

1. The Spirit of Truth: Inspiration and Revelation

One one occasion, Jesus said to "those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and *ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:31-32). Again, to Pilate, the Roman governor, He said: "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence." Then, in answer to Pilate's direct question, "Art thou a king then?" He replied: "*Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*" In response to these sublime affirmations, all that the cynical Roman could do was to voice the typically pagan question which one hears so frequently in our increasingly pagan age, "What is truth?" (John 18:36-38). Again, the writer of the Fourth Gospel declares: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), *full of grace and truth*" (John 1:14). And Jesus Himself prayed in these words, in the course of His great intercessory prayer to the Father on behalf of His Apostles: "*Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth*" (John 17:17).

The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Truth, hence the Holy Spirit, because Truth is both the foundation and essence of Wholeness. Therefore, Jesus, who possessed the fulness of the powers of the Spirit, was the Incarnate Word, hence Incarnate Truth; or, to put it conversely, because He was the Incarnate Logos, Incarnate Truth, He possessed the Holy Spirit without measure (John 3:34). The Spirit of God and the Word of God always go together: they are, in fact, inseparable. Hence, Jesus could say in all truth: "Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. . . . *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:1, 6). Cf. also the following other affirmations by Jesus Himself:

Cf. also the following other affirmations by Jesus Himself: [Matt. 4:4]: *Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God* [a quotation, almost verbatim, of Deut. 8:3]. [John 14:24]: *He that loveth me not keepeth not my words; and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.* [John

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14:23]: If a man love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him [that is, of course, through the indwelling Spirit]. [John 12:48-50]: He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I spake not from myself; but the Father that sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life eternal; the things therefore which I speak, even as the Father hath said unto me, so I speak. [Matt. 7:24-27]: Every one therefore that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them, shall be likened unto a wise man, who built his house upon the rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these words of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and smote upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall thereof. [John 6:63]: It is the spirit that giveth life; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life. [Matt. 24:35]: Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. [Cf. again John 8:31-32]: If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and *ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

What is the Truth alluded to, in these statements? Obviously, not scientific, philosophical, or political "truth"; obviously, not any form of "human wisdom," all of which is but foolishness with God (1 Cor. 1:18-31); but the Truth which makes men free—free from error, superstition, vice, sin, yea even death itself.

[Cf. John 6:51, 54]: I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea, and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world. . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. [John 11:25,26]: I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. [cf. Heb. 2:14-15, 2 Cor. 5:1-8, etc.].

That is to say, the Truth that makes men free is the living Word of God,—both (1) the *personal* Word, the Logos Himself, and (2) the *stereotyped* Word or the Word which He has communicated to mankind through the Spirit and caused to be recorded in the Scriptures. Therein is revealed the Truth respecting man's origin, nature, and ends; the Truth respecting all that God has done, is doing, and will do, to bring man to the end to which the Creator and Father of spirits orders him, namely, union with Himself or the Life Everlasting; in a word, the Truth respecting man's natural and proper ultimate ends and the necessary means of his attainment of them. These are, of course, (1) union with Christ, and (2) the life

with the Holy Spirit, and (3) ultimate Beatitude or Life Everlasting. This is the Truth, the Word of God, recorded in the Scriptures, and, I might add, recorded *only* in the Scriptures.

Naturally, the Revealer of this Truth is the Spirit. As the Apostle Paul puts it so clearly,

[1 Cor. 2:6-12]: We [the Apostles] speak wisdom, however, among them that are fullgrown: yet a wisdom not of this world, nor of the rulers of this world, who are coming to nought: but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, even the wisdom that hath been hidden, which God foreordained before the worlds unto our glory: which none of the rulers of this world hath known: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory: but as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, And which entered not into the heart of man, Whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God: that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words.

Certainly these affirmations are confirmed by human experience. Every person is an individual, hence unique; every person knows himself to be an individual, with his own particular ideas, experiences, attitudes, motives, etc. Only the *spirit* of a man knows his own thought, the things of his own experience, and knows, moreover, only *his own* thought; hence, only the spirit of the man can reveal or communicate that thought to others if not thus communicated, in words, that thought remains forever concealed within the man himself. In like manner, the Spirit of God alone, who alone "search all things, yea, the deep things of God," reveals, or indeed can reveal, through the Word of God, the Thought and Will of God. Only the Spirit of God can reveal the Truth that man needs to know respecting his origin, nature, and ultimate ends (*i.e.*, as a human being created in God's image), and the means which God has provided for his attainment of that natural and proper ultimate end. Hence, if the Spirit of God had not vouchsafed this revelation, man would be utterly without any means of knowing the Truth that makes him free, the Truth that contains the secret of, and that will lead him to, Life Everlasting. Had not God revealed His Will and Plan for man's redemption, through the agency of His Spirit and

the instrumentality of His Word, the whole world would be back where it was two thousand years ago, floundering in the mire of "natural religion" and vain human speculation. As a matter of fact, had the Spirit not given us the revelation of the Plan of Redemption, and the record of that revelation as well, as embodied in the Scriptures, *the world would not even so much as know that there is a Holy Spirit.*

