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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Holy Bible is like no other book in all the world. It is the only book which presents itself as the written revelation of the one true God, intended for the salvation of man and demonstrating its divine authority by many infallible proofs. Other religious documents, such as the Muslim Koran, may claim to be the very word of God, but they contain no such self-authenticating proofs as does the Bible (e.g., the phenomena of fulfilled prophecy).

As the record of God's holy will for man, the Bible is of utmost importance to understand aright the true meaning of the revelations it contains. It will not do to construe the words of Scripture as if they were given in our modern age and addressed to present-day English-

speaking peoples facing twentieth-century problems. To be sure, the Bible does convey God's message to us today and is as relevant to us as it was to the Hebrews of ancient times. But the form in which that message was given was an ancient Hebrew form, and it was in the first instance addressed to people who faced the special issues and circumstances peculiar to their own day and age. We cannot properly understand the underlying and permanent principles contained in these ancient utterances of God unless we first of all take stock of the problems and challenges that confronted His people in the generation in which He spoke to them.

The Purpose of the Bible

The Bible comes to us as a set of directions, right from the hand of the Manufacturer who first invented and produced the human race. For any piece of machinery a purchaser must consult diligently every word of instruction as to how to put the machine or contrivance together, or else his result will be frustration and disaster. For such a marvelously constructed creation as man, with all of his spiritual and material components, the need of an authoritative book of directions is utterly necessary. Why are we here on planet Earth? What makes us different from other biological species, and what is the purpose of our existence?

Basically there are two possible answers to

this question, as set forth in the third chapter of Genesis, where Adam and Eve have enjoyed an ideal setting of safety and plenty in happy fellowship with the God who created them to be His children, engaged in His service and committed to His glory. The clear and evident purpose of their existence was to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. But since they were moral agents possessing a free will, it was necessary for them to be faced with an alternative purpose of life.

This was persuasively presented to them by the serpentine agent of Satan, who suggested that God did not really love them for their own sakes and only wished to exploit them by forbidding access to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Lord was accused of depriv-

ing them of their basic right, which was to seek their own interests and assert their own just prerogatives. The life proposed by Satan was to live for themselves, to seek their own happiness and ascend to a godlike knowledge of good and evil.

When Eve accepted this ego-centered principle for her life's purpose and persuaded Adam to join with her in this stand against God and His holy will, the love relationship between God and man was interrupted and profoundly altered by the Fall.

God had to seek Adam and Eve out as they vainly tried to hide in the bushes from His gaze and then direct them to confession and repentance, followed by expelling them from Eden, and subjecting them to labor and pain as they shifted to the more hostile environment of the world outside. But He was able to counter the triumph of Satan by the plan of redemption, which was first intimated to Eve in Gen. 3:15, to declare to them that a messianic descendant of the woman would someday crush the head of the Satanic serpent and pay full atonement for their sin upon the altar of sacrifice. The skins with which their naked bodies were covered came from animals who had been slain, and Abel's later offering of a sheep upon the altar indicates quite clearly that Adam's family believed in and looked forward to the redemption that the Lord Jesus achieved for them and all of their believing descendants upon the hill of Calvary.

Sophisticated modern scholarship may dismiss this record in Genesis as childish myth, but the fact still remains that the two alternatives set before Eve must be chosen and answered by every member of the human race. Either we human beings are created for loving fellowship with God with the purpose of living for His glory, or else we replace Him with our own ego as the highest value in life. There is no other eligible choice left to us, for even a dedication to the welfare of others or of mankind or society in general can be valid only if we have indeed as a human race been given a special value as children of God. No such value is capable of confirmation or proof, once the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible have been rejected. Those who put themselves above God as the most important person in the universe become

guilty of moral insanity and take no more benefit from the Book of directions which comes to us in the Holy Bible.

It should also be pointed out that modern intelligentsia who assert a knowledge of the purpose of life (intelligent self-interest) which surpasses that of the prophets and apostles of old, and of the Lord Jesus Himself, put themselves in a very awkward fideistic position. The Scripture confronts them with a pattern of prediction and fulfillment which is completely beyond mere human ability. None of us really knows what the future may bring; even the events of the morrow are hidden from us day by day. But the Bible is replete with short-range and long-range predictions that could not possibly have been foreknown by man apart from the inspiration of God. A selection of these predictions will be found in excursus 1 at the end of this book. Suffice it to say that this evidence is so clear and irrefutable that no thinker can honestly say that he is intellectually respectable if he rejects the divine inspiration of the Holy Bible.

The Scope of Introduction

Old Testament introduction is the term applied to a systematic study of the ancient background against which the first thirty-nine books of the Bible are to be properly understood. It deals with matters of language, custom, historical situations, persons, places, and events alluded to in the various books of the Bible. In its larger scope it includes the following branches of study:

1. The languages in which the Old Testament was originally written, that is, Hebrew and Aramaic, along with those related Semitic languages (such as Arabic, Assyrian, Phoenician, Ugaritic, and Syriac) which help us understand the meaning of the words used in the biblical text.

2. The history of the Hebrew people and of those neighboring countries with which they had contact.

3. The religion and culture of these non-Hebrew nations, as they are revealed to us by ancient pagan authors and by the discoveries of modern archaeology.

4. The authorship of the several books of the

Classification of Semitic Languages

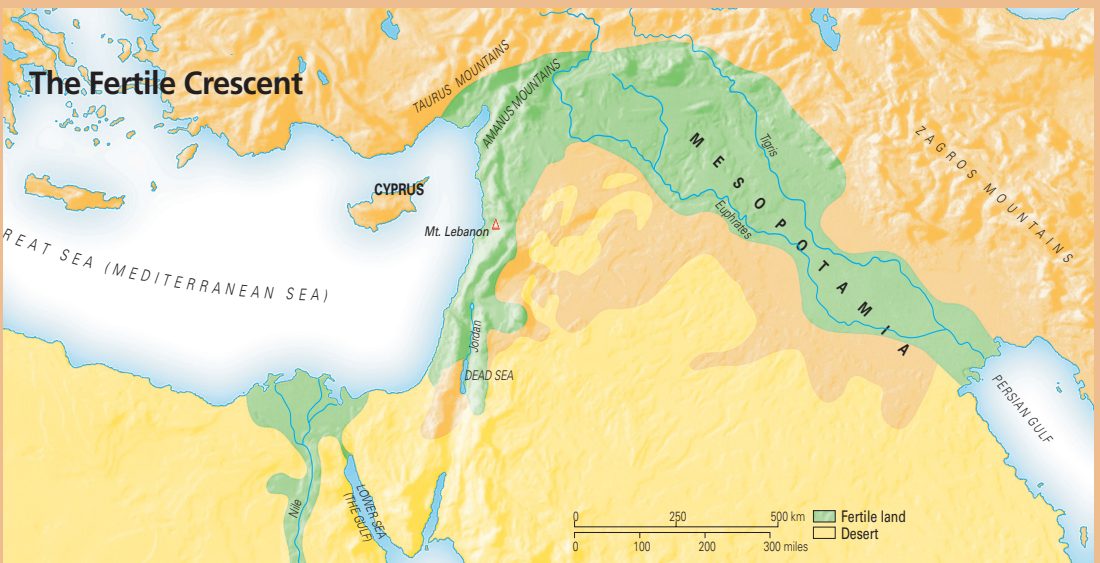
According to Geographical Location

East Semitic

South Semitic

Northwest Semitic

Primary	Akkadian	Arabic	Canaanite	Aramaic
Dialects	Babylonian	North Arabic	Eblaic	Old Aramaic
	Assyrian	South Arabic	Ugaritic	Biblical Aramaic
		Minean	Phoenician	Imperial Aramaic



Bible, since the question of who wrote the book has an important bearing upon its meaning and its reliability.

