

9-1-1931

The Inspiration of the New Testament

P E. Kretzmann

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kretzmann, P E. (1931) "The Inspiration of the New Testament," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 2 , Article 69.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol2/iss1/69>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

etwas davon, was im Gericht mit ihm geschehen wird. Er schmeckt jetzt schon, wie freundlich der Herr ist. Er erfährt etwas von der himmlischen Seligkeit. Aber ebenso gewiß ist, daß der Mensch schon in diesem Leben, in seinem anklagenden Gewissen, einen Vorschmack der ewigen Verdammnis hat. Das sagt uns Luther, auf Grund der Schrift: „Also ist nicht größer Leid denn empfindliches Leiden des Gewissens. . . . Und dies ist ein Tröpflein oder Vorschmack der höllischen Pein und ewigen Verdammnis“ (4, 1661 f.).

Weil Stange seine Theologie nicht aus der Schrift, sondern aus der eigenen Erfahrung schöpft, so kann er uns nichts Gewisses bieten. Das gesteht er selbst zu. Urteilt er von den Aussagen der Apostel, daß sie nichts anderes sind als „Lösungsversuche“, so beansprucht er für seine eigenen Aussagen auch nicht mehr. Er redet von der „Problematik der Eschatologie“ (S. 204). Gleich das erste Wort seiner Monographie sagt uns, was er uns bieten will: „das Problem der letzten Dinge“ (S. 1). Darum haben nicht nur die philosophischen Erörterungen des Buchs, sondern auch seine positiven Darlegungen keinen Wert für die Theologie.

Stange ist kein Schrifttheolog und darum kein Lutherischer Theolog. Während er sich weigert, „einfach nachzusprechen, was uns im Neuen Testament begegnet“, so erklärt Luther, „daß wir Katechumenen und Schüler der Propheten uns rühmen, als die wir nachsagen und predigen, was wir von den Propheten und Aposteln gehört und gelernt, und auch gewiß sind, daß es die Propheten gelehrt haben“ (3, 1890). Stange kann nicht zu Luther zurückführen. T. H. Engelder.

The Inspiration of the New Testament.

Inspiration is that miraculous, supernatural process by and through which God, specifically the Holy Spirit, at specified times and for specific purposes, caused certain men, the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles (and evangelists) of the New Testament, to write down in words of human speech both such historical incidents as they were already familiar with and such other accounts of persons and events, together with immediate revelations concerning future events and the mysteries of salvation, as are a matter of His divine omniscience and wisdom alone, so that every possibility of error, not only in every main proposition with its discussion, but also in every subsidiary remark and incidental reference, was eliminated from the outset, while still in this breathing-in, which must be claimed for every word of the original documents, both the natural characteristics and temperaments and the acquired abilities of the various writers were employed in such a way as to produce that variety of style which gives to the Bible its wide and varied appeal.

Let us briefly analyze this definition. The word *inspiration* is found in the English translation of the Bible, in the well-known passage 2 Tim. 3, 16, where, however, the Greek has no noun, the text reading: *πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος*, where both the context and the usage of the *Koine* fully warrant the translation: All Scripture, or the whole Scripture, is God-breathed; for the adjective certainly carries the passive connotation. The process, although ascribed to God in general in the adjective, is specifically ascribed to the Holy Spirit in a great many passages of the Bible, as in 2 Sam. 23, 2 ("The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue"), Mark 13, 11 ("It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost"), 2 Pet. 1, 21 ("Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"), 1 John 5, 6 ("It is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth"). — In the present paper we have in mind as inspired writers the apostles (and evangelists) of the New Testament. These men were not constantly under the effect of this particular process of inspiration (as when Peter gave offense in the city of Antioch, Gal. 2, 14), but only at such times when they gave public testimony of the truth committed to them. It was then also that the specific purpose of the Holy Spirit was connected with their work, their preaching and writing, when their words were in truth the vehicle of the Spirit's power. In many instances, as in matters of the life and ministry of Jesus and the founding and propagation of the Apostolic Church, the writers could speak from first-hand knowledge or from information obtained by eye-witnesses (Luke 1, 1—4; John 19, 35—37; 1 John 1, 1—4), and here the Spirit's work consisted in eliminating every possible error, both of memory and of reference, while in matters pertaining to the revelation of the mysteries of salvation as well as some concerning historical information both the contents and the form of the message was supplied by the Spirit (1 Cor. 2, 7—10; 11, 23; 15, 3; Gal. 1, 11, 12). These facts imply as a matter of course and demand the belief in *verbal* inspiration; for the Holy Spirit did not inspire thoughts, but He gave His message in *words* (1 Cor. 2, 13; 1 Pet. 2, 21), and the proclamation of the Gospel was made in words, both oral and written. If the possibility of a mistake in subsidiary remarks and incidental references were conceded, then the usage of Scripture and of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself must be repudiated, and the certainty of Gospel-preaching would be replaced by the subjective vagaries of a fallible human intellect. Yet in thus setting forth the truth of inspiration, we recognize and appreciate the fact that the Holy Spirit made the dialectical ability of Paul the vehicle of His message as He did the poetical inclination of Peter, that He utilized the blunt challenge of James as He did the simplicity and charm of John. Whether we are dealing with the utter simplicity of the narrative of Christ's ministry or with the sublime utterances of some

