

INSPIRATION

Benjamin B. Warfield

The terms "inspiration" and "inspired" are used in English with great latitude of meaning, and this latitude is reflected to some extent in their usage in the English Bible. They occur, however, only twice in the English Bible, and in both cases in a religious sense (Job xxxii. 8; 2 Tim. iii. 16). In the former passage the word is used loosely to give expression to the broad fact that men are not independent of God as intellectual beings, but that for small and great, old and young alike, it is "the breath [or inspiration] of the Almighty [that] giveth them understanding." In the latter passage the word "inspired" is used in its more proper and specific sense as a direct predicate of the written Scriptures, affirming that quality of divinity in them by virtue of which they are "profitable" for the great ends for which they are given. The Scriptures which the apostle had particularly in mind in this passage were the sacred books of the Jews, what we call the Old Testament; but the affirmation he makes will naturally hold good of all writings which rightly share the high title of Scripture with them. The quality which he thus makes the fundamental characteristic of Scripture is expressed in the original Greek, not by the simple word inspired, but by a compound word, God-inspired, possibly of his own coinage, by which the divine source of the inspiration is emphasized. He adduces this fundamental quality of Scripture as the ground on which the unique value of the Scripture rests: "All scripture," he says, "is given by inspiration of God, and is therefore profitable, etc." (A.V.), or, "Every Scripture, [seeing that it is] inspired of God, is also profitable, etc." (R.V.) Inspiration, according to the apostle, is, therefore, the fundamental quality of the written Scriptures by virtue of which they are the word of God, and are clothed with all the characteristics which properly belong to the word of God. In accordance with the teaching of this classical passage, Scripture is uniformly recognized, throughout the New Testament, as the very word of God, and is treated as possessing all the qualities which would naturally flow from its divine origin. Thus it is currently cited by the exclusive titles Scripture, the Scriptures, the Oracles of God (Rom. iii. 2) or the Living Oracles (Acts vii. 38, R.V.), and its words are ordinarily adduced by the authoritative formula, "It is written." Its divine character is explicitly expressed in the constant ascription of the words cursorily quoted from it to God as their author (Acts xiii. 34; 1 Cor. vi. 16; Matt. i. 22; ii. 15; Rom. i. 2), or more specifically to the Holy Spirit (Heb. iii. 7; ix. 8; x. 15; Acts i. 16; iv. 25, R.V.; xxviii. 25); and that, even when they are not ascribed to God in the original passages, but are spoken of or even addressed to him, and can be thought his only because they are part of the Scripture text (Acts iv. 24, 25; xiii. 34, 35; Matt. xix. 5; Heb. i. 6, 7, 8, 10; iv. 4, 7; vii. 21; x. 30). While on the other hand the human writers of Scripture are said to have spoken "in" the Holy Spirit (Mark xii. 36; Matt. xxii. 43, both R.V.), and are treated as merely the media through whom God the Holy Ghost speaks (Matt. i. 22; ii. 15; Acts i. 16; iv. 25; xxviii. 25; Rom. i. 2). Accordingly, the very words of Scripture are accounted authoritative and "not to be broken" (Matt. xxii. 43; John x. 31, 35; Gal. iii. 16); its prophecies sure (2 Pet. i. 20; John xix. 36, 37; xx. 9; Acts i. 16; cf. Ezra i. 1; Dan. ix. 2); and its whole contents, historical as well as doctrinal and ethical, not only entirely trustworthy, but designedly framed for the spiritual profit of all ages (2 Tim. iii. 16; Rom. xv. 4;

1 Cor. x. 11; Rom. iv. 23; ix. 17; 1 Cor. ix. 10; Gal. iii, 8, 22; iv. 30; 1 Pet. ii, 6; cf. 2 Chron. xvii. 9; Neh. viii. 1). That the books of the New Testament are given to the church as equally Scripture with those of the Old Testament, and share with them in all their divine qualities, is shown by the equal claim to authority which is made for them (1 Cor. vii. 40; xiv. 37; 2 Thess. iii. 4, 14; Gal. i. 8); the similar representation of their authors as the organs of God (1 Thess. ii. 13; iv. 2; 1 Cor. ii. 13, 16; vii. 40); and the inclusion of New Testament books along with those of the Old Testament under the common sacred title of Scripture (2 Pet. iii. 16; 1 Tim. v. 18).

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