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The Inspiration of the New Testament

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The Inspiration of the New Testament.

(Conclusion.)

Our fourth reason for accepting the inspiration of the New Testament on a level with the Old Testament is found in the *internal evidence offered by references to earlier writings* in the later books of the first century, that is, those contained in the convolute of the New Testament as we now have it, as well as those which indicate that letters or treatises were to be kept, thus acquiring canonical standing in the Church. To begin with the latter point first, we have such passages as Luke 1, 1—4, in which the writer expressly makes the claim that his gospel would give men the certainty of the things in which they had been instructed, that is, in the way of salvation. In 1 Thess. 5, 27 the Apostle Paul charges the recipients of the letter that it should be read to all the holy brethren; and in Col. 4, 16 he writes: "When this epistle is read among you, *cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans,*" words which clearly indicate that he intended his message to have authority, not only among the congregations to which his individual letters were immediately addressed, but among other Christians as well. The contention repeatedly made, in these later days especially by Deissmann, that the New Testament letters are mere *Gelegenheitsschriften*, is not borne out by a close study of the writings themselves.—An interesting passage is 1 Tim. 5, 18, where St. Paul writes: "*For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; and, The laborer is worthy of his reward.*" Now, the first of these quotations is clearly taken from the Old Testament, from Deut. 25, 4. But the second is not found in that form anywhere in the *corpus* of the acknowledged Scripture of the Old Testament. It is found, however, in Luke 10, 7, and we are practically obliged to conclude, both that the gospel of Luke was in existence before the year 64 or 65 and that it had the standing of "Scripture" among the early Christians, specifically in the eyes of Paul. Just as important in this connection is the passage Jas. 4, 5, 6: "Do ye think that *the Scripture saith* in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He [or *it*; for the antecedent may well be the Scripture] saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." The first quotation seems to be a free restatement of Gal. 5, 17, which alone would be valuable enough in this connection; but the second offers the thought of Matt. 23, 12 as contained literally in 1 Pet. 5, 5, a fact which clearly points to the use of earlier books of the New Testament by later writers. We have an analogy to this in Dan. 9, 2, where Daniel quotes a contemporary prophet, Jer. 25, 11, 12, concerning the duration of the Babylonian Captivity.—But the most interesting passage in this connection is 2 Pet. 3, 15, 16,

where Peter refers to Paul, his brother apostle, in the words: "Even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you, *as also in all his epistles*, speaking in them of these things." There is no doubt that Peter is speaking of a number of epistles, and his words seem to imply some sort of collection of the letters of Paul, one to which Peter's own hearers had access, with which they might be presumed to be familiar. Gausson (*op. cit.*) has the following passage: "Let the reader be so good as to attend to the following passage of the Apostle St. Peter. It is very important, inasmuch as it lets us see that in the lifetime of the apostles the book of the New Testament was already almost entirely formed in order to make one whole together with that of the Old. It was twenty or thirty years after the day of Pentecost [more exactly, about the year 67] that St. Peter felt gratified in referring to *all the epistles* of Paul, his beloved brother, and spoke of them as sacred writings, which, even as early as his time, formed part of the Holy Letters (*ιερω̄ν γραμμάτων*) and behooved to be classed with the other Scriptures (*ὡς καὶ τὰς λοιπὰς γραφάς*). He assigns them the same rank and declares that 'unlearned men can wrest them but to their own destruction.'" So much for this point.

Our fifth reason for regarding the inspiration of the New Testament as being on the same level with that of the Old Testament is found in the fact that *the Lord evidently acknowledged the work of the men*, of the apostles, who were preaching in His name, on the strength of the promise which He had given them before His death and on the day of His ascension. As the result of Peter's Pentecost sermon three thousand souls were added to the congregation, Acts 2, 41, and immediately afterward we read: "*The Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved*," v. 47. After the imprisonment of Peter and John, when the apostles had returned to the congregation and the great prayer of faith had been offered, we are told: "They were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the Word of God with boldness," Acts 4, 31. Even Gamaliel was obliged to concede: "If this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to naught; but if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it," Acts 5, 38, 39. When Paul was working in Corinth, he received the assurance of the Lord: "Be not afraid, but speak and hold not thy peace; for *I am with thee*, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee, for I have much people in this city," Acts 18, 9, 10. Of the success of the apostle in Ephesus even the silversmith Demetrius had to concede: "Not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people," Acts 19, 26, and that in spite of the fact that Paul endured many tribulations and trials, 2 Cor. 1, 8—10; 4, 1, 2. His own testimony as to the situation is given in these words: "For a great door, and effectual, is opened unto me," 1 Cor. 16, 9.