of the New Testament letters, we ever and throughout have the same powerful evidence of truth, the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.

But why go to such lengths in defining the concept of inspiration and explaining its various implications? Because the number of men who, especially during the last century, and in the last decades with renewed force, have denied and are denying the truth of the inspiration of the Scriptures, has been on the increase and also because the element of doubt in conservative circles, fostered by the idea that a subjective certainty alone would serve as a defense, has caused some uneasiness. With regard to the first point it will probably suffice to call attention to only two expressions found in the works of German theologians. Adolf Harnack writes (*Dogmengeschichte*, I, 343): "*Die Annahme der Inspiration der BÜCHER, die harmonistische Interpretation derselben, die Vorstellung von ihrer absoluten Suffizienz in bezug auf jede Frage, die auftauchen kann, und in bezug auf jedes Ereignis, welches sie berichten, das Recht uneingeschränkter Kombination von Stellen, die Annahme, dass nichts in den Schriften gleichgültig ist, endlich die allegorische Deutung sind das unmittelbare und sofort zu konstatierende Ergebnis der Kanonisierung.*" Surely strange words from a man who disavowed the higher criticism of the *Tuebingen Schule*, a strange mixture of conceptions that are not on the same level on the part of one who was an acknowledged master in the history of the early Church. On the other hand, the words of Deissmann (*The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research*, 12. 14) appear even more strange when he naively states: "Just as a stenographer receiving letters from a business man works quite mechanically, so were the apostles pens and pencils of the Holy Spirit. The dogma of verbal inspiration of every letter of the New Testament, which rightly can be called mechanical inspiration, is now abandoned in all scientific theology. . . . We may say again, it is, not because it is a religious answer that we reject the theory of verbal inspiration nor because it speaks of inspiration, but rather because it conceives of inspiration as mechanical, and this mechanical conception eliminates what is best in the evangelists and the apostles, their individuality. It degrades Paul, John, and all the others into mere writing-machines." Evidently Deissmann does not understand the doctrine of verbal inspiration as it is held by Bible Christians, particularly in the conservative part of the Lutheran Church. Of course, we cannot agree with such statements, just as we cannot accept the intuition theory of inspiration, that of mere divine direction and assistance, the illumination theory, the dictation theory, the dynamic theory, the theory of progressive revelation or that of a wider conception of inspiration, as promulgated by Goebel a few years ago. We hold that the inspiration also of the New Testament must be

conceived of as we have outlined it in our definition, with its explanation given above.

We concede, of course, that there is a *difficulty* connected with the doctrine of inspiration *as applied to the New Testament* unlike the relatively easy explanation which conservative Christians have for the verbal inspiration of the Old Testament. For it is certain beyond the shadow of a doubt that 2 Tim. 3, 16 safeguards the entire *corpus* of the Old Testament, if nothing more. It distinctly states that the entire Scripture is God-breathed. But this same truth is found expressed in numerous passages of the New Testament, whose *historical* evidence can in any event not be gainsaid. The Old Testament is spoken of as a unit, as a definite entity, when the writers of the New Testament, including our blessed Savior Himself, call it *Scripture*, or *the Scripture*, (ἡ γραφή, John 7, 38; 10, 35; Acts 8, 32; Rom. 4, 3; Gal. 3, 22; 4, 30; Jas. 2, 8; 1 Pet. 2, 6; 2 Pet. 1, 20, also in the plural, *the Scriptures*, αἱ γραφαί, Matt. 21, 42; 26, 54; Mark 11, 49; Luke 24, 27; John 5, 39; Acts 17, 2, 11; 18, 24, 28; 1 Cor. 15, 3, 4, *the Holy Scriptures*, ἐν γραφαῖς ἁγίας, Rom. 1, 2, *the prophetic Scriptures*, διὰ τῆ γραφῶν προφητικῶν, Rom. 16, 26, *the Scriptures of the prophets*, αἱ γραφαὶ τῶν προφητῶν, Matt. 26, 56, also *the Holy Writings*, ἐκ τῶν γραμμάτων, 2 Tim. 3, 15, *the oracles*, or words, of God, τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ, Rom. 3, 2; Heb. 5, 12; 1 Pet. 4, 11, not to mention the passages in which the large divisions of the Old Testament are enumerated, as in Rom. 3, 21 ("the Law and the prophets"), Luke 16, 29, 31 ("Moses and the prophets"), and Luke 24, 44 ("the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms"). These passages corroborate the truth of the inspiration of the Old Testament, even if they be regarded as mere historical documents. If we should want to add the mass of internal evidence from the Old Testament itself, the testimony would be truly overwhelming.

