspiration. Some would make the Biblical writers mere machines in the hands of the Spirit, while others would define inspiration simply as spiritual illumination. But so far as the Apostles throw any light upon this subject, they show, *first*, that while the writers were controlled by the Spirit, they at the same time used their own faculties in the communication of truth. Thus, Paul claims to use his judgment in giving directions and advice to the Corinthian Christians, while at the same time he claims to be guided by the Spirit. According to Peter, the "will of man" was held in abeyance, while "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." The original word for "moved" is *phero*, "to bear." The writers were *borne along* in their work by the Spirit. The Spirit's will, instead of their own, pre-

sided over their faculties. It was the men who spake—using their own faculties, their own style, their own tongue, and even their own vocabulary; but they spake as moved, not by their own will or reason, but by the Holy Spirit.

This same testimony also shows, in the *second place*, that inspiration is much more than spiritual illumination. This latter would not exclude the “will of man.” It might enable him to understand and speak the truth with fluency and power, but he would speak as elevated and influenced by the Holy Spirit, but not as moved thereby in such a way that the Spirit would be responsible for all that he should say.

The wisdom with which Paul wrote, according to his own testimony and that of Peter, was a wisdom not of this world; not even human wisdom illuminated. It was the wisdom of the Spirit that enabled him to write things future, things supernatural, and things perfectly adapted to human needs.

Still another point, in the *third place*, stands out clear enough in this testimony. It is that the *fundamental* idea in inspiration is that men were rendered infallible in the *communication* of matter, whether of truth revealed, truth discovered, sins and follies of devils and men, mere personal matters between the writers and others, or what not. They recognize the vast difference between receiving, whether by revelation or otherwise, and communicating to others. Men *spake* as they were moved. Paul *wrote* according to the wisdom given him. The things which he *wrote* were the commandments of God. They all *spake* or *wrote* as the Spirit gave them *utterance*. In many cases the inspiration embraces the receiving, but in every case it attaches to the communicating. Herein is the very soul of the great doctrine, as shown by all the apostolic testimony. This thought in

connection with the nature of inspiration also emphasizes the truth of verbal inspiration. To give up *verbal* inspiration would indeed be to give up the very soul of the doctrine. The Apostles clearly teach that the Holy Spirit has so inspired men as to make their *writings* His own.

We are left in the dark as to the exact method of the Spirit's operation on the mind in His work of inspiration. But it is sufficient for us that the apostolic testimony falls in with all other in assuring us a Bible that is without any mixture of error, and is for us a perfect rule of faith and practice.

We have said that in the very nature of the case this testimony of the Apostles is of the very highest value. Paul and Peter and John have been examined as the chief witnesses. If modern critics would look upon the two latter as unlearned men, not capable of taking a critical view of the subject, they certainly cannot so look upon Paul. Though they regard the human intellect of Jesus as untrained and unscientific, yet they cannot deny to Paul, both morally and intellectually, the ability to cope with any of them in the search after truth. He is their equal at least in social standing, in intellectual power, in mental training, in the love of truth, and in critical insight. He was a master in Roman law and learning. He had studied the Greek poets and was versed in her philosophy, and he certainly knew as much about the character and genius of the Hebrew language, which to him was a living tongue, as those in our day who pride themselves on being experts in the "higher criticism." Men talk about the light of the nineteenth century, as if wisdom had never entered the world before its dawn. There are many things which the world knows now that Paul was ignorant of; but upon a thousand things, and especially upon the subject in hand, he was by far more

competent to sit in judgment than any scientific or philological expert of the present day.

We listen to the jargon of biblical criticism of to-day that comes from the giant intellects on both sides of the waters. We admire the learning and research and respect the honesty of many of them; while we are left in utter confusion as to just how much Scripture we have, or whether indeed we have any or not. From these we turn to the great Apostle to the Greeks and Romans. In breadth of intellect, in sweep of vision, in consecration to the truth, and in originality of research, he is more than a match for all of them. While he speaks from the vantage-ground of a nearer and clearer view, and of a much "higher criticism" than any of their most able exponents, whose testimony shall we receive? For my own part, I would not exchange an uninspired opinion of the Apostle Paul on the things concerning the kingdom of Christ for the mature and unanimous verdict of all these modern critics combined. What the Apostle gives us is reasonable, clear, and convincing, and provides us with a sure foundation on which to stand. He seals to us the "faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance," that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." And while he and the other Apostles bear their perpetual testimony down through the ages, there comes also the ever-living, never-changing voice from above, "*These* are my witnesses, hear ye them."