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contents

Page

**Theories of Inspiration:
The Christadelphian
Experience**

Reg Carr 193

**Inspiration and
Revelation**

Edward Whittaker 199

**Inspiration and
Quotation: The Case of
Amos 5 and Acts 7**

Arthur Gibson 204

**Inspiration and the
Human Element**

Stephen Palmer 213

**Inspiration and Textual
Detail in Scripture**

Peter Forbes 218

**Inspiration and
Historicity: The Case of
Genesis and Ebla**

Arthur Gibson 223

**Inspiration Defended:
Christadelphian Views**

227

**The Inspiration of
Scriptures: A**



Inspiration

The Inspiration of Scripture is a doctrine of vital importance, for a belief in a wholly-inspired Bible is the very foundation of the Christadelphian faith. If the words of the Bible are not the words of God, then the Biblical basis for the Truth as we understand it is no reliable basis at all, and the Christadelphian Statement of Faith is a document with its roots in stony ground. If we cannot, with absolute certainty as to its Divine origin and production, turn to the Bible as the Word of God, then we are at sea without a compass, adrift without a helm, and unsure as to every effort we may make to progress towards enlightenment in spiritual things.

The sad state of Christian theology today ought to be a grim warning to any who might fail to appreciate the importance of a wholly-inspired Bible as the basis of faith. Whereas the early Christian Church “believed that the content of its system of beliefs had been directly revealed by God”, and that “in the Bible the Church possessed a revealed and infallible source and norm of belief and conduct” (G. Lampe), its ‘orthodox’ modern counterpart openly declares that the Bible is a collection of books whose message and meaning have been created by men. Not uncommonly, the theologians of the present-day Church are heard to speak freely of the Bible’s limitations, of its weaknesses, and even of its errors, in order to justify the reinterpretation of its message to suit the ‘progressive’ tastes of the verbal inspiration of Scripture has been undermined, attacked and, finally, laid aside, to be replaced by a view of inspiration of which the Bible itself knows nothing. Revelation, it is claimed, must be thought of as quite separate from inspiration; God, it is alleged, reveals Himself through history, in redemptive acts. And the Bible is said to be the record of those acts seen through the eyes of men, whose ‘inspiration’ consisted merely in the power of their sympathy with what they perceived God to be doing. And so it is that modern theologians have come to set themselves and their own ideas above the Word of God.

20th century
spiritual
in the process
of course,
doctrine

Against such a descent into error, the doctrine of a completely Divinely-inspired Bible is the all-important first line of defence. For Christadelphians, true *theology* (literally: “the word of God”) can only come from revelation by God, through inspiration, in His Word of Truth. Any tendency to weaken that position has to be seen as a threat to the solid foundations of the Truth itself. Speakers and writers, especially, have a clear duty to ensure that modern theology is not allowed to adulterate the expression of our community’s dependence on a “God-breathed” Bible. *The Testimony* magazine is keenly aware of this responsibility, and not only seeks to avoid the publication of material which gives a false significance to the human role in inspiration, but also actively pursues the publication of articles whose treatment of inspiration is consistent with the magazine’s declared objective—“the study and defence of the Holy Scripture”. A glance at the “Bibliography” published in this special issue will show that *The Testimony* has consistently asserted the doctrine of the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

(continued on inside back cover)

Publication of articles in The Testimony does not presume editorial endorsement except on matters of fundamental doctrine.

THEORIES OF INSPIRATION: THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPERIENCE

REG CARR

“The Bible can never command or retain its place as the supreme mentor of human life unless its absolutely divine character is recognised. Its histories will never be studied as they require to be, or its hopes practically blended with the motives of human action, or its self-denying precepts adopted and acted upon in human life, where there is the least suspicion of the presence of a human element in its composition. This suspicion saps confidence: and the lack of confidence leads but too easily to a neglect to which we are naturally pre-disposed. Society is a desolation today because of this. The divine authority of the Bible is not recognised. If it were recognised, as it has been hitherto among the brethren, there would be that application to it in constant reading which would purify and ennoble with righteousness and hope. Instead of this, it is regarded as a venerable piece of literary antiquity, good in its way, but not deserving of the first place in human life, and, on the whole, inconvenient and even hurtful, if it is put into that position. All confidence in it as the word of God has been undermined in the general ranks of society through the influence of learned but false theories. A few have had that confidence restored, with the result of light and comfort and righteousness entering into their dark lives by the daily reading of the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation.”¹

The historical background

THE HISTORY of the Truth since its revival in the mid-nineteenth century has been characterised by a succession of encounters with the religious falsehoods of the Christian world. These encounters, both small and great, have left their mark on the Christadelphian Statement of Faith, which now stands not simply as a bulwark against doctrinal error and as a catechism of the true gospel message, but also as a succinct catalogue of the controversies of generations past. The ‘clean flesh’ view of the nature of Christ, immortal emergence, the possession of the Holy Spirit, the human paternity of Jesus, the ‘free life’ theory of the sacrifice of Christ—these, and many more, are all doctrinal errors which have been counteracted by modifications to the Statement of Faith. It is an interesting comment on the comprehensiveness of its coverage that it has been amended on a point of doctrine only once in the ninety-six years since its adoption in its present form. More particularly, it is a tribute to the Scripture-based

wisdom of those brethren who formulated these credal expressions of our faith that succeeding generations have not found it necessary to alter those expressions and, indeed, still find them of inestimable value in clearly defining “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”.

It is all the more remarkable, therefore, to find that on the question of the inspiration of Scripture none of the early versions of the Statement of Faith contained any mention of the doctrine. It was not, in fact, until 1886 that the ‘Foundation Clause’ was inserted, for reasons which will be mentioned in due course.² There were, of course, frequent references in early Christadelphian literature to a commonly-held belief in the Divine inspiration of Scripture. In *Elpis Israel* (1849), Dr. Thomas had advised his imaginary reader: “If thou wouldst gain the knowledge of the wisdom of God which is so inestimable, and which is contained in the word

1 . Robert Roberts, *Is the Bible the Work of Inspiration?* (Birmingham, The Christadelphian), p. 16.

they (the apostles) preached, thou must also be the subject of the same illumination. This is indispensable; for there is no obtaining of this commodity except through the scriptures of truth. These 'are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. For all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for conviction, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2 Tim. 3:15-17). What more dost thou want than perfection, and a crown of life and glory in the age to come? Search the scriptures with the teachableness of a little child, and thy labour will not be in vain".³

In *Christendom Astray* (or *Twelve Lectures on the Teaching of the Bible*, as it was called when it first appeared in 1862) Robert Roberts had declared: "To suppose the Bible to be human is to raise insurmountable difficulties, and to do violence to every reasonable probability. The honesty and ability of the writers cannot be denied; and yet on the rationalistic theory, we are forced into the position of believing that with all their integrity, they acted the knave, or that with all their native wisdom and genius, they played the fool. The only truly rational theory of the book is that supplied by itself. 'Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit'—(2 Peter i.21). In this we find an explanation of the whole matter. The presence of one supreme guiding mind, inspiring and controlling the utterances of the authors, completely accounts for their agreement of teaching throughout, and for the exalted nature of their doctrines; on any other supposition, the book is a riddle, which must ever puzzle and bewilder the mind that earnestly faces all the facts of the case".⁴

Many years prior to 1886 also, Brother Roberts had gone on record in the pages of *The Christadelphian* magazine as saying that the Brotherhood's view of inspiration was one which regarded the very words of the original Scriptures as being from God: "It was an inspiration that left the subjects of it in the free exercise of their individual characteristics. It was a super-addition to these, imparting knowledge preternaturally, and giving shape to the verbal forms in which that knowledge was expressed".⁵

It cannot be said, therefore, that prior to 1886 Christadelphians had no doctrine of inspiration. It was merely that, no controversy having arisen on the subject, and the Divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures being so commonly "recognised among the brethren", the matter

had not been written into the Statement of Faith, which was itself based on the assumption that the Bible was Divinely inspired. This 'oversight' was to be swiftly corrected when the need first arose.