5. The date, or at least the approximate time, when each book was composed—since this often gives a clue as to what issues were confronting God’s people when He spoke to them.

6. The historical situation and contemporary problems to which the inspired authors addressed themselves as spokesmen for God.

7. The original text of each book as it existed before slips of the pen or other copyists’ errors may have crept into the form of the text that has been preserved to us. (This is known as textual

criticism.)

8. The integrity of the text, that is, the question of whether each book was entirely written by the author claimed for it, or whether the writings of others have been combined with it.

9. The history of the transmission of the text, that is, the way in which each book was copied and handed on in the various manuscript families, and translated into the various ancient languages of the peoples to whom Judaism and Christianity came during subsequent centuries, until finally the Hebrew text itself (and its various translations into Greek, Latin, Syriac, etc.) was put into printed form after the invention of

the printing press.

As a general rule, the first three divisions of introduction described above are dealt with in separate courses in language or history, while Old Testament introduction as an academic subject is restricted to the last six divisions. Furthermore, within introduction itself there are two main subdivisions: general introduction and special introduction.

General introduction deals with matters of the text (both in the original language in which it was composed and in the early versions into which it was first translated). It also considers the canon, that is, the question of which books are truly inspired and authoritative, and the approximate period in history when they were so recognized by the people of God. It gives an account of the origin and extent of the canon and arrangement and preservation of the books that comprises it. Since the question of the date and authorship of the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses) is so deeply involved with the theory of the canon, it is usually included in the field of general introduction.

As for *special introduction*, it treats the individual books of the Old Testament one by one, giving an account of authorship, date, purpose, and integrity. It may also discuss the overall structure and basic message of each book, although a detailed treatment of its contents belongs more properly to a course in Bible survey than in introduction.

The Relationship of the Old Testament to the New

The New Testament authors regarded the books of the Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) as a single composite whole (the Scripture), ultimately authored by God Himself, although mediated through human authors who wrote down His truth under His infallible guidance (cf. Gal. 3:8; 2 Peter 1:20). The inspired apostles regarded the intention of the divine Author of the Hebrew Scriptures as the important thing; the intent of the human author was a merely subordinate matter. It could even happen that the human author of the Old Testament prophecy did not understand the full significance of what he was writing, although his actual words expressed the purpose of the

divine Author who inspired him (see 1 Peter 1:10–11). The New Testament writers viewed the entire Hebrew Scriptures as a testimony to Jesus Christ, the perfect Man who fulfilled all the law; the Sacrifice and High Priest of the ritual ordinances; the Prophet, Priest, and King of whom the prophets foretold; and the Lover whom the poetical books described. They saw prophetic significance even in the historical events of the Old Testament record. Thus the crossing of the Red Sea prefigured Christian baptism (1 Cor. 10:1–2); Joshua's conquest of Canaan prefigured the spiritual rest into which Christians enter by faith (Heb. 3–4); and the calling of Israel out of Egypt foreshadowed the experience of the child Jesus (Matt. 2:15).

In general we may say that the Old Testament presented the preparation of which the New Testament was the fulfillment; it was the seed and plant of which the New Testament was the glorious fruit. Precisely because Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled what the Old Testament predicted, His life and deeds possessed absolute finality, rather than His being a mere religious sage like many others. For this reason also, the gospel of Christ possesses divine validity, which sets it apart from all man-made religions. The Old Testament demonstrates that Jesus and His church were providential, the embodiment of the purpose of God; the New Testament proves that the Hebrew Scriptures constituted a coherent and integrated organism, focused upon a single great theme and exhibiting a single program of redemption.

The Semitic Family of Languages

Just as truly as the genius of the Greek language imposed its stamp upon the New Testament revelation and the terms in which its message was cast, even so was the genius of the Hebrew language determinative for the expression of the Old Testament message. It made a great deal of difference that Greek was precise in expressing time values, and that Hebrew laid chief emphasis upon mode of action rather than upon tenses. Adequate interpretation of the Old Testament revelation demands a thorough grasp of these peculiar traits of the Hebrew verb and of Hebrew syntax generally; otherwise much misunderstanding and wresting of the Scriptures will result.

To a very large extent, Hebrew shared these grammatical and syntactical characteristics with the rest of the Semitic languages. Therefore it is important to examine these related tongues and derive from them the light that they can throw upon Hebrew usage. Moreover, in the matter of vocabulary, the study of Comparative Semitics is of utmost significance. It often happens that a word which appears only once or twice in the Hebrew Bible is found quite commonly in some of the related languages, and can be interpreted with a high degree of accuracy by comparison with them.

The traditional classification of the various Semitic languages divides them, according to the geographical location of the nations speaking them, into north, south, east, and west. East Semitic includes but one main language, Akkadian, divided into the slightly differing dialects of Babylonian and Assyrian. South Semitic includes Arabic (subdivided into North Arabic, the classical, literary language; and South Arabic with its subdialects: Sabean, Minean, Qatabanian, and Hadramautian) and Ethiopic (or Geez), with its modern descendant, Amharic. Northwest Semitic embraces both the Canaanite and the Aramaic dialects, which is usually divided into eastern and western branches (the eastern being the basis for the Syriac lan-

guage of the Christian era, and the western being the basis for biblical Aramaic as found in Daniel and Ezra). West Semitic (often classed with Aramaic in what is called Northwest Semitic by modern scholars) is comprised of Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Canaanite (of which Hebrew and Moabite are dialects).

It should be added that the newly discovered Eblaic language from Tel Mardikh would seem to be basically Canaanite in its vocabulary, but somewhat East Semitic in its morphology. Dating from the twenty-fourth century B.C., it is as old as the Akkadian of Sargon I of Agade. For a more extensive treatment of Ebla, see excursus 2 (cms 8.190).

Non-Semitic tongues which contributed some terms in the Hebrew language include: (1) the basically Hamitic speech of Egypt (which was subjected to Semitic influence upon the Hamitic inhabitants of the Nile Valley); (2) Sumerian, the agglutinative speech of the earlier, non-Semitic race that conquered and civilized Lower Mesopotamia prior to the Babylonians; and (3) the Indo-Iranian Persian that appears in post-exilic books like Daniel and Ezra, and is distantly related to Greek. Each of these contributed a small percentage of vocabulary to biblical Hebrew.

