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Doctrinal Theology.

BIBLIOLOGY.

(Concluded.)

The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, the essentials of which have been presented in our last issue, is the cardinal topic of Bibliology. According to this doctrine, the Bible was written by divine inspiration¹⁾ inasmuch as the inspired penmen²⁾ performed their work as the personal organs³⁾ of God,⁴⁾ especially of the Holy Spirit,⁵⁾ who not only prompted and actuated them toward writing what they wrote,⁶⁾ but also suggested to them both the thoughts and the words they uttered as they wrote.⁷⁾

1) 1 Tim. 3, 16.

2) Rom. 15, 15. 1 Cor. 5, 9. 2 Cor. 2, 3. 4. 9. Gal. 1, 20. Phil. 3, 1. 1 Tim. 3, 14. 1 John 1, 4; 2, 1. 13. John 5, 46. 47. Luke 3, 4. Matt. 13, 14; 15, 7. Luke 20, 42.

3) Matt. 2, 5. 17; 8, 17; 12, 17; 13, 35; 24, 15; 27, 9. 35. Acts 2, 16; al.

4) Matt. 1, 22. Acts 4, 24. 25. Hebr. 4, 7. Rom. 9, 25; 1, 2.

5) Acts 1, 16; 28, 25. 2 Sam. 23, 1. 2. 2 Pet. 1, 19—21. 1 Pet. 1, 11. 12. Matt. 13, 11. Luke 12, 12.

6) 2 Pet. 1, 21. 2 Tim. 3, 16. Rom. 15, 18. 19. Gal. 1, 11. Jer. 30, 2.

7) Jer. 30, 2. Rom. 15, 18. 1 Thess. 2, 13. Acts 2, 4. 2 Pet. 1, 19—21. John 10, 34. 35. Matt. 22, 43. 44. Rom. 15, 9—12. Gal. 3, 16. Rom. 10, 16. 1 Pet. 3, 6. Heb. 12, 26. 27; 8, 8. 13; 7, 20. 21; 4, 7. Rom. 4, 6. 7. 9. Eph. 4, 8. 9. John 7, 42. Luke 16, 17.

Inspiration, then, is not identical with revelation. The one may be without the other, or the two may also go together. Abraham had revelation without inspiration;¹⁾ Moses and Paul wrote some things under inspiration without revelation,²⁾ and other things by both revelation and inspiration.³⁾ Neither is inspiration the same as illumination, the latter being common to all Christians,⁴⁾ while the former was restricted to the holy men of God by whom the holy Scriptures were given for our enlightenment.⁵⁾ A Scripture based upon or sprung from revelation only or resulting from illumination would not be simply and in the scriptural sense the word of God. On the other hand, inspiration does not imply a suspension or extinction of the personality or individuality of the organs employed by the Spirit of God. It is not without a peculiar purpose that God has given us the Old Testament by a variety of organs, Moses, David, Isaiah and other prophets, and the New Testament by four different evangelists and several apostles, and that Paul was not prompted to write all his epistles in the same frame of mind and under the same circumstances. God has, so to say, given us the benefit of the various talents and peculiar graces of a multitude of holy men in the composition of His own Book, thus making it an instrument of many steps varying in quality and volume of tone, but all of them sounded by the same breath and responding to the touch of the same hand upon the keys, all the melodies and harmonies originating in the same mind, the Spirit of Truth. Even when Paul gives us his judgment or "opinion,"⁶⁾ as distinguished from the commandments of God,⁷⁾ it is because God would have him speak what he there speaks, and

1) Gen. 12, 1—3.

2) Exod. 3, 1. Rom. 1, 13; 16, 1 ff. 1 Cor. 1, 14—16.

3) Gen. 1—3. 2 Thess. 2, 3—12.

4) Eph. 1, 18; 3, 9; 5, 18.

5) 2 Pet. 1, 19—21. 1 Pet. 1, 11. 12.

6) γνώμην, 1 Cor. 7, 25. 40.

