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A Survey of the Conceptions of Revelation  
and Inspiration in Representative Modern Theologians.

By

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INTRODUCTION.

## Introduction.

## I. Statement of the Problem.

Let it be noted that this study is primarily a survey. It aims to determine inductively the views of five modern theologians relative to the problems of Revelation and Inspiration. Friedrich Schleiermacher has been termed "the Father of Modern Theology". There is no question as to his importance in such a study as this. Andrew B. Davidson is a typical example of the theology of the Scottish Free Church in its more recent tendencies. Horace Bushnell represents a new departure in the field of American theology and is known for his particular theory of the Atonement. Benjamin B. Warfield is a typical example of Calvinism in its more recent statement, and is noted for his outstanding scholarship. Karl Barth has, in the last few years, attracted the attention of the whole world with his views and by some has been hailed as the saviour of European Protestantism.

Although the investigation is primarily a survey, there is an important subsidiary feature to be considered: Has any of these men to be studied departed from the theory of Martin Luther regarding errors in the Scriptural record? A year ago the writer made a study of Luther's views on this general subject. The findings of that study will be summarized in the first chapter of this investigation, and particularly in respect to this question of mistakes in the Bible. Particular note will be made at the end of

each chapter relative to this subsidiary problem and it will be more fully summarized in the concluding chapter. Thus it is hoped that two values will be derived from the investigation: First, a statement of the views of each of these men mentioned; and second, a conclusion concerning this important problem of errors in the record with regard to Luther and each of the men studied.

## II. Importance of the Problem.

The subsidiary problem is important because several of these men with widely divergent views, such as Warfield and Barth, each claim to be in direct harmony with the position of the Reformer. Which is really correct in his claim? Then, too, the whole field of Revelation and Inspiration is very important. For in the first place, it concerns itself with that which is central in the Christian Faith, and in fact, in all religion, viz. the belief that God has made Himself known to man. It also considers the manner in which He has made this revelation. If God has spoken to mankind, how did He do it?

In the second place, it has a direct bearing upon one's view of the Bible. Are the stories of the Old Testament to be regarded as literal fact, or are they to be viewed as illustrations of men's views relative to God, and consequently expressed frequently in poetical forms of imagery? Is the Bible to be viewed as a text-book with all its statements equally valuable for the formation of doctrine or rules of conduct? If science disagrees with the first

chapter of Genesis, where is the preacher to stand? If reason balks at the story of Jonah and the huge fish, which side must the minister take, if any? The answers to these questions will determine the tenor of one's whole theological thinking. This investigation seeks to express in general terms the view of Luther relative to these questions and also those views of the five other theologians which have been selected.

And finally, the problem is important because of its bearing upon the teacher and preacher. What is to be their primary concern? To teach a body of doctrine, to spread an influence, or both? If the content of revelation consist of dogma or proof-texts, then the preacher will make sure that his people are theologically orthodox. If the content of revelation consist of an experience then he will aim to make that experience real in the lives of his people. If there is a third or middle position possible, his teaching will correspond to that view.

### III. Method employed in the Investigation.

It is well-nigh impossible to classify a theologian, for often the very classification rests upon presuppositions alien to the thought of the one classified. So it is the purpose of this study to view each man's conceptions of these problems in the light of his own thinking. Thus the investigation takes the form primarily of a survey. No man's views will be forced into moulds of another's making. He will be allowed to unfold his own ideas. So the first



thing in relation to each man will be to determine the ~~fundamental viewpoints~~ of his theology. Then in the light of his primary emphasis, each man's view relative to Revelation and Inspiration will be examined. Summary statements expressing the movement of the thought will be made at the end of each chapter. Thus room will be given for any paradoxes or obscure concepts which may be evident in any of the men consulted.

The first chapter is to consist wholly of a short review of last year's findings concerning the beliefs of Luther. These findings will be made as brief and concise as possible. Most of the references in this chapter will be found in the former study, but on one or two of the more important points, quotations to make the thought absolutely clear will be given. Then in the concluding chapter, comparison relative to the question of error will be made between each of the men consulted and Luther. Material for this comparison will be gathered from the summaries at the close of each chapter in which is contained the gist of the chapters. Any departure from the position of the Reformer, particularly in the matter of error, discerned in the writings of any of these men will be noted. There will be accruing from this study a final word on the concept of "Verbal Inspiration" in order to clear up any misunderstanding regarding that oft-used and misused term. Any obscurity with regard to that expression in the body of the work will be cleared up by reference to the concluding note. A short word of appreciation for the contribution of the investigation to the writer will be made at the close of the study.

## CHAPTER 1.

### Summary Statement of Luther's Views of Revelation and Inspiration.

## Summary Statement of Luther's Views.

### I. Historical Background.

The indulgence traffic of the Roman Church brought forth the first great statement of Luther's views in the ninety five theses. The doctrine of Justification by Faith, destined to become the material principle of the Reformation, was evident in these statements. This doctrine was the basis for much of Luther's thinking. The next step in the development of his theology concerned itself with the defence of his position against the authority of the Church. To Luther the ultimate authority was to be found not in the traditions of the Church, but in the Holy Scriptures enlightened in the heart of the individual believer by the Holy Spirit. <sup>1</sup>

### III. Experience authenticates the Scriptures.

It is a very significant fact that Luther's theology was based on a great personal experience. This experience was so real to him that he was willing to risk his life many times in defence of his position. The experience seemed to authenticate the whole of the Christian religion to him. And it was the experience which validated the Biblical record to him.

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1. First seen in the 95 theses, made plain in the three Reformation tracts of 1520-Liberty of the Christian Man, Appeal to the Nation, Babylonish Captivity of the Church-defended at the Diet of Worms in 1521.

"If you say: 'How can we learn and know what is God's Word, and what is right and wrong? We must learn this of the Pope or councils.' Let them decide what they will, I tell you that you cannot, in that way satisfy your conscience. Your life is at stake and you must decide the question for yourself. Until God says in your heart: 'This is God's Word', the matter will not rest.--- They quote the saying of Augustine; 'I would not believe the Gospel, unless the authority of the Church had moved me thereto;' and think by this they have won. But I say: What matters it to me whether Augustine or Jerome, St. Peter or St. Paul, and what is more, the archangel Gabriel from heaven, say this? I must have God's Word. I will hear what God the Lord will say." 1

Also: "But then we must not understand St. Augustine to say that he would not believe the Gospel unless he were moved thereto by the authority of the whole Church. For that were false and unchristian. Every man must believe only because it is God's Word, and because he is convinced in his heart that it is true, although an angel from heaven and all the world preached the contrary." 2

From these quotations, it is certain that the experience or the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart authenticated the Scriptures to him. But when we try to determine just how much of the Scripture the experience authenticated, it tells us nothing. Did Luther's faith validate to him every book of the canon and every fact and word contained therein? This question must be considered still further.

### III. The Books of the Canon.

It is clear that the experience of Luther gave him grounds for rejecting several books from the canon. He did not regard the canon as fixed with unalterable rigidity. He rejected the Book of Esther together with the Apocrypha;

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1. Quoted by Jacobs: The Hero of the Reformation. p.387.
  2. From the Works of Luther: Holman: II. p 452.

he placed the Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation at the end of his translation of the Bible. It will be remembered that he severely criticized the book of James, calling it a "veritable straw epistle".<sup>1</sup> In other words, his experience authenticated the epistles and doctrines of Paul, and when he was unable to reconcile any of the other books with them, he rejected those books.

#### IV. The Question of Error.

It has been seen that Luther's experience gave him ground for rejecting certain books as uncanonical. Did that experience also give him leave to say that there was error in the remaining books? Immediately we infer that it did not. That he set up a high standard for the canonical books is seen in the fact that he refused to accept those which did not quite measure up to that standard. In other words, if he rejected some, he must have had a very high opinion of those that he accepted. But let us examine his writings to see.

"I have grounded my preaching in the literal word; he that pleases may follow me; he that will not may stay."<sup>2</sup>

"many places in the Scripture are obscure and abstruse; not from the majesty of the things, but from our ignorance of certain terms and grammatical particulars."<sup>3</sup>

"It is not a question of intention or of thought, otherwise those who martyred the first Christians would be

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1. Kensinger: Luther's Conception of Revelation and Inspiration. p 34 f.

2. Ibid. p 39.

3. Ibid. p 39.

equally the servants of God, for they believed, as Christ himself says-John 16:2-that by this they were doing God service. St. Paul also-Rom.10:2- bears testimony to the Jews that they were zealous for God. Again-Acts 26:7- he says they serve God night and day in hopes to attain the promised salvation. Every one should be convinced and satisfied that the mode in which he serves God is in conformity with the word and ordinances of God, and not the produce of his own imaginations and good intentions. For he who worships God in a manner which is unsupported by the testimony of God or the Holy Scriptures ought to know that he does not worship the one true God but an idol of his own imagination, namely his own thoughts and opinions, and in other words the devil himself, and thus renders applicable to himself the denunciations of all the prophets. For the God does not exist who desires us to serve Him as we choose, or as our devotion suggests, or that we should establish any optional form of worship without the evidence of His sanction; but the one true God has amply declared, and by His word has revealed to mankind the mode of worship He requires and accepts. To this it is our bounden duty to adhere, and we must not deviate from it either to the right nor to the left. We must not make it better or worse, otherwise there would be no end to idolatry; all mean to serve the one true God, all to use His right and true Name." 1

"It appears to me that the Holy Ghost had permitted the Apostles and the Evangelists to break off the passages so abruptly, that He might hold us to the pure Scriptures only, and not give an example to future expositors, who use many words outside of the Scriptures, and secretly draw us away from them to human doctrines." 2

From these quotations, and a reading of his work on the "Bondage of the Will", it is evident that Luther had a certain hatred of error of any kind in the Scriptures. "God has manifoldly promised" the Gospel and Testament by the Prophets. Luther regarded these promises as given from God's own mouth.<sup>3</sup> He accepted the miracles and commands of the Old Testament very literally. A reading of

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1. Kensinger: Luther's Conception of Revelation and Inspiration. p 21.

2. Luther: Notes on the Gospels. Preface. p vi.

3. Ibid. p iv. Gen. 3:15, 22:18, 2 Sam. 7:2-16, Micah 5:2, Hosea 13:14.

his commentary on Genesis clearly shows that he believed the account wholly, practically word for word. Thus it is practically certain that Luther would admit of no mistakes in the Scriptures.

#### V. The Human Element in the Composition of the Bible.

Of course Luther recognized a human element in the composition of the Scriptures. Yet the writers were to be viewed as specially inspired, and in a manner different from the inspiration of ordinary Christians. The prophets were preachers, and yet more than preachers, they were specially directed by the Spirit of God. <sup>1</sup>

#### VI. The Word of God.

Luther used this term in three senses: 1. To designate the Logos as in John 1. 2. To signify God's message to the human soul whereby that soul is justified. 3. As synonymous with the Whole Scriptures. <sup>2</sup>

To sum up Luther's view in a sentence: The experience of Salvation or the witness of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer validated the Scriptural record as being from God. Certain books were not to be accepted as canonical, but the books included in the canon contained no errors, either of fact or of doctrine or of principles of conduct.

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1. Holman: Works of Luther II, p 453.  
Kensinger: Luther's conception of Rev. and Ins.  
pp 25, 34, 39, 40, 41.
2. Holman: Works of Luther II p 315.  
Kensinger: As above. pp 25, 34, 39.

CHAPTER 2.

Schleiermacher's Conception of Revelation  
and Inspiration.



## Chapter 2.

Schleiermacher's Conception of Revelation  
and Inspiration.

## I. Schleiermacher's Background.

The importance of Friedrich Schleiermacher is evident from the fact that he has been styled "the Father of Modern Theology". Coming from a home of strict orthodoxy, trained in a school preeminently pietistic, and constantly thrown into contact with the German culture of the Enlightenment, he is an ideal representative of the Post-Reformation theology in contact with the <sup>intellectual and religious</sup> new movements of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Because of his very uniqueness, difficulties at once arise when one sets out to determine his theological viewpoint. The suggestion has been made that his thought arose in two different spheres-viz. the philosophical and the theological-and consequently harmony cannot always be found in his system.

In order to arrive at an understanding of his views, and particularly those relating to revelation, it may be well to get a sketch of the immediate background of theological thought. It is a commonly known fact that in Post-Reformation times the Christian Religion had become crystallized into creedal statements. Each separate movement had its own statement of belief, and many organizations had several such statements. In time the sum of the Christian Religion

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1. Much material for this review has been found in various Encyclopedias under articles, "Rationalism", "Deism", "Illumination", "Supernaturalism".

was assumed to be bound up with a system of doctrine, and as a result, orthodoxy was taken to be the test of a Christian. Consequently two movements arose; the one protesting from without the Church, and the other seeking to raise the spiritual status within the Church. On the one hand we have the rise of the movement known as the Illumination or Aufklärung, and on the other the growth and spread of Pietism.

The Aufklärung or Illumination affirmed in contradiction to the creeds and beliefs of the Church that sufficient knowledge of God and His will might be known apart from the Biblical Revelation. They furthermore asserted that any questions pertaining to religion must be settled solely by the critical reason. This was in direct contradiction to the existing orthodoxy which held that the special revelation of God in the Bible contained all the truths of religion; and that divested of their supernatural origin, such truths could not be obtained in any other way. The reason of man was not sufficient to rise to this supernatural truth. It is to be noted that both the orthodox "supernaturalism" and the protesting "rationalism" tended to emphasize the same premise, viz. that religion consisted primarily of truth and doctrine. The concept of religion as mainly intellectual was common to both sides of the controversy.

The Pietistic movement arose in part at least, as a revolt against a barren orthodoxy which emphasized doctrine rather than piety and conduct. Pietism in its theology

was perfectly orthodox. Its sphere was other than the theological. Its first efforts were towards purifying the existing Church in its practical affairs and revitalizing the spiritual life of its members. It was apparent to the leaders of Pietism that one could hold a perfectly "sound" theology and yet not live a "sound" life nor even have a spiritual experience of any kind. Religion was seen to consist of more than truth and dogma. The task of defining this something fell to the lot of Friedrich Schleiermacher. As a result we find Schleiermacher beginning his theology from his mystical conception of the essence of religion.

