

# THE TRINITY REVIEW

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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## 1 and 2 Timothy

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**1 Timothy 4:1: The Spirit says explicitly that in later times some will apostatize from the faith, entertaining errant spirits and devils' doctrines.**

The word *explicitly* is *rhetos*: in words. This has some bearing on verbal revelation. *Acts* 1:16 says "the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spoke concerning Judas." The Holy Ghost governs the words his messengers use. He speaks in words through them. The revelation is verbal.

When then did the Spirit speak the warning Paul here refers to? Was it part of his own previous writings? Did Jesus himself say it? Were there several prophecies? It is not necessary to restrict the reference to one. *2 Peter* 2:1, which could easily have been written before *1 Timothy*, says, "There will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies." (Compare *1 John* 2:18 and 4:1-3.) Even if Jesus did not explicitly refer to the church in Ephesus, *Mark* 13:22 predicts a series of false teachers. Paul himself, earlier, by the inspiration of the Spirit, gave similar warnings. He had previously called the elders of Ephesus to Miletus and warned them against savage wolves (*Acts* 20:29). Another, better known passage is *2 Thessalonians* 2:1-12. These all justify the term *rhetos* (*expressly* or *explicitly*). Now *2 Thessalonians* may refer to a time subsequent to the twentieth century, our own century; but the other passages include all time since Paul. In the present passage, *1 Timothy* 4:1, he rather clearly

speaks of something that will shortly take place in Ephesus—in fact, something already begun. "Later times" is not restricted to the last times.

Worthy of a short note is the mention of errant spirits and teachings of demons. These are the sources of the human apostasy. Such ideas are unpopular in our era. The behaviorists in their atheism deny not only the existence of God, but, consistently, human souls or spirits as well, not to mention demons and devils. True evangelical ministers, and of course those who claim to be evangelical and are not, hardly ever mention demons and infrequently oppose false doctrine. Biblical language, such as Paul uses here, hardly ever adorns a Protestant pulpit.

The human teachers whom Paul here warns us again stare false teachers because they have apostatized. *Depart from, fall away, desert*, are good enough translations, but the actual Greek word is *apostatized*. Apostatized from the faith, that is to say, they had rejected Biblical theology and substituted contrary beliefs or doctrines. The text uses the word doctrines or teachings. Once again, we must note the recurring objectivity of Paul. Quite likely these false teachers were guilty of a certain amount of immoral conduct. Paul often condemns sin and disobedience to the law. But that is not the point here. Quite certainly these false teachers subjectively believed this or that. But Paul places the emphasis on the object of the belief. They have drifted away from Christian doctrines and now

accept the theological systems of devils. Faith in the sense of the psychological activity of believing has no value in itself. Its merit or demerit lies in the object, the truths or falsehoods, the propositions believed.

Paul's concern for truth and his opposition to error is sadly lacking today. The public derides "heresy hunters." In fact, *heretic* is almost a term of honor. It indicates freedom of thought and expression, intellectual independence, modernity as opposed to the witch-burning Dark Ages. Did not Calvin have Servetus burned because of his discovery of the circulation of the blood?<sup>1</sup>

**2 Timothy 3:16, 17: Every scripture was breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, for refutation, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, in order that the man of God may be competent, furnished for every good work.**

The first two words may be properly translated "all Scripture." This is a regular and unobjectionable use of the word *pasa*. For example, *Acts 2:36*, "Let all the house of Israel know...." Here *pas oikos* cannot mean every cottage in Palestine. And surely *Romans 11:26* cannot possibly mean *every Israel*. In other places *every* is a good translation. The present verse can properly be translated "every scripture." Every scripture, every verse of it, is inspired. If one wishes to minimize the distributive force of every, which I am far from recommending, one might say, "the whole of Scripture." *Acts 2:36* could be read, "Let the whole house...." There are thus several permissible translations; but what must be avoided at all costs is the fallacious inference embedded in the (expanded) phrase "every scripture that happens to be inspired is useful, but not the other verses which are not inspired." Therefore the New English Bible had to disregard the *kai* (*and*). The Greek says, "Every scripture is inspired and useful." Inspired and useful are both predicate nominatives.

The term *inspired* is a poor translation. As B. B. Warfield emphatically asserted, the word is "God-breathed." The situation is not that the prophets wrote some books and God breathed I know not what into them; but, rather, and pointedly, God breathed out the words that became the books. I

should like to add a comparison to Warfield's material: As the finger of God chiseled characters on two tables of stone, so God's breath put the words on some sheets of vellum. There is one difference, however, for all comparisons and analogies are defective: Moses had no part in choosing the words of the Ten Commandments, but in the Pentateuch God breathed the words onto the page through Moses' mind. Another defective comparison is: With his own lips God whistled a tune—the Ten Commandments; but he took some flutes and oboes to play the remainder of the Bible. These flutes and oboes (Moses, Isaiah, Paul) have different tonalities; but the notes, the symphony, from *Genesis* to *Revelation*, has one tune and one composer. However, since no one has ever suggested that God wrote words on vellum as he chiseled the Law on stone, we may continue with the broader problem.

