

The Infallibility of Holy Scripture

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A crude enemy of the Christian faith will simply flatly deny any infallibility of Scripture. A more subtle enemy will smoothly admit that Scripture is the infallible rule of faith and life, meaning by this that Scripture has infallibility in the sphere, not of objective, but subjective faith only. Denied is that there is any infallibility in the sphere of historical or scientific fact. The reasoning is that the Bible is authoritative, authentic, and credible in matters of precept and practice, but that, for example, such accounts as that of the flood and the passage through the Red Sea have no importance. It really does not matter whether these events ever occurred or not, or whether they are myths or not. For in the areas of the scientific, the natural, the historical, the phenomenal (as over against the real), and surely in the areas of the purely incidental and circumstantial, infallibility does not enter nor apply. This destructive-critical line of rationalization is saying that the Bible is true in spots, and full of error in spots. Who is to say, then, that any part of Scripture is a spot of truth or a blot of error? This makes man his own god, and his own writer of Scripture.

"Verbal inspiration of Scripture is only a theory and not a matter of great importance for the Christian faith." This statement was not made by Karl Barth, Martin Luther King, James A. Pike, or some similar freethinker enemy of Scripture. It was uttered by none other than Billy Graham, ostensible champion of the cause of orthodox, evangelical Christianity. Modernists, like the above, agree with this statement, and tell us that there is much in the Bible that is unacceptable historically, so that it must, therefore, be interpreted mythologically in order to distill any relevant meaning from it. It is nothing for these same modernists to have the courage to tell us that the question of the inspiration of Scripture is of no importance. This has always been the liberalistic or modernistic view of the Bible. Now neither the neo-evangelical nor the modern liberal, in going along with such a statement, wants to be understood as denying the inspiration of Scripture. That is not what either of them do. They deny the *verbal* inspiration of Scripture. The modernist speaks of the Scripture being inspired by the way a poem or a bright idea strikes us with a moment of inspiration. The inspired Word of God, then, is not to be found only in the Bible. It may also be found in Shakespeare, Goethe, Tennyson, Longfellow, Whittier, Milton, Darwin, Emerson, and Thoreau. How dare we say that the Spirit dwells in us, then, to teach that the canon of Scripture has been closed since the apostle John? Are we not interested in what the Spirit has to say in the twentieth century? Then why should not the above classics be included in the canon of Scripture? The Reformed and Protestant

doctrine is that the canon of Scripture closed with the death of the last living apostle. The liberals hold that the canon of Scripture is continuous with the physical and intellectual evolution of mankind. The source of inspiration, then, is not exclusively the Bible, but is to be drawn from the world in which we live. The Bible of the Christian has had its day, says the modern rationalist; now a richer Bible has come into existence. The Bible of humanity. This is a bible in which we all may be an inspired writer. But the Bible of the Christian, and that in the familiar King James Version, is just as much, if not more popular than ever. Its central message commands, "To the law and to the testimony (of holy Scripture - RCH), if they speak not according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them!" ([Isaiah 8:20](#)).

Now the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture is no misty theory, but is plainly and simply taught in the Bible, and is the only inspiration the Bible knows. But the trouble is with these modern men we have mentioned and their theories in which verbal and plenary inspiration of Scripture is regarded as an untenable hypothesis that is repulsive to the majority of people. For it is the aim of modern mass, co-operative (compromised!) evangelism to avoid anything repulsive to the natural man in order to secure an open field for what they deem effective dialog and discourse. But if laid down in the field is an inspiration that is not verbal, we say, Let it die where it is, for verbal inspiration is the only biblical inspiration there is. The principle of verbal inspiration is the blue thread of truth interwoven and intertwined with the scarlet thread of vicarious atonement and the golden thread of unconditional election, all running through the warp and woof of Holy Writ.

The thrust of this principle is that Scripture is the infallible revelation of God. For verbal, plenary inspiration renders the holy Scripture infallible. It is evident that this is the doctrine of inspiration and revelation taught in the Reformed Confessions. For the *Belgic Confession* states that the Word of God was uttered not by the will of man, but that holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Then God by a special providence commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit His revealed Word to writing. By His providence He also preserved these writings from error. Therefore we are bound to call such writings holy and divine Scriptures (Art. 3). These writings are so truly the Word of God that against them nothing can be alleged. This is fact, not so much because the church receives and approves them as such, but because the Spirit witnesses in our hearts that they are from God, which is exactly their own testimony. The doctrine of this Word of God is in all respects most perfect and complete. Nor do we consider any writing of men, however holy or capable, to be on a par with these divine Scriptures. Nor do we regard tradition, custom, antiquity (cp. the so-called Bible of Humanity), or any school or succession of persons, ecumenical councils, encyclicals, decrees, or statutes of equal value and inspiration with the Scripture of truth. For the truth is above all,

while men of themselves are but liars and their productions more vain than vanity itself. Therefore, we reject with all our hearts whatsoever does not agree with this infallible rule which the apostles have taught us, saying, "Try the spirits, whether they are of God." Likewise they taught, "if there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house" (Art. 5, 7).