## II. The Essence of Religion.

"The piety which forms the basis of all ecclesiastical communions is, considered purely in itself, neither a Knowing nor a Doing, but a modification of Feeling, or of immediate self-consciousness."----"the consciousness of being absolutely dependent, or, which is the same thing, of being in relation with God." <sup>1</sup>

First of all, it is necessary to notice that by the term "feeling", Schleiermacher did not mean a certain kind of religious emotion; this he terms "religiosity".<sup>2</sup> This was the element such as the old-time Methodists made prominent in their religious experience. This is not the sense in which Schleiermacher used the term "feeling".

Nor again, on the other hand, did he mean "the affective accompaniment of sense or of function".<sup>3</sup> This is the

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. pp 5, 12.

2. Ibid. p 30.

3. Osborn, Dr. A.R. Schleiermacher and Religious Education. MSS.

common usage of the word today, but in the eighteenth century a different usage prevailed. The phenomena of feeling were divided into three groups. First, the feelings "dependent upon the cognitive powers of the soul, such as sensations. Then there are the feelings which stand in close relation to the will, such as desires, inclinations, longings, and passions. Finally there are relatively independent feelings, which arise in relation to the moral life; these are the inward sentiments, or sentiments of the heart." <sup>1</sup> The term "feeling", as used by Schleiermacher, is akin to this third sense as stated above.

This highest feeling, let it be noted, is not unconnected with the processes of knowing. Dr. Osborn gives a very clear statement: "Human knowledge reaches its highest point in the exercise of the inner vision, insight ~~of~~ intuition (Anschauung), which involves knowledge of the reality behind the things we behold with the eye of sense."<sup>2</sup> The following quotations from Schleiermacher's Discourses on Religion will help to make plain his view with regard to the essence of Religion.

"And yet, however high you may go; though you pass from the laws to the universal Lawgiver, in Whom is the unity of all things; though you allege that nature cannot be comprehended without God, I would still maintain that religion has nothing to do with this knowledge, and that, quite apart from it, its nature can be known. Quantity of knowledge is not quantity of piety. Piety can gloriously display itself, both with originality and understanding in those to whom this kind of knowledge is not original."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Osborn: Citation above.

2. Ibid.

3. Schleiermacher: Essays on Religion to Its Cultured Despisers. p 35.

"Wherefore it (religion) is a life in the infinite nature of the Whole, in the One and in the All, in God having and possessing all things in God, and God in All. Yet religion is not knowledge and science, either of the world or of God. Without being knowledge, it recognizes knowledge and science. In itself it is an affection, a revelation of the Infinite in the finite, God being seen in it and it in God." <sup>1</sup>

"Only when piety takes its place alongside science and practice, as a necessary, an indispensable third, as their natural counterpart, not less in worth and splendor than either, will the common field be altogether occupied and human nature on this side complete. But pray, understand me fairly, I do not mean that one could exist without the other, that, for example, a man might be religious and pious, and at the same time be immoral. That is impossible. But, in my opinion, it is just as impossible to be moral or scientific without being religious." <sup>2</sup>

"If the ideas and principles are not from reflection on a man's own feeling, they must be learned by rote and utterly void. Make sure of this, that no man is pious, however perfectly he understands these principles and conceptions, however much he believes he possesses them in clearest consciousness, who cannot show that they have originated in himself and being the outcome of his own feeling, are peculiar to himself. Do not present him to me as pious, for he is not. His soul is barren in religious matters, and his ideas are merely superstitious children which he has adopted, in the secret feeling of his own weakness." <sup>3</sup>

"But the communication of religion is not like the communication of ideas and perceptions to be sought in books." <sup>4</sup>

From these quotations it is clear that to Schleiermacher, religion consisted of something other than knowledge or even conduct. That these are included in religion, or rather, grow out of it, he strongly affirms. But they are not of its essence. Its essence is an "affection" involving both feeling (Gefühl) and insight (Anschauung). Consequently the content of revelation would be neither in the field of doctrine nor of ethics, although these would evolve organically out of the revelation.

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1. Schleiermacher: Essays on Religion. p 36.
  2. Ibid. p 37.
  3. Ibid. p 47.
  4. Ibid. p 150.

### III. Schleiermacher's Conception of Revelation.

James Orr, in his recent work on Revelation and Inspiration, gives Schleiermacher as an example of one who held to the "Religious-Naturalistic" theory of Revelation.<sup>1</sup> In defining the view so designated, he writes; "that which identifies the natural with the supernatural.--For a classical illustration it is not necessary to go beyond Schleiermacher. To this thinker, in his Discourses on Religion, every intuition or original feeling is a 'revelation'." Now it is true that in his work on Religion, Schleiermacher seems to hold this view.

"What is miracle? What we call miracle is elsewhere called sign, indication. Our name which means a wonder, refers purely to the mental condition of the observer.--- Every finite thing, however, is a sign of the Infinite, and so these various expressions declare the immediate relation of a phenomenon to the Infinite and the Whole.--- Miracle is simply the religious name for event. Every event, even the most natural and usual, becomes a miracle, as soon as the religious view becomes dominant. To me all is miracle. In your sense the inexplicable and strange alone is miracle, in mine it is no miracle. The more religious you are, the more miracle would you see everywhere. All disputing about single events, as to whether or not they are to be called miraculous, gives me a painful expression of the poverty and wretchedness of the religious sense of the combatants. One party show it by protesting everywhere against miracle, whereby they manifest their wish not to see anything of immediate relationship to the Infinite and the Deity. The other party display the same poverty by laying stress on this and that. A phenomenon for them must be marvelous before they will regard it as a miracle, whereby they simply announce that they are bad observers. What is revelation? Every original and new communication of the Universe to men is a revelation, as, for example, every such moment of conscious insight as I have referred to. Every intuition and every original feeling proceeds from revelation.----As revelation lies beyond consciousness, demonstration is not possible, yet we are not merely to assume it generally, but each one

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1. Orr: Revelation and Inspiration. p 9.

knows best himself what is repeated and learned elsewhere, and what is original and new. If nothing original has yet been generated in you, when it does come it will be a revelation for you also, and I counsel you to weigh it well." <sup>1</sup>

From this quotation, it would certainly appear that Orr was correct in his evaluation of Schleiermacher's belief. But the following taken from the Christian Faith would lead to an entirely different conclusion.

"To begin with, all will agree that the word 'revealed' is never applied either to what is discovered in the realm of experience by one man and handed on to others, or to what is excogitated by one man and so learned by others; and further that the word presupposes a divine communication and declaration.----Accordingly we might say that the idea of revelation signifies the originality of the fact at the foundation of a religious communion, in the sense that this fact, as conditioning the individual content of the religious emotions which are found in the communion, cannot itself in turn be explained by the historical chain that precedes it." <sup>2</sup>

Notice that here revelation is made to be that which is at the foundation of a religious communion. That is, if such a communion does not spring from this so called revelation, such would be no revelation. It is in like manner affirmed that a revelation is neither discovered from the experience of one man, nor from his thought processes. This seems to be in contradiction to the statement made in the Discourses to which attention was called by Orr. But proceeding still further:

"Indeed, it would be difficult to draw any clear dividing line at all between what is revealed and what comes to light in a natural way, unless we are prepared to fall back on the

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1. Schleiermacher: Essays on Religion. p 88.
2. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. pp 49-51.

position that revelation is only to be assumed when not a single moment but a whole existence is determined by such a divine communication, and that what is then proclaimed by such an existence is to be regarded as revealed."<sup>1</sup>

From this and the quotation above, it is to be understood that revelation occurred only at the founding of a religious communion. That this was Schleiermacher's real view will be borne out later when it is shown that to him, Christ was the Christian revelation, and all else in the Christian religion is derived from the revelation made in Him. How to reconcile this with the passage from the Discourse is difficult, perhaps impossible. Yet two things must be remembered; first, that the Discourses were written as an apologetic to Religion's cultured despisers, whereas the Christian Faith was written for believers; and second, that an interval of about twenty years elapsed between the writing of the two works.

Naturally then, taking into account Schleiermacher's view of religion and revelation, the content of revelation would not be primarily knowledge nor an ethical code. If religion is in the higher realm of the insight (Anschauung) and feeling (Gefühl), revelation must make its contribution at that point. Of course, such revelation must have effects upon the whole thought life of the individual as well as upon his conduct.

"But I am unwilling to accept the further definition that it operates upon man as a cognitive being. For that would make revelation to be originally and essentially doctrine; and I do not believe that we can adopt that position, whether we consider the whole field covered by the

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. pp 50-51.



idea, or seek to define it in advance with special reference to Christianity. If a system of propositions can be understood from their connection with others, then nothing supernatural was needed for their production. But if they cannot, then they can, in the first instance, only be apprehended as parts of another whole, as a moment of the life of a thinking being who works upon us directly as a distinctive existence by means of his total impression upon us; and this working is always a working upon the self-consciousness.---That this does not exclude doctrine but implies it is obvious." <sup>1</sup>

#### IV. The Specific Christian Revelation.

To Schleiermacher, the whole Christian Revelation is to be summed up in the Person of the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. In the other religions of humanity there has been a kind of revelation, a limited one, but in Christianity there has been given the chief, unlimited and absolute revelation. The founders of other religions have had revelations given through them, but in Christianity, the Founder Himself, constitutes the revelation.

"No one will object to the supposition that in all founders of religions, even on the subordinate levels, there is such an endowment, if only the doctrine and communion which proceed from them have a distinctive and original character. But if this is to be applied in the same sense to Christ, it must first of all be said that, in comparison with Him, everything which could otherwise be regarded as revelation again loses this character. For everything else is limited to particular times and places, and all that proceeds from such points is from the very outset destined to be submerged again into Him, and is thus in relation to Him, no existence, but a non-existence; and He alone is destined gradually to quicken the whole human race into higher life. Anyone who does not take Christ in this universal way as divine revelation cannot desire that Christianity should be an enduring phenomenon." <sup>2</sup>

So then Christ is the sum total of the Christian Revelation.

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1. Schleiermacher: Christian Faith. p 50.
  2. Ibid. p 63.

The Scriptures are not to be confused with the Revelation in Christ. They are but a record of that revelation. Nor is the content of the teaching of the Apostles to be called Revelation. This teaching they were able to give by virtue of their immediate contact with the Person of the Revelation, and by Inspiration, but Christ alone was worthy to be called a Revelation.

"The general custom of calling 'Holy Scripture' as such, 'Revelation', however, leads frequently to the two ideas being treated as interchangeable, which cannot fail to produce confusion. For if this is taken to mean that the sacred writers, being under inspiration, were informed of the content of what they wrote in a special divine manner, there is no foundation for any such statement, whether we consider the act of composing a sacred book itself or the excitation of thought preceding or underlying it. All that they teach derives from Christ; hence in Christ Himself must be the original divine bestowal of all that the Holy Scriptures contain-not, however, in isolated particulars, by way of inspiration, but as a single individual bestowal of knowledge out of which the particulars evolve organically. Thus the speaking and writing of the Apostles as moved by the Spirit was simply a communication drawn from the divine revelation in Christ." <sup>1</sup>

That is to say, the revelation was made, and the Scriptures came from that revelation. Christ, Himself, was the Revelation, and the Scriptures are the record of His work and continued activity. Just in line with this idea, Schleiermacher posits the authority of the Scriptures in Christ, and not in any inherent worth of their own. Thus he remarks: "The authority of Holy Scripture cannot be the foundation of faith in Christ; rather must the latter be presupposed before a peculiar authority can be granted to Holy Scripture." Following are the reasons he gives for maintaining his position.

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. pp 597-8
2. Ibid. p 591.

1. Faith in Jesus as the Christ cannot be based upon the authority of the Scriptures for the question is then raised as to what this authority is to be based upon. If such authority is to be based upon ordinary reason alone then the common man could not attain to faith in the genuine way, but would be dependent upon experts. If he could obtain faith in this way, it is conceivable that he might have faith without having felt any need for redemption at all.

2. The grounds for our faith must be the same as those of the early Christians and Scriptural writers. "Their faith sprang not from the Old Testament Scriptures with their prophecies of Christ, but from the direct impression of Christ upon their souls." As the faith of the Apostles sprang from the preaching of Christ, so the faith of others sprang from the preaching of Christ by the Apostles and many more. The New Testament writings are such a preaching come down to us, hence faith springs from them too, but faith is not dependent upon their first being accepted as having their origin in some kind of divine inspiration.

3. Precautions must be taken to avoid the impression that a doctrine must belong to Christianity because it is in the Scriptures, for it is rather the case that the doctrine is in the Bible because it belongs to Christianity.

So then the Christian Revelation, to Schleiermacher, consisted in the Person of the Redeemer; this revelation being made available to the believer by faith in that Person; the Scriptures being the record of His work, and the testimony and preaching of His message.

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### V. Schleiermacher's Theory of Inspiration.

First of all, it is well to note the fact that Schleiermacher criticized the ecclesiastical usage of the term "inspiration". According to the common phraseology, "inspiration" was used primarily of the writings. Something was affirmed of the record regardless of the writers. Schleiermacher disagrees with this prevailing view. The term "inspiration" is not to be postulated of books, but of persons.

"It is not easy to assign exact limits to the ecclesiastical term 'inspiration' in general, and here we merely wish to make some preliminary observations before entering on a special discussion of the subject. The word *θεόπνευστος*, which is used of the Old Testament writings, and which historically constitutes the most definite basis of usage, may very easily lead to a conception of the Holy Spirit as occupying a relation to the writer which has special reference to the act of writing but is otherwise non-existent. This suggestion attaches much less to the phrase: *ἐν τῷ πνεύματι κατὰ ἰσχύον φερόμενοι*" #1

In the same paragraph, he goes on to tell what is meant by the term 'inspiration', by defining it in relation to cognate terms.