Complete inspiration challenged

While the Christian world outside the Truth was responding, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, to the higher critics by accommodating its views on the inspiration of Scripture to their scholarly, but erroneous, findings, the Christadelphian community remained for some time unaffected, on the surface at least, by the wind of doctrinal change which was blowing in orthodox circles. The widespread permeation into the popular consciousness of the slightly earlier writings of Bishop Colenso, and the learned reasonings of Dean Alford and Professor Newman, began that process of 'naturalising' the supernatural which has borne such disastrous fruits for the world in general and for the Christian faith in particular. During the whole of that time, and for as long as the secularising influences of the age remained outside the Truth, the brethren were able to keep the danger at arm's length. Brother Roberts especially was able to strengthen the community's position with a series of public debates in which he both defended the Truth and also witnessed against the prevailing errors.⁶

Towards the end of 1884, however, the comparative peace and prosperity of the Christadelphian ecclesial world was shattered by the appearance, in the first issue of a magazine entitled *The Biblical Exegetist*, of an article called

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2. THE FOUNDATION—That the book currently known as the Bible, consisting of the Scriptures of Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, is the only source of knowledge concerning God and His purposes at present extant or available in the earth, and that the same were wholly given by inspiration of God in the writers, and are consequently without error in all parts of them, except such as may be due to errors of transcription or translation (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13; Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 14:37; Neh. 9:30; John 10:35). (Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith.)
 3. J. Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, 1958 edition, p. 5.
 4. R. Roberts, *Twelve Lectures*, 1869 edition, p. 16.
 5. *The Christadelphian*, June 1872, p. 261.
 6. For example: The Nightingale Debate, 1866 ("The Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul"), The Stern Debate, 1871 ("Was Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah?"), The Bradlaugh Debate, 1876 ("Is the Bible Divine?"), and The Hine Debate, 1879 ("Are Englishmen Israelites?").

“Theories of Inspiration”. The magazine had been circulated to every subscriber to *The Christadelphian*, and the article appeared under the name of the magazine’s editor, Robert Ashcroft, who at that time was a brother in Christ. The article was, as Islip Collyer describes it, “a modified reflection of ideas presented by many theologians who were revising their conception of Christian foundations”.⁷ “Theories of Inspiration” might well have been disregarded as yet another higher-critical attack on the Divine origin of Scripture had it not been for one important fact: its author was a very prominent Christadelphian, greatly esteemed throughout the Brotherhood for his abilities as a speaker and writer. Eight years previously he had renounced his comfortable living as a Congregationalist minister to throw in his lot with the brethren in Birkenhead. There had been no complaints when, to help him out of financial difficulties, Brother Roberts had created for him the post of Assistant Editor of *The Christadelphian*—a position which he held from January 1883 until June 1884. “Theories of Inspiration” came very much, therefore, from within the camp, and could not be lightly dismissed as a typical product of the opponents of the Truth.

It would be uncharitable to insist that Robert Ashcroft had probably never entirely thrown off the effects of his clerical education and training. His efforts on behalf of the Truth seem to have been generally well accepted for the eight years up to the appearance of *The Biblical Exegetist* article. Brother Roberts himself had reason to be thankful to a brother who was able, for a time at least, to relieve him of some of the unremitting pressure of lecturing appointments and editorial labours.⁸ Continuing cooperation, however, was bound to be difficult with a writer who, in the offending article, wrote that he regarded inspiration (quoting Crabbe) as “the communication of a strong moral sentiment or passion”, that he took the view that “inspiration and error . . . are not mutually antagonistic terms”, and that, along with Dean Alford, he applied “a much more reasonable canon of interpretation to the sacred writings” in acknowledging in them “the presence of a human as well as a Divine element” (by which he meant that “Divine surveillance may not have ensured the infallibility of every text and word”). Pointing to alleged ‘errors’ in Scripture (in Stephen’s apology, for example, or in statistical details in Kings and Chronicles), Robert Ashcroft claimed that his view (later charac-

terised by Brother Roberts as “partial inspiration”) was more easily tenable against the assaults of the critics: “The far more reasonable and defensible view of the question is that which makes inspiration cover all that may be said to belong to Divine revelation proper: by which we mean everything in the Scriptures that may have been beyond the power of man to discover for himself”. The weakened version of 2 Timothy 3:16 (“Every inspired Scripture is profitable . . .”), and a watered-down interpretation of Romans 15:4 (“Whatsoever things were written for our instruction . . .”), were pressed into service to ‘prove’ that the degree of inspiration to be contended for was “neither greater nor less than would be required for the exhibition of the Divine scheme in its fullness and integrity”. This kind of inspiration embraced only “that (which) appertains, directly or indirectly, to that system of truth of which Christ is the centre and end”. It was, in other words, not a case of whether everything recorded in Scripture was infallibly true because it was all Divinely inspired in its recording; rather was it a question of inspiration being operative only in those parts of Scripture which have to do with salvation and redemption.

With this view of inspiration, Robert Ashcroft felt that believers in Scripture could easily accept the existence of a human (that is, an erring) element in the production of the Biblical text, and he claimed that “the devout student will feel that alleged errors and discrepancies are not of the serious consequence they must ever seem to be on the verbal or plenary hypothesis: and his time will not be fruitlessly employed, and his sense of candour and integrity distressed and weakened in the enforced attempt to extract harmony from what some may regard as discordant materials”.

The Bible defended

The *Exegetist* article constituted the first serious challenge from within the Brotherhood to the verbal, or plenary, view of inspiration, and it was inevitable that it would not be allowed to pass unchallenged. From this time on it was

7. Islip Collyer, *Robert Roberts: A Study of Life and Character* (Birmingham, The Christadelphian, 1948), p. 112.

8. In retrospect, however, Brother Roberts described Robert Ashcroft as “the mere echoist of Dutch and German critics whose plausibilities he was not penetrating enough to see through” (*The Christadelphian*, August 1891, p. 307).

deemed necessary to formulate as unambiguously as possible what had hitherto been taken for granted as the commonly-held view. The Birmingham ecclesia, for example, passed the following resolution at a special meeting held on 12th February 1885: "That this Ecclesia believes that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, which now exist in all languages, were originally produced, in all parts of them, by inspiration of God, in this sense, namely, that the Holy Spirit moved and guided the writers either to use its own words conveying information of which they had no knowledge, or to record their own knowledge in words which it superintended; or to adopt and incorporate from outside sources whatever it might approve or require to be recorded for its own purposes—the writers being in no case left to their own unaided efforts, and the result being that their writing was free from error;—and further, that this Ecclesia will hereafter refuse to fellowship all who maintain that inspiration was limited to the writing of certain parts only, and that the other parts were the work of a merely human authorship liable to err".⁹ This resolution was undoubtedly the clearest statement to date of the Christadelphian position on inspiration. Though it was superseded in August of that same year by a statement containing an even crisper definition of inspiration and its primary place among the doctrines of the Truth,¹⁰ it was unacceptable to Robert Ashcroft, who quoted the case of Luke's preface to his Gospel, and also the case of Paul's comment in 1 Corinthians 7:12, as being destructive of the view of inspiration expressed in the resolution.¹¹

Ashcroft's views were publicly repudiated too in the pages of *The Christadelphian*, principally by Brother Roberts, but also by Brother J.J. Andrew of London, in a series of long letter-articles which ran from December 1885 to April 1886. Brother Roberts's first article on the subject, entitled "Is the Bible the work of inspiration?" (December 1884), gave rise subsequently to a pamphlet of the same name which has been widely circulated in our midst, and which has every right to be regarded as our standard work on inspiration. Born out of controversy, the pamphlet has still never been superseded.¹²

Brother Andrew's letters have enjoyed less attention; but they are nonetheless telling in their argumentation against a theory of inspiration which leaves far too much to the men through whom God's Word was written. In particular, a series of propositions formulated by

Brother Andrew and a number of the London brethren can still serve as a touchstone on which every student of Scripture can test the nature of his own views. The seven propositions were as follows:

1. That Divine Inspiration involves infallibility in what is spoken or written under its influence—so controlling the speaker or writer as to exclude error.
2. That the recording, under Divine Inspiration, of uninspired utterances, does not, unless otherwise indicated, do more than guarantee an accurate record of what was uttered.
3. That the incorporation, under Divine Inspiration, of human with inspired writings (if such incorporation has taken place) would constitute them of equal authority.
4. That the existing evidence of the Divine authority of the writings composing the Bible, and the absence of any to the contrary, justifies the conclusion that they have been produced or incorporated under Divine Inspiration.
5. That any errors found in the Bible as we now have it are not attributable to the original writers, but are either mistakes on the part of copyists or translators, or designed alterations, omissions or interpolations; but they are unimportant, and do not impair its reliability.
6. That, in view of the length of time which has elapsed since the production of the autographs, and the extent to which difficulties in existing copies have been removed through modern discovery and research, we are justified in attributing any others to insufficient information.

