

# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible*

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

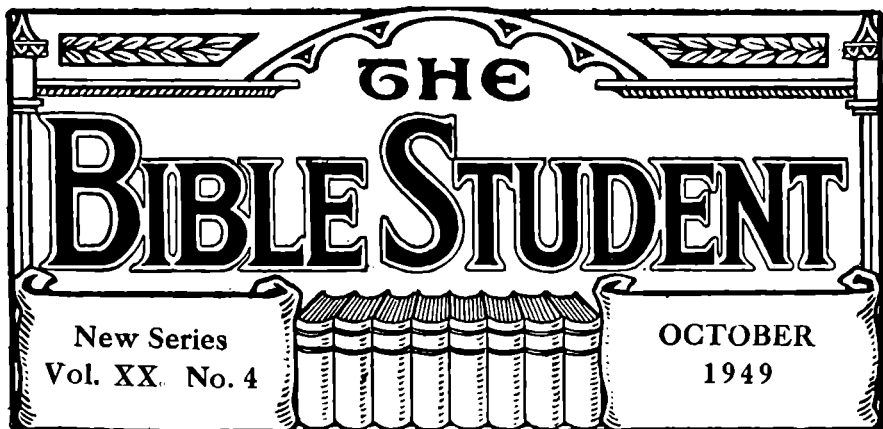
[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_bible-student\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php)



*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

---

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE DUAL TITLES OF JESUS CHRIST	145
CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS	152
THE SECOND ADVENT	157
THE DIVINE PURPOSE IN THE LORD'S PRAYER	163
NOTES ON HEBREWS	170
THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE	178
THE WITNESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO THE OLD TESTAMENT	186

---

*Editor:* A. McDONALD REDWOOD

# THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE\*

BY CLARENCE E. MACARTNEY, D.D.

II Timothy 3:16—“*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God.*”

II Peter 1:21—“*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*”

If God chose to reveal truth to man for his guidance and salvation, it is altogether reasonable to suppose that He would have taken steps to secure a trustworthy account of that revelation. Since God is Almighty, He could have repeated and renewed what He had revealed by a new revelation for each succeeding generation. But since God works through human instrumentalities, the method of giving a revelation and then securing its infallible record is more natural and just as effective.

*By a revelation we mean the truth communicated to man by God.* In popular language, inspiration is often made to mean the same thing as revelation. But in our present discussion *we shall think of inspiration as the means which God took to secure for the instruction of mankind a record altogether trustworthy of what He had spoken or what He had done.* In some cases one and the same person received the revelation, *and also the inspiration to speak or write what was revealed.* This was true of Moses, who received the law from God and also recorded it, and of John, who had a revelation on Patmos and wrote the record of it, and, to a certain degree of St. Paul, who says he received his Gospel by a revelation and taught that revelation by words, not of man, but given him by the Holy Spirit.

*That the Bible is true and credible, that the great acts and words of God therein recorded are true, this is a foundation belief of the Christian religion. Ultimately, Christianity stands or falls with the truth or falsehood of the Bible.* But we must be careful when we say that the doctrine of the *way* in which God secured a record of His revelation is a fundamental belief. For example, *Christianity was established as a working, redeeming, and historic fact*

\* This and the following article deals with the common theme, the divine character of Holy Scripture. The subject continues to hold, of necessity, a foremost place in all critical investigation of the Bible, and is, therefore, of supreme importance to every Bible student. The writers of the respective articles held an acknowledged position as Bible expositors and teachers, the former in U.S.A., and the latter in Great Britain. These two short articles, therefore, give us a presentation, from different standpoints, of the meaning of Inspiration which is worth close study. No student can afford to have hazy ideas on the divine Inspiration of the Word of God.