"Here on one side what is known by inspiration along with what is learnt stands over against what is excogitated, the latter being that which proceeds entirely from a man's own activity as contrasted with what is due to influence coming from without. On the other side, again, stands what is known by inspiration in contrast to what is learnt; the latter is derived from external communication, while the former, being as it is original in the eyes of others, depends for its emergence solely on inward communication. Hence the presentation of what has been learnt may approximate to any extent to what is merely mechanical, whereas in the forthcoming of what is known by inspiration there may be manifested the whole freedom of personal productivity." 2

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. p 597.
  2. Ibid. p 597.

By this ~~is~~ meant that inspiration is like learning and unlike reasoning, in the fact that such inspiration has been influenced from without the person. When something new is derived by thought it proceeds solely from the thinker's own powers of reasoning, but when something is learnt or known by inspiration, influences have been brought to bear from outside the person. Now what is learnt differs from what is known by inspiration in this sense; what is learnt depends on something which is derived from a visible source outside the person and communicated externally, whereas what is known by inspiration comes from an invisible source outside the person and is made known by internal communication.

So far then, the following points have been brought out: (1) Strictly speaking the Scriptures are not the Revelation; Christ is the Revelation, they are the record. (2) The ecclesiastical terminology is misleading, for inspiration is to be postulated not of the records but of the writers, for they were inspired whether in speaking or in writing. (3) In contrast with reasoning, inspiration is a divine activity acting upon the Apostles from without, and in contrast with learning, inspiration takes place by internal communication. Two more points as to the specific manner of inspiration are to be noted: (1) The influence of the life of Christ upon the Apostles. (2) The working of the Holy Spirit in the Church or Koinonia.

(1) The Influence of the Life of Christ on the Apostles.

Schleiermacher held that all Christians of all ages have

been inspired, but that the inspiration of the Apostles was unique because they were in immediate contact with the historic Christ. Therefore the writings of the Apostolic group have value as a Norm for succeeding presentations of the Christian Viewpoint.

"The Holy Scriptures of the New Testament are, on the one hand, the first members in the series, ever since continued, of presentations of the Christian Faith; on the other hand, they are the norm for all succeeding presentations." <sup>1</sup> In enlarging upon the proposition, he writes:

"But if the historical development of the Christian Church is being ever more completely realized in time, and the Holy Spirit is thus pervading the whole ever more perfectly, it looks as if the first of this or any other series cannot be the norm for all succeeding members; for in any such development each later member must be more perfect than the preceding. There is truth in this but only when we are comparing two whole phases of the development, each in its entirety.-----Contemporary with all this imperfect material (Jewish and Pagan elements) however were, the presentations given in preaching by the immediate disciples of Christ. In their case, the danger of an unconsciously debasing influence from their previous Jewish forms of thought and life on the presentation of Christianity by word and act was averted, in proportion as they had stood near to Christ, by the purifying influence of their living memory of Christ as a whole."-----Thereby every idea which had attained that clearness in consciousness which must precede oral exposition, was at once forced to betray any antagonism it might have to the spirit of Christ's life and teaching. This holds good, in the first place, of their narratives of Christ's words and deeds, which fixed the standard that was to have the widest purifying influence. But it also holds pre-eminently of all that the Apostles taught and ordained for Christian churches, as acting in Christ's name; though it must not be forgotten that even when acting merely as individuals, each of them found not only his complement but his corrective in one of the other Apostles." <sup>2</sup> (The footnote mentions the incident of Gal. 2:11)

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. p 594.  
2. Ibid. p. 595-6.

From this quotation it is evident that to Schleiermacher, the influence of Christ on the Apostles did not render them infallible. Peter needed Paul as his complement and corrective. Each man's personality was the medium through which the Divine influence was transmitted from Christ. An imperfect medium would not do away with the Reality. The question of error will be considered later, but it may be well to point out here that there is a strong presupposition that Schleiermacher would not have denied errors in the Scriptural record. The underscored section on p 22 of this chapter would show that to him faith is not dependent on absolute inerrancy of the Scriptural record. The above quotation adds further weight to this consideration.

## (2) The Working of the Holy Spirit in the Church.

This section naturally has to do with the selection of the books for the Canon. Schleiermacher says that the collection of the New Testament books "took place under the guidance of the Holy Spirit." 1 The Holy Spirit was directing the thought of the Church as a body in somewhat the same fashion as the individual Christian directs his own body.

"That, although all the particular books in the collection belong to the Apostolic age, the actual collection of them does not; we cannot therefore have handed down to us any strictly apostolic indication of what is canonical and normative. In discriminating, therefore, we can hardly use any analogy but this, that we should conceive of the Spirit as ruling and guiding in the thought-world of the whole Christian body just as each individual does in his own." 2

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. p 597.
2. Ibid. p 602.

How this selection was wrought by the Holy Spirit, Schleiermacher does not explain. But he strongly asserts that the process was directed by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore it is to be noted that it is in the "Church as a whole" that the Spirit effects the completion of the Canon. The individual churches needed to be complemented and corrected by each other.

"Similarly, the faithful preservation of the apostolic writings is the work of the Spirit of God acknowledging His own products; He distinguishes what is to remain unchangeable from what has in many respects undergone transformation in the later development of Christian doctrine. On the other hand, He rejects the apocryphal in part immediately on its appearance, and partly He ensures that both this sort of product and the taste for it shall gradually disappear from the Church. The one apparent difficulty is this, that in history certain books underwent varying vicissitudes; at first they were accepted as canonical and later were rejected as uncanonical, or vice versa. But for one thing what changed here was not the judgment of the whole church; rather a book which had been accepted in one region and rejected in another was later universally accepted or universally rejected. And much might well be thought worthy of rejection for the Church organized as a great unity or in combination with other books, which was acceptable or the reverse in isolated communities and judged merely by its own influence. On the other hand, this proves no more than that Holy Scripture as a collection came into existence only gradually and by approximation. -----so that the judgment of the Church is only approximating ever more closely to a complete expulsion of the apocryphal and the pure preservation of the canonical. The influence directly stimulating this approximation guides also the whole course of procedure, and that influence is simply the Holy Spirit ruling in the Church. But all vacillations of judgment, everything that makes the approximation more difficult, can have no other source than the influence which is exerted on the Church by the world." <sup>1</sup>

Before closing this discussion of Schleiermacher's view of inspiration, it is well to note his opinions regarding the Old Testament. To him Christianity is a

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. pp 602-3.



separate religion, distinct from Judaism. "Christianity does indeed stand in a special historical connection with Judaism;" he wrote, "but as far as concerns its historical existence and aim, its relation to Judaism and heathenism are the same."<sup>1</sup> Consequently the Old Testament should be added to the new as an appendix.

"The Old Testament Scriptures owe their place in our Bible partly to the appeal the New Testament Scriptures make to them, partly to the historical connection of Christian worship with the Jewish synagogue; but the Old Testament Scriptures on that account do not share the normative dignity nor inspiration of the new."<sup>2</sup>

"But if we consider that it is only at isolated moments that the prophets rise to inspiration, and that it is only in this reference that the Spirit moving and animating them is called holy, our conclusion surely must be that this title is given in an inexact sense, to indicate that this common spirit, bound up as it was with the conscious need of redemption, and revealing itself in the premonition of a more inward and spiritual reign of God, carried in itself, and could kindle and sustain even outside itself, the highest receptivity for the Holy Spirit."<sup>3</sup>

## VI. Summary of Schleiermacher's Views.

### (a) General Summary.

1. Schleiermacher started all his thinking from the conception of the mystical experience of the believer with God- the "feeling of absolute dependence upon God". This, to him, was the essence of religion. pp 14-16.
2. The supernatural was but the religious way of viewing the natural. Every event was either natural or supernatural, i.e. miraculous; depending upon the viewpoint of the observer. pp 17-19.

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. p 60.
2. Ibid. p 608.
3. Ibid. p 609.

3. Schleiermacher uses the term "Revelation" in two different senses. In the Discourses it is used to signify any original idea which may come to the individual. In The Christian Faith it is used to designate the original impulse which gave rise to any distinctive religious communion. pp 17-19.

4. The Christian Revelation is to be summed up in the Person of the Redeemer. Whereas in other religions, revelation was made through the founders; in Christianity, the Founder, Himself, constituted the Revelation. p 20.

5. The Scriptures are not to be called the Revelation, properly speaking, they are but the record of the Revelation. The Scriptures have their authority because of the believer's faith in Christ. p 21.

6. It is not proper to speak of the Scriptures as inspired, except in a secondary sense. It is the writers who are inspired, and they, whether in the act of speaking or writing. 23.

7. Inspiration is to be contrasted with reasoning because it was a divine influence acting upon the Apostles from without. It is to be contrasted with learning because it takes place internally, it is an internal communication. pp 23-24

8. Special inspiration is to be postulated of the Apostles because of their special relationship to the living historic personage of the Redeemer. Such inspiration does not render them absolutely infallible, they are the imperfect medium through which the light has been transmitted. For this reason, the Scriptures have a Normative value for all succeeding presentations of the Christian Faith. p 25.

9. The special canon of Scripture was formed by the activity of the Holy Spirit on the Church "as a whole". Each section of the Church found its complement and corrective in another and thus was the final canon completed. p 26

10. The Old Testament does not share the inspiration of the New. It is to be looked on as somewhat of an appendix. 27-28

(b) Schleiermacher and Luther on errors in Scripture.

It has been seen that Luther would hardly have allowed, on the basis of his own judgment, any errors in the Scriptures which he accepted as canonical. Schleiermacher, on the other hand, felt that mistakes on the part of the medium through which <sup>the</sup> divine revelation was conveyed would not invalidate that revelation. Hence there is room in his mind for errors. Such an admission obviously affects the credal statements. This fact is further shown in his statement, that for faith, one's belief in the Virgin Birth of Christ is not absolutely necessary.<sup>1</sup> This is also true with regard to the accounts of the life of Christ; Schleiermacher himself does not believe in the literal statement of the temptations of Jesus.<sup>2</sup> In summing it up; it may be said that Luther would hardly have allowed errors in Scripture, and Schleiermacher would have admitted such.

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1. Schleiermacher: The Christian Faith. p 405.  
2. Ibid. p 415. Footnote.

CHAPTER 131.

A.B. Davidson's Conception of Revelation  
and Inspiration.

## Chapter III.

A.B. Davidson's Conception of Revelation and  
Inspiration.

## I. Davidson's Importance in Theology.

Because of the tremendous influence which A.B. Davidson exerted upon the theology of the whole world, he is to be ranked as one of the greatest English speaking theologians of all times. In an article commemorating the centenary of Davidson's birth, A.C. Welch remarks that there "is still something to be said for professors when one recognizes that one man in a shabby class room upstairs did more than anyone else to leaven not only his Church, but Britain, with the new attitude to the Old Testament." <sup>1</sup> At one time it was estimated that almost every Presbyterian Old Testament chair throughout the British Empire, and not a few outside of it, contained old students of this noted Hebrew scholar.

Davidson was born in the year 1831 in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. His early training was recieved at the Grammar school of Aberdeen, and then at Marischal College. From the year 1870 until 1902, the date of his death, Davidson occupied the chair of oriental languages in New College, Edinburgh. His Hebrew Grammars, his commentaries on Job, the Prophets, and the Epistle to the Hebrews are among his outstanding works. He is also the author of the "Theology of

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1. British Weekly. April 2, 1931. Article on A.B. Davidson.

the Old Testament" of the International Theological series.

## II. The Idea of Revelation in Religion.

Davidson starts with the view that all men everywhere had some knowledge of God. He had not left Himself without witness anywhere. Often this witness was misunderstood, and frequently men's ideas of God were perverted and false, yet they could know something concerning Him and His will. "The Scripture does not seem to contemplate men without a knowledge of the existence of God, or without certain ideas regarding His nature," he writes, "it does contemplate <sup>possessed of</sup> them as perverted ideas regarding Him." <sup>1</sup> However the knowledge of God possessed by the Gentile peoples was fragmentary and insufficient. One man here, and another there, might be able to penetrate into the mysteries of the Eternal, but this would give no connected or coherent knowledge of the will and ways of God. In order, therefore, to make the complete knowledge of Himself universal, God chose a special historical group, a nation, to be light-bearers through whom He might <sup>and known</sup> be seen by all peoples. This was the people of Israel.

Davidson goes on to speak of the religion of Israel, or the Bible, as "revealed" religion in contrast to "natural" religion.

"And, as might be expected, the explanation that many have given has been, that we have in the history of Israel as established in Canaan the spectacle of a people slowly

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1. Davidson: Theology of the Old Testament. p 80.

emerging by natural means out of the darkness of idolatry into the clear light and freedom of a spiritual monotheism. The leaders in this splendid march--were the prophets. There in Canaan, and in this people Israel, humanity achieved its most glorious triumph; it trod down under its feet those debasing embodiments of its own passions and vices called Gods; and prostrated itself before the loftiest conception of one spiritual being, Lord of the universe, who is God.----Now these things are true in this representation, namely that there was a conflict between the worship of Jehovah and idolatry; that the prophets were the leaders on the side of Jehovah; that the conflict lasted during the whole history of Israel; and that the victory was won only under the purifying sorrows of the exile.-----But this is what is false in the representation given above, that the struggle was carried on in the field of natural religion. What Natural religion contributed was the idolatry. The worship of the spiritual God came from revelation. " 1

Hence revelation, in the strictest sense of the word, and as a movement, was limited to this one people. Thus was a medium afforded for the transmitting of the contents of revelation from one generation or age to the next. Occasional gleams of the knowledge of God apart from some such movement would soon be extinguished, but within the bosom of a nation such as Israel, the knowledge of the true God was effectually protected. Because of this fact the people of Israel always began with the knowledge of God, in contrast to the pagan world which tried to arrive at the Unseen through philosophy or nature. The Hebrew people did not need to discover God. They already knew Him. All their wisdom was based on this knowledge of the Eternal. In the pagan world an occasional light of the Unseen might flare up for a moment, but only for a moment and then it would be gone.