9 . Quoted from *The Truth*, February 1885, p. 94.

10. "We hereby record our conviction that the doctrine of the Divine inspiration and consequent infallibility of the Scriptures in all parts of them (as originally written by prophets and apostles) is the first principle of that system of truth which forms the basis of our fellowship with one another in Christ". (Quoted from *The Christadelphian*, November 1889, p. 551.)

11. *The Truth*, February 1885, p. 95. Ashcroft assumed that Luke had gone round collecting eyewitness testimony and did not need inspiration to write his Gospel, and he also believed that in 1 Corinthians 7:12 Paul was disclaiming inspiration for what he wrote. Both of these supposed examples of 'unaided human efforts' are explained in their true light elsewhere in this Special Issue.

12. Some of the important sections of Brother Roberts's pamphlet are quoted in other parts of this Special Issue.

7. That the fundamental principle involved in the foregoing propositions, viz, the Divine authorship and consequent infallibility of the Bible, is an essential element in our basis of fellowship, and therefore we decline to fellowship those who attribute to some parts a fallible authorship.

The logical conclusion of error?

One thing, at least, is clear from the records of the controversy: Robert Ashcroft's theory of inspiration was vigorously opposed by many Christadelphians and was rejected by most. In 1885 Brother Andrew wrote of the dangerous consequences of such a 'partialist' view: "Every book in the Bible has been rejected by one and another for the simple reason that it did not square with human ideas. If brethren of Christ imitate this vicious example in regard to one part, they cannot logically resist it in reference to every other; and thus, the solid rock will be gradually transformed into a shifting sand".¹³ The truth of this almost prophetic statement is clearly illustrated by the example of Robert Ashcroft himself. He continued, first, for some months, by pressing his theories on the brethren through the circulation (as a successor to *The Biblical Exegetist*) of a magazine entitled (ironically) *The Truth*. This contained such statements as: "The expectation of reasonable readers must be restricted to ascertaining the *general sense* of the books of Scripture taken as a whole . . . It forms no part of the present writer's belief that each contribution to the collection which we combine in one volume and call 'The Bible' has been preserved from every tinge of educational thought, from every defect in statement, from every reflection of surrounding opinion or faith";¹⁴ or this: "There are undoubtedly portions of the Hebrew Scriptures which involve no religious doctrine or precept, but seem to have been providentially written or selected from other literary sources, mainly for the purpose of illustrating the continuity of Israelitish history, and thus shewing how one event led on to another in the development of the Divine scheme. To treat these as of equal importance with those parts which are declared to be, or are self-evidently *oracular*, is to commit *bibliolatry*".¹⁵

The disaffection of Ashcroft's readers—due in large measure to the evident direction in which such views were taking him—led to the demise of his monthly magazine within the space of a year. Having thus sown "discord among brethren" in a community which had given him its

admiration and respect, Ashcroft returned to Congregationalism, being accepted again as a minister, first in Seaforth, Lancashire, and subsequently on the American continent, to which he emigrated in 1889. The logical conclusion of his removal from the "wholly-inspired" Bible of the Christadelphians was reached when, in 1903, describing himself then as a Spiritualist, he wrote in these terms about the Word of God: "The demonstrable errors of both the Old and New Testaments are such as no ingenuity can explain away . . . The materials are hopelessly discordant, and harmony cannot be extracted from them".¹⁶ Brother Andrew's prediction about "shifting sand" had come true; and the grim warning is there for us all to heed. It may not be far from the truth to say that the Christian world in general has followed a very similar path since the days when a Divinely-inspired Bible was accepted by most people who called themselves Christians.¹⁷

Some little good

Controversy is not good of itself; and there are many aspects of the 1885 Inspiration controversy which are best forgotten. But if his contemporaries had little to be grateful for to Robert Ashcroft, we at least can see him as the catalyst which caused our community to clarify its thinking on a vital aspect of its doctrine. It is because of Robert Ashcroft that we now have a clear definition of Christadelphian belief on inspiration in our Statement of Faith.¹⁸ Because of him, also, we have a substantial body of literature on the subject;¹⁹ and because of him, too, we have been prepared as a community for withstanding the many theories of inspiration with which both the secular and theological worlds confront us from time to time.

During the controversy itself the following views were among those repudiated by

13. *The Christadelphian*, December 1885, p. 563.

14. *The Truth*, March 1885, p. 143.

15. *The Truth*, July 1885, p. 315.

16. Quoted in *The Christadelphian*, July 1903, pp. 326-7.

17. Brother Roberts himself made a similar prediction: "Sooner or later, an evil principle will work itself out, whether those who advocate its introduction see its tendencies or not . . . many others see it in its true character as a doctrine ultimately involving the subversion of the whole position of faith and hope which is founded on the Bible as the Word of God" (*The Christadelphian*, May 1886, p. 218).

18. See Footnote 2.

19. Some of this is documented in the Bibliography in this Special Issue.

Christadelphian writers (and many of these are current in the Christian world today): that inspiration did not secure infallibility at all times; that inspiration only secured infallibility where matters of revealed truth were concerned; that inspiration was confined to matters necessary for salvation; that an inspired writing is not necessarily free from error in 'unimportant details'; that inspiration was only given where it claims to have been given; that Christ and the apostles did not teach the infallibility of the Old Testament Scriptures; that a writer acting under inspiration might incorporate a document containing minor errors; that a passage of Scripture is not inspired unless it deals with matters of which the writer previously knew nothing, or which he did not understand; that there is no need for any of the historical books to have been inspired; that special inspiration was unnecessary for the writing of the Apostolic Epistles; that the Old Testament consists partly of uninspired priestly records; that the Bible is not the Word of God, but merely contains it; that the quotation by the writers of the New Testament of passages from the Old Testament does not guarantee the inspiration of any words beyond those quoted, and that in some cases the quotations were not made under inspiration; that the writings of Moses are not free from error with regard to natural history; that our copies of the Bible are reliable, though the originals may have contained error; that discrepancies between parallel accounts of certain events prove that the writers were not inspired; and that the presence of differing, and human, styles in the various books of the Bible rules out a common Divine authorship. Thoroughly satisfactory and consistent Scriptural cases have been made by Christadelphian writers against all these erroneous views,²⁰ and none of us needs to feel any doubt about the soundness of our community's stance on the basis of a "wholly-inspired" Bible. Some little good, at least, has flowed to us from the troubles of one hundred years ago.

Lessons from the past

It is undoubtedly because the Brotherhood was so well armed against spurious theories of inspiration that problems in this area hardly arose for almost eighty years—and this was in spite of the fact that the view of the Bible prevailing in the Christian world outside went from bad to worse during the same period. But the columns of the community's magazines in the 1960s bear witness to the fact that the critical

views of theological scholarship had again penetrated the Brotherhood.²¹ Brethren had lost the careful habit of saying, "*The Spirit through John* writes . . ."; speakers and writers were being unconsciously influenced by their wider reading of non-Christadelphian commentators, and had begun to speak without qualification of 'Paul's style' or 'Hosea's tenderness'; younger generations had grown up who did not know the answers about the supposed discrepancies or inconsistencies in the Bible which the apparently learned world took almost for granted; and not a few brethren actually began to flirt openly with the latest theories from the arenas of theology and Biblical studies—'latest theories' which were in many cases little other than old views in new dress. "Not a shred of such claims (for verbal inspiration) can be found in the Bible itself", wrote one well-known brother.²² "The words of Jesus are only paraphrased" is another example from the same writer. "Luke, in his prologue, shows that God did not choose to give the history of Jesus' life as a revelation to the gospel writers", wrote another.²³ And again, from the same source: "Thus the frequent identity of wording in the first three gospels is proof of literary connection, and . . . most scholars of all denominations think that Mark came first, and was used by Matthew and Luke . . . Mark wrote first in colloquial Greek and Luke, a more fastidious stylist, corrected these colloquialisms". These quotations are merely typical, and show that theories of inspiration which are not consistent with our Statement of Faith have begun again to surface in our midst.