To this the original (Presbyterian) *Westminster Confession* agrees, recognizing Scripture to be of divine inspiration and of divine authority, which it also received not upon the testimony of any man or church, but upon the testimony of God who cannot lie but is truth Himself. This Word of God is the infallible truth, the whole counsel of God, immediately inspired of God, which by His special providence was kept pure in all ages. Also a "high and reverent esteem for the holy Scripture" will be evident in not less than "our full persuasion and assurance of *the infallible truth*, and divine authority thereof" (I, 5). "*The infallible rule* of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself" (I, 9).

Modern theologians and evangelists try to obscure this plain doctrine of Scripture by shifting the emphasis from an infallible Word of God to an infallible Christ. Scripture is by them always pushed into the background. Such is also the purpose and effect of the pouring Niagara of new Bible versions continually coming out on the market. They push Scripture, odd as it may seem, into the background. Their actual effect -- eventually -- is to make Scripture unrecognizable. But, to return to our point, they would have us believe that we would still have an infallible Christ, even if the Scripture could be proved untrue. But how, we must ask, would we know there is an infallible Christ if the record we have of Him were fallible? How could the Bible come to us with the truth that God is God, that He shall save His people from their sins, and infallibly lead them to glory, and then leave us with but an errant account of it all -- an unreliable record, such as the religious socialists of the hour believe the Scripture to be? Liberal theologians seeing the inconsistency and folly of an infallible Christ in a fallible Scripture have gone on to claim that the ultimate authority is neither Scripture, nor Christ, but the knowledge of God. They say they want not creeds, nor dogmas, nor the Bible, nor the Master and His teachings; they want God. To one used to low-brow thinking this may seem rather pious. But it is impertinent, God-insulting, and blasphemous. Still, it always happens: rejection of a verbally inspired, inerrant Scripture leads to the rejection of the inerrant Christ. The rejection of Christ is the rejection of God. Read [John 5:23](#); 14:6. Besides, when men say they want not dogma, but God, it is time to ask what they then could possibly mean by "God"? From their writings it is very evident that they themselves hardly know. Small wonder now that they go along with the "God-is-dead" fad! The god described in their nebulous platitudes never had any existence and is certainly not the God of Scripture.

Nor can we perceive how the only true Almighty God can be seen to be the highest good if we do not have an infallible divine Scripture so revealing Him.

Not to appear to deny inspiration of Scripture in every sense of the word, modern churchmen employ the sleight that inspiration has to do with the thought of Scripture, not with its words. The writers of the various books of the Bible set down the thoughts God gave them, but were under no special guidance from God as to the exact formulation of their thoughts. The religious free-thinker does not wish to appear disloyal to the Scriptures, hence he professes loyalty to them, but explains that by this he does not mean loyalty to a *theory* about the Scriptures. Then this free-thinker line is echoed by those who ought to be holding to the doctrine of infallibility of Scripture with might and main when they refer to *verbal* inspiration as "only a theory." What the churchly liberals object to is any definite teaching of the divine character of Scripture. Strictly, they do not hold any doctrine which regards the Bible as inspired. But to pose hypocritically their ostensible loyalty to Holy Writ, they state that inspiration has to do not with the very words of Scripture, but only with the thoughts, that is, in their opinion, with *some* of the thoughts found in Scripture. But unless the inspired penmen were so led of the Holy Spirit as to make such a choice of words as to write inerrantly, then what we have in the Bible is not an infallible revelation of God, but a mere human production necessarily imperfect in character.

Of late, Modernism has gone far beyond this pretense to "infallibility" to outright Barthian denial of it. "If God has not been ashamed to speak through the Scriptures with its fallible human words, with its historical and scientific blunders, its theological contradictions, with the uncertainty of its transmission and above all, with its Jewish character, but has rather accepted it in all its fallibility to make it serve *Him*, we *ought* not to be ashamed of it when with all its fallibility it wants anew to be to us a witness, it would be self-will and disobedience to wish to seek in the Bible for infallible elements" (K. Barth, *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, 1, 2, p.590, as quoted in *The New Modernism* by C. VanTil, p. 286). Because of what the church has always believed and because of what the Scripture itself has always taught, we must object to this Barthian idea of God, the God of truth, speaking through "fallible human words." For how does God so speak? fallibly or infallibly? How can the infallible God speak infallibly through fallible human words? What truth does the God of truth convey through "scientific blunders and theological contradictions"? How does the Bible, totally fallible (according to Barthianism), serve to express any coherent purpose? Also objectionable is the description of Scripture as being of "Jewish character," especially when the expression is belched out of the context of Barth's talmudical nonsense.