## *The Dictation Theory*

Those who attack the trustworthiness of the Bible ascribe to evangelicals, and fulminate against, "the dictation theory" of revelation. They hold that a stenographer's personality contributes nothing to a business letter, whereas the personal styles of the prophets and apostles are clearly different. Clearly: who can doubt it? But the objection applies only to an imaginary straw man, and embedded within it is the refusal to accept all Scripture as God's Word.

Had God himself written the Bible as he wrote the Ten Commandments, evangelicals would be happy enough, just as if he had sent angels to preach the Gospel. The fact, however, is that he did neither of these. Further, a message, if true, is true no matter how written. But the liberals know well enough that if men wrote the manuscripts, there is a plausible possibility of error. Apparently they think that the orthodox theologians invented the dictation theory to remove this possibility and to defend inerrancy. This is no compliment to evangelical intelligence. Dictation cannot guarantee the absence of errors. Stenographers make mistakes. If then the prophets and apostles were stenographers, "mechanically" putting words on paper, the doctrine of inerrancy would rest on feeble foundation.

But the evangelicals were never so stupid as the liberals allege. Their treatises repeatedly repudiate mechanical dictation. Dozens of instances can be found, all of which the liberals try to ignore. Hendriksen furnishes a recent example: "The Spirit, however, did not suppress the personality of the human writer, but raised it to a higher level of activity (*John* 14:26). And because the individuality of the human author was not destroyed, we find in the Bible a wide variety of style and language. Inspiration, in other words, is organic, not mechanical" (302).

Numerous citations of similar nature can be listed, and together they show how gross the liberal misunderstandings are. This is not to say that Hendriksen's expressions are the best. For example, the term organic is very vague, and the words "higher level" convey no clear idea.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Hendriksen and other evangelicals—and of necessity all liberals—use the term *inspiration*. Though this is the traditional term, it has caused widespread confusion. This verse in *2 Timothy* does not say that the prophets were inspired; it says that God breathed out the written words.

So far as theology and preaching the Gospel are concerned, the difference between dictation and God's actual method is insignificant. God foreordains whatsoever comes to pass. He makes it rain by sending Aristophanes' clouds which he previously made. He makes the grass to grow by sending the rain. So too he predestined Moses' style and Paul's choice of words. He predestined Moses' style by giving him an Egyptian education; he determined Paul's choice of words by educating him under Gamaliel. To try to escape God's control by refuting the dictation theory is foolish and futile. To rely on the term inspiration to turn attention away from the written words to the authors is deceptive. God controls everything; he certainly controls his own verbal revelation. He breathed out the Scripture, namely, what was written.

### *Errant Scholarship*

There is another matter that needs mention in connection with B. B. Warfield. In this final quarter of the twentieth century a concerted effort,

apparently led by Fuller Seminary, is being made to defend the allegation that the Bible contains falsehoods and errors. Some of the writers speak as if the doctrine of inerrancy was the invention of Warfield and the old Princeton's theologians. Such assertions derive from incompetent scholarship. From the beginning, the whole Protestant movement—Lutherans and Calvinists alike—held to Biblical inerrancy. For example, Quenstedt—a major Lutheran theologian of the seventeenth century—two hundred years before Warfield, wrote,

The canonical Holy Scriptures in the original text are the infallible truth and are free from every error; in other words, in the canonical sacred Scriptures there is found no lie, no falsity, no error, not even the least, whether in subject matter or expressions, but in all things and all the details that are handed down in them, they are most certainly true, whether they pertain to doctrines or morals, to history or chronology, to topography or nomenclature. No ignorance, no thoughtlessness, no forgetfulness, no lapse of memory can and dare be ascribed to the amanuenses of the Holy Ghost in their penning the Sacred Writings (*Systema*, 1,112).<sup>3</sup>

It would be almost impossible to write a more unambiguous, detailed, forceful assertion of inerrancy. J. Theodore Mueller, after giving the above quotations, continues by showing that Luther had previously said, in various places, every point in this quotation from Quenstedt. Kenneth Kantzer, in the next chapter "Calvin and the Holy Scriptures" of the same book, shows that Calvin accepted the same view. These references to Luther and Calvin and Quenstedt are not meant to belittle Warfield. The aim is to show that *sola Scriptura* is as much essential to evangelical Christianity as *sola fide* and *solī Deo gloria*. Not only are many liberals ignorant of the history of doctrine, some are logically deficient in exegeting the Scripture. Several say that the Bible itself does not claim infallibility. Incidentally, the recent attempt to differentiate between infallibility and inerrancy, accepting the

first and repudiating the second, does not recommend their honesty to one who knows English. A text that is infallible is one that is inerrant.