*in the world for many years before the record of the beginning of the Church and the spread of the Gospel was recorded in the New Testament.* That which came first cannot be said to depend upon that which came afterwards. This is well put by Drs. Hodge and Warfield when they say: "Nor should we ever allow it to be believed that the truth of Christianity depends upon any doctrine of inspiration whatever. Revelation came in large part before the record of it, and the Christian Church before the New Testament Scriptures. Christianity would be true and divine, and being so would stand, even if God had *not* pleased to give in addition to His revelation of saving truths an infallible record of that revelation, absolutely errorless, by means of inspiration." After the same manner Dr. Francis L. Patton in his *Inspiration of the Scriptures*, says: "It is proper for us to bear in mind the immense argumentative advantage which Christianity has aside altogether from the inspiration of the documents on which it rests: If on simple historical testimony it can be proved that Jesus wrought miracles uttered prophecies, and proclaimed His divinity—if it can be shown that He was crucified to redeem sinners, that He rose again from the dead, and that He made the destiny of men to hinge on their acceptance of Him as their Saviour—then, whether the records which contain these truths be inspired or not, woe unto him who neglects so great a salvation."

It will be clear from a reading of the Bible that there must have been *some difference in the kinds of inspiration to which the writers were subjected.* A very good classification has been suggested as follows:—Superintendence, Elevation and Suggestion. By *Superintendence* we mean a divine guidance in the narration of facts and a guidance in the selection of the facts to be related. As an actor himself in stirring scenes of the Exodus, Moses did not need a divine revelation when he came to write down those great events. Neither did St. Luke, as an actor in any of the scenes of Paul's life, such as his shipwreck, require a revelation when he came to narrate those events. All that they needed was divine superintendence and guidance, invigorating mind and memory. As we saw in our study of the divine origin of the Bible, one of the most remarkable things about the book is its omissions. John says, speaking with rhetorical license, that the world itself would not contain the books, if an attempt were made to write down everything Christ said and did. The problem of selection is the first problem of a writer or a speaker, and the

success of his book or his speech depends to a great degree upon how that problem is solved. The marvel is the way in which the writers of the Four Gospels solved the problem. How much is left untold, and yet how complete and satisfying are the things which are told.

*A second kind of inspiration is Elevation.* There are parts of the Bible which contain no narration of past events, no prediction of future events, no declaration of the way of salvation, but in which there is beautiful and sublime expression of moral and spiritual truth. The difference between the production of the highest human genius and the sayings, for example, of Job, or the Book of Psalms, or some of the prophets, can be accounted for only by the belief that the sublime elevation of thought and utterance in the Bible on these moral and spiritual themes is the effect of the Holy Spirit, working on the minds of the authors.

*A third, and the highest kind of inspiration, is Suggestion.* It is obvious that the predictions of the Bible must have been suggested to the mind of the prophets by God. No man, however trained, guided, or elevated in mind, can unlock the door of tomorrow. This is true, also, of the distinctive Christian doctrines, such as God, the Person of Christ, the Trinity, and the Atonement. Then, there are passages where the writer ascribes motives to men and assigns reasons for the divine acts. How, for example, could Moses have known how Pharaoh felt when he heard of the escape of Israel?—(Exodus 14:5). Or how did the chronicler know that Saul died in battle for the transgressions which he had committed against the Lord? (I Chronicles 10:13). Matthew records of the woman with the issue healed by Christ, that she said within herself, "If I may but touch His garment I shall be whole." How did Matthew know what the woman thought or what was in her heart? These passages must be sheer imagination or baseless forgeries, unless they contain the record of a divine suggestion and communication.

#### The Claims of the Old Testament to Inspiration

Large portions of the Old Testament are prefaced by such statements as, "Thus saith the Lord," or "God said," or similar utterances. One has counted as many as twenty-four hundred passages in which divine authorship, guidance or superintendence is claimed. There are thirteen hundred such passages in the Prophets alone. There can be no question that these passages, at least, claim to be the result of inspiration.

The New Testament refers to the Old Testament as the Scriptures fifty-nine times, and always in a manner which implies the inspiration, and, therefore, the complete authority of the Old Testament Scriptures. Paul said, "Every Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and Peter, that "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The author of the Letter to the Hebrews commences by saying that God at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets. Indeed, in some places the word "Scripture" is substituted for God, when reference is made to the Old Testament; for example, the passage in Romans 9:17 where it is written, "The Scriptures said to Pharaoh."