A piece of self-will and disobedience, Barth calls it, to look for any elements of infallibility in the Bible. Then such elements cannot be found in the ideas, let alone

the words of Scripture. Yet it ought to be evident that if the very words of Scripture are not inspired as well as the ideas, then we cannot be certain that in the biblical canon we have the mind of the Spirit. Divine ideas could find their way into Scripture only accidentally and very corrupted, if men's words expressing them were left to the direction and bent of their own minds. Furthermore, ideas cannot be conveyed as truth to the mind except in words. No one can think a distinct and reasonable thought except in the form of a word. Inspiration then means that the record God has given of His revelation is inerrant and infallible as to both the thoughts and the words. Jesus said, "the flesh profits nothing; *the words* that I speak unto you are spirit and are life!" ([John 6:63](#)). The thought in Scripture cannot be sure if the words which convey the thought are uncertain. If the script is vague the sense will be vague. Such a view of Scripture sees it as containing fractional truth. At best it will then be able to afford no more than a fractional faith. That, in turn, will leave us at every page of the Book benighted with doubts. It would be more a book of doubt than a book of faith. Then it could never be what it claims to be, "a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path!"

But these vagaries of Modernism do not express what either the Reformed or the Westminster confessions mean when they say that the Bible is infallible. These great, sound, historic, orthodox, *biblical* statements of the faith, in these confessions, do not mean that the Bible is trustworthy as to its spiritual and ethical principles, but full of contradictions as to natural and material principles. This is the old Romish false antithesis between faith and knowledge. God and heaven do not come within the sphere of knowledge. They are not scientifically demonstrable. We cannot know the certainty of God and heaven as we can the equation, $2 + 2 = 4$. That is a fact which we know. But God and heaven are accepted by faith. Now, that is a very rationalistic, philosophic view of faith. For according to Scripture, faith has two essential elements, *knowledge* and *confidence*. Therefore, faith is not *opposed* to knowledge; it *is* knowledge. Without faith, other so-called knowledge is really a form of ignorance. Objectively, the body of this knowledge is embraced in God's revelation, the holy Scripture. There you have the inerrant Word of God. But we could not have faith in God, nor in His infallible Christ, if His Word were full of blunders, contradictions, and merely human words conveyed with a great deal of uncertainty in transmission to us. The Bible with "all its fallibility," if it were that kind of Bible, could not "be to us a witness" of anything, except that it must be the most unreliable and untrustworthy of whatever could be imagined a "witness."

You see, then, exactly where infallibility lies: not in any pope, nor in the church, but in God's Christ and in God's Holy Scripture. The former said, "the Scripture cannot be broken." *His* word is Scripture. What He said about God, about His own deity, about the fall and destiny of man, about heaven and hell, about Scripture as authoritative, about the authorship of certain books of the Old Testament, about His vicarious

atonement, His bodily resurrection, and His visible bodily return at the judgment day - what He said about these things as recorded in Scripture is the infallible truth, which we may and must believe and trust with full persuasion and assurance. They come to us from His mouth with divine authority. His statements are without error and so trustworthy for both salvation and general factual accuracy. That means that if we trust His word, we will accept in every sphere as to fact, history, doctrine, and judgment, all that He said. He, the divine person of the Son of God, is our infallible authority, and He acknowledged "all Scripture" as God's word and divinely authoritative. Infallibility and authority of Scripture as the Word of God attaches both to its material content and its verbal expression; not only to the thought, but to the very words. "Why do ye not understand My speech? because ye cannot hear *My word*. He that is of God heareth *God's words*. Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God" ([John 8:43, 47](#)). God's truth, as conceived in His own mind, is infallibly true, and, through holy men of old, who spoke as they were carried along by the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, He saw to it that in the Scripture alone His truth was and is infallibly conveyed.

God planned to reveal something of His infinite and infallible mind and will to the world. In doing this, He saw to it that man received an infallible disclosure of His truth. Like the sun in the heavens, it is infallibly and constantly displayed, whether men have eyes to see it or not. For the absolutely perfect God, with His own purpose to reveal himself, would do no less than to reveal himself infallibly. It was His will and purpose that His church be in possession of this revelation through the entire history of the world. Then, believing Scripture, we believe that He had power to and actually saw to the giving and preserving of an infallible record of His will and purpose. Since the written record of His truth appears only in Scripture, then "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," is verbally and plenary inspired, thus assuring infallible revelation.