7) 1 Cor. 7, 25: ἐπιταγὴν κυρίου οὐκ ἔχω.

just as he speaks, "for our profit,"¹⁾ and the Spirit of God did not in that moment withdraw his inspiring influence from the apostle, who, as one who "has the Spirit of God,"²⁾ utters what, though not intended as a "commandment of the Lord," is nevertheless given by inspiration of God. When Paul speaks of *his* expectation and hope and joy and desire,³⁾ it is because God would tell us in his word what was in the heart of his servant and apostle, even as he inspired David to utter the joy and hope and anguish of his soul in words suggested by the Spirit of God, that such Scripture also should be profitable for consolation, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, as truly as the Sermon on the Mount or the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

But when we say that the doctrine of inspiration is the cardinal topic of Bibliology, we would not be understood to assert that the other points of doctrine which come under this head must be obtained and established by deduction from that central doctrine. That the doctrines of the authority, the perspicuity, the efficacy, the sufficiency, and the purposes of the Bible are in a measure implied in the statement that the Bible is the inspired word of God, is true; but it is equally true that all these points of doctrine are also explicitly set forth in express statements of Scripture, and it is from such explicit *dicta* that we derive such points of doctrine as theological truths.

The *Authority* of the Bible is that property whereby the Bible justly claims unrestricted acceptance of all its statements,⁴⁾ full assent to all its teachings,⁵⁾ unwavering confidence in all its promises,⁶⁾ willing obedience to all its demands by those whom they concern;⁷⁾ the prerogative by

1) 1 Cor. 7, 35.

2) 1 Cor. 7, 40.

3) Phil. 1, 20; 2, 2. Rom. 10, 1.

4) John 10, 35. Luke 24, 25.—Ps. 119, 160. 140. 151.

5) 2 Tim. 3, 16. 2 Thess. 2, 15. Luke 24, 25—27; 16, 29—31.

6) 1 Thess. 2, 13. 2 Cor. 1, 20. Tit. 1, 2. 3. 2 Thess. 2, 15.

7) Dent. 12, 32; 5, 9. 10. Exod. 20, 5. 6. Jam. 2, 10. Josh. 1, 8.

which it is the only infallible source and norm of doctrine¹⁾ and rule of life.²⁾—To doubt, or to lead others to doubt, or in any way to set aside any word of God, is the devil's theology, which the father of lies taught and practiced in Paradise³⁾ and in the desert,⁴⁾ and which in theory and practice permeates the rationalistic and syncretistic theology of to-day, while true theology says with David: "My heart standeth in awe of thy word."⁵⁾

The *Perspicuity* of the Bible is that clearness of holy writ which renders all the doctrines and precepts laid down in the inspired word freely accessible to every reader or hearer of average intelligence and sufficient knowledge of the languages employed and of a mind not in a manner pre-occupied by error as to preclude the apprehension of the truths themselves however clearly set forth in words of human speech.⁶⁾

The *Efficacy* of the Bible is that property by which the Bible has indissolubly united⁷⁾ with the true and genuine sense expressed in its words⁸⁾ the power of the Holy Spirit,⁹⁾ who has made it for all times the ordinary means by which he operates¹⁰⁾ on and in the hearts and minds of those who properly hear or read it.¹¹⁾

The *Sufficiency* of the Bible is that perfection according to which the Bible contains all that is necessary for the achievement of its ends and aims.¹²⁾

1) Luke 16, 29. 2 Tim. 3, 15—17. Jer. 8, 9; 23, 16.—1 Cor. 14, 37. Is. 8, 19. 20. Gal. 1, 8. Acts 17, 11; 15, 14. 15.

2) Luke 16, 29. 2 Tim. 3, 16. 3) Gen. 3, 1. 4. 5.

4) Matt. 4, 3—10. Luke 4, 3—12. 5) Ps. 119, 161.

6) Ps. 119, 105; 130. 2 Pet. 1, 19. Ps. 19, 8. Eph. 3, 3. 4. John 8, 31. 32.—2 Cor. 4, 3. 4. John 8, 43—45. 47. 2 Pet. 3, 15. 16.

7) Rom. 1, 16. 1 Thess. 2, 13.

8) Eph. 3, 3. 4. Acts 8, 30. 31. 34.

9) Rom. 1, 16. 1 Thess. 1, 5.

10) Ps. 19, 8; 119, 105. 130. 2 Pet. 1, 19. 2 Tim. 3, 16. 17.

