

an essay:

ON THE INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY OF THE HOLY BIBLE

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I. CAN SCRIPTURE BE BROKEN?

Saint John records The Words of our Lord JESUS CHRIST in JOHN 10:35b, “The Scripture cannot be broken!”¹ This essay is in reality a short book report on “The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible,” written primarily by the late Christian theologian Dr. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1887-1921 AD). Dr. Warfield was a Divinity Professor at the Theological Seminary of Princeton, New Jersey, USA. The title of the book describes the issues addressed. The epigraph opposite Warfield’s picture states “The Scripture cannot be broken,” which sums up Dr. Warfield’s battle cry of his theological career and thesis of this book. Warfield focuses on the Divinely inspired nature of Scripture and thus its inerrancy. He also spends much effort in refuting the insidious efforts of Biblical criticism, which has as its goal the tearing down of the inspired and inerrant view of The Holy Bible.

The same arguments that Warfield battled that advocated viewing Scripture as a fallible product of the minds of men, rather than the special revelation of GOD, are much the same arguments that many liberal Churches and Christians today have embraced. And so this book is especially relevant today, for it addresses the heart of the issue in this modern age of apostasy: “Is a Church still a Church if it rejects The Holy Scriptures as the GOD-breathed and unerring Word of The LORD?” “Can a Christian be a Christian if he rejects the traditional Christian doctrine that The Holy Scriptures are the unerring special revelation of GOD to man and thus the doctrines within it?” I believe the answer to both questions is a clear, “NO!”

II. CHRISTIANITY STANDS OR FALLS ON THE VERACITY OF THE BIBLE!

The Theologian Dr. Cornelius Van Til opens with the introduction to this book with this observation: “GOD could not be sovereign in His disposition of rational human beings if He were not also sovereign in His revelation of Himself to them.” For if we could not trust as fully truthful and without error GOD’s special revelation to men via Holy Scripture, we could not trust GOD for anything! He observes, “the Bible is, in its

¹ 1, KJV Bible online, JOHN 10:35b.

autographa, the infallible Word of GOD!”²

Of all the vital Divine truths and Providential events recorded in Holy Scripture, surely the most vital is GOD’s gift of grace and salvation offered to all men via the passion, death and resurrection of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. For “Christianity stands or falls with the idea of the resurrection of CHRIST under Pontius Pilate.”³ The Church herself rests upon “a genuine experience of intercourse with a living historical person victorious over death,”⁴ Who is none other by The Son of GOD as revealed to us in Scripture. And if the devil and his Biblical criticism servants can show the Scriptures to be false - especially on the work of CHRIST at The Cross - the very foundations of Christianity becomes mere shifting sands of the imaginations of the minds of men!

III. IS THE UNIVERSE GOD-CENTERED OR MAN CENTERED?

Van Til notes this raises the question of the nature of the universe itself - Is it GOD-centered or man-centered? “The idea set for by Warfield [of an infallible & GOD-inspired Bible]” proclaims that “it is the self-contained GOD Who is the final point of reference” in all interpretation of the universe. This is directly contrasted with modern man’s view that “it is self-contained man who is the final point of reference in all interpretation” of the universe.⁵ And if man is the judge of all things, then the absolute standards of right versus wrong claimed by The Holy Scriptures are false! Thus, as we see in our own era, man’s wicked and depraved heart now sets the standards for what is good versus evil - both outside of The Church and increasingly even within The Church!

IV. WHY THE APOSTATES WANT TO TEAR DOWN THE HOLY BIBLE!

This makes sin comfortable, and allows modern man - so he thinks - to live on in his sin, denying any need to repent, without the fear of having to answer to a holy and all powerful Creator! Or, as Van Til puts it, if modern man “can make himself believe that the evidence is doubtful [for the existence of GOD and for The Scriptures to be infallible

² 2, Warfield, “The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible,” p 3.

³ 2, Ibid., p 13.

⁴ 2, Ibid., p 14.

⁵ 2, Ibid., p 17.

special revelation from GOD], he has again found excuse for himself [to continue in sin].”⁶ To this the faithful Church must counter by showing “that an infallible revelation [via The Holy Scriptures] has actually entered into history... [by the power and will] of the sovereignty of GOD!”⁷

So it is this very heart of true Protestant Christianity, “the self-contained character of GOD,” which Biblical criticism seeks to literally cut out from the foundations of our Faith itself!⁸ Here the likes of Barth and Brunner, followed by armies of apostates and heathen critics, claim “the right to define the whole range of truth from the standpoint of man.” They proclaim that The Scriptures are mere historical documents of interest, and questionable even as that! They advise us to open our minds to an existential force of the universe superior to the mere culturally biased opinions of The Law, The Prophets, The Psalmists, The Apostles and even The Lord CHRIST Himself as recorded in The Holy Bible! They tell us that true Christian faith is not to be guided by The Scriptures, but by a “personal encounter” with CHRIST, so that The Lord and all creation become what is true for us!⁹

V. REDEFINING CHRIST & CHRISTIANITY APART FROM THE SCRIPTURES!

So Van Tile notes Brunner accuses the orthodox Christian view of the sovereign GOD and Holy Spirit-inspired Scriptures as mere “bibliolatry; [lacking] a sense of community; [and not allowing] for the necessary mediation between the word of the Bible and the modern man through the ‘viva vox ecclesiae’” - the ‘living word of The Church!’ In place of special revelation of Scriptures, Brunner would have us substitute “a personal encounter” with CHRIST.¹⁰ And so the modern apostate Churchman can look into our eyes with a straight faith and proclaim that what The Scriptures say are irrelevant, and that it’s what feels right to you in meeting GOD on your own terms that determines the shape of Christianity today!

