

WRITINGS OF JOHN A MACLEOD

by John A. Macleod

A collection of theological writings, sermons, and essays by John A. Macleod, compiled for study and devotional reading.

3 Chapters

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S. The Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God

The Doctrine of the Sovereignty of God

John Macleod

John Macleod (1872-1948) was Principal of the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh. This address was published in *The Evangelical Quarterly* (1941). The Lord is the true God and an everlasting King. He is the Maker of all things and as such He is their Lord. They are His work which He has made for Himself. They belong to His Lordship or Kingdom. They owe their being to His will and word. In the wide range of derived or created being which all belongs to His realm and is embraced in His decree there is not only the region of the inanimate or the merely sentient there is that also of animate and intelligent or spiritual being which was made to hold fellowship with Him from Whom it has come. Angels that excel in strength belong to this realm. We also who are of an order that was made a little lower than they belong to it as well. And we have a closer and more personal concern with the truth that bears on our race and on ourselves than we have with what holds good of another, albeit a higher rank of being than our own.

We each of us as well as the whole race to which we belong are subject to the sceptre of the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Made in His likeness and for His glory we should have our blessedness in Him. In regard to this we are as much dependent on the Lord for our blessedness as we are for our very being; and this we are not only as creatures as our first father was before he fell, but very specially do we depend on Him for the recovery of blessedness as creatures that have sinned. Sinners have earned the wrath and curse of God and if they are to be freed from His righteous wrath it can be only as the outcome of His holy will in gracious intervention. The evil thing from which we need to be set free takes the shape of war with God. The very mind or thinking of man as fallen is enmity against Him. It is not subject to His law neither indeed can be, and so long as the reign of this evil principle remains unbroken those who are under its sway cannot please God. They have their wicked quarrel with Him; and cherishing the thought of rebels, they are not willing to own Him as King or to give Him the glory of His kingly supremacy. They will not submit to the revelation of His will in Law as the rule of their obedience. Their quarrel with His royal rights comes out directly in their self-will which casts off His yoke. They would still, like their first father, be a God to themselves. And they dare to set up what falls in with their own pleasure against what He is pleased to make known as His preceptive will. The intimation of His preceptive will is one of the ways in which the great King makes it known that He is King. Those that would dethrone or ignore Him by ruling His authority out of their lives set at nought His will. They say in effect that their tongues are their own. Who is Lord over them? Thus the virus that was injected into the race by the tempter at the first is still at work and men will not yield to the claims of God as He calls for a loyal response in obedience at the hand of a race that He made to be His subjects and His servants. This is one side of God's sovereignty; and it is often overlooked and forgotten when we speak of the matter. And yet when our attention is drawn to it we see at once how it belongs to His Kingly glory that it should be His revealed will that ought to

guide the outgoings of our soul in the varied obedience of life. As a rule among Christian people there is an acknowledgment of this Kingship even though the best of them have reason to mourn over how far they come short of the love and the loyalty that should be theirs as their answer to the righteous claims of God. We see however that even on this side in regard to the obedience due to his Maker by man as fallen there is a disposition shown by many to reduce the claim that God makes at the hand of the sinner as though the sinful disability that man has brought upon himself availed to exempt him from some share of the full tale of duty for which his Maker calls. This perversion of truth may take more forms than one. The plea may be put forward that man is responsible for only what is within the reach and compass of his present power. When this ground is taken we see how those who adopt it as their starting-point and yet acknowledge the right of God to call for repentance and faith stand out for a seriously weakened and watered-down doctrine of the disastrous results of the Fall on the race of mankind, and they reason that when men are called upon to repent and believe the Gospel they must have some reserve of power still inherent in their nature which lays a rational ground for asking such obedience at their hand. Along this line lies Pelagianism with its diluted varieties and modifications in Semi-Pelagian Synergism and Arminianism. Those who espouse this kind of teaching reason from "I must" to "I can." They infer that there is power when there is duty. The pride of unbroken and unhumiliated human nature comes out in the Kantian ethic that deduces "I can" from "I ought." It forgets that the disability which comes in the train of sin does not take away from God the right to ask for the love and the service to yield which He made us in His likeness at the first. To take this away from Him would be as much as to say that sin has so far reached its goal as to spoil our Maker of His right to call for full and unabated obedience at the hand of men who have fallen away from Him. Now the teaching that finds a place for such a leaven joins issue with the truth that the Lord is King. It quarrels with the rightful authority that belongs to Him as Maker and Sovereign.

This, however, is not all. If there are left-hand defections there are right-hand extremes. For among those who own the truth of the spiritual bankruptcy of a fallen race there are some who reason that because man as a sinner is unable, until he is born again, to repent or to believe the Gospel he is not called upon to do either and it would not be reasonable that he should be called upon to yield such obedience. It is said to be a mockery of his misery or it is a suggestion that he is not so lost as not to be able to make his way back to God. Now it is neither the one thing nor the other. It is not a mockery of the wretchedness of the sinner which on the part of his fellow in sin would be a very heartless thing. It is the way that God Himself takes in His Word in dealing with the many that are called outwardly so many of whom hear and heed not. For many are called while few are chosen. He bids men make them a new heart and this is fitted, when they try to comply with the Word and find how wretchedly they fail to let them see the wickedness and stubbornness of hearts that will neither tremble nor obey. And at the same time it is fitted to produce the conviction that such is the grip of spiritual death that nothing else can loosen it than the new birth from above which gives life to the dead. Such a method conveys no suggestion that the thing a man ought to do he can do. He ought to do it and he has to learn that what he ought to do he cannot do and that this is the pit of hopeless ruin into which his sin has plunged him. It is a bitter thing to learn this truth but it is a wholesome truth to learn. It is not we, who are only called upon to echo His Word, but God Himself that bids the impenitent repent, the unbelieving believe and the dead to do what only the living can do. In doing all this God is within His own right and He vindicates the wisdom of the way that He is pleased to take when He brings in sinners guilty in the