"The Hebrew wisdom differed from the Greek or any other secular philosophy in two important particulars; first: in the point from which it set out; and consequently second, in

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1. Davidson: Theology of the Old Testament. pp 86-88.

its method. Greek philosophy was the operation, or the result of the operation, of the reason of man on the sum of things.---Its problem was; given the complex whole of existence, to frame such a conception of it as shall be satisfying to the mind, and contain an explanation within it. Its object was to observe the streams of tendency, and, by following them up against the current, to reach the one source that sent them all forth. Thus to name God was its latest achievement.---But the problem of the Hebrew wisdom was quite different. It started with this analysis already effected, effected so long ago, and with such a firmness and decisiveness, that the two elements, God and the world, stood apart with a force of contrariety so direct that even the imagination could not induce them to comeingle or become confused.-----The Hebrew philosopher never ascended from nature or life to God; he always came down from God upon life; and his wisdom consisted in detecting and observing the verification of his principles of religion and morals in the life of men." 1

The question at once arises as to how the Hebrew people arrived at this "analysis" already effected. How did the Israelites ever come to the stage where they began their thinking from God instead of from nature towards Him? What was the origin of this uniqueness which was theirs? Davidson held that this was a matter of conjecture. Yet he pointed out that the Old Testament "seems nowhere to contemplate men as ignorant of the existence of God, and therefore it nowhere depicts the rise or dawn of the idea of God's existence on men's minds". 2 The origin of religion lies far beyond the horizon of history. The full historical stage is seen in the Old Testament writings, but there is possibly another stage lying behind this. Traces of this pre-historic stage of religion are perceived in the practices occasionally appearing in Israel, such as seeking for the living among the dead, necromancy, witchcraft and the like.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Davidson: Biblical Essays. pp29-30.
  2. Davidson: Theology of the O.T. p31.
  3. Ibid. p 31. Footnote.



Whatever, then, may have been the origin of the idea of God among the people of Israel, we find them basing all their thought on that, by the time we meet them in the Old Testament. It must be remembered, however, that God's revelation was still further limited to individuals within this historic movement. The whole group was to obey the voice of God and worship Him alone, but they received His word only through the lawgivers and the prophets.

"This conception of revelation is just the characteristic conception of the Old Testament. It reposes on such ideas as that Jehovah is the living God, and that He rules by His activity all the life of men. And it reposes on the idea that the religious life of men is mainly their practical conduct. And revelation is His ruling practically the whole life of the people by making known His will. This must be done to individual persons, not to the whole people directly." 1

Because revelation is thus bound up with a historic movement, Davidson developed another characteristic idea, viz. that of progressiveness in revelation.

### III. A Progressive Revelation.

The union of man with God in the Person of a Messiah, in perfect harmony of mind and heart, is the result of a historical action along two lines. "Along one of these God descends, and displays Himself, and comes near to men, until He becomes man. Along the other, man is raised up, and enlightened, and purified, until he is capable of receiving God." These two lines meet in Christ, and each great movement of Old Testament history and religion was moving towards this goal.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Davidson: Theology of the Old Testament. p 36.
  2. Davidson: Old Testament Prophecy. p 12.

In this development of Revelation, there are three distinct steps <sup>or methods</sup>. These are, (1) Outward Manifestation, (2) Inward Illumination. (3) Principles taught apart from events.

1. Outward manifestaion. In this period, God was teaching the Hebrew race by outward acts exclusively. There was no accompanying word of explanation, but these acts and their significance could not fail to be perceived by those towards whom they were directed. That is, revelation was made solely by suggestion, and not by word. For instance, the deliverance from Egypt was a "true redemption," and the settlement in Canaan a "true gift of Blessing from God".

"Thesethings were not the secular movements of a nationality. Neither are they to be considered mere symbols or empty types of future religious benefits. They were themselves actually this. They were the means of a real intercourse with a living God, a giving and receiving from Him; and through them the religious mind was exercised in the very same way as it is even in these days." <sup>1</sup>

Today, God is working in the world, and the mind attuned to Him can discern much of His doing. All the while, however, He gives no word of explanation. So it was in this first period or stage of revelation. The revelation was made by suggestion rather than <sup>by</sup> dictation.

2. Inward Illumination. In this period, the acts of God continued, but there usually preceded them, or went with them, words of revelation explaining them. This was the period of the prophets, who were par excellence the interpreters of God's providences. They were the ones who gave insight to the people concerning the whole national life as it affected mankind. They were the ones who opened

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1. Davidson: Old Testament Prophecy. pp 12-15.

up to the nation the goal of their history, and showed them how God's interpositions were leading them onwards to it. This period or method is also distinguished as the stage of "inward prophetic Inspiration", in which "God spake in men by means of His Spirit". It was because of God's speaking to them by means of His Spirit that the prophets were enabled rightly to interpret the Divine acts. The <sup>true</sup> prophets were inspired, not merely their writings, but all their teachings whether oral or written. More will be noted regarding Davidson's theory of Inspiration later.

3. Principles. In this stage, "truth is taught to a certain extent apart from occurrence or event, as principles." This is the New Testament stage. The first method was by suggestion, by events self-explanatory. The second was by events together with the word of explanation. The third was truth given apart from any such events.

Perhaps it would be well to note that these three stages were methods rather than periods, although on the whole they fall into fairly well defined limits. No one of these methods was used in any one period to the absolute exclusion of the rest. They "do not terminate abruptly, but slide imperceptibly into one another".<sup>1</sup> This progressiveness of Revelation is one of the characteristic ideas of this theologian.

#### IV. The Specific Doctrine of the Inspiration of the Scriptures.

From the description of the second period in the progress

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1. Davidson: Old Testament Prophecy. pp 12, 145.

of revelation, as noted above, it is seen that, to Davidson, Inspiration meant the illumination of the minds of a certain body of men that they might rightly interpret the providential acts of God, whether those acts be natural or supernatural. The great period of inspiration was that of the prophets. Davidson, like Schleiermacher, found himself compelled to deal with the common theological and dogmatic formula: "the Inspiration of the Scriptures". He did not postulate inspiration primarily of the record but of the writers. The men who produced the Scriptures were inspired; for that reason and on that basis only might the book be said to be inspired. "By 'inspired' we mean that, by the divine influence upon the writers, Scripture is what it is.--The only thing the term postulates is the divinity of the production; but what it involves or excludes, examination only can determine."<sup>1</sup>

Davidson rejected any mechanical theory of inspiration. "A moral being is never a machine", he wrote. The prophets uttered truths which had taken hold of their own souls. They spoke to the people concerning the things which they themselves had felt and known. "They knew so much of God and of man and of the Creator's designs regarding His creatures, as to speak intelligently of the progress, aye, and of the dissolution of their own form of the theocracy."<sup>2</sup> Thus it is seen that the Scriptures were religious experience before they were Scripture. They were the expression of the devoted souls of these prophets of God.

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1. Davidson: Old Testament Prophecy. p 14.

2. Ibid. p 12.

The writers of Scripture were inspired whether in writing or in speaking. The spoken word had no less lofty qualities than had the written word. In fact the inspiration <sup>of both</sup> was identical. "Such a prophet as Amos or Isaiah used writing precisely as he used speech; his writing was but a condensation, or expansion, as the case may be, of his speech."<sup>1</sup> The words of the prophets, whether spoken or written, came from their unique religious experience.

Because the Scripture was thus given, because it came out of the life of the writers, it cannot be understood apart from these lives and their circumstances of living. All the surroundings of the prophets must be taken into account. Because the Scripture was spoken to men long ago, "it was spoken to them in their circumstances and conditions of mind, which may have been in many things unlike ours. The color, the circumstances, in a word, the relativity, of the Old Testament belongs to the church of the past, and the relativity includes the amount or degree of truth spoken on any given occasion, for God spoke in many parts."<sup>2</sup>

"Attempts to give a definition of the Scripture may be regarded as futile. Our catechism asks, What do the Scriptures teach? The systematic theologian regards revelation as the 'delivery of doctrine'-revelation meaning the communication, from an intellectual Divine mind to an intellectual and otherwise empty human mind, of some abstract and universally valid religious idea. Such catechetical and systematic uses of the Old Testament may be quite legitimate, but they fail to correspond to its idea. They omit the historical, which is of the essence of the Old Testament. They omit also the personally religious in the writers, which is also of its essence. In a word, they omit this, that the Old Testament was religious experience, before it became Scripture."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Davidson: Biblical and Literary Essays. p 309.
2. Ibid. p 309.
3. Ibid. p 319.

To discover the circumstances in which any specific portion of Scripture was given is the task of Historical investigation. Thus Davidson came to favor historical criticism of the Scriptures. Criticism strives to ascertain with accuracy the background from which any part of the Scripture came. Without such criticism that part of the Book could not be understood.

"Now the aim of historical exegesis is to read the Old Testament, in its various parts, in the historical circumstances and conditions of men's minds in which it originated, just that we may trace God's historical fellowship with mankind. Criticism is part of historical exegesis. Criticism is the effort of exegesis to be historical. The effort can never be more than partially successful. But though there may be many failures, the ideal of historical exegesis is valuable, because it gives us the right idea of Scripture, which is the reflection of the living God in human history. Historical exegesis strives to unite all the lights emanating from this presence; Abraham in his call, Jacob at Bethel, Moses at the bush, the vision of Isaiah, the piety of Jeremiah and the Psalmists-to dispose all these points of light in one great line of light running down all history, the track of the presence of the living God in the life of mankind." <sup>1</sup>

From all these considerations, it is clear that Davidson rejected the theory of Verbal Inspiration. He was too keenly conscious of the human element in the production of the Bible as to admit any such theory as that. Yet he did not fail to recognize the divine element in the making of the Book. Both human and divine elements were present in the construction of the Scriptural record, but their combination is a mystery somewhat after the fashion of the Combination of the Human and the Divine in that other Word of God, Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Thus the infinite condescension of God consisted neither in making use of human words-that would be a species of Doctetism, akin to giving Christ a phantasmical body-nor yet in

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1. Davidson: Biblical and Literary Essays. p 319.

making use of men as the medium through whom to utter words or thoughts-that would be a species of Ebionitism. It consisted in this, that His Spirit begot His own thoughts in man's breast, whence, being conceived, they came forth clothed in perfect human flesh, as the Word of Life came; and that Holy Thing, thus begotten and thus born, is the word of God. We have, therefore, a fixed basis for interpretation. We have not two senses to look for, one of the writer and another of the Spirit, but one sense common to both, begotten of one in the bosom of the other. This is the Biblical sense; and we shall find it if we seek it biblically." 1

It must be noted that when Davidson speaks of the "word of God" as in the quotation above, he does not use it as synonymous with the whole Bible. What is referred to is the message which the prophets spake to the people. It is the "word that came to Jeremiah from Jehovah" in such and such a time. It is the contents of the "Thus saith Jehovah" of Isaiah. The description above would not apply to the historical sections nor to the chronological records save as these were used to illustrate some message or lesson from the prophets. Those sections, as was noted above, should be subjected to historical criticism. The record is not to be thought of as inspired save as it was composed and used by inspired men.

#### IV. Summary of Davidson's Views.

##### (a) General Summary.

1. Revelation denotes the act or process whereby God has made Himself known to humanity. Revelation has been made to isolated individuals of all nations but such was fragmentary and <sup>was doomed</sup> soon to become extinct. The Biblical revela-

tion was fostered and protected within a great historical movement which was itself directed by God and thus an integral part of the revelation. pp 33-34.

2. Those within the pale of revealed religion always began their reasoning and thinking from the God they knew, whereas those outside of this group always began from the phenomena of nature and tried to arrive at some conclusion regarding the Universe, or God. pp 34-35.

3. This revelation to Israel was not static, but progressive. The three stages were: (1) outward manifestation, (2) Inward Illumination, (3) Principles taught apart from events. pp36-38.

4. Inspiration is to be postulated of men; personalities, not records. Inspiration applies to these men whether in speaking or in writing. p39.

5. The Scripture was experienced before it was Scripture. Men spoke out of the fulness of their own souls. pp 39-40.

6. Scripture is to be interpreted in the light of the thought forms, characteristic ideas, and ruling notions of the times in which it was given. Historical criticism is a valid and legitimate method of determining these conditions, and is necessary for an adequate understanding of the Scripture. pp 40-41.

7. The method whereby the prophets were inspired is a mystery somewhat after the order of the incarnation; consisting of both human and divine elements. Verbal inspiration is not to be admitted. pp 41-42.



## (b) Davidson and Luther on Errors in the Scriptures.

Although Davidson did not hold to Verbal Inspiration, I could find no definite statement to the effect that there are errors in the Scriptural record. This inference may be drawn from his attitude towards criticism, although nothing positive can be asserted with respect to such an inference. It is not possible to know Luther's attitude on the subject of Biblical criticism, but it hardly seems probable that he would have favored it.

## CHAPTER 4.

Horace Bushnell's Conception of Revelation  
and Inspiration.

## Chapter 47.

# Horace Bushnell's Conception of Revelation and Inspiration.

## I. Bushnell's Importance in Theology.

Horace Bushnell ranks as one of the greatest American theologians. His "Christian Nurture" practically marks the inauguration of an entirely new movement which has now attained a place of primary importance in the religious world-viz. Religious Education. His name is attached to the Moral-Influence theory of the Atonement. "The present generation venerates him as one of the molders of religious opinion, and has been influenced by him more perhaps than it knows." 1

Bushnell was born at Litchfield Conn. April 14, 1802. His training was recieved at Yale College from which he graduated in 1827. After studying law for a few years, he changed his mind and determined to enter the ministry. After completing his course at Yale Divinity School, he became pastor of the North Church, Hartford Conn, where he remained until 1859, when he was forced to resign because of his health. He died in 1876. Twice in his life, Bushnell was accused of heresy, but his congregation stood by him, and nothing came from the accusation.