The antidote, however, is obvious; a closer adherence to (and a more frequent public expression of) the plenary inspiration of Scripture will keep us on a firm foundation. The lessons of the past are perfectly relevant for today. Our community needs only to recall the bitter experience of 1885 to realise how important it is to stand firm against any views which undermine the Word of God. The warning from our own experience is crystal clear: "What can be more presumptuous than to say an inspired writing is

20. The essence of many of these cases has been reproduced elsewhere in this issue of *The Testimony*.

21. A literature search on inspiration in the pages of *The Testimony* and *The Christadelphian* reveals that articles on the subject were far more frequent in the 1960s than in any other decade since 1880. This is reflected in the Bibliography.

22. Quoted in *The Testimony*, September 1965, p. 290.

23. *Endeavour*, No. 5 (Autumn 1962), p. 13.

not inspired, or that Divine inspiration does not involve infallibility? When Christ commissioned the seventy he said to them: '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). To despise these Spirit-endowed disciples is to despise Christ, and to despise Christ is to despise God. The same is true of the apostles. Hence we find Paul saying in connection with his declaration that 'God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness', 'He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man but God, Who

hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit' (1 Thess. 4:8). That which is affirmed of the apostles must also be true of the prophets, for all spake by the same authority. We are called to holiness by means of the Holy Spirit in them, and all that we think and do must be in harmony with our 'holy calling' (2 Tim. 1:9). To define any portion of the Spirit's teaching to be the writing of man, is the first step to despising it; it degrades to our own level that which is of God."²⁴

24. J.J. Andrew, *The Christadelphian*, February 1886, p. 79.

INSPIRATION AND REVELATION

EDWARD WHITTAKER

Revelation through inspiration

IN DESCRIBING the scope of God's revelation to man many modern higher-critical writers include the witness of the universe and the events of human history. Yet in the Word of God itself the Greek words *apocalupsis* ("revelation") and *apocalupto* ("to reveal") seem to be reserved by the Spirit to describe only the truths supernaturally given by God to man — the words are not even applied in Scripture to the evidence that "the visible things of God" in creation give to God's eternal power and Divinity.

To say that the events of history also "reveal" God's purposes, and that much of God's revelation of Himself to man has taken place as events of history, is to misconceive the difference between revelation proper and the outworking of that revelation in history. God "revealed" through Moses that He would redeem Israel from Egypt after the final plague. The fulfilment of that promise confirmed the truth of the revelation, but it was not in itself a revelation. Nor is this view falsified by the claim that God has chosen to reveal Himself "in the framework of history". The events of vital redemptive history would be meaningless without the enlightening interpretation of that history by the inspired revelation of God through the prophets

and, supremely, through His Son. It is important that we get our definitions right.

It is of course true that only a small proportion of God's revelation was originally given in writing. Revelation by dream, by angel, by audible voice, or by vision, required no prophet as intermediary. If, however, God called on the one who received the revelation to transmit it to others, whether orally or in writing, he was empowered to speak as a prophet of God with all the authority that accompanied the introductory "Thus saith the Lord". With the same compulsive power, prophets would give in public, or write for a public reading, or for posterity, "as the Spirit gave them utterance", revelations of which they may not have had prior knowledge, or even immediate understanding.

The ministry of the Christian prophets was on a much larger scale than has been generally supposed. Too often their work is thought to have been restricted to the writings that now form the New Testament canon. The ecclesias were being "built upon the foundations of the apostles and (Christian) prophets", and there is little doubt that the words spoken by those prophets in preaching and oral teaching formed the greater part of their inspired ministrations, especially since, in the earliest days, there were

as yet few, or none, of the writings extant which now form our New Testament (see Ephesians 2:20, 3:5, and context; also 2 Peter 3:2). Suffice it to say here that the doctrine of inspiration, and its relation to revelation in the early churches, is only part of the wider (and much misunderstood) subject of Spirit gifts in New Testament times. Because the gifts were withdrawn the subject is usually regarded as archaic and unnecessary for our 20th-century understanding of the Truth. But the fact is that we shall never have a sound and comprehensive grasp of the phenomenon of inspiration until we have understood the operation of the Spirit gifts. Many passages of the New Testament are misinterpreted because no thought is given to the meaning of those passages in the context of the circumstances and needs of the Spirit-guided first-century ecclesias to which the inspired revelations were first "given by inspiration of God".¹

Inspired revelation and compilation

It is true that all that has been revealed by inspiration of God has not become the inspired *written* Word of God. But the higher critic goes completely astray by saying that not all in the written Word was revealed. They point out that less than one third of the Old Testament has "Thus saith the Lord" prefixed to it (or some equivalent phrase), or is of such a character that a phrase of this kind would be appropriate. The historical portions, we are told, were not written by men who sat in a corner and suddenly had revealed to them the records that they wrote. We are asked to assume that, like historians generally, they drew on the testimony of eyewitnesses, if still alive, and compiled from records when no living memory existed any longer. And yet Scripture itself tells us that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4); so the selection of the historical facts in the books of, say, Kings and Chronicles was not made for the purpose of merely recording Jewish history. And what if one single fact that God required to be recorded "for our admonition" could not be derived from contemporary sources? How, then, could it be included? Must God's omnipotence wait on His servant's impotence and ignorance? The reply would be that God would give this item of information to the prophet by the same power of inspiration. But this is revelation, which the compilation theory was specially intended to render superfluous!

There is, of course, good evidence that the prophets of Israel and Judah contributed to the record of contemporary events in what are now the books of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles; but there is no valid proof or evidence that they did so from human sources or recollections. Isaiah chapters 36 to 39 are reproduced in 2 Kings. Are we then to accord total inspiration to 62 chapters of his book and only a "superintending" inspiration to the middle four chapters? Why is there such a determined effort to minimise the marvel of inspiration, and to "put asunder" the human and Divine elements that God has so wonderfully and inscrutably "joined together"?

But the matter must not be allowed to rest there. A prophet, whether he prophesied in the Christian era or earlier, did not *know* all the facts which he is supposed to have compiled—and certainly not in the sense which God knows them. All the historical facts narrated in Scripture have a spiritual content because they contain God's own interpretation and assessment of those events as they relate to His scheme of grace. "All Scripture is . . . profitable", and whilst "the carnal mind" sees only in the histories some stirring stories of national exploits or family feuds, "the spiritual mind" reads and "knows" the deeper messages of God's visible and providential ways, "because they are spiritually discerned". All this applies equally to the New Testament histories. Where, then, is there place for research in and compilation of historical facts by the prophets to work into a record of such a highly spiritual order?

The prologue to Luke's Gospel supposedly provides evidence for the compilation theory. But it is possible to see the prologue in a different light in its first-century setting. As already explained, the greater part of the work of the Christian prophets in the early church was oral. In the services, which were modelled on those of the synagogue, portions would be read from the Old Testament. But in the earliest days there would be no written Gospels. The prophets in the assembly would, therefore, "bring all things to (their) remembrance", whatsoever the Lord

1. See the long-running series of articles under the heading "Spirit in the New Testament", by E. Whittaker and R. Carr, which appeared in *The Testimony* from March 1973 to July 1975, especially "A survey of Spirit gifts" (July 1973), "The gift of tongues" (August 1973), "The Christian prophets" (September and October 1973), and "Withdrawal of the gifts" (December 1973).

had told his disciples (Jno. 14:26), in the form of short oracular messages, each authenticating an incident or discourse in the life of the Lord. These revelations would be memorised, following the Jewish synagogue practice, by learning them by rote.² Theophilus had been instructed in the gospel by this means (Lk. 1:4, RV margin: "which thou wast taught by word of mouth"). In his prologue Luke is explaining to Theophilus that whereas some early brethren, who had been eyewitnesses of the Lord's ministry, and were also ministers of the Word, had set about collecting these fragmentary inspired revelations together into a complete historical sequence, he had been enabled to write an entire Gospel as an orderly account ("in order"), and in correct sequence. Instead of assuming, therefore, that Luke's competence to write a life of Jesus rests on his having "gone over the whole course of these events in detail" (NEB), it is possible to see this as a reference to the manner in which Luke had already written the narrative, and the prologue becomes a kind of prefatory note written (as so many prefaces are, e.g. Rev. 1:1-3) after the Gospel itself had been finished. The true meaning of the Greek word *anōthen* (translated "from the beginning" in the AV of 1:2, but more accurately translated "from above" as in John 3:31 etc.) can then be given its full force as Luke's apostolic claim that his Gospel account had been given in its entirety "by inspiration of God".³

Compilation there certainly has been in some parts of the Word of God, but in no instance can it be proved that the inspired prophet-compiler used works other than what had originally been given by inspiration through earlier prophets.⁴

Inspired revelation and interpretation

The use of the Old Testament Scriptures by the Christian prophets provides indisputable evidence that the Spirit regarded them as verbally inspired. The Lord Jesus hinged his argument on the truth of a word ("I said, Ye are gods", John 10:34); similarly, Paul's argument ("He saith not . . . seeds, as of many", Galatians 3:16) rests for its force on the integrity of the grammatical form which, he claims, God used when He spoke to Abraham. Such examples could be extended at considerable length.