court of conscience and makes them feel that they are quite consciously impotent by reason of the dominion of death over their nature. When He does this He teaches the truth of spiritual death in the hard school of a living experience. This is something more than acquaintance with doctrinal notions. God convinces those whom He thus teaches that they must depend on Him as God Who quickeneth the dead Who alone can give effect to His own Word of truth and Who alone can burst the bonds that lie on the person and his powers over which the apathy of death holds its sway. The subjects of this teaching can speak of things whose truth they have been made to feel. That our race should be in such a sad plight is a mystery that we are bound to recognise to be one that we cannot fathom; and it is folly on our part to try to explain it away by our proud and empty reasonings. In his pride man the culprit would take as his own the seat of the Judge and arraign his Judge at his bar as though the roles of Judge and culprit were reversed. He forgets that He with Whom he has to do is One that giveth not account of His matters and is not amenable to the judgment of the creatures that owe their very being to His Kingly fiat. Well would it become each one of us in things of this kind to hearken to the Voice that spoke of old at the Bush — "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." The truth of scripture has a catholicity of its own, an all-round fulness and symmetry that man with his nibbling cavils would mar and mutilate. The whole truth as to man's awful ruin is to be held and taught subject to no abatement and the full tale of God's unabridged rights and claims is at the same time to be held and taught along with it. And so the two-fold truth that man ought to obey and yet he cannot is to be maintained in its integrity. There is a lofty superiority to the whittling schemes of man to be seen in the way in which the Word of God sets forth both sides of this truth doing full justice to each alike. And in this respect our Reformed Faith in its fullest confession and expression as it sets forth standard Reformed teaching in such symbolic documents as the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Confession of Faith is a true echo of the doctrine of the Word which these notable symbols undertook to declare and to defend. The sacred rights of Law as an utterance of the holy will of God are guarded and at the same time unmistakable witness is borne to the need that there is for the saving operation of God so that man may be restored to the likeness he has lost. He will only in this way be enabled to answer the end of his being when he answers the end of his calling in wearing the yoke of his Redeeming Lord. We are thus brought up to face the question of what effects this precious result. And this is the other aspect of Sovereignty which is to be seen not in the authoritative proclamation of the preceptive will of God the Lawgiver and King but in His decisive will as He appoints things to be in His eternal decree. This second aspect of His Sovereignty of which we are now to speak is what is oftenest indicated by the word when in doctrinal debates it is used of God. Stress is laid in historical and dogmatic discussions on the disposal of all things according to the purpose of God as that is wrought out in the field of universal providence. At times the word predestination may be used in a narrower and at other times in a wider sense. The stress of thought may be laid on the decree that bears in electing grace on the destiny of the people of God and its twin decree which bears on the appointed destiny of those that He is pleased to pass over and to ordain to wrath and to dishonour as the reward of their sin. In the wider sense of predestination it covers all events so that God is seen to have preordained whatsoever comes to pass and the regularity of natural law is due to His appointment as to the necessary action of second causes according to the nature that He has bestowed upon them and their consequent appropriate working. In the course of His government in providence He works out what He has decreed so that these second or subordinate cases have

their field of a proper operation and activity according to the nature of each of them. Thus events that are contingent fall out contingently and what is necessary has its own necessity. In the range of this latter category, paradoxical as it may sound it is necessary that the functioning of the created will should be free so that if it is to be exercised at all there is a need that it should be free. Thus rational freedom and necessity are found to conspire sweetly in the production of the actions of free agents. Here there is a necessity that has in its nature nothing of the character of the compelling force that overbears rational freedom; and so the predestination of God does not clash with the responsible freedom with which He has endowed accountable creatures whom He has put under Law and laid under obligation to honour Him by obeying it. When a free agent in the exercise of his personal natural spontaneity takes a course of action it was certain beforehand that he would take such a course and should be naturally free in doing so. For God Who appointed beforehand that such a course should be taken, in doing so appointed that it should be taken by a free agent in the natural exercise of his proper freedom. Such an appointment does not mar the freedom of the agent or his responsibility for his act. So far is this from being the case that it made sure that without any compulsion the action should take place and that it should be free when it took place. And appointment of this kind lays no kind of blind or brute necessity upon a free agent which interferes with his native spontaneous freedom or binds the agent hand and foot to be or to do anything else than he sees fit to choose for himself. Thus the Sovereignty of God in His purpose of predestination or preordination is a guarantee beforehand that when the time and place come for rational accountable action such action shall be taken in the full tale of its rationality and responsibility. That God has appointed that a thing should be free is what secures and makes certain that it shall be so. It makes it certain beforehand; and this certainty does not come in conflict with the truth of the freedom of the willing agent when he in due course wills to act and acts as he has willed. It is a mere bugbear that is conjured up when men say that the predestination of God with its attendant certainty prohibits the free eventuation of the acts of responsible agents. God has appointed that responsible action should be that of free agents in the exercise of their choice as it commends itself to them and as they shall answer for it. To say that the purpose beforehand to make a being endowed with rational freedom is inconsistent with the true freedom of that being when made is as much as to say that no truly free and accountable creature can exist; for to be such a free creature is only the thought of the Creator Who designed to make such a being. The creature will be free as it chooses what the person sees to be good for choice. It was made to be free and the purpose to make it was a purpose to make it what it was meant to be. There is thus no quarrel between man's creation as a morally free being and his freedom, and there is no more of a quarrel between that freedom and God's purpose to make beings endowed with such a freedom. Man made in the likeness and for the service of his Maker was not meant to be a mere piece of automatic mechanism grinding out irresponsibly thought and desire and — shall we call it? — volition. In his own sphere he was meant to be an originating centre of spontaneous and voluntary acts and of an activity that is a reflection on the plane of created life and being of the supreme and controlling activity of the will of God our Maker. Thus the Sovereign counsel of God has effect given to it, and yet it not only does not impinge upon the entire freedom of the will of free agents, it has in its certainty of execution the pledge that each responsible creature of His hand shall have all the freedom that is needed for the responsibility for which He has given it being.

There is then a perfect harmony between the will of a Sovereign God, the blessed and only Potentate, as effectual and controlling and transcendent, and the will or freedom of His responsible creatures who take the way that commends itself to their choice. At one and the same time the will of God is sovereign and supreme and the will of man is naturally and morally free. Neither has a real quarrel with the other, though the perverse and rebel will of fallen man has its steady quarrel from day to day with the preceptive will of the Holy Sovereign of heaven and earth. The exercise then of the will of the creature leaves him open to the account that he has to give in. His responsibility is unimpaired. And it is altogether an oblique view that is taken of the supreme control and certainty of God's decretive will when it is seen as if it were in conflict with the fundamental and undeniable truth that we as a race are amenable to the judgment in righteousness of the great King Eternal, Immortal and Invisible.

There is no conflict at this point. In a word we may say that as surely as God is sovereign man is free, and as surely as man is free God is sovereign. In the sovereignty that belongs to Him He so controls the thoughts and desires and volitions of His creatures as to carry out through their free and responsible activity what He has Himself designed. His supremacy sets bounds to the activity of His creatures so that at the very time and in the very thing in which they please themselves they are giving effect to His transcendent design. And this is so even should it be the thought of their heart that they are bent on frustrating His counsel by doing their own will and pleasure. When their self-will reaches its highest His controlling hand is above it.