## II. Christianity, a Supernatural Religion.

Bushnell gave no formal statement of his belief on revelation. His efforts were mainly directed, especially in his apologetic work, towards a defence of the super-

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natural, and particularly as it is related to Christianity. An elucidation of what he meant by the term "supernatural", together with his meaning of Christianity as a supernatural religion, will aid greatly in an understanding of his conception of revelation. His work entitled, "Nature and the Supernatural", first published in 1858, furnishes the main source for this treatment. In that book, the aim is stated as follows: "to find a legitimate place for the supernatural in the system of God, and show it as a part of the divine system itself." <sup>1</sup>

As has been previously noted, Schleiermacher, in his Discourses at least, identified the natural with the supernatural. "Every event, even the most natural and usual, becomes a miracle as soon as the religious view becomes dominant." <sup>2</sup> The supernatural is thus made to depend upon the attitude and viewpoint of the observer. Bushnell's idea differed from this. To him the supernatural was something distinct, and to be contrasted with the natural, although the two are not to be thought of as contradictory. To him "nature" or "system of nature" signified a realm of being or substance "which has an acting, a going on or process from within itself, under and by its own laws".<sup>3</sup> When he spoke of the "natural", he meant "the chain of causes and effects, or the scheme of orderly succession, determined from within the scheme itself". Anything influencing this natural chain from without is supernatural because it extra-natural. This term, as is easily seen, may therefore

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1. Bushnell: Nature and the Supernatural. p. 18.

2. Schleiermacher: Essays on Religion. p 88. See p 17.

3. Bushnell: Nature and the Supernatural. p. 25f.

be used in several connections. For instance, man is in a sense supernatural, for he may influence nature from without. Bushnell points out that nature never built a house, nor wrote a book, nor invented a steam engine. It took the extra-natural or supernatural power exerted by man on nature to do these things. The example which he gives is that of a murderer in firing the fatal shot from his pistol. The materials are brought together and compounded for making an explosive gas, an arrangement is prepared to strike a fire, muscles contracted to pull back the arm, a nervous telegraph running down from the brain, by which some order is sent to contract the muscles. At the end of this chain of natural causes there is some decision of will, which the jury holds responsible for the whole chain. This line of causes and effects existed "elementally" in nature, but was not effective until some extra-natural or supernatural cause set it going. Thus man himself is in a sense a supernatural being. Likewise God is a Superior Supernatural Being able to set forces of cause and effect into motion which had hitherto been but latent in nature.

In the same sense, the term "supernatural" is to be applied to Christianity, and yet with one addition. Because God is thus superior to nature and acting from "behind and through her laws" is not sufficient reason to make Christianity a "supernatural" religion. Christianity is supernatural because it is redemptive,

"On the other hand, there are many who claim to be acknowledged as adherents of a supernatural faith, with as little definite understanding. Believing in a God superior to nature, acting from behind and through her laws, they suppose that they are, of course, to be classed as

believers in a supernatural Being and religion. But the genuine supernaturalism of Christianity signifies a great deal more than this; viz., that God is acting from without on the lines of cause and effect in our fallen world and our disordered humanity, to produce what, by no mere laws of nature, will ever come to pass. Christianity, therefore, is supernatural, not because it acts through the laws of nature, limited by, and doing the work of the laws; but because it acts regeneratively and new-creatively to repair the damage which those laws, in their penal action, would otherwise perpetuate. Its very distinction, as a redemptive agency, lies in the fact that it enters nature, in this regenerative and rigidly supernatural way, to reverse and restore the lapsed condition of sinners." <sup>1</sup>

That is to say; God under any circumstances could work through nature; and there would be much that is supernatural in the world even apart from the need of redemption from sin, but in the strictest sense of the word, Christianity, as a religion, would not be supernatural were there no need for this redemption from sin and for regeneration from sin's blighting effects.

Perhaps the most blighting of all these effects of sin is the bondage to which sin submitted the will of man. Of course this bondage does not mean that man lost his freedom with regard to the realm of nature except in a certain degree, but in the things of God, man finds that he is unable to restore himself, for in this realm his will is not free. No amount of development could bring him back to God. Here a supernatural intervention is necessary to bring him to God again.

Christianity then, is a supernatural religion because it contains the provisions of God necessary to counteract the consequences of sin. Revelation as supernatural, therefore,

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1. Bushnell: Nature and the Supernatural. p 29.

is to be viewed in the same light. The highest self-development and culture had failed to free the wills of men, Christ brought the Gospel from without. The revelation in Him was thus extra-natural or supernatural, operating on nature and men's nature from without. <sup>1</sup>

This whole consideration of Christianity as a supernatural religion anticipates Bushnell's idea regarding Inspiration. The essence of the Christian revelation consists in the fact that something has been done from without. Man's soul has been set free, and God is working to remedy the effects of sin both upon the soul and upon nature. These are facts, experiences, not mere rational truths. Perhaps this accounts for Bushnell's dislike for creeds. The Christian Gospel cannot be adequately stated in rational form. The Christian Gospel does something for the soul. The Apostles Creed is the best of all because it "stays by the concrete most faithfully, and carries its doctrine, as far as possible, in a vehicle of fact and of real life". <sup>2</sup> Thus it is no surprise to find Bushnell rejecting the theory of Verbal Inspiration, but holding a special theory of his own. To this we now turn.

### III. Bushnell's Theory of Inspiration.

The first thing to note here is that Bushnell held that words were inadequate to express the fullest truths of the soul. This belief is stated quite at length in his Dissertation on Language. Here words are shown to be but symbols, signs which are unable to convey accurately all that is

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1. Bushnell: Nature and the Supernatural. p 235.

2. Bushnell: God in Christ. p 83.

in any author's mind. "All words are, in fact, only incarnations, or insensings of thought." So it is that the fullest truth can be expressed only in paradoxes. This accounts for the fact that the Christian Revelation often comes to us in seeming contradictions. For instance, the mysteries of the Incarnation and the Trinity are paradoxes.<sup>1</sup>

The second thing of importance with regard to Bushnell's theory of Inspiration is the fact that the supernatural revelation of Christianity is not non-rational but super-rational. This revelation can not be expressed adequately in words, nor can it be fully apprehended by reason. It can only be received.. Because the Christian revelation is spiritually discerned it cannot be grasped by the intellect. Nine things which the Christian revelation thus brings are enumerated.<sup>2</sup>

1. The Gospel is extra-natural and extra-rational. "Christ comes into the world from without, and above it, and brings in with Him new premises, not here before".

2. The salvation of Christianity is extra- or super-rational. "The human teachers come with disquisitions, theories, philosophies, pedagogies, schemes of reformation, ideal republics, doctrines of association. But they, none of them, speak of salvation."

3. Because this salvation is by faith it exhibits this superrational character. "Reason may be allowed to have a tribunitial veto against it, provided the doctrine is certainly proved to be contrary to reason; but it cannot be received by reason."

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1. Bushnell: God in Christ. p 55.  
2. Bushnell: Nature and the Supernatural. p362ff.



These three elements are sufficient to show how Bushnell developed the idea of the superrational in the Christian Revelation. From these two facts then, viz. that the deepest truths of the soul can not be expressed in words, and that the Christian Religion is superrational as well as supernatural, it follows that the substance of the Christian Revelation consists of experience rather than language. The Bible is not to be used as a storehouse of mere "dialectic propositions", but as a message of God to the human soul. God speaks to each individual through the Scriptures.

"And if it be somewhat difficult to put the poet of humanity into a few short formulas, that will communicate all that he expresses, with his manifold, wondrous art, will it probably be easier to transfer the grand poem of salvation, that which expresses God, into a few dull propositions; which when they are produced, we may call the sum total of the Christian truth? Let me freely confess that, when I see the human teacher elaborating a phrase of speech, or mere dialectic proposition, that is going to tell what God could only show me by the history of the ages, and the mystic life and death of Jesus our Lord, I should be deeply shocked by his irreverence, if I were not rather occupied with pity for his infirmity." 1

Both these points which have been stated point to the conclusion that Bushnell did not hold to Verbal Inspiration. Furthermore he states definitely that there are insuperable difficulties connected with that theory. The theory of Verbal Inspiration ties the hands of the investigator from the first. It must be the first thing to be defended in Christianity. But such a theory cannot logically be defended.

"We go into no debate about the canon, which is likely to issue in a manner that is not convincing; we start no

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1. Bushnell: God in Christ. p 74.

claim of verbal inspiration, such as takes away the confidence and establishes the rational disrespect of the skeptic, before the argument is begun; we sharpen no point of infallibility down, so as to prick and fasten every particular iota of the Book, afterwards to concede variations of copy, defects of style, mistakes in numerals, and as many other little discrepancies as we must. But we try to establish, by a process that is intelligent and worthy of respect, the historic outposts, Christ and His miracles, and with these, also, the grand working plan of a supernatural grace and salvation." <sup>1</sup>

Here then, mistakes in the Scriptural record are not denied. Inspiration does not extend to the very words of Scripture. Furthermore there is no dogmatic assertion regarding the canon. "We are also obliged to admit", writes Bushnell, "that the canon was not made by men infallibly guided by the Spirit; and then the possibility appears to logically follow that, despite of any power they had to the contrary, some book may have been let into the canon which, with many good things, has some specks of error in it." <sup>2</sup>

If Bushnell denied Verbal Inspiration, what is his theory of inspiration? How did he view the Scriptures? At this point Bushnell followed Schleiermacher and Davidson. Inspiration is not to be postulated of a record but of the writers. Here he distinguishes two modes of inspiration. The one "is concerned to re-establish the normal state of being, or the state of divine consciousness, in which the soul, as a free spirit, comes to abide and live in the divine movement, and is kept, strengthened, guided, exalted, by the inward revelation of God; where it may be truly said that the soul is inspired, accordingly as it yields itself conformably

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1. Bushnell: Nature and the Supernatural. p 482. Cf. p 21f.

2. Bushnell: Nature and the Supernatural. p 22.

to God's will, and trustfully to the inspiring grace." <sup>1</sup> Thus every Christian may be said to be inspired. The second mode of inspiration is the inspiration of instrumentality according to which God inspires men to perform the specific tasks which He has for them to do. "And here the kinds, or qualities, are as many as the uses. He inspires the shepherd, Amos, not to write Isaih's prophecy, but the prophecy of Amos. He inspires Bezaleel to devise cunning works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in cutting of stones, and Moses to be the leader and lawgiver of his people." <sup>2</sup> Thus it is that God has inspired the writers of the Scriptures to write their particular portions as they were fitted.

"The doctrine of Mr. Parker wholly ignores or disallows this inspiration of use, and recognizes nothing but the inspiration of character. If a prophet, therefore, writes a book of Scripture, with a higher inspiration than another man has, it is because he is a better man. Let all men be good then, and all will be able to write as good books as he. A very convenient and short way of letting down the honors of Scripture; but it may be that God wants only a few men for this particular use, or to write books of Scripture; as He wanted only one to be a Moses, and one to be a Bezaleel. And if this be so, it will be very certain that He will inspire as many as He wants, for the uses wanted, and no more. It may be that, as He never wants another Moses, so He may never want another book of Scripture written, and it may be that He does. Should He ever want another, He will be able to qualify His man; if not no other will be qualified. Meantime, it must be enough that He will have His own counsel, and will aid and qualify all men for the uses He appoints." <sup>3</sup>

These inspired writers of the Scripture could fathom only one side of the facts of the Revelation in Christ. So there is the explanation of Paul, the dialectic; that of

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1. Bushnell: Nature and the Supernatural. p 484.
2. Ibid. p 484.
3. Ibid. p484.

John, the mystic, that of James, the moral or ethical. Even at times there is a diversity between the explanations given by these inspired writers, as for instance between Paul and James. <sup>1</sup> This then was Bushnell's theory of inspiration, the Inspiration of Instrumentality, according to which every one of the Scriptural writers was inspired and fitted by God to write in his own particular way.

This leads on to the other question: How did Bushnell regard the Scriptures? How are they to be used? He gave his answer to this question quite plainly. The Bible is to be read, not "as a magazine of propositions and mere dialectic entities, but as inspirations and poetic forms of life; requiring also, divine inbreathings and exaltations in us that we may ascend into their meaning." The individual is to read the Scriptures that he may come into contact with the God whom they reveal. "Our opinions will be less catechetical and definite, using the term as our definers do, but they will be as much broader as they are more divine; as much truer, as they are more vital and closer to the plastic, undefinable mystery of the spiritual life." <sup>2</sup> In the Christian life it is neither desirable nor possible to define everything; the Christian truths are superrational. In the light of this we are to read the Book. "We shall seem to understand less, and shall actually receive more" if we treat the Scripture thus. <sup>3</sup>

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1. Bushnell: Nature and the Supernatural. pp 11, 113.
  2. Bushnell: God in Christ. p 93.
  3. Ibid. p 93.

#### IV. Summary of Bushnell's Views.

##### (a) General Summary.

1. Christianity and the Christian revelation are supernatural because they contain the provisions necessary to free the will of man and frustrate the effects of sin, (p47-50)
2. The contents of the Christian revelation are not to be placed in the realm of knowledge, i.e. scientific knowledge, for they were neither discovered by the cognitive faculty in man nor are they apprehended by that faculty. (pp 50-51)
3. The Christian revelation consists of a Gospel received by faith only, with certain intellectual beliefs growing out of that revelation. ( p 51)
4. Bushnell did not believe in Verbal Inspiration. Inspiration is to be postulated primarily of the writers, and of the writings only in a secondary sense. ( pp52-53).
5. There are two kinds of inspiration; a. The influence of the Spirit of God in reestablishing the normal state of the soul of man, and b. that influence of the Spirit whereby certain men are called for certain tasks. This is the inspiration of Instrumentality. One man may be inspired to preach, another to teach, a third to earn money for the Cause, and another to write a Gospel. Thus one man was inspired to write the books of the Pentateuch, another the Psalms, another to interpret the Gospel of Christ in a dialectic fashion, and another in a mystical.

##### (b) Bushnell and Luther on Errors in Scripture.

It has been noted that Luther likely believed in Verbal

Inspiration, Bushnell certainly did not. No statement was found to the effect that Luther would have admitted errors in the Scripture, the evidence seems to point to the fact that he would have denied any mistakes at all. Bushnell practically admitted variations of copy, defects of style, mistakes in numerals, and many other little discrepancies. (p53)

CHAPTER 5.