CHAPTER 2

The Inspiration of The Old Testament

Before commencing a higher critical study of the Old Testament, it is appropriate for us to come to terms with the basic question of what kind of book it is. If it is merely a product of human genius, like many other documents upon which religions have been founded, then the data it presents must be handled in one specific way. That is, these revered writings must be dealt with in purely literary terms, and naturalistic explanations must be found for every feature that appears to be supernatural (such as fulfilled prophecy). If, on the other hand, the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament are inspired by God, employing human instruments to record the truth He revealed to man, then the data must be handled in a quite different fashion. That is to say, everything which might appear to be inconsistent with that standard of accuracy and truth which divine inspiration presupposes¹ must be carefully investigated in order to arrive at a satisfactory reconciliation of apparent discrepancies. Thus the whole line of investigation is profoundly influenced by the premise with which we start.

Evidence for the Unique Inspiration of the Bible

This is not the place to enter into a thorough treatment of Christian evidences; that is the province of textbooks on apologetics. But it is appropriate to suggest here, at least in a cursory way, why it is reasonable and proper to start with the premise that the Old Testament is a collection of books inspired by God.

In the first place, there is significant unity that underlies the entire collection of thirty-nine books in the Old Testament, betraying an organic interconnection that carries through the many centuries during which it was being composed. These books exhibit a remarkable singleness of purpose and program, most reasonably explained as the operation of a single mind, the mind of the divine Author Himself.² (A classic discussion of this aspect of Scripture is found in chapter 2 of James Orr's *Problem of the Old Testament* [POT]. Though he published this work in 1907 [New York: Scribner], Orr's line of argument has never been successfully refuted and is still valid today.)

Second, of all world religions, only the Hebrew-Christian offers a logically defensible epistemology (science of religious knowledge). The end result of four thousand years of human investigation and philosophic inquiry has, apart from the Bible itself, been hopeless disagreement and confusion in the whole area of religion. Some theorists have urged the manufacturing of a system of ethics and vague theism,

Fragment of Isaiah scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls



which they call a world religion. But the fact remains that the tensions among Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are just as sharp today as they ever have been, even though milder methods of propagation or protection are usually employed today than in earlier ages. They still give entirely different answers to the question, "What must I do to be saved?"

Contrast the situation that prevails in the realms of medicine and science. The many centuries of experimentation and research have resulted in general agreement among all civilized nations as to the basic laws of chemistry and physics. To be sure, the emergence of new data makes necessary the constant revision of the theories and conclusions which scientists

publish from year to year; but by and large, the scientific world remains in substantial agreement the world over.

In the case of religion, however, which deals with questions of the greatest importance for mankind, there has appeared no consensus whatsoever. It often happens that two men who have been reared as brothers in the same home, have enjoyed the same educational advantages, and possess the same degree of intelligence may hold views of religion which diametrically oppose each other. If it were possible for the tools of human reason and scientific research to lead to valid results in the realm of metaphysics, men of equal education and enlightenment would surely come to some measure of agreement (just as they do in philology or science).

Nothing, however, could be further from the case so far as religion is concerned. We are scarcely any nearer to agreement today than our ancestors were four thousand years ago; perhaps even less so, for they had not yet invented atheistic naturalism at that early period. It logically follows that human investigation, even with the most careful and scientific methodology, can lead to nothing more solid than mere conjecture when it comes to the destiny of the soul and the meaning of life. Man by his own searching cannot find out God; at best he can only conjecture. A guilty defendant before the court can hardly be objective about himself.

How then can we know God or His will for our lives? Only if He reveals Himself to us! Unless He Himself tells us, we can never know for sure the answers to those questions which matter most to us as human beings. At this point it is important to observe that the Bible presents itself to us as the written revelation of God. This purports to be a book in which God gives us the answers to the great questions which concern our soul, and which all the wisdom and science of man are powerless to solve with any degree of certainty. The Bible asserts of itself that it is the special revelation from God; it must therefore be acknowledged as claiming to be the right kind of source from which to derive a trustworthy knowledge of religious truth.³ It comes to us with the claim that the words are from God Himself: "Thus saith the Lord." If there be a God, and if He is concerned for our salvation, this is the only way (apart from direct revelation from God to each individual of each successive generation) that He could reliably impart this knowledge to us. It must be through a reliable written record such as the Bible purports to be.⁴

Inerrancy of the Original Autographs

We must next ask ourselves the question, what kind of record is this Book going to be? One containing errors of various kinds, or one free from all error? If this written revelation contains mistakes, then it can hardly fulfill its intended purpose: to convey to man in a reliable way the will of God for his salvation. Why is this so? Because a demonstrated mistake in one part

gives rise to the possibility that there may be mistakes in other parts of the Bible. If the Bible turns out to be a mixture of truth and error, then it becomes a book like any other.

No doubt, there is truth in every other religious document known to man—the Koran, the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Analects, the *Iliad*, and the *Odyssey*—even though this truth may coexist with an abundance of error. What is to be done with books of this sort, books containing both truth and error? There is only one thing that can be done, and that is to subject them to the critical faculty of the human reason. Within proper limits, to be sure, the reasoning powers of man have a legitimate and necessary function in weighing the evidences presented by these documents, to see whether they are consistent with divine origin. Here it is a question of recognizing the identity of a purported revelation as to whether it is the Word of God. Human reason is competent to pass upon these evidences, applying the rule of self-contradiction and the other canons of logic, in order to determine whether the data of the texts themselves square with the claims of divine origin. (It has already been pointed out in footnote 3 that only the Bible, as opposed to other religious documents, contains decisive evidences of divine inspiration and authority.)

But it is a very different thing for human reason to attempt to pass judgment upon divine revelation as such, to determine its truth or falsity. For such judgments to be valid, they must proceed from a Judge who possesses a knowledge of metaphysical truth that is superior to that of the revelation itself. In other words, man must know more about God and the soul and spiritual values than the Bible itself knows if he is to pass valid judgment on the truth of the Bible. But this is obviously not the case, as pointed out previously (pp. 21–22), and therefore man is totally dependent on divine revelation for this all-important knowledge. For this reason, if that revelation is to come in a usable and reliable form, not dependent on man's fallible judgment, it must come in an inerrant form. Otherwise it would depend ultimately on the authority of man for its validation and, therefore, could not serve its purpose as a trustworthy disclosure of divine truth.

Textual Transmission Not Necessarily Infallible

At this point we must make a distinction. Inerrancy (freedom from all error) is necessary only for the original manuscripts (autographs) of the biblical books. They must have been free from all mistakes, or else they could not have been truly inspired by the God of truth in whom is no darkness at all. God could never have inspired a human author of Scripture to write anything erroneous or false.⁵ To say that God could not use fallible man as an instrument of His infallible truth is as illogical as to insist that an artist can never produce a valid painting because his brush is capable of slipping.