11) Rev. 1, 3. Eph. 3, 3. 4. John 7, 17.

12) Is. 8, 20. Luke 16, 29—31. 2 Tim. 3, 16. 17.

The *Purposes* of the Bible are, to convey to the understanding of men the truths and precepts of Scripture;¹⁾ to convert the unregenerate,²⁾ to preserve and strengthen the faith of the regenerate,³⁾ to rear them in holiness of life,⁴⁾ to afford them consolation in their afflictions,⁵⁾ and to furnish weapons of offense and defense to combat error and falsehood conflicting with God's truth,⁶⁾ and all this for the glory of God and for man's eternal salvation.⁷⁾

It is not our purpose here to balance accounts with all the various objections raised against the several bibliological statements laid down in this series of definitions descriptive of the properties and purposes of the Bible. In fact, the only stricture we could not avoid to face would be that we had failed to substantiate a specified point by the testimony of Scripture. We repeat that Bibliology is a matter of faith, not of opinion or reasoning, and there is no essential difference between Bibliology and Christology in this respect. If holy Scripture is "profitable for doctrine" at all, it is certainly and first of all profitable for doctrine concerning itself, its origin, properties, and purposes, and one single plain *dictum* of Scripture is fully and amply sufficient to establish any point of doctrine therein set forth, as surely as "all Scripture," *πᾶσα γραφή*, each and every Scripture, every word that is written by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, and "cannot be broken,"⁸⁾ being the word of God, who is at all times and everywhere *ἀψευδής θεός*,⁹⁾ who can neither err nor lie.

1) Eph. 3, 3. 4. Rom. 3, 20. Luke 24, 25—27. 2 Tim. 3, 16. Rom. 15, 4. 2 Tim. 3, 15. Ps. 119, 104. 130. 19, 8.

2) Ps. 19, 7. Luke 16, 29—31. 2 Chron. 34, 27.

3) Luke 24, 25—27. John 20, 31.

4) 2 Tim. 3, 16. 17. John 17, 17. Ps. 119, 9. 43 f.

5) Rom. 15, 4. Ps. 119, 49 f. 92.

6) Acts 18, 24. 28. 2 Tim. 3, 16. Ps. 119, 41—43.

7) John 20, 31; 5, 39. 2 Tim. 3, 15.—Ps. 138, 1 f. 4; 119, 171.

8) 2 Tim. 3, 16. John 10, 35.

9) Tit. 1, 2.

It is, therefore, no argument at all, when the impugn-ers of our Bibliology as of our Theology at large object that our mode of establishing doctrines by quoting detached passages of Scripture is inadmissible, that only the Bible in its entirety, "*das Schrifiganze*," and not such "scraps and particles of Scripture," can establish the character and claims of Scripture. This effort to get rid of the testimony of the Bible cannot even bear the test of common sense. We hold that the Constitution of the United States is the established will, not of an individual or of an assembly, but of the *people of this country*. How do we know this, or how are we to prove our assertion? Simply from and by the words of the Constitution, which says in its Preamble: "*We, the people of the United States . . . do ordain and establish this Constitution.*" This quotation has lost nothing whatever of its pertinence or force by the omission indicated, nor by the fact that the whole document is not quoted at length, provided that the quotation be really a true and complete statement of that document to the point at issue. The fact is in this case that while by the above quotation we have made our point, we might quote the whole document, omitting those words of the Preamble, and fail to make our point. But if we would know or show what the Constitution says on the powers of the President, we should turn, not to the Preamble nor to the First Amendment, but to Art. II, Sect. 2 and 3, and only a fool would find fault with us. Thus, also, when we would know and show what the Bible teaches concerning its origin, authority, etc., it is certainly very proper that we investigate, quote, and expound those passages which are intended to give us and others light on those subjects, however long or short, few or many, such passages may be. And for this practice we have fully sufficient precedent in Scripture itself, in the instances too numerous to quote, where Christ and the Apostles refer to texts from Moses and the Prophets. That such texts are cited without their context does not im-