Since the infallible rule of Scripture interpretation is the Scripture itself, what does Scripture itself say in support of its own claim to infallibility? As Jesus put it, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life." Rebuking the religious liberals of His day, He said, "*Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures,*" which implies that the Scriptures are an unerring rule. Referring to the infallible authority of the Old Testament, He said, "The Scriptures cannot be broken." The apostles believed the Scriptures to be an Infallible standard of truth. John said, "For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'A bone of Him shall not be broken.' And again, another Scripture saith, 'They shall look on Him whom they have pierced.'" Paul said, "The holy Scriptures" alone are "able to make. . . wise unto salvation." The Old Testament writers themselves claimed to be inspired of God. "David the son of Jesse said. . . 'the Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue'" ([II Sam.](#)

[23:1ff](#)). They unfailingly used such language as, "Hear ye the word which the Lord speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: thus saith the Lord" ([Jer. 10:1](#)). The New Testament writers believed the Old Testament to be the word of God. They quoted from the Old Testament with such language as, "the Holy Spirit saith" ([Heb. 3:7](#)), "the Lord by the mouth of his servant David saith" ([Acts 4:25](#)), and "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets" ([Heb. 1:1](#)). So the New Testament recognizes and confirms the inspiration of the Old Testament. In [II Timothy 3:16](#) you have, *Paso graphē theopneustos*, which is paraphrased by our King James Version as, "All Scripture (here you have the principle, *tota scriptura*) is given by inspiration of God." Although this is not, strictly, a translation, at least there is nothing misleading about the King James Version, as there is in the case of the American Standard Version's rendering of this text, where you have, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable." *That* version of it is not only misleading but suspect -- really more a *perversion*. For it implies there is uninspired and therefore unprofitable scripture. Actually, the term *theopneusto* does not mean inspiration or inspiring. Literally, it denotes a divine spiration. It does not say that Scripture is breathed into, not that it is breathed out by God, nor that it is the result of breathing Scripture into holy men of old, but that "all Scripture is *God-breathed!*" Scripture is the *breathing* of God. Scripture is the living Word of the living God. The Word of God is the very life and breath of God. Scripture as the breathing of God is the product of the almighty life and power of God ([Ps. 33:6](#); [Job 33:4](#)). Scripture is then literally God-animated. It is nothing less than the animation and activation of God. Scripture is God-spirited, that is, full of God's Spirit.

Jesus and His disciples, including the apostles, cannot be found anywhere to be in conflict. They perfectly agree; also on the all-important point of the doctrine of Scripture. There they all regard the Old Testament as infallible, and for that reason it necessarily had to be fulfilled. "Truly I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" ([Matt. 5:18](#)). "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning Me" ([Luke 24:44](#)). Jesus insisted that "the Scriptures shall be fulfilled that thus it must be!" ([Matt. 26:54](#)). The apostles claimed to have the power of the Spirit. "For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance" ([I Thess. 1:5](#)). They also claimed that the words they wrote were not of man's wisdom, but of the teaching of the Holy Spirit ([I Cor. 2:13](#)). They claimed to speak as the prophets of God. "He therefore that despiseth (us), despiseth not man, but God, who hath given unto us His Holy Spirit" ([I Thess. 4:8](#)). They also claimed plenary authority for their writings. "The things that are freely given to us of God...we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth" ([I Cor. 2:12, 13](#)). Read also [II Corinthians 13:2-4](#) and [Galatians 1:8, 9](#). They put their writings on a level with

the Old Testament as Scripture. Paul, in [I Timothy 5:18](#) referring to [Deuteronomy 25:4](#) says that the Old Testament is Scripture. "The Scripture saith, 'Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.'" Since this Scripture also appears in [I Corinthians 9:7, 11](#), then he is saying that his writings are Scripture. He also adds, in the same place, that the Scripture says, "The laborer is worthy of his reward." Where does Scripture say that? in the Gospel according to Luke, chapter 10, verse 7. Then Luke's gospel is Scripture. Peter says that his and Paul's writings are Scripture, and that the writings of the major and minor prophets are Scripture ([II Pet. 3:2, 15](#), 16). The writings of the apostles and prophets such as Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Jude, and James are all Scripture. The Apostle Paul confirms this. "When ye read *what I wrote* before in a few words, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is *now* revealed unto his holy *apostles and prophets* by the Spirit" ([Eph. 3:4, 5](#)).