But what evidence have we for the inspiration of the New Testament? How can we be sure of our ground? By what right may the ministers of the Word stand before their congregations speaking from texts taken from the New Testament and assert, "Thus saith the Lord"?

We have a number of clear and compelling reasons for our stand in accepting the inspiration of the New Testament. In the first place, the very *choice and mission of the men* whom the Lord chose to be His representatives and ambassadors to men indicate the fact that their inspiration could not be inferior to that of their predecessors, the prophets of old. The Lord plainly stated: "*He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me,*" Luke 10, 16. Because He had sent these men, the Seventy, because they were His ambassadors, therefore their words, their message, were to be accepted as the full

truth. The same statement is found in the Lord's assurance to His apostles on the evening of His resurrection: "Peace be unto you. As My Father hath sent Me, *even so send I you,*" John 20, 21. This was in exact accordance with the words of His sacerdotal prayer, John 17, 8. 14. 18: "*I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me. . . . I have given them Thy Word. . . . As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.*" There would be no sense to all these statements if the Lord did not intend to convey thereby the assurance that His representatives would actually bring the full message of divine truth. The position of envoys was distinctly given to the apostles also in the special commission given to them on the day of Christ's ascension: "Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and *ye shall be witnesses unto Me* both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth," Acts 1, 7. As envoys of the risen and ascended Lord the apostles required a full measure of the Spirit, also in presenting the facts of the redemption wrought by Christ, who was ever associated with their work. As Gausson puts it (*Theopneustia*, 75): "If, then, the prophetic Spirit was necessary for the former men of God in order to show the Messiah under the shadows, was it not much more necessary for them, in order to their bringing Him out into the light and to their evidently setting Him forth as crucified among us, in such a manner that he that despiseth them despiseth Him (the Father), and he that heareth them heareth Him? Let one judge by all these traits what the inspiration of the New Testament behoved to have been compared with that of the Old; and let one say whether, while the latter was wholly and entirely prophetic, that of the New could be anything less."

In the second place, we cannot but see that the *specific promises* of Christ to His apostles are bound to give us an *a priori* basis of the inspiration of the New Testament. We take first those promises which gave to the envoys of the Lord the assurance of His presence and of His Spirit to give them the precise words which they were to employ on given occasions. In sending them out on their first preaching tour, the Lord told the newly chosen apostles: "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what (*πῶς ἢ τί*) ye shall speak; for *it shall be given you* in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but *the Spirit of your Father* which speaketh in you," Matt. 10, 19. 20. Another instance of a similar promise was when tens of thousands were gathered around the Lord to hear Him. It was at that time that He stated: "When they bring you unto the synagogs and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer or what ye shall say; for *the Holy Ghost*

shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say," Luke 12, 11. 12. And again, in the eschatological sayings of Jesus, we find the Lord's promise: "Settle it therefore in your hearts not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for *I will give you a mouth and wisdom* which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist," Luke 21, 14. 15. "On these different occasions," writes Gausson, "the Lord assured His disciples that the fullest inspiration would regulate their language in the most difficult and important moments of their ministry. . . . They behoved to cast themselves entirely on Him; it would be given them entirely; it would be given them by Jesus; it would be given them in the same hour; it would be given them in such a manner and in such plenitude that they should be able then to say that it was no more they, but the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of their Father, which spoke in them; and that then also it was not only an irresistible wisdom that was given them, it was a mouth." (*L. c.*, 76.)