But what about the text of the Bible as we now possess it? Is that text necessarily free from all mistakes of every kind? Not when it comes to copyists' errors, for we certainly do find discrepancies among the handwritten copies that have been preserved to us, even those that come from the earliest centuries. Some slips of the pen may have crept into the first copies made from the original manuscripts, and additional errors of a transmissional type could have found their way into the copies of copies. It is almost unavoidable that this should have been the case. No one alive can sit down and copy out the text of an entire book without a mistake of any kind. (Those who doubt this statement are invited to try it themselves!) It would take nothing short of a miracle to ensure the inerrancy of a copy of an original manuscript.

Granted, then, that errors have crept into our texts as we now have them, how can they serve as a reliable medium for disclosing God's will? Are we not right back with the problem of books containing both truth and error? Not at all, for there is a great difference between a document which was wrong at the start and a document which was right at the start but was miscopied. One may read a letter from his friend or relative and find in it such common slips as *of* for *or*, or *and* for *an*, or *led* for *lead* and yet by a simple process of correction in the light of the context, he may easily arrive at the true sense intended by the writer. Only if the errors which have gotten into the copies are so serious as to pervert the sense altogether does the message fail in accurate communication. But if the letter came

from a correspondent who was confused, mistaken, or deceitful, then the errors and misinformation it contains are beyond remedy, and the reader is injured thereby.

An objection is raised in modern scholarly circles in regard to the faithfulness of the transmission of the original text of Scripture that seems to be quite specious and illogical. In view of the unquestioning acceptance of so many of the earliest surviving copies of Greek and Latin classical authors, very seldom is any objection raised on the ground of their unreliability because they are late or because there are so few of them.⁶ But in the case of the Bible there are hundreds of witnesses to the text of the Old Testament and over 20,000 witnesses to the text of the New Testament in their original languages, and therefore it is safe to say that no documents of ancient times have ever had such a full and impressive witness to the text as is found for the sixty-six books of the Bible. It is highly significant that these non-biblical texts are so cheerfully accepted, even though, for example, works of Tacitus, Lucretius, Catullus, and Aristotle have fewer than five extant copies each and largely bear much later datings than many biblical texts. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the objection as to the trustworthiness of the text is hardly sincere, but rather it appears as special pleading on the basis of a hostile bias that is scarcely worthy of responsible scholarship.

It should be added that this kind of concern for flawless accuracy has a certain bearing on related matters such as the standard of weights and measures which should prevail throughout a society. One can hardly purchase an absolutely perfect pound or an absolutely perfect foot measure in any store in America. But, we all understand that in the Bureau of Weights and Measures in Washington, D.C., there is a perfect standard. Those measures and weights that can be purchased can be judged by reference to those in the Bureau of Weights and Measures for objective verification.

This brings up the question of the faithfulness of the transmission of the Bible text. There are numerous types of manuscript error which the textual critic may discover in the early manuscripts of the Old Testament. (These will be discussed in chapter 4). Are these of so serious a nature as to corrupt the message itself, or make

Extrabiblical Historians

Author	Date	Title of Work
Eusebius	ca. A.D. 263–340	The Life of Constantine, Ecclesiastical History
Herodotus	ca. 484–425 B.C.	The Histories
Flavius Josephus	A.D. 37–97	Antiquities of the Jews, Bellum Judaicum
Philo of Alexandria	30 B.C.–A.D. 40	Allegories of Sacred Law
Polybius	ca. 203–120 B.C.	Histories
Strabo	ca. 64 B.C.–A.D. 24	Geography
Suetonius	ca. A.D. 69–140	The Twelve Caesars
Tacitus	ca. A.D. 58–120	Germania, Historiae, Annals
Thucydides	ca. 460–400 B.C.	The History of the Peloponnesian Wars
Xenophon	ca. 430–355 B.C.	Anabasis, Cyropaedia, Hellenica,

it impossible to convey the true meaning? If they are, then God's purpose has been frustrated; He could not convey His revelation so that those of later generations could understand it aright. If He did not exercise a restraining influence over the scribes who wrote out the standard and authoritative copies of the Scriptures, then they corrupted and falsified the message. If the message was falsified, the whole purpose of bestowing a written revelation has come to naught; for such a corrupted Scripture would be a mere mixture of truth and error, necessarily subject to human judgment (rather than sitting in judgment upon man).

Do we have any objective evidence that errors of transmission have not been permitted by God to corrupt and pervert His revelation? Yes, we have, for a careful study of the variants (different readings) of the various earliest manuscripts reveals that none of them affects a single doctrine of Scripture. The system of spiritual truth contained in the standard Hebrew text of the Old Testament is not in the slightest altered or compromised by any of the variant readings

found in the Hebrew manuscripts of earlier date found in the Dead Sea caves or anywhere else. All that is needed to verify this is to check the register of well-attested variants in Rudolf Kittel's edition of the Hebrew Bible or else the more recent *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. It is very evident that the vast majority of them are so inconsequential as to leave the meaning of each clause doctrinally unaffected.

It should be clearly understood that in this respect the Old Testament differs from all other pre-Christian works of literature of which we have any knowledge. To be sure, we do not possess ordinarily so many different manuscripts of pagan productions, coming from such widely separated eras, as we do in the case of the Old Testament. Strong confirmation of this type of copyist error is found in various pagan records that have been preserved to us for the purposes of comparison. For example, in the Behistun Rock inscription set up by Darius I, around 510 B.C., we find that line 38 gives the figure for the slain of the army of Frada as 55,243, with 6,572 prisoners—according to the Babylonian column.

In a duplicate copy of this inscription found at Babylon itself, the number of prisoners was 6,973. But in the Aramaic translation of this inscription discovered at the Elephantine in Egypt, the number of prisoners was only 6,972—precisely the same discrepancy as we have noted in the comparison of Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7 (cf. F. W. König, *Relief und Inschrift des Königs Dareios I am Felsen von Bagistan* [Leiden: Brill, 1938], p. 48). Similarly in line 31 of the same inscription, the Babylonian column gives 2,045 as the number of slain in the rebellious army of Frawartish, along with 1,558 prisoners, whereas the Aramaic copy has over 1,575 as the prisoner count (*ibid.*, p. 45). (For greater detail on the discrepancies between the three-language inscription of Darius I on the above-mentioned Behistun Rock inscription [i.e., the Persian, Babylonian, and Elamite], and the Aramaic papyrus copy found in the Elephantine, consult F. W. König: *ibid.*, pp. 36–57.)

Where we do have many different manuscripts of pagan productions, for example, in the *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, the variations are of a

far more extensive and serious nature. Quite startling differences appear, for example, between chapter 15 contained in the Papyrus of Ani (written in the Eighteenth Dynasty) and the Turin Papyrus (from the Twenty-sixth Dynasty or later). Whole clauses are inserted or left out, and the sense in corresponding columns of text is in some cases altogether different.