ply a disregard of the context; it is often by a very careful consideration of the context and the real and verbal parallels that the dogmatician will find and show forth the finest points of doctrine contained in the text, and he will be a sorry dogmatician who neglects exegetical theology. But though a richer light may be shed upon a text from its context, it must not be forgotten that the text which is a *sedes doctrinae* is also in itself a light, is true in itself, and has its divine authority in itself, because of its own divine origin, not by virtue of its context. To reject even a detached statement of Scripture or the sense conveyed by the terms thereof, is to reject the word of God, and the simple sentence, "God is love,"¹⁾ is in and by itself as truly Scripture, a light unto our path and the power of God, as the whole epistle of St. John or any book of Scripture or all the Scriptures of both Testaments taken together. All this is also substantiated by express testimony of Scripture, when Christ and St. John apply the term "Scripture" to detached passages of the written word,²⁾ Scripture which cannot be broken, Scripture which must be fulfilled.

But while we thus maintain the unquestionable propriety of the use we make of particular texts of Scripture as *sedes doctrinae*, as source and norm of doctrine in Bibliology and elsewhere, we are fully aware of a vast difference between certain books and passages of Scripture and others of equal authority, but of lesser clearness and importance. The same degrees of clearness and importance do not always go together. "One star differeth from another star in glory."³⁾ Vega and Altair are stars of the first magnitude, and the Polar star is not; but the latter has been sought and found and followed by thousands who never knew the names or places of either of the former. Thus also 2 Thess. 2, 3 ff., though containing some clauses which have been

1) 1 John 4, 8. 16.

2) John 10, 35; cf. Ps. 82, 6; and John 19. 37; cf. Zech. 12, 10.

3) 1 Cor. 15, 41.

variously interpreted also by orthodox theologians, is doubtless of greater importance than many very plain passages in Joshua and Judges. But also among texts treating of the same subjects, there are those of greater and those of lesser clearness. What Daniel and the Apocalypse say of Antichrist is less clear than what we have in 2 Thess. 2. In Isaiah 53 the vicarious atonement is more clearly taught than in the Messianic psalms. "*Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet.*" Christ spoke in parables sometimes, at other times he spoke plainly and directly, and speeches of both kinds are recorded in the Gospels. And here it should be noted that the cause of the difference may be either in the text, or in the reader, or in both. The way of salvation was revealed in the Old Testament as by moonlight; we see it in the New Testament as in the sunshine at noon. But we have doubtless observed that eyes thereto accustomed see many things by moonlight which the eyes of one coming from a brightly lighted hall will fail to see. Thus we may be sure that God's children in Israel of old saw Christ in the Old Testament far more clearly and distinctly than we do when we read Moses and the Prophets, and some of them even more clearly than many sore-eyed or drowsy Christians see him in the Gospels and St. Paul. A trained eye, accustomed to microscopic research, will see many things by the same light and through the same instrument which will reveal little to the untrained eye and nothing to the eye with a cataract. Thus the Apostles learned to understand many things in Scripture and the teachings of their Master at a later day, although at an earlier day "they understood none of these things, and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken."¹) On the other hand it is true that also in the New Testament, as in the Epistles of St. Paul, there are, as St. Peter says, "some things hard to be under-

1) Luke 18, 34; cf. John 14, 26.

stood."¹⁾ We may think of 2 Thess. 2, as being enigmatic to the Christians of those days, when Antichrist had not yet developed into maturity, and of such chapters as Rom. 9 to 11, which, because of their subject matter, are, as Luther says, strong wine, not intended for infants in spiritual life or in theology. But Luther also points to the days of affliction under the cross as the proper time at which those chapters will be better understood and duly appreciated. You may not see the stars of heaven by day from your parlor windows; but go down to the bottom of a mining shaft and look up, and you will see them. Thus from the depths of sorrow and anguish many of the texts of Scripture often looked upon as obscure or of little consequence become so many kindly lights beaming forth comfort and strength and wisdom from on high. We have personal knowledge of a case in which the troubled conscience of a Christian was relieved by Paul's request to Timothy to bring with him the cloak the apostle had left at Troas,²⁾ a text which has often been set down as of no practical use in the world and too trivial to be looked upon as given by divine inspiration. Many *dicta* of Scripture were brought into prominence by the controversies forced upon Christians and their teachers by errorists within and assailants without the pale of the church, and what may have previously appeared obscure or irrelevant was then on close inspection found to be most telling and convincing, and this increased familiarity with and deeper insight into the inspired word is one of the chief benefits accruing from doctrinal controversies properly conducted. Luther freely gave his many adversaries credit for having driven him to ransack the Scriptures and thus made him far more a *Doctor in Bibliis* than he would otherwise have been.