The doctrine of the infallibility of holy Scripture is the great keystone truth. Without it there would be no Christian faith, no portal to eternal life, and no foundation stone for the true church. Indeed, the true church could neither exist nor be known. We, therefore, heartily and unequivocally agree with Charles Hodge, when in his *Systematic Theology* he says, "The infallibility and divine authority of the Scriptures are due to the fact that they are the word of God, and they are the word of God because they are given by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. . . . The apostles claimed to be the infallible organs of God in all their *teachings* (ital. added). They required men to receive what they taught not as the word of man, but as the word of God ([I Thess. 2:13](#)); they declared, as Paul does ([I Cor. 14:37](#)), that the things which they wrote were the commandments of the Lord. They made the salvation of men to depend on faith in the doctrines which they taught. Paul pronounces anathema on even an angel from heaven who should preach any other gospel than that which he had taught ([Gal. 1:8](#)). John says that whoever did not receive the testimony which he bore concerning Christ, made God a liar, because John's testimony was God's testimony ([I John 5:10](#)). 'He that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us' (4:6). This assertion of infallibility, this claim for the divine authority of their teaching, is characteristic of the whole Bible" (I, 153, 161). "It lies in the very idea of the Bible that God chose some men to write history; some to indite Psalms; some to unfold the future; some to teach doctrines. All were equally His organs, and each (as to his writings - RCH) was infallible in his own sphere" (p. 164). "If they (the Scriptures - RCH) are a revelation from God, they must be received and obeyed; but they cannot be thus received without attributing to them divine authority, and they cannot have such authority without being infallible in all they teach" (p. 166). How opposite this is to Barth who calls it disobedience to seek for infallible elements in the Bible! Hodge goes on, "The question is not an open one. It is not what theory is in itself most reasonable or plausible, but simply, What does the Bible teach on the

subject? ...The whole Bible was written under such an influence as preserved its human authors from all error, and makes it for the Church the infallible rule of faith and practice" (p.182). "Inspiration was an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain select men, which rendered them the organs of God for the infallible communication of his mind and will.... What they said, God said." "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are therefore infallible...free from all error, whether of doctrine, fact, or precept" (pp.154, 152).

But where you find the so-called church denying Scripture's claim to its own infallibility, what have you left? Nothing but low-brow religious innovations, based on human behavior patterns as found in "situation ethics" and various forms of "sensitivity training" - extremely dangerous "guidelines," to say the least! Instead of the eternal, unchangeable and infallible Word of God, nothing remains beyond the ridiculous shallowness of confusing and befuddled dialog. Any man foolish enough to swallow the pseudo-liberalism in the apostate churches will regard the Bible as self-contradictory, full of errors, theologically primitive, ethically outmoded, morally tyrannical, historically inaccurate, scientifically juvenile, and hopelessly superstitious. But the Bible is comprehensive, complete, perfect in content, intrinsically infallible, rightly commanding us what to believe, think, and do, establishing the principles and pattern of government and worship the true church must hold and proclaim to the end of the world. Think the church and the Bible to be like human institutions and the passing show of life, subject to error, change, experimentation, and improvement, and you are dangerously close to becoming perfectly satisfied with no church and no Bible at all. You may then quickly "arrive" where liberal ecclesiastics would lead you, to what is outwardly and professedly religious but inherently and actually atheist.

The one absolutely constant attribute of every portion and element of Scripture is that it is God-spirated. That attribute renders Scripture infallible in its every utterance. It is the Bible's most distinctive feature, elevating it in the whole heavens above all other books. God revealed to man the truth he needed to know but could not possess, neither discover nor invent by natural means or human genius. God revealed His Word, which, in all its parts, in its every thought and word, is the verbally, plenary inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God.

"Man craves for certainty. Speculations and hypotheses are insufficient where eternal issues are at stake. When I come to lay my head upon my dying pillow, I want something surer than a "perhaps" to rest it upon. And thank God I have it. Where? In the Holy Scriptures. I know that my Redeemer liveth. I know that I have passed from death unto life. I know that I shall be made like Christ and dwell with Him in glory

throughout the endless ages of eternity. How do I know? Because *God's* Word says so, and I want nothing more.

"The Bible gives forth no uncertain sound. It speaks with absolute assurance, dogmatism, and finality. Its promises are certain for they are the promises of Him who cannot lie. Its testimony is reliable for it is the inerrant Word of the Living God. Its teachings are trustworthy for they are a communication from the Omniscient. The believer then has a sure foundation on which to rest, an impregnable rock on which to build his hopes. For his present peace and for his future prospects he has a, 'Thus saith *the Lord,*' and that is sufficient."

from *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible* by Arthur W. Pink