Apart from divine superintendence of the transmission of the Hebrew text, there is no particular reason why the same phenomenon of discrepancy and change would not appear between Hebrew manuscripts produced centuries apart. Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered in Qumran Cave 1 near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known (A.D. 980), they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text, but in 1QIsb (ca. 75 B.C.) the preserved text is almost letter-for-letter identical with the Leningrad Manuscript. The 5 percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling. Even those Dead

Comparison of Other Ancient Writings

Author	Earliest Copy	No. of Copies
Caesar	900 A.D.	10
Plato (Tetralogies)	900 A.D.	20
Tacitus (Annals)	1100 A.D.	20
also minor works	1000 A.D.	1
Pliny the Younger (History)	850 A.D.	7
Thucydides (History)	900 A.D.	8
Suetonius	950 A.D.	8
Herodotus (History)	900 A.D.	8
Sophocles	1000 A.D.	100
Catullus	1550 A.D.	3
Euripedes	1100 A.D.	9
Demosthenes	1100 A.D.	200
Aristotle	1100 A.D.	5

Sea fragments of Deuteronomy and Samuel which point to a different manuscript family from that which underlies our received Hebrew text do not indicate any differences in doctrine or teaching. They do not affect the message of revelation in the slightest.

The Doctrine of Inspiration Affirmed by Scripture

Does the Bible assert infallibility for itself? It has sometimes been argued that the Scriptures do not even claim inerrancy for themselves. But careful investigation shows that whenever they discuss the subject, they do in fact assert absolute authority for themselves as the inerrant Word of God.

Matt. 5:18: "For verily I [Christ] say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot [the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet] or one tittle [a distinguishing projection in Hebrew letters] shall in no wise pass from the Law [the Old Testament], till all be fulfilled." This indicates that not only the thoughts conveyed by Scripture, but also the individual words themselves, as valid vehicles of those thoughts and as spelled out by individual letters, are possessed of infallible truth and will surely find their fulfillment and realization.

John 10:35: "The scripture cannot be broken" carries the same implications as the preceding.

2 Tim 3:16: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God ["God-breathed," *theopneustos*; cf. New International Version], and is profitable for doctrine." From New Testament usage it can easily be established that "Scripture" (*graphē*) refers to the whole canon of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament as we have them today. Second Peter 3:16 implies that Paul's New Testament epistles also enjoy the same status as inspired Scriptures (*graphai*).

Heb. 1:1-2: "God, who . . . spake . . . by the prophets, hath . . . spoken unto us by his Son." This asserts the same infallibility for the writings of the Old Testament prophets as it attaches to the New Testament message of Christ Himself.

1 Peter 1:10-11: "Of which salvation the [Old Testament] prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in

them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." The implication is that the Holy Spirit was in these Old Testament authors, and that He guided them into composing words of infallible truth sure of fulfillment, even though the human authors themselves might not fully know all that these divinely guided words actually signified. Because of verses like these, in interpreting Scripture we must seek to establish not merely the intention of the human author who wrote the words, but also (and more important) the intention of the divine Author who guided in the composition of those words.

2 Peter 1:21: "The prophecy [the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures] came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved [carried along, as the wind bears along a sailing ship] by the Holy Ghost." In their speech (as committed to writing), these Old Testament authors who prophesied of Christ were supernaturally carried into inerrant truth, truth that is not subjected to mere "private interpretation" (v. 20).

All these passages add up to this doctrine of inspiration: that accuracy inheres in every part of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, so that as a whole and in all its parts, the Bible is infallible as to truth and final as to authority. This accuracy extends even to matters of history and science as well as to theology and morals.

Some scholars, such as Henry P. Smith and Charles A. Briggs, have attempted to draw a distinction between these two types of truth, and allow for error to inhere in matters of mere history or science. To this position there are two fatal objections. First, the New Testament makes no such distinction: the historicity of the literal Adam and Eve is implied in 1 Tim. 2:13-14 (otherwise Paul's comment would be quite irrelevant); as also in 1 Cor. 11:8-9, which clearly affirms that Eve was literally formed from a part of Adam's body, as Gen. 2:22 states; the literal historical experience of Jonah's three days in the stomach of the whale is absolutely essential if it is to serve as an analogy for Christ's three days in the tomb (Matt. 12:40). It is impossible to reject the historicity of these two often contested episodes without by implication rejecting the authority of the Christ of the Gospels and of the apostle Paul in the Epistles. As to the historicity

of the flood and Noah's ark, compare Christ's own dictum in Matt. 24:38–39: "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking . . . until the day that Noe [Noah] entered into the ark. And they knew not until the flood came, and took them all away." In Matt. 19:4–5 Jesus affirmed that the words of Gen. 2:24 were spoken by the Creator of Adam and Eve, who had just brought them together as husband and wife. In Mark 12:26 He clearly implies that God Himself had spoken to the historical Moses the very words of Ex. 3:6: "I am . . . the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Note also that in Matt. 23:35 He put the historicity of Abel's murder upon the same plane as the murder of Zechariah, the son of Berachiah.

Second, it is not always possible to make a clean-cut separation between theology-ethics and history-science. There are crucial cases where both types of truth are involved, as in the case of the literal, historical Adam (upon whose fatherhood of the whole human race the whole theological argument of Rom. 5:14–19 depends). One cannot allow for error in history-science without also ending up with error in doctrine. (So also the Apostles' Creed: 1. Creation performed by a personal God, "Maker of heavens and earth," rather than through impersonal forces and mechanistic evolution. 2. God has a unique Son—Jesus. 3. Jesus was fathered by God the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin in a specific moment in history. 4. Jesus suffered under Pilate—crucified, died, and was buried. 5. The bodily resurrection of Christ on the third day.)

This brief survey of the views of Christ and His apostles serves to indicate that they regarded the Old Testament in its entirety as the inerrant record of God's revelation to man. In other words, the basic ground for the complete trustworthiness of Scripture is the trustworthiness of God Himself. When the Scripture speaks, it is God who speaks; unlike any other book ever written, the Word of God is "living and operative" (Heb. 4:12 says that the *logos* of God is *zōn* and *energēs*) and penetrates to the innermost being of man, sitting in judgment upon all human philosophies and reasonings with absolute and sovereign authority. Such a judgmental prerogative on the part of the Bible must presuppose its complete inerrancy, for if error

inherited in the original text of the Scripture on any level, it would inevitably be the object of man's judgment, rather than that authority which sits in judgment upon man.

In the last analysis, then, every man must settle for one of two alternatives: the inerrancy of the Holy Scripture, or the inerrancy of his own personal judgment. If the Bible contains errors in the autographs, then it requires an infallible human judgment to distinguish validity between the false and the true in Scripture; it is necessary for every affirmation in the sacred text to receive endorsement from the human critic himself before it may be accepted as true. Since men disagree in their critical judgments, it requires absolute inerrancy on the part of each individual to render a valid judgment in each instance. Even the agnostic must assert for himself such infallibility of judgment, for he cannot logically assume an agnostic position unless he can affirm that he has surveyed all the evidence for the authority of Scripture and has come to a valid judgment that the evidence is insufficient to prove the divine authority of the Bible as the Word of God. These, then, are the only alternatives available to us as we confront the Scriptures: either they are inerrant, or else we are.⁸

The Infallible Proof of Fulfilled Prophecy

There is in Holy Scripture a form of evidence which is discoverable in no other religious document known to man: the phenomenon of prediction and fulfillment according to an ordered plan followed by a God who is sovereign over history. No one could suppose that He would enjoy accuracy in fulfilling the predictions He might make concerning the future. Occasional human predictions might come to pass, but in the Scripture we have many hundreds of predictions which are revealed by God and which are later fulfilled in events of subsequent history.