But does not this same Luther here and there confess that the import of a text in hand is not sufficiently clear to

1) 2 Pet. 3, 16.

2) 2 Tim. 4, 13.

him to permit him to give more than a personal opinion in its interpretation, leaving it to others to do better if they can? Yes, and there is probably no reader or interpreter of Scripture who has not met with more passages than one concerning the meaning or bearing of which he must confess a *non liquet*, although with our more exact and intimate knowledge of the original languages after centuries of philological research many difficulties no longer exist for us which were in Luther's way. Thus the more difficult parts of the holy text are but another incentive toward ever renewed obedience to Christ's admonition: "*Search the Scriptures.*" And it may be safely said that every persistent student of Scripture, especially in the original Hebrew and Greek, may expect to find in God's inexhaustible storehouse this and that which perhaps no other eye had yet discovered, or which, at any rate, has nowhere been pointed out in any commentary or postil within his reach, although no other book has been so largely studied and so extensively expounded as the Bible. Even a lesson which we may ourselves have read and carefully studied ninety and nine times, may reveal to us new beauties as we read or study it the hundredth time.

Nor is the work of searching the Scriptures like working in the gold-diggings, where the precious metal must be by some process separated from the surrounding or intermingled dross. In the earlier Luther we find some things which the later and maturer Luther himself discountenanced and pronounced fit for the fire. But the theology of Moses is as pure as that of Peter, and that of Isaiah as unalloyed as that of Paul. Whatever progress there is, is in quantity, not in quality. The New Testament was not composed to supplant or supersede, much less to correct the Old. Paul "believed all things which are written in the law and in the prophets,"¹⁾ and "said none other things than those

1) Acts 24, 14.

which the prophets and Moses did say should come."¹⁾ The holy Scriptures which Timothy had known from a child, which were the books of the Old Testament, were by the apostle pronounced "able to make him wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."²⁾ Christ and the apostles often appeal to, but never and in no point disavow the Old Testament Scriptures, nor does Christ correct those who "thought that in them they had eternal life," but admonished them to search those Scriptures.³⁾ Neither did the Old Testament Scripture lack the property of *sufficiencia*; the Old Testament was just as truly sufficient for the church of the Old Testament to the fulness of time⁴⁾ as the whole Bible is sufficient for the church to the end of time.⁵⁾ Both, the Old Testament and the New, being with equal truth and in the same sense the word of God,⁶⁾ both are of the same divine *authority* and *efficacy*, and the *purposes* of both are, likewise, the same.⁷⁾ The Bibliology, Theology proper, Cosmology, Christology, Soteriology, and Eschatology of the Old Testament being, therefore, inaterially the same as of the New, and laid down in both for essentially the same purposes, it is with full propriety that we draw and substantiate our doctrinal statements on all these topics from the Old and the New Testaments alike and indiscriminately and thus employ the whole Bible as the source and norm of doctrine and rule of life.

On the other hand, we concede this dignity *only* to the Bible, the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments. While we consider a doctrine fully and sufficiently established, though it were clearly and indisputably set forth in but one passage of Scripture, as the doctrine of Christ's

1) Acts 26, 22.

2) 2 Tim. 3, 15.

3) John 5, 39.

4) Luke 16, 29. 31.

5) Hebr. 1, 1. 2.

6) Rom. 3, 2. 2 Tim. 3, 16.—1 Thess. 2, 13. 2 Thess. 2, 15.—1 Cor. 14, 37.

7) Ps. 119, 104. 130. Ps. 19, 7. 8. Ps. 119, 9. 43 f. 49 f. 92. Ps. 138, 1 f. 4. Ps. 119, 171. John 5, 39. 2 Tim. 3, 15. 16. Rom. 15, 4.—John 20, 31. 1 John 1, 3. 4; 2, 12—14. Tit. 1, 9.