When God has made such an exact use of the text of the Old Testament in His message through the New Testament prophets, it is most unseemly to hold the view that we should read only "the general sense" into a passage of Scripture. Who speaks with greater authority,

the Christian prophets or our higher-critical contemporaries? Indeed, even the general sense of a passage cannot be reliably gathered unless the literal inspiration of it is accepted. A simple illustration of this point is to be found in Revelation 1:5, where the AV translation reads, "Unto him that . . . washed us from our sins", whereas the RV accepts a *one letter difference* in some Greek manuscripts and so translates it: "Unto him that . . . loosed us from our sins". The general sense in the two cases is quite different. That we have to depend on manuscript authority to decide which of the two versions translates correctly does not invalidate our argument in the slightest degree, because Scripture nowhere claims infallibility for itself beyond the original autographs.

Our interpretation of Scripture will thus be coloured by the view we hold as to the origin of the information it contains. The higher-critical approach is to see the Bible writers as being directly influenced by the culture of their age rather than by the Holy Spirit of God. An example of prime significance (because it is so often seized upon) is the law of the goring ox in Exodus 21:28. This law, it seems, occurs almost verbatim in a collection of laws from the Babylonian city of Eshunna, which allegedly antedate Moses by some 500 years. Coincidence is ruled out by the critics, and so it is argued that the Mosaic law cannot have come directly from God. From which it is evidently meant that Moses himself must have discovered this particular law in use in a nearby country and appropriated it for Israel. Was God then indebted to idolators for saving Him the trouble of thinking out and codifying such laws for His people? And did Stephen make a mistake when he claimed (Acts 7:53) by inspired revelation that Moses "received the law by the disposition of angels"?⁵ Students of the Word of God, however, instinctively look within the Word for

2. For evidence of this, and John Mark's part in it, see E. Whittaker, "The Preface of Luke's Gospel", *The Testimony*, May 1964, pp. 156-158.

3. On the proper contextual translation of *anōthen*, see R. Green, "Gifts 'from above'", *The Testimony*, June 1978, pp. 190, 191; also R. Carr, "Have you been born again?", *The Testimony*, April 1981, pp. 103-106.

4. Any list of cases of inspired compilation would include the examples alluded to in Numbers 21:14, Joshua 10:13, and 2 Samuel 1:18.

5. The higher spiritual level of all the Hebrew laws as compared with the Babylonian laws is ably demonstrated by D. Styles, "The origin of the Law of Moses", *The Testimony*, September 1965, pp. 329-332.

an explanation of the apparent difficulty. In fact, it appears, *many* of the laws given through Moses were antedated by *God Himself*, in some cases by 2,500 years. Our old friend J. J. Blunt (in his *Undesigned Coincidences*) provides "coincidental" evidence for the Mosaic law being anticipated in patriarchal times in such things as sanctuary, altar, sacrifices, tithes, priests and their dress, the sabbath and circumcision; to which might be added levirate marriage and, probably, cities of refuge. But the matter can be pressed still further. It can be said categorically that when Moses used the law of the goring ox, God was again duplicating one of His own earlier laws. After the Flood, God gave Noah a brief code of laws which included one governing the sanctity of human life: "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; *at the hand of every beast will I require it*, and at the hand of man" (Gen. 9:5). The beast and the man who owned it were to be put to death, which is exactly what the Babylonian law of later times required. Who then did the copying?

It is wise to accord the Almighty priority of invention of all good things. "Thy Word is very pure: therefore Thy servant loveth it" (Ps. 119:140).

The character of inspiration

There is no denying the difficulty of understanding how the eternal God could convey absolute truth to creatures of time through the spoken or written word. It is, however, no solution to separate revelation from inspiration as those with higher-critical views often do. *Revelation*, we are told, is the absolute truth of the mind of God; *inspiration* is allegedly the mind of man in a state of faltering, groping development through the centuries towards greater light and knowledge, towards the "fulness of Christ". With this view the supposed "immorality" of the Old Testament (and much else in it that seems to grovel far below the standard of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount) can be "accommodated". The men of those days were inspired in the sense that God was guiding them towards His fulness in the "glory that excelleth". Meanwhile, the moral lapses in the Old Testament can be rationally explained and indulgently tolerated without offence to the Christian conscience.

Consideration may now be given to the steps in the argument by which the higher critic reaches this surprising conclusion. God had to reveal His laws and His purpose progressively so that at no stage were they beyond the capacity of

man to receive and understand. In all ages, God's revelation has been bounded by the mental and linguistic capacity of His servants. On this account the Edenic prophecy could not reveal the promise of redemption in terms beyond those of the immediate family relationship of the husband, wife, and their "seed". When the race reached the tribal stage in patriarchal times, the message of the promises could be expanded to suit, and so on, as the channel of revelation itself developed. Yet there is no evidence brought forward to suggest that the earliest revelation was not *true* when compared with the latest simply because it was given in the language of the childhood of mankind. All parts of God's revelation—and here no distinction *can* be allowed between it and inspiration—in whatever terms it may have been couched (in thoughts simple or profound) are equally "the Word of the living God", and must be equally true if His character is not to be impugned.

The law of God through Moses said, "Thou shalt do no murder"; but Jesus said that the man who hated his brother had murdered him by intent. Now in no way was the earlier commandment falsified, or made less true by the later one; but there was an advance in the standard of holiness advocated by Christ towards which God was guiding His people through the simpler laws. The Sermon on the Mount was a "fulfilling", or a "filling up", of the law with the fulness of its meaning and demands.

But then the critic tries to argue that his concept of inspiration resulted in a widening spiritual perspective in the people of God down the ages. But where is the evidence that the people of Jerusalem in the time of Christ were spiritually any better in life and character than, say, those of Isaiah's day, or than the children of Israel in bondage in Egypt? Clearly, the facts of history do not fit the theory. Some of the most advanced of God's people lived in earliest times. Far from being spiritually retarded, Abraham had the perception to see Christ's day, and to develop such an astounding faith in God that righteousness (or forgiveness of sins) was imputed to him—in *pre-Mosaic* times! The view that the teaching of Jesus was on a higher level than that of Moses needs a fair degree of qualification. Much of the spirit of Christ is discoverable in the Law of Moses, and it would be more accurate to say that Jesus was opening up the inner essence of the law that was already implicit in it for the perceptive man of faith in

Israel to believe and to practise. The Law and the Prophets are full of the spirit and teaching of Christ. In fact, as we know, he endorsed his teaching frequently by reference to them. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice" may be regarded as the keynote of the message of the Old Covenant, and had the Israelite loved his God with all his powers, and his neighbour as himself, he would not (on the authority of Christ) have been far from the Kingdom of God.

To justify his view that the inspirational character of the Old Testament is somehow inferior to that of the New, the critic will often cite the stock examples of supposed immorality: Jephthah's rash vow, the imprecatory psalms, Elisha's cursing of the children of Bethel, and the place of Rahab the harlot in the ancestry of Jesus. These examples are supposed to illustrate the opinion that the spirit of Christ does not pervade the Old Testament as it does the New. But does it even pervade the New? Immorality was almost certainly much more prevalent in the early Christian church than is generally supposed. The apostles were no scaremongers when they made frequent and anxious references to fornication, adultery, incest, lasciviousness, and other gross vices.⁶ In view of this disgusting array, to pick out the lapses of a few Old Testament worthies for uncharitable special mention is hardly fair. The imprecatory psalms which pray, for example, for vengeance on the wives and children of the psalmist's enemies do sound on superficial reading far removed from the Christian standard of ethics. But there is reason for much more careful thinking when it is realised that so many of these psalms are shown to be Messianic by the inspiration of *New Testament* writers. Psalm 69, for example, which is imprecatory enough at verses 22-28, is applied five times in the New Testament to the Lord Jesus and those associated with him, and in one case by himself to himself (Jno. 15:25). No one would charge our Lord, who taught us to pray for our enemies, with a desire for personal revenge. Nevertheless, as verse 9 says, zeal for his Father's house consumed him with anger — but it was anger in the spirit of Psalm 139:21: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate Thee?". Certainly, it is only because the man of God is jealous for the Lord of hosts that he seeks his desire on God's enemies (Ps. 54:7; 59:10).