But we have also very specific promises concerning the speaking or teaching of the truth as given to the apostles. It is of this function that the Lord speaks John 14, 26: "But *the Comforter*, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He *shall teach you all things* and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you." The purpose of this teaching and testifying is given in the next part of the Lord's last discourse, John 15, 26. 27: "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 testify of Me*; and ye also shall bear witness because ye have been with Me from the beginning." Cp. John 14, 16—18. Still more complete is the promise in John 16, 13: "Howbeit, when He, *the Spirit of Truth*, is come, He *will guide you into all truth*; for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak; and He will show you things to come." And then the main object of all apostolic and Christian preaching is given: "He shall glorify Me; for He shall receive of Mine and shall show it unto you." Rohnert (*Inspiration der Heiligen Schrift*, 24 f.) rightly says that these promises of the Lord fully guarantee not only the proper and adequate presentation of the divine truth of salvation, but also an unfailing historical faithfulness in remembering occurrences and an ability to have prophetic visions and to foretell future events, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And all the promises of the Lord are summarized in His last instructions to His apostles, on the day of His ascension: "*Ye shall receive power* after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and *ye shall be witnesses* unto Me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." The special gift of the Holy Ghost was directly connected with their ambassadorial office, with their testifying of

Christ and His vicarious atonement. This much must be kept in mind with regard to the *a priori* basis of the inspiration of the New Testament. Men who were given such assurances, not merely of divine assistance, but of a direct communication of testimony, must be accepted as inspired witnesses of the saving truth.

But we hasten to add here at once the *a posteriori* evidence for the inspiration of the New Testament, the evidence which gives us the assurance that the promise of the Savior according to His merciful intention and purpose could not fail, but was bound to be fulfilled. In His sacerdotal prayer, John 17, 18, 20, 21, the Lord says: "As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but *for them also which shall believe on Me through their word*, that they all may be one." If the word of the apostles, whether oral or written, had not been that of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, inspired throughout, then it would not have had the power to bring men to the knowledge of the truth, to faith in Christ and His redemption. It follows therefore that wherever the word of the apostles is proclaimed, we are dealing with God's inspired Word. The same conclusion must be drawn from Mark 16, 14—16: "He appeared unto the Eleven as they sat at meat. . . . And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world and *preach the Gospel* to every creature. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.*" The Gospel as preached by the apostles, by God's promise, has the power to work faith in the hearts of men everywhere; hence their word must have contained the power which comes by inspiration only.

We now take up our third reason for believing in the inspiration of the New Testament; it is that contained in the *testimony of the writers themselves*. There can be no doubt in the mind of any unprejudiced reader of the New Testament that the writers of the various letters and gospels were fully convinced, and that without any morbid strain of a false enthusiasm, that the promises of Christ were carried out in their own persons, that they operated with the idea of being filled with the Holy Spirit. In the resolutions of the so-called Apostolic Council of the year 49 A. D. we find the motivation stated: "It seemed good *to the Holy Ghost and to us*," Acts 15, 28. And this motivation was satisfactory not only to the Christians of Jewish antecedents, but to those from among the Gentiles as well, to whom the resolutions of this meeting were transmitted, Acts 16, 4. In the first letter written by Paul in an official capacity we find the statements: "When ye received *the Word of God which ye heard of us*, ye received it not as the word of men, but, *as it is in truth, the Word of God*, which effectually worketh also in you that believe," 1 Thess. 2, 13. And again: "He therefore that despiseth, *despiseth not man, but God*, who hath also given unto us *His Holy Spirit*,"

1 Thess. 4, 8. About six years later the apostle wrote to the Christians of Corinth: "Which things also *we speak*, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but *which the Holy Ghost teacheth*. . . For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ," 1 Cor. 2, 13, 16. In the fall of the year 57 the apostle wrote to the same congregation: "I told you before and foretold you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent now, I write to them which heretofore have sinned and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare, since *ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me*, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you," 2 Cor. 13, 2, 3. But this same strain of alleging that it was Christ and the Holy Ghost who were teaching through him, is found also in the other letters of the great missionary apostle. With great earnestness and holy zeal he writes to the congregations of Galatia: "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. . . . But I certify you, brethren, that *the Gospel which was preached of me is not after men*. For I neither received it of men, neither was I taught it, but *by the revelation of Jesus Christ*," Gal. 1, 8, 11, 12, thus repeating what he had also told the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 15, 1, 3: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you *the Gospel which I preached unto you*, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand. . . . For I delivered unto you first of all *that which I also received*." A very emphatic statement is also that found in Rom. 15, 18, 19: "For I will not dare to speak of any of those things which Christ hath not wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, *by the power of the Spirit of God*, so that from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum I have fully preached *the Gospel of Christ*." If we turn to the letters of the first captivity, we find assertions which do not vary in any point from those of the preceding decade. Paul writes to the Ephesians: "Ye are *built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Corner-stone*," or Key-stone, chap. 2, 20; and in chap. 3, 3—5: "How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, 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*." So the apostle insists that his knowledge of the mystery of the Gospel, like that of the other apostles, is a gift of God, knowledge granted to the apostles as it was given to the prophets of old. And he is so sure of his ground that he speaks in a very sharp manner in 1 Tim. 6, 3: "If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even *the words of our Lord Jesus Christ*, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing

nothing." This is not empty self-assertiveness, but it is the expression of a conviction founded in the assurance of the Spirit, on the fact of inspiration. And Peter is no less sure of his ground when he writes, 1 Pet. 1, 12: "Unto whom it was revealed that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you *by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.*" So it is stated that the Gospel as preached to the Christians of Northern Asia Minor by the apostle and his coworkers was a product of the Holy Ghost given to the men of God for that purpose.

But under this third reason, with its testimony of the writers themselves, we have also *their statements regarding their actual writings.* It was not merely the oral proclamation of the message of salvation for which the apostles and evangelists demanded the assent of their constituents, but specifically their written words, in the form of treatises and letters. In Rom. 1, 13 ff. St. Paul expresses his regrets that it had not been possible for him to come to Rome in person and so to bring the Christians of that city the Gospel-message; hence he writes them a letter containing the chief articles of the Christian doctrine. The oral and the written proclamation of the apostle are on the same level; both bring the same Word of God. For that reason he also admonishes the Thessalonians, 2 Thess. 2, 15: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, *whether by word or our epistle.*" And the same position is taken by the other apostles, notably by St. John. He writes, 1 John 1, 1—4: "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life; . . . that which we have seen and heard *declare we unto you* that ye also may have fellowship with us. . . . And these things *write we unto you* that your joy may be full." In this case also oral proclamation and written message are placed on the same level. Cp. 1 John 2, 1. 12—14. The same apostle, in transmitting to the seven congregations of Asia Minor the message of the ascended Lord, repeats his admonition time and again: "He that hath an ear, *let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.*" Rev. 2, 11, etc. And this is on the basis of the admonition and commission which he himself had received: "What thou seest *write in a book* and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia," Rev. 1, 11. That the written Word of God as put down on paper by His apostles had the same object as the spoken message appears throughout the letters of John, as in the well-known passage 1 John 2, 12—14. 21. 26. Of particular interest in this connection is 1 John 5, 13: "These things *have I written unto you* that believe on the name of the Son of God that ye may know that ye have eternal life and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." This,

in turn, agrees exactly with John's words in John 20, 30, 31: "And many other signs, truly, did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book; but *these are written* that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, ye might have life through His name." Surely this is asserting in the strongest terms that these writings are the truth inspired by God, carrying in themselves the conviction of God's wisdom and power.—To this list of passages we might well add those in which, for example, St. Paul emphasizes that the things which he writes are not a lie, Gal. 1, 20; that he does not handle the Word of God deceitfully, 2 Cor. 4, 2; that he speaks in Christ as of God, in the sight of Christ, 2 Cor. 2, 17; that he is separated unto the Gospel of Christ, Rom. 1, 1; 15, 19; that he, with his coworkers, is a minister of Christ and steward of the mysteries of God, 1 Cor. 4, 1; Eph. 1, 9; 3, 3. It is because the apostles are so sure of their ground as the ambassadors of Christ that they demand for their proclamation the willing ears of their listeners and readers. St. Paul writes: "And *my speech and my preaching* was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in *demonstration of the Spirit and of power* that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the *power of God*," 1 Cor. 2, 4, 5. And again: "If any man think himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that *the things that I write unto you* are the commandments of the Lord," 1 Cor. 14, 37. And again: "Our Gospel came *not unto you in word only*, but also in power and in the *Holy Ghost* and in much assurance," 1 Thess. 1, 5. So much emphasis does the apostle place upon his letters, knowing that they are divinely inspired, that he charges the Thessalonians: "I charge you by the Lord that *this epistle be read* unto all the holy brethren," 1 Thess. 5, 27. The same thought underlies the statement in 2 Thess. 2, 2: "That ye be not soon shaken in mind or be troubled, neither by spirit *nor by word nor by letter as from us*." Just as evident is the conviction of the apostle from his remark to the Christians at Colossae: "When *this epistle* is read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the *Laodiceans*," Col. 4, 16.—A most instructive and stimulating passage, finally, is Luke 1, 1—4, where Luke sets forth the motivation of his treatise to his patron, the noble Theophilus. We shall revert to this passage once more; but in this connection certain expressions in this classical prolog may be noted, to wit: "Even as they delivered them unto us which from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, . . . having had perfect understanding of all things from the very beginning." The last expression, in the Greek, is one word, *ἀνωθεν*, which may indeed be translated "from the beginning," but has as its original connotation "from above," as in John 3, 3, 7; 19, 11; Jas. 1, 17; 3, 15, 17. A few sentences from Gaussen are worth quoting at this point, when