*The testimony of Jesus to the authority and inspiration of the Old Testament cannot be questioned.* In His encounter with the Devil He fell back upon the book of Deuteronomy, saying three times, "It is written." When He was asked about marriage and divorce, He said, "Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female?" His whole argument is based upon the truth and authority of the Book of Genesis. Repeatedly, He refers to some event in His life as taking place because the Scriptures must be fulfilled. But why must the Scriptures be fulfilled? Only because they were regarded as the Word of God. When He spake with His disciples after His resurrection, He reminded them how He had told them that all things written in the Old Testament concerning Him must be fulfilled. And to the two with whom He talked on the way to Emmaus, He said, "Oh fools and slow of heart, to believe all that the prophets have spoken." He said to the Scribes and Pharisees that David in the 110th Psalm called Him, "Lord," by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. When the Jews rebuked Him and were ready to stone Him, because He made Himself equal with God, Christ, arguing from the less to the greater, quoted the 82nd Psalm, saying, "If ye call them gods unto whom the Word of God came, say ye of Him Whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" The argument here is that if God could apply the term "gods" to human judges and rulers, then certainly Christ, who was sent and sanctified of God, could call Himself the Son of God. The bearing that this has on the inspiration of the Old Testament is the parenthetical clause which Christ introduces in the midst of His citation of the

Psalm, and in which He says, "And the Scriptures cannot be broken." This shows very clearly His thought of the inspiration of the Old Testament. In another place Christ bases His argument upon the use by the Old Testament of a single word, a verb in the present tense, He had been asked about the resurrection of the dead. His answer was, "Have ye not read that which was spoken of you by God, saying 'I am' the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." God is not the God of the dead, but of the living (Matthew 31:32). Three things about which the Jews were very jealous were the Temple, the Sabbath and the Scriptures. They charged Christ with disloyal sayings concerning the Temple and the Sabbath, but never once did they find fault with Christ for His views concerning the Old Testament.

#### The Claims of the New Testament to Inspiration

Here it must be admitted the situation is a little different from that which obtains in the Old Testament. The writers of the Four Gospels, for example, do not explicitly claim divine inspiration. Luke commences by telling of his researches and his original sources, after the fashion of any careful historian. The only book which directly claims inspiration for itself, and for the whole of it is the Book of Revelation.

If God took pains to secure by inspiration an errorless record of His revelation in Old Testament times, it is *certainly reasonable to think* that He would have taken equal pains to secure by inspiration *an errorless account of the establishment of the Christian Church*. As the years passed by, and one by one the contemporaries of Jesus disappeared, the great advantage of a written, as well as an oral prediction, would be clearly seen. Take the case of St. John. His Gospel is composed for the greater part of long discourses by Jesus, such as his argument with the Jewish rulers and his beautiful farewell address to the disciples. John wrote this Gospel, it is generally agreed, towards the close of the first century, and when he was now a very old man. To say that he remembered verbatim, or even as to the sequence of thought, these wonderful discourses of Jesus which he so carefully records, would mean that a great miracle had been wrought. But if God provided for the recording of these words of Jesus by inspiration, we can see how it was possible. Indeed, this was distinctly promised to the disciples by Christ in His last address, where he says,

“The Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you.”

*St. Paul declares that the Gospel* which he preached to the Galatians, the same which he preached everywhere, *came to him by a revelation of Jesus Christ* (Galatians 1:12), and that in teaching it he had the help of the Holy Spirit, for he says, “Which thing also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth.” In one of his letters, Peter seems to recognise the Epistles of Paul as equal in authority with the Old Testament Scriptures, for he speaks of how the unlearned and the unstable wrest the writing of Paul, as they do also the the other Scriptures—(II Peter 3:15). Christ undoubtedly predicted, and provided for, the inspiration of His apostles. He said, the Holy Spirit would tell them what to say and would guide them into all truth. If it be objected that these sayings of Jesus predict inspiration for the apostles in their oral utterances only, it may be answered that if they were inspired of God when they spoke in court, or in prison, or in preaching to the people, surely they would have a like gift when they came to write the records which were to be the guide for Christians and for the Church in all succeeding generations.