The Bible is the Book of the Spirit, the Spirit of Truth. The Bible differs from all other books in its very claim to be the record of God's progressive revelation to mankind, indited by men who were inspired and thus guarded against error by the Spirit of God. The imprimatur of the Spirit is stamped upon every book and every page of Scripture. This very claim to Divine Authorship makes it impossible for any man to approach the Bible as he would approach a book of strictly human origin or authorship. A man's understanding of the Bible, moreover,—no matter how poorly or how well educated he may be, no matter how many academic degrees he may attach to his name—will be determined largely by his attitude toward this claim. If he approaches the Bible confirmed in the pre-supposition that it is only a collection of quasi-religious documents written by ordinary or uninspired men, that it is to be treated in the same manner as any secular history to which the name of the Spirit is not attached, he will fail utterly to grasp the spiritual import of its teaching; he will read into it discrepancies, antinomies and notions which simply are not there; and in the end he will get only a completely distorted picture of its content as a whole. That, in fact, is all he can expect to get from such an approach. If, on the other hand, he approaches the Bible with the firm conviction that it is the Book of the Spirit, and treats it with a corresponding humility and reverence, he will acquire such a comprehensive understanding of the Plan of the Universe, such a vision of the Truth that makes men free, as he has never been able to acquire from the contradictory speculations of human philosophers. Or, even if he will only approach the Bible with an unbiased mind, a mind ready to allow the Scriptures to interpret themselves and to speak to him just as they are, the chances are that his study will lead him to a genuine appreciation of the unity and spirituality of the Book as a whole, and to appreciation also of its inestimable

worth to mankind; and the chances are also that such a procedure will, in the end, beget in him the conviction that the Bible is precisely what it claims to be, namely, the Book of the Spirit of Truth. The trouble with men,—with theologians even more than with laymen,—is that they are not willing to permit the Bible to speak for itself: they insist on reading into it their own pre-suppositions and notions, seeming never to be able to realize that Divine Truth simply cannot be imprisoned in a denominational strait jacket.

The Holy Spirit, the Author of the Bible, is the Spirit of Truth. He is expressly so designated by the Logos Himself.

[John 14:16]: I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive. [John 15:26]: But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall bear witness of me. [John 16:13]: Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth. [These statements all occur in the discourses delivered by Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, to the Eleven whom He was soon to qualify with infallibility by sending the Holy Spirit upon them to guide them "into all the truth."] [Cf. also the statements of Christ to His Apostles after His resurrection and just before His ascension.] [John 20:21-23]: Jesus therefore said to them again, Peace be unto you: as the Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. [Acts 1:1-5]: The former treatise I made, O Theophilus, concerning all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up, after that he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit *unto the apostles whom he had chosen*; to whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, ye have heard from me: for John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence. [Also Acts 1:8]: But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. [Ye shall receive power; who shall receive power? Obviously, *the apostles whom he had chosen*. Who received the instruction regarding the kingdom of God? Obviously, *the apostles whom he had chosen*. Who were to be His witnesses unto the uttermost parts of the earth? Obviously, *the apostles whom he had chosen*. Just as Moses received the pattern of the Tabernacle when he sojourned with God in the holy mount, so did Jesus receive the plans and specifications for the church from the risen Lord in the forty days following His resurrection.] [Read Acts 1:26]: And they gave lots for them; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. [Thus the original number was restored; hence, the total was again *twelve*, as related in chapter 6, verse 2.] [Now let us read Acts 2:1]: And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they