There is of course an important distinction in the meaning we put upon the word free when we apply it to the ordinary rational choice and activity of every man in every day life which marks it out from the sense that attaches to it when we deny the spiritual freedom of the natural man and ascribe freedom in things spiritual to those only whose spiritual freedom of will has been given back to them by the touch of renewing grace. On such subjects as fall to be discussed in this connection we cannot be too careful as to the precise sense in which we and others use the words that are the coinage of thought. It is the failure to define our terms and to adhere to the definition if made and accepted that brings in the confusion that is found so often in the handling of topics in which ambiguity lurks at every corner, owing to the various shades of meaning that belong to the same words, as they are used in the dialect of the various schools of thought. It is one of the benefits that issue from dogmatic or theological conflict that the combatants are forced by the necessity of the case to clear their ground and to use their terms with a respectable amount of self-consistency. In the field of philosophy we may ascribe to man a freedom that in the contiguous field of theology we deny to him. And when we understand the terms that we use in these neighbouring realms of thought we see that it is quite consistent to ascribe to man as a moral agent an inalienable freedom, while in regard to spiritual service to God his Maker, we deny to him as fallen the true and holy freedom which was his glory in his unfallen state. Then to do God's will was man's true delight; and such delight he cannot again have in the will and Law of God until that Law is written on the fleshy tablets of a new heart as the promise of the New Covenant has been made good to him. By the misuse of his natural freedom of will man lost both himself and his true liberty. He is thus without the power to yield the homage of a loyal heart to the will of God. This being so, he is often spoken of as being destitute of freedom of will in which usage power and freedom are almost convertible or interchangeable terms. He is in bondage as fallen to the depravity of his nature so as not to be able to choose or to will as he should. This inability is

bondage which is the negation of freedom. Yet as he is in possession of spontaneity of action and makes his own choice, he has a natural freedom that is enough to leave him responsible for the choice that he makes and the course that he takes.

It is in regard to the bondage of the will to sin that on the field of history, discussion took place in the Pelagian controversy. For the Pelagians denied the truth of the teaching of the orthodox which laid stress on the spiritual bondage of man as a fallen being. In connection with this denial they had their quarrel with the sovereign will of God in regard to the dispensation of His grace; and this quarrel has passed on along the line of their avowed successors such for instance as the Socinians. In a modified form we find the Semi-Pelagian strain taking up this teaching and so quarreling with the free and absolute sovereignty of God's will in the distribution of His saving favour and salvation. This holds of the earlier and later Semi-Pelagians so that the Arminians both of the early seventeenth century and of the Methodist movement, join hands with the first representatives of their tendency in raising opposition to the freedom and sovereignty of the love and will of God in the choice of a people who shall reap the good of His thoughts of saving grace. The criticism that Pelagianism in its several varieties makes on the truth of the sovereignty of grace, is rooted in the unhumbled and self-righteous thoughts of men who fail to see that they are indeed sinners or who have no just or serious sense of the evil of sin and the righteousness of the doom that is out against it and that lies upon the sinner because of it. An uncircumcised heart is its source. The objections that an Apostle had to face recur down the ages. Men will still say "Who hath resisted His will?" so that they have to be told that it does not belong to the thing that is made to say to its Maker, "Why hast Thou made me thus?" They need to be told that God our Maker is our Lord and King, being all that He is and all that the ideal Lord and King must be. If to be an ideal king among men one must be wise and just and true and good, these things raised to the height of full perfection and bearing the stamp of unending immutability belong to the Sovereign of heaven and earth. If a king to be a king indeed must be good, He is good. There is none good but one; that is God. If he must be true, He is true. If he must be just, He is just. If he must be wise He is wise. If he must be mighty He is mighty. And in all these things He is infinite, eternal and unchangeable while over and above His wisdom, power, justice, goodness and truth He is as perfect in the beauty of His holiness as He is in all His other attributes. Of such a One it is not to be thought that he should not be trusted even in the dark. Nor should we dare to think of Him and of His ways as though He were subject to our judgment while as a matter of fact we are subject to His judgment and not He to ours. Thus in the infinitude of His Being there are depths that no plumb line of ours can fathom so that it is sheer presumption on the side of man to take the measuring rod of his own creature mind to measure the thoughts and ways of One Whose judgments are unsearchable and Whose ways are past finding out. In these things it is our best wisdom to be clad with true lowliness of mind for we are dealing with things that are so high above us that we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness. When such wisdom is shown as keeps man within his proper bounds he will sit as a little child at the footstool of God as He speaks in His Word and will say, "I will hear what the Lord will speak." It is to souls of such gracious docility that those things of the Kingdom are made known which are hid from the wise and prudent. They are of such a temper because they have been born from above and this new birth is the outflow and the token of the high sovereign and distinguishing love of Him Who in His counsel of peace and purpose of love set them apart from everlasting to be His own.

It is a fruit of God's kingly choice that comes out in the efficacious gracious work of the Holy Ghost. For there is a bond that binds into one scheme or system the truths of the doctrines of grace. These doctrines are part of one whole. With God's sovereign choice goes hand in hand His kingly provision and destination of the redeeming work of His Son in the effectual working of His gracious call as He quickens His called ones to newness of life. It is this working that begets faith; and the conversion or the turning of the sinner to God is the result of the renewing of his will which has been wrought by the effectual call. The newness of life thus given is seen in an abiding inclination of the called ones to new obedience so that the renewal of their will prompts them willingly to abide in Him to Whom they have betaken themselves and thus they persevere in the faith and in new obedience. This willing abiding in the Vine or in the City of Refuge tells of the operation in real grace of the love that in the purpose of grace sets apart its objects to be vessels prepared unto glory. That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit, so that the new born have that in them that cleaves to the Lord and His good ways. The outflow of sovereign choice in electing love is found in the reality of the new life of the regenerate which beginning at their call shall reach its crown of completion in the achieved perfection of the subjects of grace here in the kingdom of glory hereafter.