Jephthah's rash vow is an inspired record of a very human incident; but even if—as the present

writer refuses to believe—he could be charged with cruelly sacrificing his daughter, the *Divine standard* of morality in the Old Testament is in no way affected. The place of the harlot in the ancestry of Jesus reflects no discredit on either Rahab or the Lord, and it is a strange perversion of the canons of Christian morality that could imply otherwise. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators . . . nor adulterers . . . shall inherit the kingdom of God. And *such were some of you . . . but ye are sanctified*" (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Let us be humbly grateful that (probably) all four women who figure in the Lord's genealogy in Matthew 1 were Gentiles, and three of them harlots, to show that "he was numbered with the transgressors". And finally, they were young men, not children, that Elisha cursed, and evidently "spivs" from Beth-el, the nearby centre of idol-worship. And if, as the record says, Elisha "cursed them in the name of the Lord", that is, by the Spirit's direction, who are we to question the morality of it (especially when we do not know the full facts of the case)?

The distinction that the critic would maintain between revelation and inspiration is artificial, at least at the level of the revelation inspired by God. There is no sound evidence for it in Scripture. And if the premise is without warrant, what credence can be put on the ideas developed from it? There is no better course of treatment where doubts about the Word of God exist than to apply oneself to a detailed study of it. A detached student may fear that disharmony might result that could destroy what little faith he had. On the contrary, Truth has nothing to fear. "Thy Word is Truth". Because the Word is inspired by God it will stand microscopic examination, providing it is not approached in a sceptical spirit. The sceptic may soon find that the door of the Word is closed in his face. But God never yet turned away any servant of the Word who came to it with reverence and godly fear.*

6. See 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:9, 13, 18; 7:2; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 13:4; James 4:4; 1 Peter 4:3; 2 Peter 2:14; Jude v.4.

*This article is an edited and rewritten version of a series of articles which first appeared in *The Testimony* in 1966. Its arguments are clearly still valid in the 1980s.

INSPIRATION AND QUOTATION: THE CASE OF AMOS 5 AND ACTS 7

ARTHUR GIBSON

Introduction

IT IS COMMON for some readers of the Bible to claim that what God said to Biblical writers is not what the Biblical writers wrote. A reason sometimes given for this opinion is that the New Testament fails to reproduce the meaning of Old Testament passages which it purports to quote. Would God misquote Himself when citing His own previous revelation?

The present study addresses itself to what is generally regarded as one of the strongest cases of self-evident misquotation in the Bible. If this example could be proved to be an exact quotation, then weaker cases of alleged misquotation would have no chance of disproving Biblical inspiration.¹

This topic of inspiration and quotation is not solely a linguistic subject. The admission that there is misquotation in the Bible has provoked many people to discard God as the Author of the Bible and insert conflicting notions of disagreeing authors in His place. A consequence of this position is to accept mythology as a Christian way of looking at the Bible and its history.² You will come to see why this happens by reading on.

Amos 5:25-27 and Acts 7:42, 43

Acts 7:42, 43 quotes Amos 5:25-27. The quotation is often cited as a case of misquotation, and of usage of the Greek Old Testament as against the Hebrew, in which a doctrine of verbal inspiration cannot be sustained. The following reproduction of the two passages

records Amos in ordinary type while Acts is in italic:

Have ye offered unto Me sacrifices and offerings
O ye house of Israel, have ye offered to Me slain

*in the wilderness forty years, O house of Israel?
beasts and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness?*

But ye have borne the tabernacle of your Moloch
Yea, ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch,

*and Chiun your images, the star of your god,
and the star of your god Remphan, figures*

*which ye made to yourselves. Therefore will I
which ye made to worship them: and I will*

*cause you to go into captivity beyond . . .
carry you away beyond . . .*

When discussing the relations between Amos and Acts, the expressions being studied will be placed as section headings in what follows.

Prior to this, though, one widespread misunderstanding needs to be corrected. The Greek quotation in Acts is *not* identical to the Greek Septuagint of Amos. There are seven differences of word order where the Septuagint (LXX) disagrees with the Greek of Acts in this quotation. One word (*heautois*) is in the LXX, but not in Acts; and there is a word in the quotation in Acts (*proskusein*), if we accept it as part of the quotation,³ which is not in the LXX. In addition to the differences of syntax between the Greek of Amos and Acts in this quotation owing to conflicts of word order, there is another conflict of syntax when two words are written differently (*auton/autois*). The above listing of the quotation in Amos and Acts does not include

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1. "Biblical inspiration" is employed to indicate those means which the Bible represents as God's modes of communicating revelation.
 2. For example, G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Duckworth, London, 1980), pp. 219-71.
 3. See the section, **Worship them**, about this issue.

“Damascus” in Amos nor “Babylon” in Acts. Each of these terms respectively ends the sentences in Amos and Acts. They are not part of the quotation. But some writers have confusedly thought that the change from “Damascus” in Amos to “Babylon” in Acts is because Acts is quoting the Greek text of Amos. This is wrong. The Septuagint Greek of Amos has the same “Damascus” as has the Hebrew Old Testament text of Amos. So the “Babylon” in Acts is no support for an appeal to the Greek Old Testament. (“Damascus” occurs in Amos because Damascus was the means by which and route through which northern Israel was taken into captivity—“beyond Damascus”. Acts adds “Babylon” to update and typify the captivity to cover Judah’s parallel fate *and* its significance for the Jews to whom Stephen was speaking in Acts 7, since they too were soon to be sent beyond Babylon, that is, Rome.) This absence of Amos’s “Damascus” from Acts serves to inform us of an obvious yet important principle which is sometimes not recognised explicitly: inspiration quotes sentences with bits left out. The reason for this, judging by the use of the principle in Scripture, is to produce a transformation of the sentence’s value or reference, while yet preserving its original function.⁴ This, effectively, produces two levels of sense to enrich and deepen description of a subject: the Old Testament reference casts a typical shadow over the New Testament usage. If we add to this the foregoing catalogue of differences between the Greek of Amos and Acts, we ought to begin to appreciate that quotation under inspiration is not the superficial proof text represented by theologians, but a deep intricate unexpected articulation of sense which reveals its own Divine rules as revelation occurs.

Sacrifices: slain beasts

The Hebrew for “sacrifices” (*hzzbhym*) is a main term for “slain (ones)”, and is used of sacrifices to stress this feature. (The AV of Amos has translated it “sacrifices” to mark what the term refers to functionally.) The Greek for “slain beasts” in Acts (*sphagion*) is one word, also with the sense of “slain (ones)”. There is there no separate term for “beasts”; the AV has supplied this because the single term “slain” takes on board a reference to its subject (“beasts”) when in noun form—as it is in Acts. As mentioned above, this same principle holds for the Hebrew of Amos. The Hebrew of Amos and the Greek of Acts are thus equivalent. (Notice that the term “sacrifices” in Acts, to be

considered in the next section, translates a different word’s meaning from the expression in the Hebrew of Amos which is translated “sacrifices”.)

Offerings: sacrifices

“Offerings” in Amos renders a word (*mnhh*) which is sometimes translated “sacrifices”—for example 1 Kings 18:36. The LXX frequently employs the Greek *thusias*, which is also rendered “sacrifices” in Acts, to represent the Hebrew *mnhh* in Amos and other places. Therefore Acts properly characterises the Hebrew.

One word can have many levels of overtone in one context. The AV’s varying translations of the above two words is probably a case of attempting to push some of these levels into English. “Offerings” confers attention on the role of the sacrifice’s function, while “sacrifices” depicts more directly the thing offered and its propitiatory import. When the Hebrew *mnhh* is aligned with the Greek *thusias*, *mnhh* is operating as a symbol for the thing offered (a form of metonymy as a *live* metaphor). It is this change from the solely ‘meal offering’ use which is the primary sense of *mnhh* to a richer symbolic complex of senses which creates the exact parallel with the term in Acts. Acts is pulling out and emphasising this aspect.