⁶ 2, Warfield, “The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible,” p 32.

⁷ 2, Ibid., p 47.

⁸ 2, Ibid., p 58.

⁹ 2, Ibid., p 59.

Van Til notes the defiant words of Brunner, "...I am what GOD says, what GOD thinks, and what He wills. The contrast between subject and object will completely disappear, but the fact of personal encounter, and thus of the nonidentity of GOD and myself, will remain. For I am in the truth and the truth is in me, as truth which is given to me and receive by me, and this truth will be my very being, and my life."¹¹ Brunner's CHRIST is what and who each man says He is or is not. For the likes of Brunner, the Holy Scriptures are no longer defining, but now merely voluntary and not to be taken literally when its words become inconvenient or uncomfortable.

"Having been liberated from the orthodox doctrine of an infallible Bible by higher criticism, Brunner feels that he is also liberated from all concern for internal consistency of the Bible's testimony to CHRIST."¹² And so freed from the constraints of the clear words of Scripture, the militant feminist, abortionist, sodomite and evolutionist can - under the false veneer of the pseudo-Christian blankets of universal forgiveness and universal salvation - assure himself and any who inquire that his chosen sin is perfectly acceptable to GOD because He has met CHRIST personally!

So we see the fruits today of what the likes of Barth and Brunner not long ago planted in Western society, in its seminaries, its schools, its Churches, its very fabric - the blasphemous proclamation of modern man who, shaking his fist towards Heaven, declares "I define Who GOD is! I interpret what He says to me! I determine how I meet the CHRIST of my own imagination!" Indeed, the modern West today, both outside and often sadly inside The visible Church, is not unlike apostate ancient Israel in the time of The Judges. Now, as then, JUDGES 17:6, "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."¹³

This is the battle cry of apostates and heathens in all ages, that they might either remake GOD in their own fallen image, or make themselves as gods! But it is not man

¹⁰ 2, Warfield, "The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible," p 61.

¹¹ 2, Ibid., p 65.

¹² 2, Ibid., p 63.

¹³ 1, KJV, JUDGES 17:6.

who may save himself, but only The LORD GOD, Who alone is The King of The Universe. As the prophet writes in ISIAH 33:22, “For Te LORD is our judge, The LORD is our lawgiver, The LORD is our king; he will save us!”¹⁴ But our Lord JESUS CHRIST confronts haughty and prideful man, revealing that He is The I AM, The Everlasting Creator Incarnate, as in JOHN 14:6, “JESUS saith unto him, I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life: no man cometh unto The Father, but by Me!”¹⁵ To he who receives the saving Grace of GOD in CHRIST is given eternal life. But he who turns from The Way, The Truth and The Life condemns himself by his own hand to a life of separation from GOD both now and forever!

VI. THE CURE - CHRIST AS REVEALED IN THE SCRIPTURES!

To this apostasy, Van Til opens the door to Warfield’s works, which directs the orthodox Church to proclaim her faithful doctrines of Christianity, “CHRIST is The Truth. He is the content; He is the ‘point’ of all preaching in the Church;” He is its very content! For “The Scriptures ... [are] the telescope through which the CHRIST is drawn near to us and we to Him!”¹⁶ As Saint John declares in I JOHN 5:12-13, “He that hath The Son hath life; and he that hath not The Son of GOD hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on The Name of The Son of GOD; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on The Name of The Son of GOD!”¹⁷ The battle lines drawn, The Scriptures remain GOD-inspired and thus infallible. And no amount of ravings by Biblical criticism can shake this truth - the theme of this book - that “The Scripture cannot be broken!”

VII. THE BIBLE NOT DICTATED BY THE CHURCH OR MEN, BUT BY GOD!

Warfield reminds us that the Church did not create The Bible, but rather accepted it’s Books - both the Old Testament and the New Testament -which were ordained and inspired by GOD through its human writers. “From the very beginning the Old Testament was as cordially recognized as law by the Christian as by the Jew.” CHRIST

¹⁴ 1, KJV, ISIAH 33:22.

¹⁵ 1, KJV, JOHN 14:6.

¹⁶ 2, Warfield, “The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible,” p 61-62.

¹⁷ 1, KJV, I JOHN 5:12-13.