he writes (*op. cit.*, 86 f.): "You see in fact that his [Luke's] object there is to contrast the certainty and divinity of his own account with the uncertainty and the human character of those narrations which many had taken in hand to set forth on the facts connected with the Gospel — facts, he adds, most surely believed among us, that is to say, among the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. . . . And therefore, adds St. Luke, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things *from above*, to write of them to thee in order. St. Luke had obtained this knowledge *from above*, that is to say, by the wisdom which comes from above 'and which had been given him.' It is very true that the meaning ordinarily attached to this last expression in this passage is 'from the very first,' as if instead of the word *ἀνωθεν* (from above) there were here the same words *ἀπ' ἀρχῆς* (from the commencement), which we find in verse second. But it appears to us that the opinion of Erasmus, of Gomar, of Henry, of Lightfoot, and other commentators ought to be preferred as more natural." The argument, if not absolutely conclusive, surely carries much weight, especially in connection with some further points which are to be introduced in favor of the gospels of Mark and Luke. This much is certain, and it should be noted with satisfaction, that the writers of the New Testament regarded themselves as the mouth-pieces of the Lord when they penned the treatises and letters which are contained in the New Testament canon.

And still another point must be considered in connection with this third reason, of the testimony of the writers themselves, namely, that *these men deliberately placed themselves and their writings on a level with the Old Testament writings*. Certain passages seem to imply and to suggest, if not to force, the conclusion that the writers of the New Testament prepared their written messages on the basis of a specific command of God. This seems to be the import of 1 Cor. 14, 37: "The things that *I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.*" In 2 Cor. 1, 13 the same apostle writes: "We write none other things unto you than what ye read or acknowledge and, I trust, ye shall acknowledge even to the end." Also in 2 Cor. 13, 10: "Therefore *I write these things being absent*, lest, being present, I should use sharpness *according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification and not to destruction.*" Peter speaks along the same lines: "This second epistle, beloved, *I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance,*" 2 Pet. 3, 1. Also John, 1 Ep. 2, 7: "Brethren, *I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.*" — To these passages we add others of the same kind, as 2 Pet. 3, 2: "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and of the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior." Compare with this statement that of Jude 17:

"But, beloved, remember ye *the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" These passages surely claim for the message of the apostles the same authority as that possessed by the writings of the prophets. But St. Paul speaks in the same strain. He writes Rom. 16, 25—27: "Now, to Him that is of power to establish you *according to my Gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith, to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever!*" Again, in Eph. 2, 20: "And are built *upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets,*" where St. Paul even puts the apostles in first place. Also in Eph. 3, 4, 5: "How that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery . . . whereby, *when ye read, 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.*" Cp. 2 Tim. 2, 14. These surely are bold and comprehensive statements, and they would have little meaning if they could not be accepted in the spirit in which they were made, namely, that the writers of the New Testament were conscious of being on the same level with the prophets of old in the matter of inspiration.

(To be concluded.)

P. E. KRETZMANN.

Introduction to Sacred Theology.

(Prolegomena.)

The Nature and Constitution of Sacred Theology.

10. Theology Considered as Doctrine.

As theology, in its subjective sense, is the habitude, or ability, to teach the Word of God as set forth in Holy Scripture, in all its truth and purity, so Christian theology, in its objective sense, or conceived as doctrine, is nothing more and nothing less than the true and pure presentation of the doctrine of Holy Scripture. 1 Pet. 4, 11: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." Titus 2, 7—10: "In doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned, . . . showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God, our Savior, in all things." The claim of being a Christian theologian may be properly made only by such as teach nothing but Scripture doctrine. This doctrine, however, is not drawn or developed from human reason, but is taken in all its parts alone from Holy Scripture. The function of the Christian theologian therefore consists merely in grouping in distinct paragraphs and chapters and under proper heads the various teachings