Before the Pelagian controversy arose what was in substance the system that called forth the witness of Augustine to the doctrines of grace had been taught by men like Clement of Alexandria and other Church teachers in whose case their philosophy gave law to their theology. That philosophy had at its heart a pagan strain. Along with the earlier philosophic theologians we may take the general strain of the teachers of the Greek Church who were not given to an Augustinian type of teaching. The influence of Augustine as one of the recognised and accepted doctors of the Church told on the Western Churches in such a succession as we find in the names of outstanding teachers like Anselm and Bernard and so far as Aquinas, so that there was a definite Augustinian tradition which gave the Evangelical element to the mixed teaching of the Middle Ages. A Gottschalk might be condemned and a Semi-Pelagian strain might prevail among the Scotists and the Franciscans of pre-Reformation days. Yet so great was the authority that was recognised as belonging to Augustine that when the threads of Mediaeval Scholasticism were woven into one fabric at Trent, the Council aimed at avoiding any finding that would come in conflict with the teaching of the great bishop of Hippo while with equal care it sought to shun any form of words that would condemn the Semi-Pelagianism which was rampant in the current teaching of the Church and the Schools. So intellectual acrobats went through their gymnastic exercises of balancing themselves on the tight rope by coming to noncommittal findings which kept their doctrine from being too definite on the one side or the other of debated questions which were open in the Schools. The Augustinian strain that came out in Jansenius and Baius was a much more emphatic utterance of the doctrine of grace than the teaching that found acceptance in Lutheran circles from the later days of Melancthon's life onward or in the beginnings of the Arminian movement in the Reformed Churches. The earlier stage of the Reformation showed the leading teachers of the Protestant world to be very much at one as to the gratuitous character of the Gospel salvation. Their movement was indeed a resurgence of the teaching of the Doctor of Grace. This marked them out to begin with from the half-way men of the Humanistic Reform. In the main features of their teaching the first Reformers were at one as to the gracious character of salvation. They were also at one with the teaching of the line of the Augustinian witnesses of earlier days except that in the sphere of relative grace they made a great advance in setting forth the truth as taught by the

Apostles in regard to the free Justification by faith of the believing sinner. This advance made clear the distinction between grace as it renews the nature and grace as it rectifies the standing of those to whom it is shown. As things came about the defence of the truly gratuitous character of the provision of the Gospel fell to be made by the Reformed as distinct from the Lutheran Churches. They were in the Augustinian tradition on the subject. In the Church of England in Post-Reformation days, the first uprising of a type of teaching that came in conflict with the true teaching of its Confession was firmly repressed and the Lambeth Articles made plain to the world the strict Reformed orthodoxy of the leaders of the Anglican Communion in the latter days of Queen Elizabeth. It was not then to be wondered at that the representatives of England at the Synod of Dort should join in the condemnation of Arminianism and in the profession of the Reformed Faith in regard to the decree of God which recognises His holy sovereignty in the dispensing of His saving favour. The findings of the renowned ecumenical Synod of the Reformed Churches set forth their faith as it was held in the great theological age which followed the Reformation itself when the divines of Western Protestant Europe were thoroughly at home in the kind of questions that were at issue between their Churches and Rome and in particular were alive to the meaning of the marked Semi-Pelagian teaching of their Jesuit opponents who were the foremost champions of the Papacy as they were the keenest critics of the doctrine of the Reformers. It was no convention of novices or of weaklings that met at Dort in 1618. They had among their leaders and counselors some of the foremost divines of their day. And the conclusions at which they arrived in the avowal of their faith and in the condemnation of error were not hastily come to. They were the ripe decisions of a generation of Theologians who were at home in their subject, expert in wielding their weapons and temperate and restrained in the terms in which they set forth their judgment. Coming as they did in point of time after the National Confessions and Catechisms of the Reformed Churches, even after the Irish Articles of 1615, except the documents of the Westminster Assembly they with these documents of British origin are the culminating exhibition of our common Reformed Faith when it was called upon to unfold its inmost genius and essence in self-defence against the revived Semi-Pelagianism of the early Arminians. Their statements on these subjects put in short compass the dogmatic teaching of our Churches. Thus the Canons of Dort say:

Art. 1. "As all men have sinned in Adam, and have become exposed to the curse and eternal death, God would have done no injustice to anyone, if He had determined to leave the whole human race under sin and the curse, and to condemn them on account of sin"

Art. 2. But "in this is the love of God manifested, that He sent His only begotten Son into the world that everyone who believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"

Art. 3. But that men may be brought to faith, God mercifully sends heralds of this most joyful message to whom He willeth, and when He willeth, by whose ministry men are called to repentance, and faith in Christ crucified.

Art. 4. They who believe not the Gospel on them the wrath of God remaineth, but those who receive it, and embrace the Saviour Jesus with a true and living faith are, through Him, delivered from the wrath of God and endowed with the gift of everlasting life.

Art. 5. The cause or fault of this unbelief as also of all other sins, is by no means in God, but in man. But faith in Jesus Christ and salvation by Him, is the free gift of God"

Art. 6. That some, in time, have faith given them by God and others have it not given, proceeds from His eternal decree according to which decree, He graciously softens the hearts of the elect, however hard, and He bends them to believe; but the non-elect He leaves, in just judgment, to their own perversity and hardness. And here, especially, a deep discrimination, at the same time both merciful and just, a discrimination of men equally lost opens itself to us; or that decree of Election and Reprobation which is revealed in the Word of God"

Art 7. But Election is the immutable purpose of God, by which before the foundations of the world were laid, He chose out of the whole human race, fallen by their own fault from their primeval integrity into sin and destruction, according to the most free good pleasure of His own will, and of mere grace, a certain number of men neither better nor worthier than others, but lying in the same misery with the rest, to salvation in Christ; Whom He had, even from eternity, constituted Mediator and Head of all the elect, and the foundation of salvation; and therefore He decreed to give them unto Him to be saved; and effectually to call and draw them into communion with Him, by His own Word and Spirit; or He decreed Himself to give unto them true faith, to justify, to sanctify, and at length powerfully to glorify them, having kept them in the communion of His Son; to the demonstration of His mercy and the praise of the riches of His glorious grace"

Art. 9. This same Election is not made from any foreseen faith, obedience of faith, holiness, or any other good quality and disposition, as a pre-requisite cause or condition in the men who should be elected but unto faith, and unto the obedience of faith, holiness, &c. And therefore Election is the fountain of every saving benefit; whence faith, holiness, and the other salutary gifts and finally eternal life itself, flow as its fruit and effect"

Art. 10. Now the cause of this gratuitous Election, is the sole good pleasure of God, not consisting in this, that He elected into the condition of salvation certain qualities or human actions, from all that were possible; but in that out of the common multitude of sinners, He took to Himself certain persons as His peculiar property"

Art. 11. And as God Himself is most wise, immutable, omniscient and omnipotent; so, Election made by Him can neither be interrupted, changed, recalled, nor broken off; nor can the Elect be cast away, nor the number of them be diminished." This teaching is but an exposition or expansion of the teaching of the Belgic Confession in what it has to say on the subject. So in brief compass the Second Helvetic Confession which found so wide an acceptance in the Reformed Churches says: "God hath from the beginning freely and of His mere grace without any respect of men predestinated or elected the saints whom He will save in Christ." So also we find in the Irish Articles which passed through the hands of James Ussher such words as these: "By the same eternal counsel, God hath predestinated some unto life, and reprobated some unto death, of both which there is a certain number known only to God which can neither be increased nor diminished." This choice these Articles go on to attribute only to the good pleasure of God Himself. There is no question as to the agreement of the Westminster documents with the common consensus of the Reformed Churches as they deal with this matter of Divine Sovereignty and Predestination.