None of us can be sure of what will happen to ourselves or those in our immediate environment within the next twenty-four hours. Those who have attempted to predict future events have often been disappointed. In view of man's inability to foretell the future with any high

degree of accuracy one is forced to the conclusion that the kind of fulfillments that are found in Scripture could only come from God Himself.

No scholar yet has been able to explain how the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah could have described so accurately what was to be the suffering of our Lord on Good Friday as the New Testament records. Similarly, the prediction of Isa. 49:6 was given at a time when Israel had suffered major defeats and losses through the oppression of her enemies, and it was highly questionable whether any knowledge of the Hebrew religion would even be retained in future generations by any people. But Isa. 49:6 records the promise of God that the Servant of the Lord would bring to pass not only the regathering of the scattered people of Israel to their native land, but also that He would be a light unto the Gentiles unto the ends of the earth. Very clearly this refers to the events that followed the resurrection of Christ and the launching of the missionary enterprise that ultimately compelled even the empire of Rome to surrender to the lordship of the Redeemer they had crucified. From there the message of the Gospel has gone out to every continent in the world so that there are large numbers of people who have been brought into a saving relationship to God through the proclamation of His atoning grace as promised in Isaiah 49. There is no possible way to explain this kind of fulfillment on the basis of mere human literary activity or speculation. For further details and examples of fulfillments, the reader is encouraged to consult excursus 1.

Subbiblical Views of Inspiration

Those who incline to a Neo-Orthodox approach in dealing with the inspiration of Scripture have usually (like H. H. Rowley of Manchester) set up the so-called "mind of Christ" as a standard for judging between doctrinal truth and error in the Bible. For example, they say that when Joshua and the Israelites slew the entire population of Jericho, this was due to their primitive or savage ideas of justice, rather than to the express commandment of God, as recorded in Deut. 20:16–18. Statements or judgments attributed to God in the Old Testament but which seem to be too

severe for Christ's standard of meekness, patience, and love as contained in the New Testament are to be rejected as mere human inventions concocted by Israel in their backward stage of religious development. The criterion of truth should be "the mind of Christ" as understood and approved by modern scholarship.

Nevertheless, investigation will show that many of Christ's statements recorded in the New Testament clash with this supposed "mind of Christ" in a most startling way. Note, for instance, Matt. 23:33: "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" Again, Matt. 25:41: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." We have no accredited record of what Christ's mind actually was other than the sayings recorded in the Gospels. It is fatally inconsistent to set up a philosophic notion as to what the viewpoint of Christ actually was, on the basis of some of His recorded statements, and then to reject the authenticity of other statements recorded in the same source, simply because they conflict with modern preference. Such a procedure really amounts to imposing human judgment upon the written Word of God, and allowing only that portion of the Word to be true which the human mind endorses.

We have already seen that human reason is an inadequate and discredited tool for attaining true religious knowledge. If the Bible is truly the Word of God, it must sit in judgment upon man; man is not competent to sit in judgment upon the Holy Bible. His reasoning powers are to be employed in the task of consistent interpretation of the message of the Bible, in order that he may be sure to understand what God means by the words of Scripture. But never may he pass judgment against the clear teachings of Scripture as established by exegesis; for if he does, he by implication rejects the authority of Scripture as a whole.

More typically Neo-Orthodox is the view that regards the Bible as something less than the written Word of God; the Bible is merely a *witness* to the Word of God. According to this view, the Word of God is a dynamic principle which comes into operation only when there is a living or "existential" encounter between the believer and God. God speaks with power to him from



The settlement buildings at Qumran. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were found at Qumran.

the pages of Holy Writ and establishes a personal relationship, rather than merely instilling propositional truth into his mind. (*Propositional* here refers to the kind of truth which may be stated in propositions, such as, "God is an eternal Spirit." Propositions may be grasped as mere objects of knowledge, like mathematical formulas; but divine truth, it is urged, can never be mastered by man's mind. Divine truth reaches man in an "I-Thou" encounter; it is like an electric current with both a positive pole and a negative pole as conditions for existence.) Since the biblical text was written by human authors, and all men are sinful and subject to error, therefore, it is claimed, there must be error in the biblical text itself. But, it is argued, the living God is able to speak even from this partially erroneous text and bring believers into vital relationship with Him in a saving encounter.

Such a view of the Bible leaves ample room for all manner of scientific and historical errors, and for all the adverse judgments of rationalistic higher criticism against the authenticity of the writings of Moses, Isaiah, Daniel, and all the rest. All these findings may be (and undoubt-

edly are) true as an accurate account of how the Bible humanly originated. Nevertheless, God has appointed this error-studded Scripture to be a uniquely authoritative witness to His revelation, and He is able to use it in a dynamic way to "save" men.

Thus, in their zeal to sidestep the assaults of rationalistic higher criticism upon the trustworthiness of the biblical record, and to rescue the significance of the Christian message in the face of scientific objections to the supernatural, the theologians of the Neo-Orthodox movement have resorted to a paradoxical view of the nature of revelation itself. They hold the position that by its very nature, divine revelation cannot be inscripturated. As soon as it is imprisoned in words, especially words setting forth propositions about God and spiritual truth, then it becomes the object of men's minds and cognitive powers. It thus falls under the control of man, and finds itself imprisoned within the covers of the written word. Revelation therefore is not to be equated with revealed doctrines or propositions about theology; rather, it consists of a direct encounter between God and man, as

one subject confronting another subject. Revelation bears an analogy to a personal encounter between human beings; they experience each other as personalities, rather than as a set of statistics or items of information on an identification card.

From this same viewpoint it may be urged that it is a matter of no consequence whether the accounts recorded in Scripture are accurate or not. The gospel record of the virgin birth, for example, or the bodily resurrection of Christ may very well be unhistorical (since modern scientific theory leaves no room for such miraculous events), but this makes no particular difference. Through these pious legends of the early church we may encounter God and the suprahistorical realities to which these stories point. To rely upon the infallible accuracy of the written record of the Bible is held to be an obstacle to true faith. The dogma of an infallible Scripture operates as an unhealthy crutch upon which to lean; true faith soars above the manifest errors of the Bible to the transcendental truth to which the Bible points—truth available to the believer only through a personal encounter with the living God.

But this Neo-Orthodox view is confronted with a host of logical difficulties. It puts the authority of Scripture on the basis of sheer unverifiable faith. How can we be sure that God has not spoken to us from the record of the Koran (which is demonstrably full of errors and anachronisms), or from the Egyptian Book of the Dead, or from the Hindu Vedas? Why only from the Bible? Objective verification is not only discarded as impossible, but the desire for it is condemned as reprehensibly earthbound and rationalistic. One must simply believe! Whom or what? Why, the Scripture, of course.