B. E. Warfield's Conception of Revelation and  
Inspiration.

## B.B.Warfield's Conception of Revelation and Inspiration.

### I. Warfield's Place in Theology.

Benjamin B. Warfield has exerted a tremendous influence upon modern American Christianity. Preachers and theologians from all parts of the country have been touched by this scholar's thorough thinking and saintly life. Although his specialty was theology, he was an outstanding exegete as well. Always an ardent Calvinist, he has been one of the most noted exponents of that school in recent times.

Warfield was born near Lexington Kentucky, Nov. 5, 1851. He attended the College of New Jersey at Princeton, and was graduated from the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1876. Following a brief pastorate, he was called to the chair of New Testament Language and Literature in the Western Theological Seminary near Pittsburg Pa. From 1887 until his death he was Professor of Didactic and Polemic Theology in the Princeton Theological Seminary at Princeton.

### II. The Two Species or Stages of Revelation.

Warfield held that God had revealed Himself to man in two ways; first by the general revelation which He has made to all men. This is the picture of God as shown in nature; such as is seen in Psalm 19, "The heavens declare the glory of God". Then there has been a special revelation which was necessary because of sin in the world. Here Warfield was in agreement with Bushnell. If man had not sinned



there had been no need of supernatural intervention of God into the course of human history. This 'stage' of revelation is also illustrated from the 19th Psalm: "The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul".

"It is quite obvious that there are brought before us in these several representations two species or stages of revelation, which should be discriminated to avoid confusion. There is the revelation which God continuously makes to all men; by it His power and divinity are known. And there is the revelation which He makes exclusively to His chosen people: through it His saving grace is known.---These two species or stages of revelation have been commonly distinguished from one another by the distinctive names of natural and supernatural revelation, or general and special revelation, or natural and soteriological revelation." <sup>1</sup>

Here it is well to note Warfield's view of the Supernatural and Christianity as a supernatural religion. In an article on the "Ideas and Theories of Revelation"<sup>2</sup>, he cites the contrast between the different viewpoints from which theology has been approached and the bearing of these on the question of the natural and the supernatural. In the Deistic controversy of the 19th century, the supernatural was formally denied, and with it all special revelation. Today the pendulum has swung to the other extreme, the Pantheistic, which "formally" denies the natural. That is, the natural and the supernatural are confused by those who hold to this pantheistic conception of the Deity. The natural and the supernatural are thus declared to be but different ways of looking at the same thing. It will be remembered that Schleiermacher seemed to hold to this viewpoint in his

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. p 5.  
2. Ibid. p 38.

## Discourses.

Warfield tries to defend the idea of a strictly supernatural revelation from this "insidious undermining", as he terms it, by emphasizing the fact that the knowledge communicated is as supernatural in its mode of communication as in its source. Otherwise the categories of reason and revelation would be completely confounded. So then he declares that <sup>the</sup> "mode of acquisition" is as supernatural as that which is acquired in revelation. "The differentia of revelation in its narrowest and strictest sense, therefore, is not merely that the knowledge so designated has God for its source, nor merely that it becomes the property of men by a supernatural agency, but further that it does not emerge into human consciousness as an acquisition of the human faculties, pure and simple." <sup>1</sup>

In returning to the thought of Christianity as a supernatural religion, it is to be said that Warfield held that the supernatural character of our religion is to be found in the fact that it aims to remove sin from the human race. Christianity is supernatural because God has made provision for sinners which provision is outside the course of nature as it was originally constituted. That is, if man had not sinned, the world and humanity would have gone on in a natural way to the perfection for which it was originally destined. Christianity is supernatural, then, because it is soteriological.

"The religion of the Bible is a frankly supernatural

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. p 39.

religion. By this is not meant merely that, according to it, all men, as creatures, live, move and have their being in God. It is meant that, according to it, God has intervened extraordinarily, in the course of the sinful world's development, for the salvation of men otherwise lost." <sup>1</sup>

Thus there are two "species" of revelation, the natural and the supernatural or soteriological. In defining the relationship between the two, Warfield is careful to show that they are not mutually antagonistic, but rather that the one complements and completes the other. Together they constitute a unitary whole. "Without special revelation, general revelation would be for sinful men incomplete and ineffective, and could issue--only in leaving them without excuse. Without general revelation, special revelation would lack the basis in the fundamental knowledge of God as the mighty and the wise, righteous and good, maker and ruler of all things, apart from which the further revelation of this great God's interventions in the world for the salvation of sinners could not be either intelligible, credible or operative." <sup>2</sup> Each species of revelation is incomplete without the other.

### III. The Contents of the Biblical Revelation.

At this point Warfield differed from the rest of the authors who were reviewed. It was noted that Schleiermacher held the content of revelation to be a Person, Jesus Christ, and through Him an experience of redemption on the part of the individual believer. To Davidson the essence of the Old Testament and that of the New, as well,

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. p 1.  
2. Ibid. p 6.

is the historical and the religious. Bushnell, too, denied that revelation was essentially doctrine, to him it was a Gospel accepted by faith. Warfield, on the other hand, held that the special revelation was a 'body of saving truth'. Continually throughout his entire work he stressed doctrine and the fact that a low view of inspiration would destroy the distinctive Christian doctrines.

That revelation consisted of history and of the appearance of Christ, Warfield did not deny; he rather strenuously asserted these facts. In fact he followed Davidson's outline of the periods of revelation, such periods denoting the progress of the great historical movement of redemption. These stages are those of (1) external manifestation, (2) internal suggestion, and (3) concursive operation.<sup>1</sup> But Warfield went still further and asserted that revelation also consisted of words suitable for doctrine. These words have been given so as to be in the most real sense the words of God.

"Revelation is, of course, often made through the instrumentality of deeds; and the series of the great redemptive acts by which He saves the world constitutes the preeminent revelation of the grace of God-so far as these redemptive acts are open to observation and are perceived in their significance. But revelation, after all, is the correlate of understanding, and has as its proximate end just the production of knowledge, though not, of course, knowledge for its own sake, but for the sake of salvation."<sup>2</sup>

Thus it is seen that Warfield held knowledge to be necessary for salvation, and revelation to be the manner by which such knowledge could be received.

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. p 151.
  2. Ibid. p11.

Words are necessary in the process of revelation in order to explain the divine acts. Without any explanation such acts would be unintelligible. For no series of unexplained acts can be thought to produce knowledge of God and His purpose and method of grace, especially if these acts be of a highly transcendental character. Thus the explanatory word had to be added to the revelation made through act.

Here it must be noted that at times Warfield uses the term 'revelation' in different connotations. Usually he uses it in the sense employed above, to denote all the ways in which God has been revealing Himself to man. However there are times when he employs it to denote only that revelation which is made in word.

"It (i.e. Revelation) is therefore not made even a mere constant accompaniment of the redemptive acts of God, giving their explanation that they may be understood. It occupies a far more independent place among them than this, and as frequently precedes them to prepare their way as it accompanies or follows them to interpret their meaning. It is, in one word, itself a redemptive act of God and by no means the least important in the series of His redemptive acts." <sup>1</sup>

Thus it is evident that to Warfield, revelation consisted essentially of words of <sup>there could be no mistake given</sup> ~~whose meaning~~ to man by God Himself. He did not deny the redemptive acts of God, but he denied that their interpretation was by man's own powers. He denied that these acts were of the essence of revelation in the strictest sense of the term. Such essence was to him knowledge, unambiguous and certain, so adapted

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. p 12.

as to redeem men from their sins. This leads on to his doctrine of inspiration, which obviously must differ from that of the other more modern men reviewed in this study.

#### IV. Warfield's View of Inspiration.

Warfield held to the theory of Verbal or Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> This was the doctrine of the Church from the beginning, he claims, and it is his own. He cites, in his treatment of the subject, another modern investigator, who though not holding to this theory, yet admits that the doctrine of the Church has always been that of Verbal Inspiration. This author whom he cites is the noted English scholar, Dr. Sanday. He claims that Origen, Irenaeus, Polycarp, Luther, and Calvin, knew no other doctrine. This line has continued through the "saintly Rutherford" and Baxter down to Charles Hodge and Henry B. Smith of our own day.

In the second place, Warfield notes as further evidence, the testimony of the painstaking care with which exegetes have scrutinized the sacred text of Scripture. This he claims, is in the words of another, "a high testimony to verbal inspiration". "This is represented rather by the Bengels, who count no labor wasted, in their efforts to distil from the very words of Holy Writ the honey which the Spirit has hidden in them for the comfort and the delight of the saints." <sup>2</sup>

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. p 63, 225, et. al.  
2. Ibid. p 53.

Still more, he cites this theory as that of the Scriptures themselves. Quotations are given as evidence from both Old Testament and New. He claims the testimony of our Lord as to this view. All the Apostles held to it, he insists. In his exposition of the passage in 2 Tim. 3:16, he arrives at the conclusion that the term *Θεοπνεύματος* means "God-breathed", that is, "the product of the creative breath of God. In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a divine product, without any implication of how God operated in producing them." 1

This theory holds that the Bible, not merely contains, but is the Word of God. It asserts that the Scriptures are by the Holy Ghost rendered infallible in what they teach, and their assertions are free from error. A human element in their production is not denied, but at times this element is almost lost sight of.

"It will suffice to remind ourselves that it looks upon the Bible as an oracular book,--as the Word of God in such a sense that whatever it says God says,--not a book then, in which one may, by searching, find some word of God, but a book which may frankly appealed to at any point with the assurance that whatever it may be found to say, that is the Word of God." 2

"Inspiration is that extraordinary influence (or, passively the result of it,) 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." 3

"No single error has as yet been demonstrated to occur in the Scriptures as given by God to His Church." 4

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. p 78, 90, et.al.
2. Ibid. p 52.
3. Ibid. p 396.
4. Ibid. p 225.

Thus throughout his entire work on Inspiration he speaks of the Scriptures as a whole, and almost without any regard for the human agency in their production. The Scriptures are here, they are inspired as a unit. No matter how they were produced or in what manner they were gathered into the canon, they are all inspired. This fact may be easily seen from the very titles of some of the chapters in his book on Revelation and Inspiration. Chapt.V. "Scripture", "The Scriptures" in the New Testament. Chapt. VII. "God-Inspired Scripture", Chapt. VIII. "It Says", "Scripture Says", "God Says". Chapt.IX. "The oracles of God". In these he almost personifies the Scriptures. They speak, and God speaks, they are the very words of God.

As was noted, Warfield recognized a human element in the production of the Scriptures. "It is quite clear from the records", he writes, "which the prophets themselves give us of their revelations that their intelligence was alert in all stages of their reception of them." <sup>1</sup> The human factors in the production of Scripture have acted as human factors, and have left their mark on the product as such, however they are more than human in that they cannot be erroneous. <sup>2</sup> The analogy between the Divine-human personality of our Lord and the Divine-human in the Scriptures is but an analogy and true only to a certain extent. "In the one they unite to constitute a Divine-human Personality, in the other they cooperate to perform a Divine-human work."<sup>3</sup> This analogy is true insofar as it recognizes that neither

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. p 21.

2. Ibid. p 108.

3. Ibid. p 108.



Person nor record has made any mistakes or errors.

However, Warfield will not admit that his theory is that of Dictation. The idea of Verbal or Plenary Inspiration must not be confused with that of Dictation. He states that he is trying to avoid two extremes, the one which overemphasizes the human element and the other which excludes it altogether.

"The purpose of both these extreme views is the good one of doing full justice to the objectivity of the revelations vouchsafed to the prophets. If these revelations took place entirely externally to the prophet, who merely stood off and contemplated them, or if they were only implanted in the prophets by a process so violent as not only to supersede their mental activity but, for the time being, to annihilate it, it would be quite clear that they came from a source other than the prophets' own minds.-----But these extreme views fail to do justice, the one to the equally important fact that the word of God, given through the prophets, comes as the unmixed Word of God not merely to, but from, the prophets; the other to the equally obvious fact that the intelligence of the prophets is alert throughout the whole process of the reception and delivery of the revelation through them." <sup>1</sup>

One final point needs to be cleared up regarding Warfield's position. It has been seen that in one of his uses of the term 'revelation', he makes it to mean revelation by means of word. Inspiration also applies to words since it is Verbal. The relation between the two is this; the Scriptures are a Revelation because they are inspired by God's Holy Spirit. <sup>2</sup> Sometimes the words of the inspired Revelation are themselves a direct revelation. In the reception of such the minds of the receivers "occupy relatively to the attainment of this truth a passive or receptive attitude." <sup>3</sup>

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. p p 21.
2. Ibid. p 167.
3. Ibid. p 40.

That is to say, when Jeremiah or Isaiah or any other of the prophets, or Moses, received the "Word of God", such reception was by revelation, and these men were relatively passive in the reception. In fact they are often represented as having received the word of God in a dream or vision. This receiving was by revelation. On the other hand, in the inspiring of the Scriptural writers, their own qualities were employed. They spoke their own tongue and made their own investigations, and yet in such a fashion that they can be said to have been "borne along" by the Spirit of God. Thus there were both divine and human elements in the production of Genesis or Joshua. In the word given by revelation, the recipients were almost passive, so much so that the words can be said to have been practically dictated to them. In the record given by inspiration, and now forming a revelation, the recipients were active in the reception, and there is no room left for dictation, but rather for guidance, and that in such a way as to guard the resulting record from error.

#### V. Summary of Warfield's Views.

##### (a) General Summary.

1. There are two "species" of revelation; the natural which has been made to all men, and the supernatural or soteriological which has been given through a special group whereby God's saving grace and redemptive program might be made known. pp 59-62.

2. Revelation consists of history, acts, and words and is

sometimes used to refer to the last only, because words- and they suitable for doctrine-form the main content of revelation. pp62-64.