S. The Inspiration of the Scriptures

The Inspiration of the Scriptures

John Macleod

John Macleod (1872-1948) was Principal of the Free Church of Scotland College, Edinburgh. This address was published in *The Evangelical Quarterly* (1935). When we speak of the inspiration of the Holy Scriptures we are dealing with one of the doctrines of the Christian faith. It is from the Scriptures themselves alone that we can learn at first hand what the claims are that they make in regard to their own origin and authority. It holds of any of the doctrines of the faith that if we would know it we are called upon to learn it on proper authority. That is to say it rests on the statements made in the Bible in regard to it by Prophets and Apostles. It may pass into acceptance in the Church in currently professed form as a creed, and as such men may know what it is and discuss it as the recognized teaching of the Church. But the formulation which it receives in this shape is not the ultimate basis on which Christian truth rests. It may come to be as familiar in Christian circles as is the doctrine of the Trinity, and it may be looked upon as the authentic statement of what the Church holds. There is, however, something that lies deeper than ecclesiastical formulation and profession and recognition. To these things no higher authority than that of the Church attaches. What really matters is that what the Church teaches should be a true exhibition and representation of what is taught in the Scriptures. The authority that belongs to the teaching of Scripture rests in turn on the fact that the supreme author of Scripture is none other than God Himself. In other words it is because it has been breathed by God and so given by Him that it is possessed of its rightful infallible and final authority.

Now, in respect to the distinctive quality of Holy Writ as the Word of God we can learn, as we have said, what it is only from its own statements. There is no serious question as to the attitude adopted toward the Old Testament by our Lord and His Apostles. What that was we learn from the New Testament as an authentic witness to their teaching. The Christian response to this is one of acceptance. It is because they recognize that our Lord spoke with authority that Christians are entitled to be called Christians. They acknowledge Him to be the Christ and as such they accord to Him the submission of their intellect as well as of their heart. Their acquaintance with Him and His teaching is derived from the witness of the New Testament Scriptures. These they proceed upon as trustworthy documents and as they acquaint themselves with their teaching they subject heart and conscience and understanding to the truth that they open up. So in regard to what their Lord taught about the Scriptures of which Israel were the custodians they accept His words as regulative for their thought as surely as for their faith. This determines the outlook on the Old Testament Scriptures that is characteristic of historical Christianity. From these same Scriptures of the New Testament which tell them what Christ taught they learn on an authority which they recognize as sufficient what the endowment was which He bestowed upon His chosen representatives as well as the claims that He put forth on behalf of His own authority. It is as a matter of fact the Christ Who makes these claims that historical Christendom recognizes as the

supreme authority in the department of Faith and Life; and recognizing Him to be the Christ, the Great Prophet of the Church, Christians are willing to learn what He had to teach. So they submit themselves to the authority of the Gospels and as they find in those documents the message that He delivered they receive it as they receive Him Who delivered it.

Thus they learn not only what our Lord had to say in respect of Moses and the Prophets, but also what was peculiar to His own teaching as an opening up of what had found place in the Old Testament only in cryptic or initial form. The advance of revelation was like the path of the just which shines more and more unto the perfect day. The bud hides in its bosom what the warmth of the summer sun brings to light. The full flower shows more than did the bud. Yet all the beauty of the full-blown rose was hid in the bosom of the rosebud. So the early revelation was brought to maturity in the ministry of our Lord. He brought out to its full development what the former revelation held only in seed or in germ. The first grey streak that tells of the dawn and that heralds the day is followed by increasing light until the sun rises and the day has come. So was it with the progress of gracious revelation. It was given by steps and stages. But no new step that was taken set aside what had been already given. The first promise was followed by many more. The Books of the Law were followed by the Prophets and the Psalms, so that when our Lord came Israel had in their hands the whole canon of Old Testament Scripture. What that embosomed by way of prophecy and promise found its fulfillment in His person and coming and work. He opened up the true sense, so that what many prophets and righteous men desired to hear and heard not was made known to the generation of Israel which had the benefit and privilege of His ministry.

Now the writers of the Gospels set down as witnesses credible and trustworthy the teaching that He delivered. God who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke unto the fathers through the prophets spoke in the fullness of time through His Son. The message which He proclaimed His disciples received and the record of that message we have in the four Gospels which proceeded from the circle that had heard for themselves and had seen for themselves what the Son of God did and taught. If from the Gospels we see what the character of our Lord's ministry of teaching and working was we learn from them too what His followers experienced by way of training and equipment for the work that they were to do. They were to be His witnesses and that this might be the case they must be in a position to tell what they heard and saw for themselves. During His earthly ministry they were learners in their Lord's School. But they were learners who had very much to unlearn and in the account that they give of the process of their education they are wonderfully candid as they let us see their own mistakes and how backward they were in taking in the real meaning of their Lord's mission and work. A competent witness, it has been said, needs three things, capacity, opportunity, and veracity. All these three met in the witnesses that our Lord chose to testify in regard to Himself. In respect of their capacity they were plain men of common sense who would never be challenged as witnesses in any case or court on the ground that they were deficient in ordinary understanding. The fact that they were so long in their Lord's company gave them the opportunity that was needed to fit them to be His witnesses. For in the years of their fellowship with Him as disciples they had every chance of seeing and of hearing for themselves. This fitted them to tell, as witnesses, of the facts about His works and His teaching both. The third requisite condition for a competent witness is to be found also in their case. They were men of character and on the score of veracity we cannot name any others whose word we should sooner take in regard to what had come within the sphere of their own cognisance. With these three

conditions meeting in them we should at once acknowledge how fit they were to fulfill the function of bearing witness to their Lord. When further we take note of the risk that they ran in bearing their witness and the many inducements that they had to be silent and not to provoke the anger of the men in power and yet they were not silent, this consideration shows how free they were from self-seeking in taking the course that they did. All ordinary prudential motives would tell in the direction of bidding them study their selfish interests and their ease. But in spite of this they could not hold their peace. In the face of persecution and danger and death they bore their witness. The facts that they attested we find on record and we may come in touch through the record of those facts in the Gospels with the Lord whom they learned to know, to follow and to serve. The disciples who were thus meant to be witnesses and were trained for that work were meant also to be teachers. Now for their two-fold office of witnesses and teachers their Lord promised them that they should have special equipment. In the matter of the witness that they should bear to His Word He gave them the express promise that when they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost He would bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever He had said unto them and they should bear witness because they had been with Him from the beginning. Witness given under such special conditions should be the witness not only of the ordinary powers of human memory but also the witness of memory divinely reinforced. In that case their witness should be a positively trustworthy source of information in regard to what their Lord had done and taught. And such was the witness that was borne by the Apostles from the time that they received the endowment of Pentecost; and what held of their spoken word holds good of the permanent record of their ministry of witness as we have it in the four Gospels.