But regrettably enough, the Scripture itself seems to be totally unaware of this Neo-Orthodox approach to religious knowledge. It positively bristles with propositional truths about God, truths which may be reduced to creedal statements that the human mind may intellectually grasp. Perhaps this may be explained away as a manifestation of the fallibility and frailty of the sinful men who wrote the Bible.

But how does one get beyond the text of the Bible to the more rarefied, ineffable, suprahistorical, personal-encounter truth which is supposed to lie beyond? Why, by a direct encounter

with God, of course! Yes, but whose direct encounter? Barth's? Brunner's? Niebuhr's? Tillich's? These giants of the Neo-Orthodox movement have many stark disagreements among themselves on matters theological. Some, like Barth, disagree even with themselves quite noticeably from decade to decade. It is hard to see how the eternal and unchanging truth of God can be validly interpreted in Barth's celebrated *Commentary on Romans*, when his views are modified so remarkably as they are from edition to edition of that work.

As a matter of fact, then, this Neo-Orthodox view of Scripture raises far more serious difficulties than it seeks to solve. It is virtually impossible for crisis theologians to make any affirmations at all about God or faith or any other aspect of religious truth which do not ultimately rest upon the propositional statements of the written Word of God. For example, to quote from William Temple's dictum concerning Holy Scripture: "No single sentence can be quoted as having the authority of a distinct utterance of the all-holy God."⁹ But how does Archbishop Temple know that there is a single God, rather than a host of gods, as pagan religions teach; or no God at all, as Marxism teaches? Only from the authority of the written Bible, or of a confessing church which demonstrably trusted in the infallible authority of that Bible. Again, how does he know that the one true God is "all-holy"? Only because the Scripture affirms Him to be so—a propositional affirmation! Remove the authority of the written record of divine revelation, and the statement of Temple or Brunner or any other religious teacher concerning religious truth is reduced to the status of a mere conjecture, completely devoid of authority, and resting upon the same questionable basis as any other human opinion.

How may we know that faith is an important and saving principle, as Neo-Orthodox teachers insist? Only because it is so taught in the written Word of God. Otherwise it may well be, as most of the non-Christian world believes, that salvation is achieved only by good works. Even the possibility of an encounter between God and man is only guaranteed to us by the affirmations of Scripture and its numerous records of such encounters. Otherwise the whole "experience" of divine-human encounter may be a mere mat-

ter of hallucination and autosuggestion, devoid of metaphysical reality.

Thus it turns out that every religious affirmation of the adherents of this school is ultimately dependent upon the truthfulness of the written Word of God, the Hebrew-Christian Scriptures. If these are erroneous in any portion, then they may be erroneous in any other portion; no reliance can be placed in them at all, or indeed in any affirmation which Neo-Orthodox theologians have derived from them—and all their doctrinal statements about God, encounter, and faith have in fact been derived from them. In other words, if the authority of the Bible as written cannot be trusted, then no insight of crisis theology has any more value than a mere human opinion—unless perchance the theologian happens to enjoy in his own person the very attribute of infallibility which he denies to Scripture.

This brings us to the question of the peculiarity of Neo-Orthodox faith, the faith which soars to God without the fettering dogma of scriptural inerrancy. What is faith, but a trust in something or someone other than itself? In what or whom, then, is this exalted faith reposed? Ostensibly it is reposed in God, or in the insights derived from religious experience as the believer encounters God, whether in the pages of Scripture or in some other context. But how are these insights to be adjudged in their validity? Since they cannot be verified by appeal to any objective authority whatever (whether the Scripture or an infallible human teacher or church), the believer cannot look to any authority except his own. He cannot even be sure that there is a God, if the Bible is not reliable as an objective witness; he can only trust in himself. In other words, this Neo-orthodox type of faith, in the last analysis, must be faith in man, not in God; that is, the believer's faith is reposed in himself.

The Bible cannot be trusted, nor any human authority either (since humanity implies fallibility); therefore the Neo-orthodox believer can know nothing except his own opinion, and hope that this may turn out to be correct. Otherwise he is irretrievably lost. It is only a bit of self-deception for him to suppose that his faith rests in a God outside himself; lacking any objective authority whatever, he is at the mercy of his own subjective impressions and opinions. He can never be sure that his revelations are not mere hallucinations.

Dealing with Difficulties in the Bible

It must be admitted that the text of Scripture as transmitted to us contains occasional difficulties which appear to challenge the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Some of these difficulties are relieved by a proper use of the science of textual criticism. Others, such as discrepancies in statistics or the spelling of names, call for an emending of text which goes beyond the available data of textual criticism. Still others present logical difficulties, such as the endorsement given in Judg. 11 to the apparent sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, when Deut. 12:31 forbids all human sacrifice in Israel.

There are two possible methods for dealing with these problems. First, one may hold in abeyance the biblical claims to infallibility until each individual difficulty is cleared up. Each time a new problem presents itself, the Bible becomes demoted to a suspect status until the matter is satisfactorily settled. Meanwhile, the believer is kept on the tenterhooks of painful suspense and anguish of soul until the Bible is again cleared of the charges against it. Second, one may, even in the face of apparent discrepancies, retain his faith in the infallibility of the biblical record, waiting patiently for the vindication that later investigation will surely provide. Having been convinced that only divine origin explains the phenomena of Scripture, he may take his stand with Jesus of Nazareth upon the inerrancy of the written Word of God, and look forward to an eventual clearing up of all the problems that may arise.

Those who follow this second approach may perhaps be accused of illogical subjectivism, because they proceed on the basis of an *a priori* conviction. But this accusation is not well founded, for the Bible cannot be studied at all except upon the basis of one *a priori* or another. One must start with the prior assumption that the Bible is either a fallible record or an infallible one. There is no middle ground; one cannot remain in a state of neutral suspense and insist, "Just let the Bible speak for itself." We must first of all ascertain what kind of book this Bible is that does the speaking. Is it the infallible Word of God, or is it the error-prone product of man, having elements of divine truth intermingled

Procedures for Handling Biblical Difficulties

1. Be fully persuaded an explanation or reconciliation exists.
2. Trust in the inerrancy of Scripture as originally written down.
3. Carefully study the context and framework of the verse to ascertain the original intent of the author.
4. Practice careful exegesis: determine author intent, study key words, note parallel passages.
5. Harmonize parallel passages.
6. Consult Bible commentaries, dictionaries, lexical sources, encyclopedias.
7. Check for a transmissional error in the original text.
8. Remember that the historical accuracy of the biblical text is unsurpassed; that the transmitted text of Scripture is supported by thousands of extant manuscripts, some of which date back to the second century B.C.

with human mistakes? If it presents such data as to compel an acknowledgment that it can only be of divine origin—and it does present such data in abundance—then the only reasonable course is to take seriously its own assertions of infallibility. If the Scriptures constitute an authoritative self-disclosure of God, then any discrepancies which appear must be dealt with as only apparent, not real. When all the facts are in, the charges of error will prove to be unsubstantiated.