3. The term "inspiration" is to be primarily affirmed of the Scripture i.e. as records. Inspiration is to be postulated of the writings and to cover the whole of the Bible. The genealogical list of I Chron. 1 is as much inspired as is the complaint of Jehovah concerning the people of Israel in Is. 1. There is, however, a difference between these two passages. The words attributed to Jehovah in Is.1 are a revelation, whereas the list of I Chron. 1 is but a record, belonging to the people to whom God's special supernatural revelation had been made. Nevertheless the whole record of the redemptive program of God, coextensive with the Scriptures, has been inspired of God. pp 67-69.

4. Verbal Inspiration is the theory held by the Church from the beginning, and it postulates inspiration of the whole record so that the Bible is absolutely infallible and free from error. pp 65-67.

5. The Bible is termed the "Word of God" because in every part it has been inspired of God. In some portions, as in Is. 1, we find the revealed words of God, but every portion constitutes a section of the inspired "Word of God." pp66-69.

6. A human element is recognized in the composition of the Scriptures. pp 66-68.

(b) Warfield and Luther on Errors.

It is hardly necessary to remark that Warfield and

Luther appear to be in agreement in regard to this question. There is this distinction which must be made. In Luther's time the canon was hardly completely formed, Whereas in Warfield's time various church bodies had practically agreed on the limits of the canon, which limits Warfield always assumed to be correct. Luther, therefore, was somewhat freer in his criticism of certain books of the canon. On the whole, however, it may be said that both Warfield and Luther held to the theory of Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures.

CHAPTER 6.

The Barthian Conception of Revelation  
and Inspiration.

## Chapter 6.

The Barthian Conception of Revelation  
and Inspiration.

## I. The Barthian School of Theology.

At the present it is hardly possible to view objectively the influence exerted on theology by the Barthian school. The movement seems to have awakened much interest both in Europe and in America. What will be the ultimate outcome, only time will tell. The opinion has been voiced that Barth and his school have saved the Protestantism of Europe. How true this opinion is no one can definitely say. At any rate, the whole world is eagerly watching and investigating the movement and its bearings on Christian thinking. The great number of books published concerning it and the continual space given to it in modern religious periodicals is sufficient justification for a consideration of the Barthian conception of Inspiration in this investigation.

Karl Barth himself, after whom the school is named, is a Reformed theologian, born at Basle Switzerland 1886. His training was received at Berne, Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg. After serving as a pastor for a few years, he was called to a chair at Göttingen, from there in 1925 to Münster, and in 1929, to Bonn. Brunner, one of the most lucid thinkers of the group, occupies the chair of Systematic Theology at Zurich. Gogarten, Thurneysen, and Bultmann are three names closely connected with the school.

## II. The Fundamental Tenets of the Barthian Theology.

### (a)-The Dialectical Method.

The Barthian theology is frankly dialectical. In varying forms, this method has been used in the realm of philosophy from the time of Plato to our own. It associates itself particularly with the names of Kant and Hegel. The Barthians derive their special use of the Dialectical Method largely from the Danish theologian, Kirkegaard; from whom they have drawn much in their theological thinking.

This method takes into account the "fragmentariness" of truths pertaining to God. Here perhaps, is its distinctive contribution. It realizes that the truths of God cannot be logically systematized in such a manner as to exclude their opposites. In other words, the dialectical method recognizes as valid the use of paradoxes. Barth, in his chapter concerning the task of the Christian minister<sup>1</sup>, bases his discussion on these two propositions: "We (ministers) ought to speak of God". "We are human, however, and so cannot speak of God". Three possible solutions, he offers. The lines between these three are not rigidly fixed, but they pass over into one another. No religious teacher ever used any one of them to the exclusion of the rest. The first is Dogmatism, which is intellectual systematizing. The second is that of self-criticism, which is mysticism. The third is the Dialectic, which is by far the best, because the great truths of dogmatism and self-criticism are presupposed by it, and also their fragmentariness.

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1. Barth: The Word of God and the Word of Man.

Brunner gives the following characterization of the Dialectical method as used by the Barthian School.

"The word 'dialectic'-used in Kirkegaard's sense, not Hegel's-points to something which Luther frequently indicates by the simple statement that in His revelation, God is hidden sub contraria specie. 'The position that God can be known directly,' writes Kirkegaard, 'is heathenism'. Like a rod in water, God's Word is broken in the element of the world; just as Christ could only reveal the glory of God through the form of a servant, so all speech concerning God, if in the sense of this revelation, is necessarily 'paradoxical'. It is only by means of the contradiction between two ideas-God and man, grace and responsibility, holiness and love- that we can apprehend the contradictory truth that the eternal God enters time, or that the sinful man is declared just. Dialectical Theology is the mode of thinking which defends this paradoxical character, belonging to faith-knowledge, from the non-paradoxical speculation of reason, and vindicates it as against the other." <sup>1</sup>

God's truths, then, are not to be seen in systematic form for the intellect, but in paradoxical<sup>form</sup> for faith. Thus the essential content of revelation will hardly take the form of Dogma or Doctrine. For that the Eternal God enters time is not a truth to be learned, but a contradiction to be grasped.

#### (b)-The Theology of Crisis.

Another aspect of the Barthian Theology is its emphasis on crisis. Brunner's first work to appear in English was entitled "The Theology of Crisis", which was first delivered as a series of lectures at the Reformed Seminary at Lancaster, Pa., in 1928. His newest book, "The Word and the World" gives a fuller explanation of the term, "crisis".

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1. Brunner: The Word and the World. p 6.



The name, "Theology of Crisis" has a meaning similar to the method of Dialectics. It signifies that the Word of God exposes the contradiction of human existence and then in grace covers it. Man is placed in the "critical" position of having to decide. "Theoretical thought seeks the unity of system; the Theology of Faith insists on the reality of existential decision." <sup>1</sup> This is an attempt to rescue faith from the toils of the intellect and restore it to the whole personality. Faith must not drift into the meaning of mere belief, a function of reason alone, but is to be thought of as fiducia, a decision of the will. The intellect acts upon mere timeless, impersonal truths; the function of faith is to make a decision regarding man's relationship with his God.

"Can it be scientifically proved that the Christian faith is true, it would be a sign that you have not understood what was said above. You can only prove general, timeless, and impersonal truth. In fact, to prove means nothing else than to link up an assertion with a system of general and timeless truth. To prove faith would mean placing faith within the sphere of general truths; and that is evidently nonsense, for it contradicts the definition of faith. There is a strict connection between general, timeless, and impersonal truths. But just as strict is the impossibility of proving faith. Otherwise it would not be faith. You cannot prove personal truth, you can only believe it; and similarly you cannot believe impersonal truth, you can only prove it."<sup>2</sup>

"The truth which 'became' through Jesus Christ can be apprehended only by faith, which means by personal decision. Faith is the acknowledgment of Christ as the event through which God decides the fate of my life."<sup>3</sup>

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1. Brunner: The Word and the World. p7.
  2. Ibid. p 27.
  3. Ibid. p 55.

Barth, too, shows how faith is not the assent of the intellect, but an act of the will. It is the decision of man to give his all, "his highest and best" to God. It is to live a life of obedience to the Divine call. The life which is offered to the Christian cannot be imitated or learned, it can only be accepted. <sup>1</sup>

All these considerations have a direct bearing on the problems of Revelation and Inspiration. If the content of the Christian message is not essentially to the reason but to the will; and if we may expect to find the truth of God coming to us not in a system, but in the form of contradictions, we can readily see that the Christian Revelation is to be thought of as something essentially different from systematic doctrine. Likewise, there is reason to believe that the doctrine of strict Verbal Inspiration is rejected.

### III. The Barthian View of Revelation.

#### (a)-The Word of God.

The Barthian Conception of Revelation is closely connected with their idea of the Word of God. They are continually speaking of the "Word" Brunner's most recently translated book bears the title, "The Word and the World", and two of the works of Barth are entitled, "The Word of God and the Word of Man", and "The Word of God and Theology". Once we arrive at some knowledge of their usage of this term, we shall have gone a long way towards an understanding of their view of revelation.

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1. Barth: Word of God and the Word of Man. pp 130, 41.

The Word of God is God's message to the individual. In Barth's own words, in reply to a certain student's correspondence, "only God can tell a man what the Word of God is". Thus it would appear that there is no room left for what is known as "progressive revelation". The "Word of God" makes the same demands upon the individual today and offers him the same privileges as at any time in the history of mankind. Yet history has made a change in revelation. Because certain things have happened in the past, the "Word of God" does not come to the individual in exactly the same way as it did before their occurrence. Perhaps this fact- that history has influenced revelation and yet there appears to be no progress in revelation-is one of the Barthian paradoxes, and it will be seen more clearly later.

(b)-The Word of God extra- but not contra- rational.

The first chapter of Brunner's book, "The Word and the World", is entitled, "The Word of God and Reason". The whole chapter deals with the fact that God cannot be apprehended by means of the reason, but only through faith. The intellect deals with timeless impersonal truths, whereas the Word of God addresses man in a personal way, and that from without. Faith is not merely the believing in a set of propositions; faith is the casting of one's whole self upon the God who has addressed that one through His Word. Reason is not depreciated; it is declared to be the greatest gift of the Creator. Yet it is to be thought of as a gift, and not as God. The Creator of reason is above reason. "Reason is not given us to know God but to know the world."

"When reason pretends to know God, it creates a reason-God, and that is always an idol. It is on this pretentious trespassing reason that faith declares war. I do not mean that we are not allowed to think metaphysically; but we are

not allowed to put the God whom reason knows in the place of the living God, who can be known only in the personal decision of faith.-----It is however true that, owing to the confusion in which we actually are, this perfect peace can only be striven for. It will never be without a tremendous inward conflict that we trust the Word of God which is so different from all that reason offers; but this conflict belongs to the life of faith, as to which we know that we have to fight the good fight to the very end." 1

(c)-The Word of God in History and in Christ.

Brunner follows his chapter on the "Word of God and Reason" with one on the "Word of Christ and History". This section of his work is most important for determining just what he means by the Revelation in Jesus Christ. He first shows that the coming of Jesus the Christ constituted "an event which is not only gradually but fundamentally above all other events, and one which essentially can happen only once.-----Jesus the Christ means eternity in time, the Absolute within relativity." It constitutes the absolute paradox. Hence it is a stumbling-block to the Jew and foolishness to the Greek. He then goes on to show how in the course of history, men have tried to replace this stumbling-block with a human commonplace. Consequently all the following erroneous opinions arose regarding the Person of Christ.

First, Jesus has been thought of as a teacher who brought an ideal, whether that ideal be individual or social. Second, Jesus has been viewed as the Example who lived the ideal. Third, Jesus has been called a religious genius, the greatest of all known members of the class, "religious genius". Fourth, Jesus has been conceived of as a mere Symbol of the Divine. And lastly, and this

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1. Brunner: The Word and the World. p 33.
2. Ibid. Chapt. 2.

is of utmost importance for our knowledge of his conception of the Word of Revelation, Jesus is to be remembered as a prophet. In regard to this last, let us hear Brunner's views in his own words.

"The case is very different, if we take the word 'prophet' in the original Old Testament sense. There we find the same stumbling block as in the Christ-idea of the New Testament, only in a different place. The prophet, according to the Old Testament views, is in no way distinguished from an ordinary man. What is peculiar about the prophet is not his person, not what he is but what he has, namely, the Word of God. To the prophet is given to say what no man can say, what God alone says- the Word from outside all human possibilities, therefore the Word which is no general truth, the Word which has to be explicitly communicated.-----Nor has the prophet authority. It is the Word which comes from outside of what man can know and judge, the Word, which, coming from God Himself, demands obedience." 1

But Jesus is more than a prophet for while the prophets have the Word, He, Himself, is the Word. In Him, God gives the world something absolutely new and final from outside of all that is historical, ideal, and human; "something which cannot be verified, pronounced upon, or pigeon-holed, but only believed- i.e., heard as God's sovereign Word, which demands obedience." 2 Here we have their characteristic ideas regarding the Word of God. The Word of God came to or through the prophets. Jesus was uniquely the Word of God, and through Him God speaks His Word to men today. 3 The Word is not constituted of information nor of religion, but of a demand for absolute obedience. It evidences itself by its authority.

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1. Brunner: The Word and the World. p 42.

2. Ibid. p 45.

3. Ibid. Chaps. 4 and 5.

Barth, in his "Word of God and Word of Man", brings out the same thing. It is the "strange new world within the Bible" concerning which we enquire. It is to the "Wholly Other" that we see the prophets look. And it is to the Word, which the pointing hand of John the Baptist, as in Grunewald's painting of the Crucifixion, points.<sup>1</sup> The Revelation through the Word is not essentially history, biography, morality, or even an answer to our questions concerning God; it is the demand that we cast ourselves upon God and live in obedience to Him. "This daring is faith".<sup>2</sup>

(d)-The certainty of the Word of God.

This faith constitutes one of the ways whereby we are certain that it is God's Word that addresses us. This is the testimony of the human spirit. The other is the testimony of the Holy Spirit. "Faith is personal certainty". The human spirit recognizes the Word of God which addresses it. "In faith man becomes certain that he has his self not in himself, but in God's Word."<sup>2</sup> Brunner then asks the question, "But what if faith were an illusion?" In reply to this, he points out <sup>that</sup> the fact/all our knowledge is ultimately dependent on faith of some nature. "No objective proof can be given that faith and not scepticism is right." "The certainty of faith rests entirely on the certainty of the divine Word; which means that the only true certainty is that attained through the Holy Spirit. But it is only in faith that we can say this".<sup>3</sup>

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1. Barth: The Word of God and the Word of Man. p 34, 65.

2. Brunner: The Word and the World. p 74.

3. Ibid. p 79.

The inward speaking of the Holy Spirit is identical with this miracle of faith on the part of the believer. The believer recognizes the Word of God as it addresses him, and he is also made certain by the witness of the Holy Spirit. "It is God Himself who tells you that the Gospel Word, which comes to you from the outside, is His Word. He testifies to the truth of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit. This the old theologians called the 'testimonium spiritus sancti internum'." 1

This then, is the final Christian authority, the witness of the Holy Spirit to God's Word spoken to the soul of the individual. The knowledge which thus comes, is not to be looked upon as mere "autonomous" knowledge which is to be verified by the reason, but is more like "heteronomous" knowledge, which is received, not verified. Yet there is a sense in which this knowledge rises above both autonomous and heteronomous knowledge, in that it is recognized by the human spirit and verified by the inward speaking of the Holy Spirit. This is the certainty of faith, and the ultimate Christian authority.