And so throughout the Apostolic Age and the early centuries the Lord was on the side of the servants whom He had equipped with the gift of inspiration to make known the message of His salvation. As Tertullian and other early apologists have shown, the growth of the Church was due to the fact that the power of the Lord attended His servants, not to a false enthusiasm, which would have amounted to nothing but a flash in the pan. The founding and the propagation of the Christian Church on the basis of the Gospel-message was obviously the work of God, who thus supported His ambassadors in their labors.

Our sixth reason for accepting the New Testament as the inspired Word of God is *the marvelous agreement between the two parts of the Bible*. Evidence of this is found even in the many quotations and allusions contained in the books of the New Testament which are taken from the Old Testament, often with a specific mention of the author. We do not only find the expression "*that it might be fulfilled* what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet," but Jeremiah is named in Matt. 2, 17, Isaiah in Matt. 3, 3, the same prophet in Matt. 4, 14, again in Matt. 8, 17, again in Matt. 12, 17, again in Matt. 13, 14, again in Matt. 15, 7, David in Matt. 22, 43; and so we could enumerate passage after passage showing the intimate inner relationship between the writers of the Old and those of the New Testament. In Matthew alone there are more than sixty quotations and expressions from, and references to, the Old Testament. And some one has made a conservative count of all such places in the New Testament and found that the number of quotations from the Old Testament amounts to 277, of expressions to 100, and of references to 121; but that does not include the use of Old Testament thoughts in words which show just a slight difference. A very interesting and convincing feature of this argument is the use of Old Testament prophecies in showing the exactness of the fulfilment as given in the accounts of the gospels and in the letters. Take passages like the following: Matt. 26, 56: "That the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled"; Luke 4, 21: "This day is this scripture fulfilled"; John 7, 42: "Hath not the Scripture said?"; John 13, 18; 17, 12; 19, 24. 28. 36. 37: "That the Scripture might be fulfilled"; Acts 1, 16: "The Scripture must needs be fulfilled"; Rom. 4, 3; Gal. 4, 30: "What saith the Scripture?"; Rom. 9, 17; 10, 11; 11, 2; 1 Tim. 5, 18; Jas. 2, 23; 4, 5: "The Scripture saith." — But the argument comes to us with overwhelming force when we consider the marvelous agreement to be found in many parts of the New Testament as compared with similar passages in the Old. This is not in the nature of quotations, but in the imagery used and in the scope of the thoughts presented. Thus the Apocalypse has as the background of many of its visions a temple or an immense throne-room, just as we have it in chapter 1

of Ezekiel and elsewhere. There are four living beings in Rev. 4, 7 ff. and in that whole vision, just as there are four living creatures in Ezek. 1, 4 ff. Gog and Magog are introduced in Rev. 20, 8 ff., just as we find these enemies of the Church mentioned in Ezek. 38 and 39. There is a miraculous stream of water proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb in Rev. 22, 1 ff.; the same stream is evidently referred to in Ezek. 47. In Rev. 22, 2 a tree of life with twelve kinds of fruit is spoken of; in Ezek. 47 we have many trees on both sides of the miraculous river of water. And these comparisons could be extended almost indefinitely. They offer one of the most convincing proofs of the unity of the Bible and of the inspiration of the New Testament.