It should be pointed out that such a procedure is commonly followed in human relations without adverse criticism. For example, a husband who has come to the conviction that his wife is a faithful and virtuous woman will steadfastly refuse to become suspicious of her, even though she has been seen going out with some other man. Without jumping to adverse conclusions, he will simply await further information which will clear up the situation and satisfactorily explain her association with the man in question. It would be foolish and unworthy for him to abandon his conviction of her integrity until her action is vindicated. Only an initial pre-

sumption that she is inconstant and untrustworthy would justify such a reaction on his part.

Even so, it is foolish and unworthy for one who has been convinced of the divine authority of the Bible to question its infallibility until each new allegation against it has been cleared up. Rather than being a scientific and objective procedure, as is sometimes asserted, such a policy involved only an illogical shifting from one *a priori* to another with weak-minded vacillation. A genuine, outright contradiction in the Scriptures (especially if demonstrable for the original autographs) would be good cause for abandoning faith in the inerrancy of Scripture; but until such has been proved, or until some outright error in history or science has been demonstrated according to the laws of legal evidence, the believer in Scripture need never feel embarrassed about holding to the assumption that it is the inerrant Word of God. It is highly significant that no such mistake has ever yet been proved to the satisfaction of a court of law, although various attempts have been made to do so.¹⁰

Notes

- 1 There remains, of course, a third possibility: that God chose to reveal His truth through an imperfect revelation in which truth was mingled with error. But this would be a quite useless or unusable type of revelation, inasmuch as it would require infallible human judgment to discern the truth from the error. See the section under "Inerrancy of the Original Autographs" in this chapter.
- 2 Of course, it is possible to handle the Old Testament writings in an artificially dissectionist way, in the interests of a theory of diverse sources and conglomerate authorship. One who has espoused such theories is not obliged to interpret texts in the light of their overall context and setting, but he may always, by ingenious twists of interpretation, find disagreements and discrepancies between the sources. He may uncover divergent viewpoints and inconsistencies in any given work that would never occur as such to the mind of the unbiased reader, who is simply reading the book to grasp its message. But even the doctrinaire dissectionist must finally acknowledge that in the form in which the Hebrew Scriptures have been preserved to us, there is very little difference, if any, between the concept of God and the covenant which appears in the latest portion of the Old Testament and that which is found in its earliest written sections. Nor can there be any doubt that from the standpoint of Christ and the New Testament apostles, the entire Old Testament represented a single unity that spoke as with a single voice—"the Holy Scripture."
- 3 To be sure, there are a few other religious scriptures which make the same claim for themselves, such as the Koran and the Book of Mormon. It must be conceded, however, that these two documents lack the credentials which authenticate the Bible as the true record of God's revelation. Most notably they lack the validation of prior prophecy and subsequent fulfillment, and the all-pervading presence of the divine-human Redeemer. The Book of Mormon is vitiated by many historical inconsistencies and inaccuracies, and the Koran (which is claimed to have been dictated from a heavenly archetype coeternal with Allah) exhibits not only the most startling historical inaccuracies but also the changing viewpoints of a human author (Muhammad) in the light of the current events of his own day. Nor is there any comparison between the Bible and these other books when it comes to the grandeur and sublimity of thought it conveys, or the power with which it penetrates the human soul with life-changing consequences. (For specific details, see appendixes 2 and 3.)
- 4 What about oral tradition? May not the inerrant truth of God be handed down from mouth to mouth through successive generations? Yes, indeed, it may be, and undoubtedly portions of the Bible were preserved in this way for a good many years before finding their authoritative, written form. But oral tradition is necessarily fluid in character and in constant danger of corruption because of the subjective factor—the uncertain memory of the custodian of that tradition. The legacy of faith was handed down through the millennia from Adam to Moses in oral form, for the most part, but the final written form into which Moses cast it must have been especially superintended by the Holy Spirit in order to ensure its divine trustworthiness. The Scriptures themselves lay the greatest emphasis upon their written state and scarcely ever impute divine trustworthiness to mere oral tradition. While it was, of course, true that the words which Moses, the prophets, Jesus of Nazareth, and the apostles spoke were divinely authoritative from the moment they were uttered, yet there was no other way of accurately preserving them except by inscripturation (i.e., recording them in writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit).
- 5 The question may be raised as to the infallibility of the sources from which the Scripture record (such as the genealogical tables in Genesis and Chronicles) may have been copied. If temple archives or palace records were consulted (as they probably were), and if these records were previously written down by uninspired men (as was probably the case), why can we not limit the inerrancy of Scripture to mere accuracy in copying out the human record, whether or not that record was free from mistake? In other words, could there not be inspired mistakes in the Scriptures?
We must answer this question with another: What essential difference is there between a fallible human record and a fallible human speaker? If the written words of men could be accepted into Scripture even though erroneous and mistaken, does it not follow that their spoken words could also be so accepted? Who can suppose that everything that Moses or Isaiah or Malachi spoke was free from all error? Was it not when they were uttering the Word of the Lord that their utterance was infallible? As God employed their oral communications to reveal His truth, safe-guarding them from error until they were recorded in written form, so also God could take erroneous human archives and guide the human author to avoid all their errors and record only what was in fact true. Whatever Scripture asserts to have been historically true, regardless of the intermediate source of the information, must be understood as trustworthy and reliable. It makes no essential difference whether the source was written or oral, whether it came from a fallible human hand or a fallible human mouth; in either case the Holy Spirit eliminated mistakes and ensured the inscripturation only of truth. All the discrepancies that have come down to us in the Received Text of the Hebrew Scriptures are perfectly well accounted for by errors in later textual transmission. There is no need to resort to a theory of mistakes copied out in the original autographs, and to do so endangers the authoritativeness of Scripture as a whole.
- 6 For a fuller comparison, note the early authors, dates, and number of extant documents which rarely receive the same criticism as the far better attested biblical MSS. (See charts on following pages.)
- 7 This word is really to be rendered "breathed out by God" rather than "breathed into by God." The emphasis is upon the divine origin of the inscriptured revelation

- itself rather than upon a special quality infused into the words of Scripture.
- 8 For a fuller discussion of the field of biblical trustworthiness and inspiration, the reader is encouraged to consult G. L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 19–32.
 - 9 William Temple, *Nature, Man and God* (London: Macmillan, 1953), 350.
 - 10 Cf. Harry Rimmer, *That Lawsuit against the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1940). For additional material on the subject of difficulties in the Bible, consult the spirited defense of biblical authority and inerrancy found in Wick Broomall, *Biblical Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1957), 11–84. For detailed handling of discrepancies in the biblical narrative, see Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992). For more general discussions of the inspiration of the Old Testament, see R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 462–75; W. Montgomery, *Crisis in Lutheran Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 15–44; M. H. Woudstra, “The Inspiration of the Old Testament” in *The Bible: The Living Word of God*, ed. Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968), 123–42.