[who? obviously the Apostles] [We must remember that there was no organization of the New Testament into chapters and verses originally; that development is usually attributed to Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury, who died in 1228. The first English Bible to incorporate these divisions was the Geneva Version of 1560. Hence, if we read Acts 1:26 and Acts 2:1-4, without any break, everything becomes clear. It was the apostles *whom Christ had chosen* that were all together in one place.] And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Thus did the Apostles receive the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. He came upon them in overwhelming measure to be their helper, to guide them into all the truth, that is, to clothe them with infallibility in revealing to men the facts, commands, and promises of the Gospel. Hence, the Word delivered by the Apostles under the guidance of the Spirit was just as truly the Word of Christ as the Word which He delivered in person throughout His ministry in the flesh. (It will be noted that the New Testament never speaks of the "teachings" of Christ; it is always, "teaching," that is, in the singular number. Christian preachers and writers would do well to take note of this fact.) No line can be drawn between the personal teaching of Jesus in the course of His incarnate ministry and the teaching of the Apostles whom He sent forth under the personal guidance of the Spirit to reveal to men the terms of His Last Will and Testament. The teaching of the Apostles *is* the teaching of Christ through the agency of the Spirit, who came on Pentecost to act as His representative throughout the Gospel Dispensation. (It is positively affirmed by Jesus Himself that this teaching is also that of God the Father, John 17:7, 8.) To assert that there are differences between the content of the Apostles' teaching and that of the teaching of Jesus is equivalent to asserting that the Word and the Spirit are in disagreement, or more precisely that the Spirit is in disagreement with Himself. Moreover, God's revelation to man, which was begun through holy men of old inspired by the Spirit, and which was continued through the prophets inspired by the Spirit, was brought to completeness and concluded through Christ Himself and through His Apostles guided into all the truth by the same Spirit. Cf. 2 Pet. 1:2-3: "Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that his divine power hath granted

unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue," etc. Personally I have always labored under the impression that the word "all" means *all*; hence, if this text teaches anything, it *certainly teaches us that revelation ended with the Apostles*. As a matter of fact, no man ever did, no man ever will, add one iota of moral or spiritual truth to the body of Divine truth as revealed by the Spirit and set down in the Scriptures by inspired men. The Spirit is the Revealer of all Truth that man ever has received, or ever will receive, regarding his origin, nature, and proper ultimate ends. And that Divine revelation was brought to perfection in the Apostles' teaching and permanently set down in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

The sum of all these observations is, that both *inspiration* and *revelation* are distinctively works of the Spirit of God. That is to say, though concurred in by both the Father and the Son, and sometimes ascribed to the Father and sometimes ascribed eminently to the Holy Spirit.

Now revelation is twofold, as to mode; that is, it is of two kinds. Primarily, revelation is *historical*; that is, it has taken the form of those successive historical events which occurred in the execution of the Plan of Redemption. Among those events were the following: (1) the universal application of the penalty of sin, following man's first disobedience; (2) the institution of sacrifice, to point forward to the Atonement made once for all "at the end of the ages" (Heb. 9:26); (3) the moral purification of the world by the Deluge, and the preservation of the race through Noah; (4) the Call of Abraham, the Abrahamic Promise, and the inauguration of the Old Covenant; (5) the formation of the Hebrew Theocracy under Moses at Sinai, with its ordinances, institutions and rites, the majority of which were typical of Christ and the Christian System; (6) the ministry of the Hebrew Prophets, announcing the details of the life and work of the Messiah to come; (7) the special ministry of John the Baptizer to the Jewish nation, heralding the immediate advent of the Messiah; (8) the incarnation, death, resurrection, and exaltation to universal sovereignty, of the Son of God, the Messiah Himself; (9) the advent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, the incorporation of the Church of Christ and the institution of he

New Covenant; (10) the special ministry of the Apostles as witnesses and ambassadors of Christ; and (11) the subsequent preaching of the Gospel for a testimony unto all the nations. All these were, with but few exceptions, events occurring in time and space; that is to say, historical events. They are not figments of the human imagination, nor are they matters of human speculation; they are presented to us in Scripture as events actually occurring in this world, and consequently must be accepted or rejected *as such*. The question is not, *Could* they have happened? The question, is *Did they or did they not* happen? And this in turn reduces to the more ultimate question, Is the testimony regarding these events, as presented in Scripture, reliable? Moreover, these events are presented to us in Scripture as a chain of historical events, all linked together in the Divine purpose, and all leading eventually to one final and supreme end, namely, the Second Coming of Christ and the Day of the Consummation of all things (Acts 3:20-21). *Christianity, unlike other so-called "religions," is rooted in history.*