During the course of their Lord's ministry on earth His disciples made it quite obvious that they had much yet to learn that they might understand the teaching which they heard from Him. It was only by slow degrees that they were set free from the mistaken ideas that they had learned, from their childhood, to cherish in regard to the work of the Christ for whose coming their fathers had looked and in whose coming they themselves as disciples had learned to rejoice. So long as they were held in the grip of such prejudice they neither entered into their Lord's teaching as they should, nor were they in a position to teach their fellows the full truth that had fallen upon their ears. They were meant, however, to be teachers, and authoritative teachers, of the full Word of divine revelation. For this end they needed to have their understanding enlightened and their judgment cleared. Otherwise they could not be the authoritative expositors and preachers of a message which was to be proclaimed with great plainness of speech. If their hearers were to acquaint themselves with the fullness of Gospel truth it was plain that they as its teachers must know it for themselves. They must then be delivered from their mistaken thoughts of the truth made known by their Lord. They knew it as yet not as a whole but in parts. This knowledge was not enough to furnish them with equipment for their office. So their Lord's promise was given them that when the Spirit of truth that He promised them should come He would lead them into all the truth. So much they knew already. So much more they failed to do justice to, and so much also was not as yet disclosed to them. The full discovery had not been given them for they were not ripe yet for it. So their Lord told them that He had many things to say unto them which they could not yet bear. These things they were to come to know when they should be led into the full truth. Once this should happen they were no longer to be mere babes in this knowledge. They were to be led into it and when this should come about they would know it in its true setting and they would know its parts in their true relations to one another and in their proper proportions. Thus their judgment should be matured. But our

Lord's promises to the apostles went further. In them the Spirit of their Father was to speak even when they were only called upon to open their mouths in their own self-defence. If this was so might it not be reasoned a fortiori that the provision which should equip them for self-defence would assuredly be theirs when they spoke as the responsible and authoritative representatives of their Lord? We are not left to inference here or to our own reasonings from the fitness of things. So close was their relation to their Lord as His Apostles that those who should hear them should hear Him, and those who rejected them rejected Him. And again when we see the claims that an Apostle could make we learn what the endowment was that his brethren and he enjoyed for the discharge of the ministry of witness and teaching to which they were called. In this connection it is of interest to take note of what the Apostle Paul has to say of himself and of his fellows. They spoke not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Not only did they receive the Spirit who is from God that they might know the things which are freely given us from God. They were to speak these things in Spirit-given words. Thus he claimed that not only the substance of their teaching was of authority but also its form. In this we read the recognized fulfillment in the Apostles of the promise that had been given to them. Their hearers who heard to profit received from them the word of God, and in so doing treated it not as the word of man but as it was in truth the Word of God which worketh effectually in them that believe. And when Paul used his authority as an Apostle in laying down the law for those in the Church of Corinth who were prophets or spiritual he made it plain that they were called upon to recognize that the things which he wrote to them were indeed the commandments of the Lord.

What Paul thus claimed for his written word held good of the word of his brother Apostles. Thus also we find John saying: "He that is of God heareth us", while "he that is not of God heareth not us". And it was thus that men were to know the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error. The very touchstone that told the difference lay in this fact, that the final authority of the Apostles should be recognized.

Such is the position that historical believing Christianity takes up. It accords to the Apostles what they claim as their own; and it recognizes in their writings the permanent and final form of the revelation that the Son of God came to make. He gave so much of it in the course of His ministry on earth and this we have in abiding shape in the four Gospels. These are the records of what Jesus began both to do and to teach until the day in which He was taken up. With this record in our hands we may see what the Apostles saw and we may hear what they heard. We are as it were looking through their eyes and we are listening as it were with their ears. They have left us the record of what they heard and saw to serve as the ground of Faith. They thought their witness worthy of credit and that it was a sufficient basis for a faith to build upon which receives their Lord as the Christ, the Son of God. When they indicate the end for which they wrote they but put on record what their Lord meant them to do. He also meant that their word of witness should be enough for the faith of His people in all ages to build upon. Their ministry was derived from Him. He called them; He trained them; He sent them. The equipment that He promised them He bestowed upon them. Thus it came about that after He was taken up He fulfilled to them His promise and in their witness and in their teaching He Himself continued to bear witness and to teach. What He did in His earthly ministry He continued in His heavenly. As the result of this continued ministry He enabled His Apostles to fulfill their oral and their active ministry on earth and to leave an abiding heritage to those who should believe in Him through their word. This was

nothing less than the prolongation of their ministry of witness and of teaching. Its concrete embodied form is the Scriptures of the New Testament.

We may be tempted to wish that we had lived in the days in which our Lord was to be seen and heard, or His Apostles bore first-hand witness in regard to Him. These were days which many prophets and righteous men desired to see yet saw not. They were great days indeed. We should not, however, forget that the word of the Apostles preserves to us their witness, and though curiosity might be gratified if we could be transported back to the time and land of the New Testament facts yet we should see nothing but what the Apostles tell us and we should hear from their living voice no other message than we have in their written word. We need not then envy them the privilege that was theirs. The same Jesus of Whom they speak and Whom they knew is before us that we may believe in Him and know Him as our own. The greatest good that the Apostles themselves got of the Gospel is the good that is common to all the children of the new birth. They knew their Lord, and that is the very life of the soul and it is our life that we should know Him. And we are not to give place to the thought that He has withheld from us the means of truly acquainting ourselves with Him. Such is the privilege that the New Testament Church enjoys to the ends of the earth and to the end of time, when she has those Scriptures which enshrine the ministry of our Lord, as a personal and direct ministry on earth, and as a real and abiding and authoritative ministry which is His as the risen and exalted Christ. He continued to work and to teach through His Apostles and the record of it all is ours that we may acquaint ourselves with Him, and through a living faith get the good of the Gospel of His Grace.