Himself and His Apostles “imposed The Scriptures upon the infant Churches as their authoritative rule of faith and practice.” The Books of the New Testament canon were “also preached in the Holy Ghost,” their very words being “of the Holy Spirit.” From the beginning, the New Testament was “therefore of Divine authority... and their writings were the depository of these [Divinely inspired] commands.”¹⁸

And what was the test of a book for entry into The Canon of the New Testament? It was “the historical tradition of apostolicity... The principle of canonicity was... imposition by The Apostles as ‘law’ upon the early Church.” Warfield observes that the New Testament canon “was completed when the last authoritative book was given to any [one] Church by the apostles, and that was when John wrote the Apocalypse [REVELATION] about AD 98.” And “from the time of Irenaeus down, the Church at large had the whole Canon as we now possess it,” although individual Churches often did not possess the entire canon in these early times of the Christian era.¹⁹

VIII. DEFINING DIVINE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY BIBLE!

Warfield defines the inspiration of The Bible as “that extraordinary, supernatural influence... exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of GOD and therefore perfectly infallible.”²⁰ The traditional Church doctrine of the Divine inspiration of Holy Scriptures “claims that by a special, supernatural, extraordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, the sacred writers have been guided in their writing in such a way, as while their humanity was not superseded, it was yet so dominated that their words became at the same time the words of GOD, and thus, in every case and all alike, absolutely infallible.”²¹

IX. HOW THE BIBLICAL CRITICISM ATTACKS THE SCRIPTURES!

Warfield identifies the goals of Biblical criticism: First, they must shake our belief that the early contemporary Church found that “GOD was visibly with the

¹⁸ 2, Warfield, “The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible,” p 411.

¹⁹ 2, Ibid., p 415.

²⁰ 2, Ibid., p 420.

²¹ 2, Ibid., p 422.

Apostles, and... [that GOD sealed] their claim with His blessing on their work.” Second, they must demonstrate conclusively “contradictory phenomena in or about the writings themselves.” To accomplish these insidious goals, Biblical criticism must show that: 1) “The New Testament writers do not claim inspiration;” 2) “or that this claim was rejected by the contemporary Church;” 3) “or that... [the Apostles’ claim of Divine inspiration for their writings is destroyed by proving] that the books containing it are forgeries;” 4) “or ... [discrediting the New Testament by proving] that they contain along with the claim, errors of fact or contradictions of statement.”²²

X. THE FAILURE OF BIBLICAL CRITICISM TO DISPROVE THE HOLY BIBLE!

The writers of the New Testament clearly held the Old Testament to be Divinely inspired and thus without error. They further considered their own writings Divinely inspired, for they were quite conscious that they were writing Scripture. Warfield comments: “As they indubitably hold to the full - even verbal - inspiration of the Old Testament, it follows that they claim the same verbal inspiration of the New [Testament].”²³

Here Warfield notes the lofty titles with which the writers of the New Testament quote the Old Testament, using the very words that form many of this book’s chapter titles: “Scripture; The Scriptures, The Oracles of GOD.” He notes the typical formulas of quotation used by the writers of the New Testament: “It is written; Scripture says.” Here Warfield refers to “Paul, who wrote in II Timothy [3:16], ‘Every Scripture is GOD-inspired.’”²⁴ As Saint Paul declares in II TIMOTHY 3:15-17, “And that from a child thou hast known The Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS. All Scripture is given by inspiration of GOD, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of GOD may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works!”²⁵

²² 2, Warfield, “The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible,” p 423.

²³ 2, Ibid., p 425-426.

²⁴ 2, Ibid., p 426.

²⁵ 1, KJV, II TIMOTHY 3:15-17.

XI. THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN!

After debunking Biblical criticism on all fronts, Warfield makes these triumphant observations: 1) The incredible internal and external harmony of the Bible is “one of the chief evidences of Christianity;” 2) “One of the strongest... [proofs] for Christianity is the utter accord with the minute details of contemporary history which is exhibited in its records;” 3) The “detailed accuracy of the New Testament writers I historical matters... [is proved] more and more by every fresh investigation;” 4) The laws “of probabilities [applied] to the accuracy of these New Testament writers” is mathematically impossible by mere human effort and can only be accounted for by attributing Divine inspiration to the Scriptures.²⁶

I can not leave Dr. Warfield’s speech without noting some of his concluding words: “Since all the efforts of the enemies of Christianity - eager to discover error by which they might convict the precious Word of life of falsehood - have proved utterly vain, [for] the Scriptures stand before us authenticated as from GOD. They are, then, just what they profess to be; and criticism only secures to them the more firmly the position they claim!”²⁷ For as Saint John records – by the guiding arm and inspiring Presence of The HOLY SPIRIT working in and through him - The infallible and unerring Words of our Lord JESUS CHRIST in JOHN 10:35b, “The Scripture cannot be broken!”²⁸ In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN.

²⁶ 2, Warfield, “The Inspiration and Authority of The Bible,” p 436-437.

²⁷ 2, Ibid., p 441.

²⁸ 1, KJV Bible online, JOHN 10:35b.

XII. REFERENCES

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