### *Inerrancy*

Does then the Bible claim to be inerrant? The passage before us says that every scripture, distributively every verse, has been breathed out by God. Is that not an assertion of inerrancy? Every verse is also useful for teaching, correction, for refutation of falsehoods, and so on. Would falsehoods be useful for teaching, for instruction in righteousness? The liberals, or semi-liberals who call themselves evangelicals, would be more honest if they simply said, "The Bible contains errors, and this is one of them."

The inerrancy of Scripture, as Quenstedt so carefully detailed it, is of fundamental importance. Nowhere else can we learn of salvation. Nowhere else could we learn of justification by faith alone. Nowhere else is there any information about Jesus Christ. Whatever later Christian authors have written about the virgin birth, the atonement, the resurrection, has its source in Scripture. If the Scripture is in error here and there, it is possible that it is in error here. Then too, from the standpoint of logic, there is a question the new so-called evangelicals are reluctant to answer. It is this: If the Bible contains falsehoods here and there, the theologian must have a criterion to distinguish the parts that are true from the parts that are false: What is the criterion? In a court of law, if the judge and jury detect a witness perjuring himself two or three times, or even once, they cannot accept any of the remainder of his testimony. If some things he says happen to be true, they must be proved by other witnesses. Therefore attacks on the evangelical position are obliged to state the criterion they use in separating the truths of the Bible from its falsehoods. What is this criterion by which, from its superior position, it convicts the Scripture of error? Are the Assyrian inscriptions infallible in matters of history? Is Swedenborg an inerrant authority on Heaven and Hell? Bultmann at least had the consistency to say, "We do not know a single thing Jesus ever said or did."

### *Some Implications*

Because God breathed out the words through Paul's mind onto the manuscript, Timothy knows that he is obliged to teach, refute, correct, and instruct. Otherwise neither Timothy nor any other minister down to the present day could provide his parishioners with anything better than his own personal prejudices. In fact, this is precisely what happens in much contemporary pastoral counseling. Take three neo-evangelicals and present them with a domestic problem: There will be two contrasting recommendations, while the third pastor smiles, says nothing, and pats the parishioner on the shoulder. What the many troubled people in this society need is the word of God. Nothing else is needed. Note that the final verse ends with the statement, "that the man of God may be competent, furnished [or, equipped] for every good work." Those who do not hold the Bible in high repute, and many who do, will demur. Does the Bible, they ask, inform us what to buy in the stock market? Asks a young man, which of these two, or three, girls should I marry? Well, if a young man has to ask that question, I think the best answer would be, None. More strictly, the Biblical answer is, any one, providing they are all Christians.

But there are so many questions the Bible does not answer. Is this verse therefore a falsehood? No, but the questioner has missed the implication. The questioner thinks that buying AT&T is a good work and that buying XY&Z is bad. The Biblical view is that neither is either. Scripture tells us that we should work and invest in the stock market (*Matthew 25:27*) in order to make our living. But in God's providence, it might be good for us to make a bad investment. If we are greedy, if we worship wealth, a loss might teach us a spiritual lesson. But though investment is proper for those who have money to invest, there is no moral problem in deciding between two honest businesses. In such matters, the question of morality is the internal motive. Giving a cup of cold water to a thirsty traveler is neither good nor bad as an external action. To give it "in my name" is a good action. If someone claims that overt actions such as murder, adultery, and theft are always evil, the answer is

that these are not precisely overt actions. The terms used include both motive and various other circumstances. The overt act of killing a man is not always murder. Under certain circumstances this overt act is a good act. Sexual intercourse is legitimate for a married couple. Adultery already has the idea contained that the couple is not married one to the other. Picking up some money and putting it into one's pocket is an overt act, but it is not necessarily theft. The three terms include ideas of motive and other circumstances, and when these conditions obtain, the act is wrong. But it is the motive, not the motions, that make it wrong. In other circumstances, an act is neither right nor wrong. When all this is sorted out, we find no reason to deny that Scripture equips us completely for every good act.

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1. No, he did not. Calvin himself, when charged with Servetus' death, appealed to the judges themselves to testify that he opposed the execution. Nor did he mention beheading instead of fire, as some try to evade his clear statements. As for the facetious reference to physiology, I suppose that Servetus did not discover the circulation of the blood, but, on the word of his defenders, was about to, and would have done so, had not the court interrupted his studies.

2. Instead of the ambiguous word *organic* and the metaphorical phrase "raised to a higher level," the present writer prefers his own more literal verbiage in his *Religion, Reason, and Revelation*, 117-119.

3. Quoted by J. Theodore Mueller, "Luther and the Bible," Chapter III, 96, *Inspiration and Interpretation*, edited by John W. Walvoord, Eerdmans, 1957.