Now this record is as authoritative as the spoken word of the Twelve. It shares with their oral witness and teaching in the quality of final authority. This was theirs because their Lord spoke through them. They spoke in the words that the Holy Ghost enabled them to employ. They were inspired men and their message was an inspired message. God breathed on them and He breathed through them so that their word was His Word in very deed. They were equally inspired when they wrote as when they spoke, and the same theopneust character that attached to their spoken word belongs to their written word also. Such is the claim that they made for themselves; and that is the claim which their writings still make. Their word as His Apostles was their Lord's word, and this is what is meant by the inspiration of the New Testament. From its pages we learn that our Lord and His Apostles too regarded the sacred deposit which was in the hands of Israel and which the New Testament Church as the legitimate successor to the Church of the Old Testament still holds in her hands as the Word of God given of old by Moses and the Prophets. It was not the word only of Moses or the word of Isaiah, or the word of David. It was their word indeed, for they spoke it and they wrote it. But the word of Moses was the Word of God. The word of Isaiah was the word of God. The word of David was the Word of God. So in the New Testament we have the Word of Paul and the Word of John and the Word of Luke. It was not only their Word, it was the Word of God. Now this brings before us the mysterious character of Holy Writ. The written and the Incarnate Word are so alike the one to the other. The Incarnate Word was very God and very Man, and He was the sinless One. So too the written word is the very word of those who wrote it, and at the same time the very word of God Who made use of them. They were the penmen of scripture. They themselves were, to quote the word of Dr. John Duncan, the "men-pens" of the Holy Ghost. In the fullness of their individuality with all their gifts of style and expression He made use of them. There is mystery here without a doubt. It is not, however, a

mystery that is unparalleled or unexampled. We have an illustration of it in the working of the efficacious grace in which we believe. The Lord, the Holy Ghost, works in the regenerate the faith of the Gospel and the repentance that is unto life. It is not the Spirit that believes or repents. It is the believer or the penitent. They exercise faith. It is the Spirit that works it. They exercise godly sorrow. It is the Spirit who is its author. He works all and they are the agents in it all. It is of His inworking and enabling that they repent and believe. But the faith that they exercise and the repentance by which they turn from sin to God are both the personal activity of the new-born soul. He worketh all their works in them and to Him belongs the undivided glory of them. Yet the works are theirs. His working does not overwhelm or obliterate their personality. It quickens the soul when dead in sin and it upholds the soul that it has brought alive. In the free exercise of a will that His grace has renewed they yield themselves in obedience of faith.

Now to those who hold with us this, the faith of the Reformed Churches, it sounds simply absurd to hear men describe the doctrine of inspiration as though it were an impossible thing for a transcendent sovereign God so to use a man in the full and free exercise of his faculties as an instrument of His own hand for making known His mind and will. Why, men who play well on an instrument may harp well or pipe well. The music of the pipe and of the harp may be in perfect harmony yet the hearer can tell the one from the other. They are both the music of the players who are pleased to make the one of them the pipe and the other of them the harp his instrument of music. A man's writing varies with the pen that he employs. That pen may be hard or soft. It may be broad or fine and according to its make will the script be that it is employed to produce. Yet you find men object to the doctrine of inspiration that there can be nothing in it because we can tell the style or expression of John or Paul or Isaiah.

It is of the essence of stupidity not to see that God Almighty is not confined to a dead level of monotony when He is pleased to speak to His creatures in His written word. To say that inspiration of necessity suppresses the distinctive features of human expression when men are under its influence is to refuse to acknowledge that God is able to use men in the full and free exercise of their distinct individuality. It sets unwarrantable bounds to the power of Almighty God. Yet men maintain that the doctrine of inspiration which teaches that there is the concursus of the Divine and the human is an impossibility. They hold that if the written word is wholly of God it can be only by His express dictation that this can be secured, or that He brings it about by making the writers so many machines. They denounce it as mechanical inspiration. They evidently think that they can tell what God can and what He cannot do in these things. So they take upon themselves to say that in the case when the written product is wholly divine it must be the effect of mere mechanical activity of the human writer.

Now in these things it becomes men to be modest and not to claim to know more than they know indeed. We who hold to the pervasive Divine character of Holy Writ are not bound to say how otherwise than by mechanical control such a result is brought about. The mode of the divine activity may, nay must, be to us an inscrutable mystery. We are not to outstep our bounds and to lay limits on the free Sovereignty of the Lord God and say - "Thou must do this and Thou must not do that". It is the bloated pride of an unhumiliated heart that will utter words of such a kind. He gives no account of many of his matters and we dare not summon Him to our bar before whose bar we must ourselves stand. Men may press us to define what the inspiration is which brings it about that the words of men are at the same time, and fully, the words of God. We might answer that we are

not minded to pry into the mysterious mode of the Divine co-agency and controlling agency in producing the Holy Scriptures: That operation of Divine power is one that results in a Book which on the one side is altogether the Word of the men who spoke and wrote it, while on the other side it is wholly the Word of the Living God Who made use of the writers as His instruments.

We like to consider inspiration as that exercise and just that exercise of divine controlling and determining power which secures that those who are its instruments wrote the very Word of God. Men have spoken of guidance and control and direction and superintendence and suggestion as modes of inspiration. It may quite possibly be that these words may be competently applied to the character of its work. But when we go into these things we are going beyond our depth. We who cannot tell how soul and body co-exist and go to make up our full person are overstepping the bounds of our province when we speculate as to how God is working in bringing such a product as Holy Writ into being. Let it be enough for us to recognize what it is and what it claims to be and leave it with Him to bring His counsel to pass as seems best to His unsearchable wisdom. A full inspiration extends not only to the substance but to the form, not only to the thought but to the expression of Holy Scripture. In other words the inspiration that is responsible for producing the written Word of God is at once full and verbal. In the Downgrade controversy in which Mr. Spurgeon took part in his later years, he said that the attacks that were then so common on verbal inspiration were but the verbal form of the attack on inspiration. In saying so he hit the nail on the head. Those who are content to learn their doctrine of inspiration from the statements, teaching, and phenomena of Scripture itself will not be slow to acknowledge that the very words, which are but the vesture of the thought, are God's chosen Words. Thought and expression are interlinked and when Paul laid stress on the word "Seed" in his Epistle to the Galatians, or when our Lord quoted Psalms 110:1-7 to ask how Messiah could be David's son when David in the Spirit spoke of Him as his Lord, or when he answered the Sadducees by referring them to the words spoken from the Burning Bush we are confronted with Scripture's own use of Scripture. And this teaches us the stress which it lays upon the very words that it employs.

Again when men refer to Scripture quotations as not verbally accurate they forget that the Supreme Author of Scripture is surely free to express Himself as He pleases. He knows His own thought and how to utter it. May He alone not vary the expression of His thought, the thought remaining the same, as He sees right? When we are told that our doctrine of inspiration can hold good only of the autographs of Holy Writ we might answer that it is the whole aim and endeavour of a reverent criticism, that is, of the study of Scriptures by believers, to attain to certainty as to the precise text and the exact meaning of the Word of God as it was at first given. And the more real our conviction of the truth of Divine Inspiration the more should be our zeal and diligence in this study.