O (ye) house of Israel

The above translation is the same for Amos and Acts, except for “ye” in the latter; but there is no term corresponding to “ye” in the Greek, although the grammar for the word rendered “house” complies with the “ye” form. There is no expression for “ye” in the Hebrew of Amos.

The position of “O house of Israel” is different in Amos and Acts, in the English; but the Greek of Acts places the expression at the same point as the Hebrew of Amos, which is after “forty years in the wilderness”. In the Greek Old Testament the phrase “O house of Israel” is inserted before “forty years in the wilderness”. This conflicts both with the Hebrew of Amos and the Greek of Acts.

In the wilderness forty years

This heading quotes Amos 5:25’s word order in English. In Acts the Greek and English word order is “forty years in the wilderness”. The Hebrew in Amos is susceptible of the same translation as Acts, as can be seen from the *New*

International Version, which gives the same word order for Acts and Amos. Also the Hebrew behind this expression occurs not only in Amos 5:25, but in 2:10 as well; and the AV here confers the same word order on 2:10 as it does for Acts. This supports the conclusion that the Hebrew and Greek for this expression are parallel in sense and order.⁵ Conversely, the LXX word order conflicts with Acts (the word for “years” (*etē*) occurs after the term for “forty” in LXX, but before “forty” in Acts).

But: yea

In Amos, “but” translates a Hebrew word represented by one letter—*w* (vocalised *ḡ*). Very often this term is rendered by “and”. For example, in the expression considered above, “sacrifices and offerings” in the Hebrew has *w* behind its use of “and” (other examples from Amos 5 appear in vv. 11, 17, 19).

The AV “yea” in Acts 7:43 is a most unusual translation for that version. In the Greek text the word is *kai*, the common term for “and” in Greek; later in the same verse it is so translated by the AV: “and the star”, “and I will”. Therefore the Hebrew of Amos for “but” and the Greek of Acts behind “yea” are synonymous.

Perhaps the AV introduced “but” and “yea” for poetic force and stress. Particularly could this be a valid variation, even given that the Hebrew and Greek terms are synonymous, because the load of sense which such conjunctions carry in the Bible is far heavier and more varied than in modern English. And both “but” and “yea” undertones seem to exist in the Hebrew and Greek words, in addition to the primary “and” meaning. To convey this idea it is helpful to imagine “and” being the foundation of this building of meaning, with “but” plus “yea” coexisting as first and second floors of the building. The AV has picked out distinct levels of sense in different contexts. As long as one remembers that this procedure concurs with the original multidimensional meaning of the original expression, it only serves to highlight the depth of God’s use of language.

Have borne: took up

The Hebrew stem which is translated “have borne” (*nś*) is also rendered “took up” in passages such as 2 Kings 4:37, which is precisely the expression employed in Acts. This is typical of its usage, and supports the conclusion that the Hebrew of Amos and Greek of Acts are parallel

in sense.

But this is not the whole explanation for the variation in translation. The choice of this Hebrew word creates a tension in Amos because of its earlier associations. First, *nś* occurs in Amos 5:1, and with the AV translation used in the Acts rendering: “Hear ye this word which I take up against you, even a lamentation, O house of Israel”. Clearly, “O house of Israel” here initiates the critique finalised in 5:25-27 where it is repeated, as is *nś*. Secondly, this relation produces the tension in the indictment: inspiration *takes up* the word of Yahweh against the house of Israel, whilst the house of Israel *takes up* a pagan tabernacle. Thirdly, the introduction of *nś* in 5:1 and 26 utilises a symbolic complex of nuances forced into *nś* in previous Old Testament usage. The above translations of *nś* are figurative (although they describe actual actions); but the main earlier sense, which some people crudely term “literal sense”, is “lift up”. These uses are very often connected with either the lifting up of the eyes to see something Divine (Josh. 5:13), or the lifting up of the ark of the covenant (Josh. 3:6). These two elements of contextual association invade later use of *nś* to force into it a symbolic nest of allusive sense. And it is probable that Joshua’s twofold employment of *nś* (Israel’s having *borne* the ark, and Joshua’s *lifting up* his eyes) are sources for the inspired allusion in Amos 5. The “lifting up” of eyes is an undertone amounting to grim pun on Israel’s heretical myopia. Amos’s usage also adds a twist to the reference to Israel’s wilderness journey: as the ark was borne, so was Moloch’s tabernacle. “Have borne” is a translation which with deep sensitivity exposes the symbolic set of allusions deep in the levels of inspired language in Amos 5. This set generates parabolic types and is effectively a tabernacle of meaning to despatch Moloch.

4. In this use of “function” the theory is adopted which is presented in A. Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1981), chapters 2-4; this book will be referred to by the abbreviation *BSL* in subsequent notes.

5. A reason for the AV’s varying word order is because the Hebrew has a dual force for “wilderness” and “forty years”. Depending on which aspect of the general theme one is isolating for attention (the place, or the duration), that aspect can be put first, whereas in Hebrew a stylistic device is employed rather than a position of order to strike an emphasis on “the wilderness”. Notice that in Amos 2:10’s “forty years through the wilderness” the Hebrew for “through” is identical to Amos 5:25’s “in” (*ba*).

Chiun: Remphan

These are proper names. The Greek for "Remphan" is *Raiphan* which spelling will be used here.⁶ What is the meaning of a proper name? We need to sort out this question so that we can have a correct conception of what it is to be the two above names which we are attempting to match. The answer to the question is: the meaning of a proper name is what it refers to. But this reference presupposes a criterion we use to identify what the name refers to. Consider some examples from ordinary usage: Amos 5:7 uses "wormwood" in the AV, "hemlock" in some other versions. "Wormwood" and "hemlock" are proper names which refer to a poisonous plant. They do not describe it. There is no worm, wood, hem or lock which is the characteristic of the plant. Wormwood and hemlock thus only refer to the plant they name. In doing so they satisfy a criterion of what the plant's identity is. This criterion would be, roughly, a poisonous plant with small white flowers yielding a drug with such and such a specification. We do not have to be able to define this criterion to be able to use it. It is only required that we are able to recognise that a given thing is picked out by the appropriate proper name when a true criterion is assumed by the name. This complies with daily usage as well as Scriptural employment of names.

Normally, a proper name is transliterated, not translated, from one language to another. A typical example of this transliteration is where the English "Amos" is from the Hebrew *ʾāmoš*. But sometimes the language into which one is translating a quotation already has its own proper name for a thing. In this case it is normal to use that name instead of transliterating the name in the language which is being translated. For example, "hemlock" is the English proper name for a poisonous plant. The AV of Amos has this name "hemlock" for the Hebrew name *la'anah*. An English user recognises the plant by the name "hemlock": he knows the criterion it employs.⁷ Conversely, a transliterated Hebrew "Laanah" would puzzle him; he would not know what criterion to adopt to identify the plant.

Sometimes, though, two or more proper names can coexist within *one* language, yet all stand for one object. The choice of which name to use is often dictated by circumstance or context. These proper names refer identically, but the way they are written is different: their mode of presenting the thing named is different. There is a standard astronomical case

illustrating this: "Venus", "The Evening Star" and "The Morning Star".⁸ These are all proper names of one object: a planet. The foregoing presents the principles surrounding proper names in ordinary usage. This is to establish, outside a context vexed by theological dispute, what the grounds are for explaining why "Raiphan" is substituted for "Chiun" in Acts. So the present solution is based on ordinary language usage, and is not special pleading.