From these<sup>statements</sup> we see the Barthian idea of revelation. Revelation is not primarily the giving of information of any kind. It does not consist essentially of the founding of a new religion. Revelation is a demand; a demand that man cast himself by faith into the hands of his God, a demand

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1. Brunner: The Word and the World. p 63.

that man live in obedience to the voice and Word of God. Because revelation comes in the form of a paradox, the divine in the human, it is a stumbling-block to the reason, and can be accepted only through faith. Revelation came through the prophets, but came most fully in Jesus Christ. The "Word of Revelation" comes now to each individual soul, being recognized by the individual and certified to him by the Holy Spirit, mediated through the Bible and through the Church, making the same demand as always, the surrender of one's whole self to his God.

#### IV. The Barthian View of Inspiration.

##### (a)-The Human Character of the Bible.

The first thing to note is that the Barthians are little concerned with the Bible as a document. They are far more concerned with its content. What it has to bring to the individual is the primary consideration, not any intrinsic worth of its own. Barth writes: "The Bible is a literary monument of an ancient racial religion and of a Hellenistic culture religion of the Near East. A human document like any other, it can lay no a priori dogmatic claim to special attention and consideration.-----For it is too clear that intelligent and fruitful discussion of the Bible begins when the judgment as to its human, its historical and psychological character has been made and put behind us." <sup>1</sup> With this attitude it is not surprising that the Barthian school would not oppose any historical criticism of the Scriptures.

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1. Barth: The Word of God and the Word of Man. p 60.



Brunner is somewhat more definite. Almost at the opening of his "Theology of Crisis", he asserts that we of today do not need to hold the same world view as did the men of the Scriptures.<sup>1</sup> This means that the Biblical writers made use, not necessarily of the correct world view, but of the world view of their times. In other words, the Word of God came to men who were not rendered infallible in their scientific and philosophic outlook.

(b)-Verbal Inspiration denied, and errors in the Scriptures asserted.

Because the Bible is a human document, the old theory of Verbal Inspiration cannot be held. "Only through a serious misunderstanding will genuine faith find satisfaction in the theory of verbal inspiration of the Bible." The letters and words of the Scriptures are not to be identified with the words of God.<sup>2</sup> They are human words, and as such, liable to be mistaken.

The Bible is, in fact, full of errors.

"That is why in the Bible we find so many errors and inaccuracies, so much that is no better than what man has said and done in other places and in other times; the Bible is full of frailty and fallibility which is characteristic of all that is human."<sup>3</sup>

In holding a theory of inerrancy for the Scriptures, Brunner feels that the orthodox are worshipping the Scriptures which is idolatry. Such requires an antecedent "Sacrificum intellectus, before one can come in contact" with

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1. Brunner: Theology of Crisis. p 4

2. Ibid. p 19.

3. Brunner: The Word and the World. p 96.

the Bible's teachings. This is "blind obedience, whereas the Scriptures require an obedience which is not blind, but seeing". That is, to accept the theory of Verbal Inspiration is to accept a previous external authority.

The authority for the Christian is God's Word speaking in his heart. Thus "you ought not to believe the Scriptures because the Scriptures say so, but because God tells you that these Scripture words are His".<sup>1</sup>

Brunner then goes on to cite the Reformers as favoring this viewpoint. "The orthodox teachers could never have repeated Luther's words, that 'the Scriptures are the crib wherein Christ is laid'; and Luther would never have approved of later orthodoxy that everything in the Scriptures, is equally inspired by the Holy Spirit. For Luther and Calvin, those living exegetes, it was clear that the Scriptures are human testimony to divine truth, and that therefore the authority of the Scripture is not direct, but indirect." From the summary of Luther's teachings which was included in an earlier chapter<sup>2</sup>, it is to be noted that on the whole the contention of Brunner is correct. Luther would hardly have insisted upon an a priori acceptance of the Bible. It was most certainly the voice of God in the heart that authenticated the Scripture to that Reformer. However the question was raised at that point as to just how much of the record the experience authenticated, and the evidence

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1. Brunner: The Word and the World. p 94.  
2. Chapter 2, p 5 ff.

seemed to point to the conclusion that all the words of the books accepted as canonical were thus validated. But already we have seen that Brunner rejects Verbal Inspiration. So it is likely that Luther and the Barthians proceed from the same premise to different conclusions.

(c)-The Necessity of the Bible.

On the other hand, however, the Barthians are very emphatic in their stress that the Bible is necessary for Christianity. "Christianity without the Bible would long ago have degenerated into an unrecognizable caricature." <sup>1</sup> The revelation of God is not in a book or a doctrine but a living Person. But the book is needed to carry on the "tradition" regarding the historical Person of the Revealer. This tradition "is not an empirical objective account for the purpose of scientific or profane enlargement of knowledge," it is a "message, testimony, the word of faith designed for the creation of faith." <sup>2</sup> Like the Church, then, the Scriptures are necessary for the sharing of the message of the historical Person of the Christ of God.

V. Summary Statement of the Barthian View.

(a)-General Summary.

1. The Barthian School use the Dialectical Method of Kierkegaard in their theological thinking. The truths of God can be expressed only in paradoxes.

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1. Brunner: The Word and the World. p 83.  
2. Ibid. p 87.

2. This theology is known as the "Theology of Crisis", because man is said to be in a situation in which it is necessary for him to decide either to accept or reject the Word of God and its demands as it comes to him. The truths of the Christian Religion are not timeless and impersonal so that the logical mind is forced to accept them, but they are super-rational and accepted only by faith. p75.
3. Revelation is made to the individual through the Word of God. pp 77-78.
4. The Word of God is not contra-rational, but extra-rational. It cannot be discovered by the intellect. pp 78-79.
5. The Word of God first came through the prophets of the Old Testament, and then in the Person of Jesus the Christ. pp 79-81.
6. The Word of God is recognized as the Word by the individual by faith. The truest certainty is made possible by the witness of the Holy Spirit. This constitutes the Christian's final authority. pp 81-83.
7. Verbal Inspiration is denied, and many errors and inaccuracies are asserted to be present in the Scriptures. pp 84-86.
8. The Scriptures are necessary to continue the "tradition" or witness to the historical Person of Christ. p 86.

(b)-Luther and Barth on Error.

The Barthian group is hardly justified in leaving the impression that they follow in the steps of the Reformers in asserting mistakes in the Scriptural record. It is true that Luther used his individual judgment with regard to the

limits of the Canon, but within those limits, he left plenty of room for the things he did not understand.

The Scriptures were authenticated to Luther by the inward witness of the Holy Spirit as the Barthians claim, but he did not conclude from this that they were full of errors and mistakes. Luther and the Barthian school would hardly be in agreement at this point.

CHAPTER 7.

Conclusion.

## Chapter 7.

## Conclusion.

In the introduction to this investigation, it was stated that there were two values which were expected to emerge from this study. The first was a statement of the views of the men studied, the second a comparison of each with Luther on the question of errors in the Scriptures and Verbal Inspiration. The first of these is to be found in summary form at the end of each of the chapters; the second is also mentioned there, but will in this chapter be more fully considered.

## I. Comparison of the Views.

of the <sup>modern</sup> men we have investigated  
It appears that Warfield is ~~is the only~~ <sup>modern</sup> exponent of Verbal Inspiration. So it is proposed to take Luther's views and those of Warfield for the first comparison. From the investigation, it is practically certain that neither Luther nor Warfield would have admitted any mistakes in the Bible. Both would have asserted that the Scriptures are free from error.

Two reasons are usually given to prove that Luther did not hold to Verbal Inspiration. These may be true in the light of the objector's definition of the term, but in the light of Warfield's definition they do not hold. The first pertains to the Reformer's treatment of James and other books of the Canon. Warfield has done practically the same

as Luther in this respect. He has used his critical Judgment in accepting the Protestant pronouncement regarding the Canon, and in rejecting the Apocryphal books.

The second, as advanced by Ritschl, Westcott, and more recently by Barth, pertains to the ground on which Luther accepted the Bible. It was Luther's inner experience, it was his personal contact with the living Christ, which validated the Book to him. From a close study of Warfield, the same thing is evident. Warfield does not found the Christian religion on this theory of Inspiration. To him this is not the most important of the Christian doctrines. He writes: "Were there no such thing as inspiration, Christianity would be true, and all its doctrines would be credibly witnessed to us in the generally trustworthy reports of the teaching of our Lord and of His authoritative agents in founding the Church, preserved in the writings of the apostles and their first followers, and in the historic witness of the living Church. Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. It is the last and crowning fact as to the Scriptures."<sup>1</sup> He goes on, in the same paragraph, to show that it is the historic truth of Christianity and its power in the human heart that validates the inspiration of the Scriptures. He is in "entire sympathy" with Dr. Marcus

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1. Warfield: Revelation and Inspiration. pp 209-211.



Dods, in the latter's remark against the statement that "The infallibility of the Bible is the ground of the whole Christian Faith". It is the truth and experience of Christianity, to Warfield as well as to Luther, which certifies the Scriptures. What Warfield is contending for, in his argument, is that the Scriptures be represented to the common man as sufficient and trustworthy for his salvation and the ordering of his life. With this Luther was most certainly in agreement. His doctrine of the "priesthood of the believer" asserted the God-given right of every man to interpret the Scriptures for himself.

According to Warfield's own definitions, Verbal Inspiration does not signify dictation, as is so often asserted or assumed. What is really involved in that term is merely that by the Providence of God the Scriptures have been kept free from error. True, it regards the words of the Bible as the very words of God, but in a sense different from that which is often supposed. The real words of God, according to Warfield's theory, are those which came to the lawgiver and the prophets when they said: "Thus saith the Lord". These were the words of revelation, and not of Inspiration. In the words of Inspiration, the writers used their own intellect and understanding in the writing; in the words of Revelation, they were relatively passive in the reception.

Schleiermacher, on the other hand, rejected the theory of Verbal Inspiration. From his viewpoint, he emphasized the non-intellectual aspects of revelation. Hence such

revelation need not be absolutely free from error. He emphasized the experience of redemption; errors of the intellect need not make this experience void. So it appears that he went beyond Luther at this point.

It is also to be noted that Schleiermacher emphasized the fact that a doctrine does not belong to Christianity because it is in the Bible, but rather it is in the Bible because it belongs to Christianity. It was the writers of the Scriptures who were inspired and not primarily their writings. Their inspiration did not make them infallible in their writing any more than the Holy Spirit's influence on our lives makes us of today infallible. At this point, too, Schleiermacher went beyond Luther who assumed that the Scriptures were inspired as well as their authors.

Davidson followed Schleiermacher in refusing the doctrine of strict Verbal Inspiration. The great period of inspiration, to him, was the period of the prophets. These men were inspired of God whether in speaking or in writing. Inspiration with him as well as with Schleiermacher is to be postulated of personalities, and not of records. As such the Scriptures must be interpreted in the light of the thought forms and notions of the times out of which that portion came. These men had an experience which constituted their inspiration. Such a religious experience did not render them infallible and consequently there would be room for errors in the Scriptures. Davidson was in favor of the Higher Criticism which sought to discover that which was actually historical in the Bible. The doctrine of Verbal

Inspiration asserts that all is actually historical because it is part of the Bible.

Bushnell, likewise, rejected the theory of Verbal Inspiration. He admitted errors in the Scriptures. His was the theory of Instrumentality, whereby God fitted the men of the Scriptures for the tasks which He had for them to do. Obviously such inspiration did not render them infallible. Bushnell postulated inspiration not of the record so as to make it inerrant, but of the writers.

The Barthian School set forth no theory of inspiration. They are concerned with God's Word of Revelation to the individual soul. They are strong in rejecting the theory of Verbal Inspiration and consequently do not hesitate to admit errors in the Scriptural record.

All these men investigated, then, save Warfield have departed from the position which Luther assumed regarding the Inspiration of the Scriptures. They postulate, on the whole, something of the writers of the Scriptures, but only in that sense do they assert that the Bible is inspired. Its inspiration lies in the inspiration of the writers. To Luther, as to Warfield, the writers of the Scriptures were inspired because that which they wrote was inspired. This leads us to a final definition of Verbal Inspiration.

## II. Definition of Verbal Inspiration.

Properly speaking, Verbal Inspiration is not a theory but a viewpoint. It starts with the Bible as a book. It postulates inspiration of the record. Its favorite text

is: II Tim. 3:16, "Every Scripture is inspired of God". Something is predicated of a record. Naturally enough, if a record is inspired, every word of that record must be inspired, for the words constitute the record. The other viewpoint postulates inspiration, not of the record but of the writers. It claims that certain men were divinely moved to teach and preach, to speak and write; that which they wrote is the Bible. Here the favorite passage is II Pet. 1:21; "men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." Verbal Inspiration tends to view every passage as given from God regardless of its setting; this viewpoint considers the personality of the author and the conditions under which he spoke. The one says, "The Bible Is the Word of God"; the other that the Bible contains the Word of God. The one views inspiration from the result-the Scriptures as we now possess them; the other from the process whereby they were given. When one speaks of inspiration, it starts from the Book; when the other thinks of inspiration, it thinks of the authors of the Book. Thus Verbal Inspiration is often termed mechanical and scholastic, whereas this other viewpoint is called "dynamic" and "vital".

From this survey, it becomes clear that recent Protestant Theology conceives of two viewpoints from which the whole subject of Inspiration is to be approached. Both of them affirm the reality of the divine plan of redemption. Both regard the Bible as the special divine organ for the communication of divine truth. With either view it is

possible to use the Scriptures to proclaim the message of God to man. Therefore either view is compatible with the supreme task of the Church, viz. proclaiming and expounding the Word of God.

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