In closing this first part of our discussion, we may be called upon to meet some objections with regard to the writers of the New Testament. Books whose authorship is apostolic would seem to offer little difficulty: the gospel of Matthew; the gospel, the epistles, and the Revelation of John; the thirteen epistles of Paul; the two epistles of Peter; the letter of James, especially if we identify this James with James the Less, the son of Alphaeus, the half-brother or cousin of our Lord; the epistle of Jude, if we assume that this Jude was also a member of the Twelve. The difficulty would concern *Mark*, *Luke*, and the author of the *Letter to the Hebrews*. As to Mark, apart from the external evidence which we intend to present shortly, he was related closely with Paul, both in his earliest and in his later career, but especially with Peter, who calls him his son, 1 Pet. 5, 13. It seems that Mark was closely associated with both Paul and Peter after the year 62 A. D. and that his gospel was written about this time. Patristic evidence, that of Papias, whose designation of Mark as the "interpreter" (*ἐρμηνευτής*) of Peter is well known, and that of Justin, Irenaeus, Clement of Rome, and Origen, agrees in noting the influence of Peter on the gospel of Mark. This is not to be understood as making Mark a mere amanuensis, or secretary, of the apostle, but as obtaining his information of the things most surely believed from Peter, the *Traditionshypothese* being especially well sustained in his case. In much the same way we think of Luke in his relation to Paul, whose close companion he was for more than a decade, as far as can be determined. This is substantiated also by the fact that there is a strong inner relationship between the cast of Paul's message and that of Luke in his gospel and in the Book of Acts. Besides, the evidence furnished by the prolog of his gospel cannot be overlooked by the honest searcher for the truth. As for the Letter to the Hebrews, it may be a little too unsafe to ascribe it to Paul, for certain internal and external reasons, but it certainly belongs to the treatises of the inner Pauline circle. Nor may the points made by both Rohnert and Gaussen be ignored, who place the three

authors here concerned into the circle of apostles in the wider sense. (Cp. Gaussen, *op. cit.*, 83 ff.)

Having offered now in a brief form the main points pertaining to the internal evidence for the inspiration of the New Testament, let us examine just as briefly the *external evidence for the New Testament books*. Let us turn first to the Apostolic Fathers to see what historical evidence for our position is offered by these unimpeachable witnesses, men who surely cannot be charged with any ulterior motives in presenting the truth as they knew it. In the writings concerned, it is true, the expressions *ἡ γραφή* and *γέγραπται* are continued in use for the books of the Old Testament, but they, like *τὸ γεγραμμένον* and *ὁ ἄγιος λόγος*, are used also for New Testament references, particularly at first for the sayings of the Lord Jesus, extended to include the Gospel accounts of His ministry. Thus we find in the *Letter of Barnabas* (IV, 14): "Let us take heed lest, as it is written, we be found 'many called, but few chosen.'" Ignatius writes to the Smyrneans (VII, 2): "Give heed to the prophets and especially to the *Gospel*, in which the Passion has been revealed to us and the Resurrection has been accomplished." In his letter to the Philadelphians the same man writes: "Your prayer will make me perfect for God that I may attain the lot wherein I found mercy, *making the Gospel my refuge* as the flesh of Jesus" (V, 1). In the *Didache* (VIII, 2) we find the passage: "Do not pray as the hypocrites, but as the *Lord commanded in His Gospel*, pray thus: 'Our Father who art in heaven. . .'" A few chapters farther on we read: "And concerning the *apostles* and prophets, act thus according to the ordinance of the *Gospel*" (XI, 3). Particularly strong is the statement in the letter of Ignatius to the Philadelphians (VIII, 2): "But I beseech you to do nothing in facetiousness, but *after the teaching of Christ*. For I heard some men saying, 'If I find it not in the charters, in the *Gospel*, I do not believe,' and when I said to them that it is in the Scripture, they answered me, 'That is exactly the question.'" And just as the story of Jesus, as preserved in the accounts of His life, in the gospels, was generally accepted as the truth and designated as "Scripture," so the letters and treatises of the apostles were regarded as inspired and authoritative. Their commands and ordinances as contained in their accepted writings were accepted without hesitation. This authority is referred to in *1 Clement*, 44, in Ignatius to the Romans IV, 3 ("I do not order you as did Peter and Paul; *they were apostles*, I am a convict"), also in that to the Trallians III, 3 ("I did not think myself competent, as a convict, to give you orders like an *apostle*"), and VII, 1 ("Beware therefore of such men; and this will be possible for you if you are not puffed up and are inseparable from God, from Jesus Christ, and from the bishop and the *ordinances of the apostles*"). In *2 Clement*,