It is boldly affirmed at other times that if it was the original text that was inspired we are not entitled to speak of any translation of Scripture, even the very best, as being the Word of God. The niggling spirit that carps at the acknowledgment of a good translation as the Word of God in another language comes in conflict with an obvious feature of Scripture usage; for we find that the New Testament makes use of a translation of the Old Testament. In this usage the translation is freely employed and no exception is taken to it as though the quality of Divine authorship and authority had evaporated in the process of translation. When again the objection is raised that we are face to face with a large variety of readings in our oldest manuscripts and that it is inept for us

to hold the inspiration of Scripture seeing that we cannot be sure as to the exact reading at some points of the original text. Men forget that by the time when our Lord was upon earth there is no doubt but there were already in existence a multitude of various readings in the Hebrew Text and the Greek translation of the Old Testament. There were undoubtedly various exhibitions of Scripture in the instances in which that translation diverged from a literal representation of the Hebrew Text of the Old Testament. Now of these things our Lord takes no notice. So also His apostles. The cardinal controlling consideration that the Scriptures as the people had them in their hands or had access to them, were the Word of God is what He and they lay stress upon. And this is ample warrant for us to follow in their steps. But how often do we hear men daring to say that when our Lord emptied Himself in His humiliation He consented to such an abridgment of His knowledge as that He shared in the limitations and prejudices of His Galilean environment, and so took Old Testament Scripture at its current valuation? When they say this they think that they have got rid of His witness to the word which Israel had in their hands. They imagine that they have put Him out of action as an authoritative teacher in regard to such matters of criticism and that they have left the ground clear for exercising the utmost freedom in their handling of the Old Testament. Well, what have they succeeded in doing? For themselves they have got rid of the note of authority which sounds through His teaching and they have taken up the position that the Incarnate Son of God was the victim of nescience, ignorance and local and provincial prejudice. Would it not be more in keeping with the attitude that they have resolved to adopt that they should at once deny the truth of His Incarnation? Their profession of it when they strip His words of final authority is like the kiss of Judas when his Lord was to be taken and slain. But how does the case stand in regard to the words that our Lord spoke? Let us but listen to what He has Himself to say. "I have not spoken from Myself but the Father which sent Me; He gave me a commandment what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His Commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto Me so I speak." The quarrel then of those who will not hear and rest in His words as final is with the Father, who, as He dwelt in His Son and did the works, gave to His Son in Whom He dwelt the words that He should speak. We should bear in mind that when the Son came as His Father's Servant to do His will He was sent and thus had at once a mission and a commission. Within the bounds of that commission He kept Himself. When He was tempted by Satan to turn the stones into bread the tempter aimed at inducing Him to lay aside that form of a servant in which He had come. This the faithful Servant would not do. Throughout His ministry He kept a servant's place and the Will of the Father was the rule of His service. This held in regard to the very words that He spoke. When then He spoke of the word which had already been given as a Scripture that could not be broken the witness which He bore to it is the very word which His Father gave Him to speak. So all who have recognized Him as a Son sent as a servant receive His word as final and rest in it.

Whatever endeavours the adversaries by their excursions in the department of criticism have made to set aside the authority and finality of His witness come to naught when we are face to face with the claim that He makes to speak the Father's words. Let this claim be set aside and He is set aside. When this claim is acknowledged Christian Faith rests with security in the words that He has spoken.

It is the very Son of the Father that has spoken the very words which the Father gave Him to speak. And it is in keeping with the fitness of things in this situation that when the words of the

Father are to be spoken they should be spoken by His everlasting Word. We see then how vain the attempt is to shake the authority of our Lord's witness to Old Testament Scripture and at the same time we see how the truth that He spoke only the words which the Father gave Him to speak stamps His every Word with absolute authority. The promises that He gave to His Apostles were among those words. Those promises we recognize to have been fulfilled in the subsequent ministry of the Apostles and so the revelation given once for all in the fullness of the times is preserved in its written form for all time and is still and will be to the end the abiding possession of all to whom the New Testament Scriptures have come.

Modern Sadduceism in all its forms has a quarrel with the Divine authority of the written word. This is so because its animating principle is not the faith which takes its seat at the footstool of the Son of God, but the unbelief which carps and cavils at His message. It has made the most of its parade of objections and difficulties yet Christian believers who have heard the voice of the Son of God as He still speaks the words of everlasting life have not been greatly moved. Those of them who have enquired into these matters have learned to wait for further light to clear up the difficulties that are to be met with and they do this with all the more confidence and composure of mind because so many of the difficulties that were the stock in trade of unbelievers in former days have been already cleared up; and they cherish the confidence that there is still in store for the Church of God an experience of clearing up in regard to those difficulties on which unbelief still lays stress. In this connection some writers on the subject of the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures have put the cart before the horse. In seeking to state the doctrine of inspiration they begin at the wrong end. They start with the difficulties and having come to their conclusions in regard to these they employ those conclusions to modify and determine the sense in which the clear evidence of the statements of the Bible itself should be taken. This is not the course that men would take to arrive at the teaching of Scripture in regard to any other subject, say, sin or salvation. What is obviously the right course to take is that we should first see what the witness of the sacred Writings is and when we have taken a conjoint view of that witness as exhibited in various statements of the Word, then we should put objections and difficulties into their own subordinate place and not suffer the impression that they make upon us to override the plain statements on which the body of our doctrine rests. As we indicated at the outset it is only when we are agreed as to the fact that Christian Truth is indeed a Divine Revelation that we come logically to discuss the doctrine of what Inspiration is. When we recognize the authentic character of our Scripture documents as an exhibition of the truth which our Lord and His Apostles proclaimed we are warranted in going further than stating that these documents are in a general sense authentic and trustworthy; we are warranted too, in holding that they are what they claim to be, not only a written embodiment of a real Divine Revelation, but a divinely given record of that Revelation, so that it is indeed God's own Word which He has been pleased to commit to writing. In the everyday working of Christian Faith this is proceeded upon. And when questions are raised about it and we look into them we find that the working understanding of Christian Faith can be set aside only by refusing to accept the substantial truth of the claims that our Lord made for Himself and that His Apostles on His behalf continue to make. For they continue to make the same claims as He did and these we have in the Word that enshrines their ministry of teaching and witness. To refuse then to accept the teaching of Scripture in regard to the claims that it makes to be the Word of God is to meet its claims not with a loyalty of a Christian Faith, but with the unbelief that has not yet learned to bow to the authority of Christ, the Son of God.

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