Hence we read in Scripture that certain men were called, moved, impelled, in a word *inspired*, to do certain things, by the Divine Word. For example, Abel was impelled by faith to offer unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; Noah was moved with godly fear to prepare an ark to the saving of his house; Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees to become the progenitor of a people Divinely elected to perform certain necessary works in the unfolding of the Plan of Redemption; Joseph was inspired in his dying hour to foretell the Exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt and to give commandment concerning the disposition of his bones; Moses was called and commissioned to lead his people out of Egyptian bondage, and Joshua was called to be his successor and to lead them into the Land of Promise; Samuel was commissioned to anoint Saul and David respectively as kings of Israel; the Prophets were inspired to testify of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them; John the Baptizer was called and qualified to herald the advent of the Messiah; and the Apostles were called and qualified to act as the ambassadors of reconciliation, to witness to the facts of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, even unto the uttermost parts of the earth (cf. Heb. 11:1-30; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 15:1-11, etc.). In a word, God's revelation to man

was worked out first in human history through chosen human instrumentalities, men of great faith, who were called, moved, *inspired*, to effectuate on earth those successive events which were necessary to the execution of the Divine Plan of the Ages.

Revelation is, in the second place, *documentary*. The events came first; after them, the recording and the interpretation. That is, the Spirit moved, impelled, and inspired certain men to set down in permanent form the account of those successive historical events by which the Divine Plan was progressively effected on earth, and to record also the correct interpretation of the significance of those events for man. Thus Moses is said to have written a book, at Jehovah's command, containing the account of "the journeys of the children of Israel, when they went forth out of the land of Egypt" (Exo. 17:14, 24:4; Num. 33:1-2). Sometimes these revelations of Divine truth were first communicated to the people orally, and were put in written form afterward. This was true especially of the Apostles' teaching. Throughout the first century, the local congregations of Christians were under the personal supervision of the Apostles, and Divine revelation, with accompanying instruction, was communicated to them orally by the Apostles and by the early evangelists who were personally taught by the Apostles. Thus the church in Jerusalem is said to have "continued stedfastly *in the apostles' teaching and fellowship*, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:42). Obviously the Apostles' teaching was at that time communicated vocally to the church. Little by little however, his teaching was reduced to permanent form in the Gospels, histories, epistles, and prophetic books of the New Testament canon, as indited by inspired men. The point to be remembered is that, whether oral or written, it was the Apostles' teaching, and, because the Apostles were guided into all the truth by the Holy Spirit, it was the teaching or Word of Christ. We today have the Apostles' teaching in permanent form in the New Testament Scriptures.

In a word, *revelation* is the term which has reference to the disclosure of God's Plan of Redemption for man, both as a historical development and as the documentary record of that development. *Inspiration*, on the other hand, is the term which has reference to the actual communication, or rather this mode of communication, of Divine revelation. Inspiration, in Scripture, is invariably connected with the realization of the

Divine Plan in the world, or with the communication of Divine Truth respecting that Plan, its origin, execution and ends. *For this reason, purely human psychical "inspiration," which may account for the great productions of human genius, is, nevertheless, of an order inferior to Divine inspiration, which invariably has for its end Divine revelation in one or both of its forms, i.e. either as historical or documentary.*

2. The Meaning of "Prophecy"

Now we have throughout the Scriptures a single word which is used to designate either or both of these two distinctive works of the Spirit, the works of inspiration and revelation. That word is *prophecy*.

"Prophecy" is a term commonly thought of as having reference solely to the prediction or foretelling of "things to come." This, however, is only its *secondary* meaning in Scripture. Primarily it means to declare and to interpret the Mind and Will of God. In its primary sense, the word *prophetes* invariably means, both in classical and in ecclesiastical Greek, "one who *speaks forth* for another," and especially "one who speaks for a god," or "one who declares in the name of a god," "one who expounds or interprets the word of a god." This is certainly the primary meaning of the word in the Scriptures. When Moses, for instance, on being commissioned to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage, complained of his inability to make a speech, Jehovah promised him that He would make him "as God to Pharaoh," that is, empower him to deal with the Egyptian monarch in the name and power of the living and true God. At the same time, Jehovah promised Moses that Aaron his brother should accompany him to be his spokesman, that is, to declare his (Moses') words and to interpret their meaning both to the people of Israel and to the King of Egypt. Exo. 4:16—"And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God." Cf. Exo. 7:1—"And Jehovah said unto Moses, See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy *prophet*." A prophet, in Scripture, is a mouthpiece of God, a spokesman for God, a revealer of the Will of God, a declarer of the Word of God. Thus the prophets of Israel were primarily preachers