*The general claim of the Church has been that the original documents, that is, the autographs, were inspired of God so as to be free of error. No one claims that the many copies and translations have had no error in them.* Therefore some will ask, What advantage is it to claim errorless inspiration for the autographs of the New Testament, if you cannot claim the same for the present text? The answer is that there is great difference between a Bible which goes back to an errorless autograph, and one which has come down from an autograph which was itself imperfect and incorrect. There are in existence some 800,000 various readings, that is, readings which differ one from the other. But it has been said that of these, seven hundred and ninety-five thousand differ in matters about as important as whether we shall spell honour with a “u” or without it, or how we shall pronounce “either.” There will always be a mystery about the combination of the Holy Spirit’s influence and the natural faculties of the man who writes. All we can be sure of is it was *no mere mechanical dictation*, such as would make the writers, not even the penman, but the pens of the Holy Spirit. If that had been so,



then Peter and John both say that they testify of the things which they themselves have heard and seen. The Holy Spirit was working through their own impressions and their own recollections. *Inspiration did not destroy the human element in the Bible*—"Where the prophet has been of the priestly race, the temple, the altar, the ark and the cherubim float before his view, as in the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The shepherd Amos still wanders in the pastures. His imagination still lingers with the flocks and dwells on the culture of his fields. His similitudes are taken from the mildew which blights the vineyard or the lion which invades the fold."

*It will not do to say that some of the sayings of the Bible were inspired and others are not*, for it would take nothing short of a revelation itself to enable man to distinguish between the inspired and the uninspired portions. When we say that the whole Bible is inspired, we are not saying that the whole Bible is a revelation. The Bible contains many sayings which are contrary to sound morality and to God's revelation. When we say that these parts of the Bible are inspired, what we mean is that they are *recorded without an error*. It is strange that even a fine mind like that of Coleridge should have rejected the doctrine of the complete inspiration of the Bible on the ground that there are many things said in the Book of Job which are contrary to true religion and morality. No one doubts that. But no sensible man claims that these sayings are a revelation, but that they are *recorded* by inspiration.

Perhaps the most striking witness to the inspiration of the Bible, as well as to its divine origin, is the well-known fact that the Bible read and preached as the Word of God possesses great power. It is a sword piercing to the dividing asunder of joints and marrow. It is the fire that burns and consumes. It is the hammer which breaks the rock. But the Bible has never shown this power in the hands of those who could not say of it, "Thus saith the Lord." Even the most ardent advocates and exponents of naturalistic views of the Bible begin to be alarmed. One writes, "*Liberal Protestants have lost their Bible, and in losing it they have lost their religion.*" And another, "*Materialistic science and biblical criticism have brought multitudes to the brink of despair.*" Taught and preached as a merely human composition, or as a book half inspired and half uninspired, or as a book true in some things, but incorrect in other things, the Bible

has not a feather's weight of influence. But where it is received as the Word of God, there and there only, as Christ said, are the Scriptures able to make us wise unto salvation. In all our discussions we must remember that to do that, to make men wise unto salvation, is the grand object of the Bible. The Bible was given to man in order that he might have eternal life through Jesus Christ. What St. John said at the close of his Gospel is true of every part of the Bible. "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing ye might have life through His name." "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life."

---

**"GOD CREATED" (Gen. 1: 1)**

To create is to PROTECT.

To protect is to REDEEM.

To redeem is to PRIZE.

To prize is to COMPLETE.

To complete is to GLORIFY.

*"In the Beginning."* The remotest date that has ever been suggested. Science has its slow-rising and slow-falling centuries, yet "the Beginning"—the dateless date—includes them all and drowns them in a deeper sea. On that ocean millenniums are tufts of foam.

*"God."* Personality, Will, Thought, Purpose: an undefined Definition—matching the un-beginning Beginning—an impersonal Personality—the shapeless Shape. God! He enters His own Book instantaneously. He comes not as a spectacle, but in the very glory and supreme purpose of action.

*"Created."* A Process; slow, quick, deliberate, infinite—before all speech, therefore baffling it; before all form, therefore without comparison—the beginning of Action, therefore without parallel.—*Joseph Parker.*

---

**MY PRAYER**

Be Thou my Arm each morning: this I plead;  
 Be my Defence, O Lord, in all my need;  
 From dawn till darkness this shall make me free,  
 To walk in all the light of God with Thee.