XIV, 2, according to the text given by Zahn (*Geschichte des Kanons*, II, 942 ff.), the books of the prophets and the apostles are referred to as authorities in matters of doctrine. In perfect agreement with this view the writings of the subapostolic age are permeated with quotations from, and references to, practically all books of the New Testament. The number of excerpts, quotations, expressions, and allusions to New Testament books in the Apostolic Fathers is as follows: to Matthew, 100; to Mark, 24; to Luke, 32; to John, 35; to Acts, 21; to Romans, 31; to First Corinthians, 43; to Second Corinthians, 10; to Galatians, 9; to Ephesians, 25; to Philippians, 16; to Colossians, 5; to First Thessalonians, 8; to Second Thessalonians, 4; to First Timothy, 16; to Second Timothy, 11; to Titus, 10; to First Peter, 28; to Second Peter, 4; to First John, 7; to Second John, 1; to James, 19; to Jude, 1; to Hebrews, 27; to Revelation, 6. This is a truly formidable array of testimonies. Its significance causes Seeberg (*Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, I, 159) to remark: "*Es kann als sichere Tatsache bezeichnet werden, dass in den ersten Decennien des zweiten Jahrhunderts der 'Kanon' in seinem Grundstock in den heidenchristlichen Gemeinden wohl ueberall in Gebrauch kam. Das 'vierfaeltige Evangelium' und die Sammlung von dreizehn Paulusbriefen bildeten den Grundstock. Um diesen Grundstock rankten sich die uebrigen Schriften in lockerer Vereinigung.*" There are many interesting points which might be introduced here, such as the fact that Zahn, for the period 95 to 140, can find only four gospel citations which cannot be derived from our present gospels, while a great many quotations and allusions attest the Church's use of the four gospels which have been accepted since the earliest days. (Cp. Souter, *The Text and the Canon of the New Testament*, 162.)

If we take the period of the apologists, down to the end of the third century, we find much corroborative material, showing that the present books of the New Testament were regarded as canonical. As Souter shows, it is now a practical certainty that Justin used Matthew, Luke, and John, and the reference to the recollections of the Apostle Peter is best explained as a reference to the gospel of St. Mark. To quote Souter directly: "Justin knows the Apocalypse as a prophetic work by the Apostle John. Knowledge of the following further books is evident from his writings: Acts, First Peter, Romans, First Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, Second Thessalonians, Hebrews, and the *Didache*." (L. c., 168.) At the end of the second century Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons on the lower Rhone, in Gaul, quotes from, or refers to, all the books of the New Testament except Third John and Philemon. It is but necessary to consult any good history of the canon of the New Testament to find how Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen of Alexandria, and practically all the Church Fathers down to Augustine, in whose days the canon was

fixed by resolution of the councils at Hippo and of Carthage (383 and 397), stood. One might here profitably consult the extensive study by Gregory, in his *Canon and Text of the New Testament*. And our particular interest in the question is fully satisfied, inasmuch as most of the teachers of the early days express themselves in no uncertain terms concerning their acceptance of these books on the basis of the apostolic authority attaching to them and the inspiration which prompted their writing.

But what about the so-called *antilegomena*? Is not the very word an evidence of uncertainty with regard to inspiration? Our answer is emphatically negative. The question of the *antilegomena* is not at all one that concerns inspiration, but chiefly one of historical witness and secondarily of the analogy of faith. Instead of weakening our position with regard to the inspiration of the New Testament and the position of its various books, it tends very materially to strengthen our attitude. The situation is this. Even in the days of Paul's early missionary labors, about the middle of the first century, he found it necessary to warn the congregations against unauthorized letters, apocryphal and pseudepigraphic. He tells the Thessalonian Christians that they should not be soon shaken in mind or troubled, "neither by spirit nor by word nor by letter as from us," 2 Thess. 2, 2. And at the end of the same letter, 3, 17: "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle; so I write." He was compelled, then, to give his readers a special token and guarantee that the letters which he sent in person were genuine. And in a similar way Luke states to Theophilus that many unauthorized persons had undertaken to write accounts of Christ's life and ministry, from which we may infer that he had been duly commissioned. It is a well-known fact also that the number of apocalypses in the early period of the Church was very great.

Hence the early Christians made use of the utmost caution. Every book which claimed apostolic authority and inspiration had to pass muster, had to prove its right to be received into the New Testament canon. The *Didache* and the *Letter of Barnabas* were considered apostolic in some parts of the Church, but eventually they had to withdraw because of insufficient historical evidence and doctrinal difficulties. In some parts of the Church doubts regarding certain books remained: Second and Third John were private letters; Second Peter was undoubtedly penned very shortly before the death of the apostle and hence was not widely enough known to be accepted without question; Jude seemed to some to be a mere repetition of Second Peter, and its tone lacks some of the fervor of the more important writings; James seemed to be out of harmony with the sweeping statements of Paul on justification by faith alone; Hebrews

names no author, and there seemed to be certain doctrinal difficulties in the letter; and the Apocalypse was under suspicion simply because of its nature. If inspiration came into the discussion at all, it was only as a secondary consideration; for if the books are not apostolic and canonical, then they are also not inspired by the Holy Ghost. The historical and doctrinal obstacles have largely been removed, but we still respect the arguments that led up to the distinction in name and would therefore not charge any one with lack of respect for the Scripture if he shares the doubts of some of the teachers of the Church from the earliest days. But as for the inspiration of the New Testament, it stands secure; and for the *whole Bible* we say: *Verbum Dei manet in aeternum!*

P. E. KREZTMANN.

D. Pieper als Prediger.

D. Pieper war vor allem Dogmatiker. Mit seltener Meisterschaft beherrschte er das ganze reiche Gebiet der dogmatischen Theologie. Mit einzigartiger Klarheit und Schärfe wußte er die rechte Lehre darzustellen und den gegenüberstehenden Irrtum aufzudecken und zu widerlegen. Das tat er in einer so lichtvollen, klaren, einfachen Sprache, daß man schier gezwungen wurde, ihn zu verstehen. Er hätte auch eine andere Form der Darstellung gebrauchen können. Wer seine dogmatischen Schriften liest, wird bald erkennen, daß er die Sprache auch der modernen Theologen, so unklar und schwülstig sie oft ist, vollständig beherrschte. Meisterhaft verstand er es, die Irrtümer und Entgleisungen und Trugschlüsse, die sich so oft unter dem Schwulst der Sprache zu verstecken suchen, dieser ihrer Hülle zu entkleiden und sie in ihrer wahren Gestalt hinzustellen. Er, der die Sprache der modernen Theologie so gründlich verstand, hätte sie auch gebrauchen können. Aber durch Gottes Gnade blieb er davor bewahrt, seine klaren, schriftgemäßen, theologischen Gedanken in unverständliche Sprache zu kleiden. Als Schüler Luthers redete er eine allgemeinverständliche Sprache, so daß der Genuß und der Segen, den man von dem Lesen seiner köstlichen, inhaltreichen Schriften hat, nicht durch die schwerverständliche Sprache beeinträchtigt, gehindert oder gar unmöglich gemacht wird.

D. Pieper war auch ein Prediger von Gottes Gnaden. Das war er vor allem deswegen, weil, wie in allen seinen Schriften, so auch in einer jeden seiner Predigten der *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, die Lehre von der Rechtfertigung eines Sünders allein aus Gnaden, allein um Christi willen, allein durch den Glauben, der Mittelpunkt war, um den sich alle seine Gedanken drehen, das Allerheiligste, auf das er immer wieder seine Zuhörer aufmerksam machte, in das er sie immer wieder hineinführte. Die Gedanken, die er aus dem Schacht des göttlichen Wortes durch eifriges Forschen und tiefes Graben zutage gefördert