"Chiun" and "Raiphan" are rarely used not only in the Bible; they hardly ever appear in Near-Eastern literature. This makes it easy for these proper names to become puzzles which readers often do not resolve. "Chiun" (*kiyyūn*) is a Canaanite form of an Assyrian word which is used of Saturn—*kayamānu*. The Assyrian term has various forms⁹ derived from a stem which has the sense of "regular" or "normal". This term is employed in astrological contexts, partly to indicate the motion of the planet in relation to the gods' seeming control of life. It is also employed in related uses to do with omens and sacrifices. "Chiun" appears to have been the proper name for a Canaanite god's adoption and adaptation of this complex of astral mythology. "Chiun" marks a specious god-manifestation in Israelitish absorption of this mythology.¹⁰

Before turning attention to "Raiphan" it is important to notice that by the first century B.C. "Chiun" had ceased to be understood by extant expositors of that period. Proper names never

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6. In some manuscripts "Raiphan" is spelled "Rompha" (Vaticanus), or "Romphan" (Sinaiticus), or "Rempham" (Bezae), etc. These variations are not corruptions; they are effectively preserving the meaning when, owing to a dialect change, the earlier spelling is not understood by readers, and the newer spelling reflects contemporary usage. For example, Origen, quoting Acts 7:43 in *Contra Celsum* V.8, employs the form "Rompha", writing perhaps on the eve of the Decian persecution in 248 B.C. The Vaticanus "Rompha" followed soon after.
 7. This study does not deal with the occasions on which "hemlock" is an homonym. For an explanation of "criterion" see *BSL* 3.1, 1-2.
 8. Cf *BSL* pp. 42-4 on this distinction, where Caird (see 2 above) is also criticised for muddling the distinction.
 9. The "m" in the Assyrian changes to that from the Hebrew *u*, in the term *kayamānu*—this is a regular feature of change between the two languages. Likewise, the *-u* at the end of the Assyrian word is usually deleted when it comes into Hebrew.
 10. Other East-Mesopotamian words for Saturn occur in Palestinian cult sites as early as the Exodus. For example, the El-Amarna tablets refer to Nin-ib in the place name Beth-Ninib; this term designates Saturn as a war god.

lose their meaning, but readers can fail to grasp the criterion by which one can identify that to which they refer. For example, in the Damascus Document, which stems from that era (in the form found in the Cairo Genizah, and which has parallels with elements in the Dead Sea Scrolls), the author quotes Amos 5:26 and almost totally misunderstands it, as Fitzmyer has shown.¹¹ This Damascus writer asserts that the pagan astral deities criticised in Amos are proper symbols with which to personify the Mosaic Law. Such was the literary background of the Sanhedrin. So it is not surprising that the Holy Spirit caused Stephen to quote the very words from Amos which characterise the revival of astrology in Amos's time which was also current amongst the Jewish hierarchy.

But the confused obscurity of the identity of Chiun was a constant threat to continued use of the name "Chiun". The ambiguity surrounding this name was at first a mystical novelty, yet eventually it was replaced by the equivalent "Raiphan". Chiun was an Assyrian-Canaanite mongrel whereas Raiphan was an Egyptian-Canaanite hybrid. On the New-Kingdom Egyptian inscriptions at Buhen there appears the usage of a word meaning "hereditary" and "constant".¹² This was promoted to become the rare "Repā", a proper name of Seb — god of Saturn and hereditary chief of gods, head of the ten great gods of Memphis, head of the ten great gods at An, as his publicity agent used to say. Since we find the Hebrew for "giant", *rāphā*, in some 18th century B.C. execration texts when the Israelites are in Egypt, it may be that there is some interrelation between "Repā" and *rāphā* in Egypt and probably in Canaan. The -an ending of "Raiphan" agrees with the Canaanite manner of indicating that a word is a proper name of a god.¹³ This also obliquely stresses the Canaanite context of "Raiphan".

There are a number of other common features which Chiun and Raiphan share, in addition to their being gods which are subsidiary manifestations of a main Saturn deity reflected in curse and omen rituals with attendant mythology. Is it an "undesigned coincidence" that the deity Raiphan emerges in Egypt when the Israelites were there, and then it has a resurgence of use when the Jews absorb its astrology in the period of Acts, with Acts drawing the parallel between the two periods?

The status of proper names of false gods is peculiar. The deities do not exist, but people intend to refer to them. Referring to a god by a proper name such as Raiphan succeeds only in

referring to or representing the doctrines and cultic features of the deity. So where there are identical, parallel doctrines between two criteria of identity for "two" gods, then this situation forces the judgement that they are one false god. This is like saying that The Evening Star is Venus: two names for one thing.¹⁴ So it is with Chiun and Raiphan. Scripture is precise in identifying these as the same deity.

Images: figures

In Hebrew "images" (stem: *šelem*) is the same term used in Genesis 1:26: "Let us make man in our image". This develops into a sense where it is employed of Nebuchadnezzar's image (Dan. 3). And there is an unusual shift of sense in the term which is punned upon when "image" is applied to a person's state of mind: "Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form (i.e. image) of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego" (Dan. 3:19). This is the same term which is used in Amos; Amos allusively deploys the term "images" to cover the imprint or influence of the image on the personality of the worshipper. The worshipper's mind, in the relevant sense, is or becomes the imprint of the image which he worships.¹⁵ In Greek this is expressed by the word translated "figures" (*tupous*) in Acts 7:43. English gets its word "type" from this Greek, and the root sense is that of an imprint which embodies a type. Once in the AV, in Romans 6:17 with its "form of doctrine", this Greek word in the singular, *tupos*, shares the same translation as the Hebrew *šelem* in Daniel 3's "form of his visage". Here the type is true of different things, but at least it shows that a single English translation can render the Hebrew *šelem* and the Greek *tupos*. This indicates that there is an equivalence of meaning between the two words. The unusual use of the Hebrew *šelem* in Amos, where its sense is shifted, has often been

11. J. A. Fitzmyer, *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (Chapman, London, 1971), p. 40.

12. Cf. R. A. Caminos, *The New-Kingdom Temples of Buhen*, I (London, 1974), plate 21, B.

13. As with the similar ending in "leviathan" (Ps. 74:14).

14. "Name" in this study is always used with the meaning of a proper name. See BSL pp. 171-3 and chapter 3 for definition.

15. Clearly this applies to Nebuchadnezzar: he receives a vision (Dan. 2), egocentrically construes all of it as himself, demands worship of it (for it is he), and his resulting visage has an "image" which mimics the idol-image.

missed by commentators, and they have subsequently wrongly alleged that the Greek is not a correct reproduction of the Hebrew sense. But the above sketch shows that the Greek accurately measures the rich Hebrew nuance.

The star of your god

In the English of Amos the above expression occurs *after* "Chiun", whilst in Acts it appears *before* "Raiphán". This is also true of the original texts; and the Greek Old Testament puts the phrase in at the same position as Acts. To have different positions for the phrase "the star of your god" in two languages is not necessarily a change of meaning. Phrase order is a deep topic, and any two different languages do not share the same standard word and phrase order for sentences. So a difference of order is not certainly a case of misquotation. Further, phrases, even within one language, may be placed in a non-standard position in a sentence for the sake of emphasis or force. The claim of the present section is that, even though the above phrase is in a different position in Amos and in Acts, the meaning is equivalent in both books. In fact, this claim rests on a stronger premise: the phrase order in Amos differs from Acts *because* Acts is producing in Greek what the meaning is in Amos's positioning of "the star of your god". Accordingly, the assumption someone might make—that it is self-evident from the different phrase order that there is a conflict of meaning—has a naively misleading view of meaning.

In Amos 5:26 we have the expression, "and Chiun". But the Hebrew has one extra word (*’eth*) between "and" and "Chiun". This marks the object of the verb, "have borne"; the object is "Chiun". Hence the Hebrew for "and Chiun" is *we’eth kiyyūn*, with *we* being the word for "and". It is not proper in this Amos context to split up *we’eth kiyyūn* without destroying the structural and thematic sense of the verse in Hebrew. This would be contradicted if "the star of your god" were inserted between "and" and "Chiun". It would also produce severe distortion and problems for *’eth* because of its role, as well as owing to its linking "and" and "Chiun" together in relation to the verb "have borne".

However, in Greek there is no such problem. There is no word with which to mark "Raiphán" as the object of the verb in the Greek of Acts, and no constraint on "and" and "Raiphán" to be next to each other. It is normal Greek to insert the phrase "the star of your god"

where it appears, if an emphasis is intended, just as it is correct Hebrew to position the phrase where Amos has it if one wants to achieve the same emphasis as in Acts. Therefore if the proper conceptions of phrase order are employed for Greek and Hebrew, the difference of position in the phrase is a case of Acts preserving the emphasis and sense of Amos's usage. There is a transposition of "star of your god" between Amos and Acts because the two languages in which they are written have different phrase order rules for realising the same effect. This effect is that "star of your god" is a sort of condemnatory punch line whose position gives it intense stress and emphasis. The star is an emblem of the god Chiun/Raiphán, which makes the astrological orbit of the god explicit in the indictment (the Greek for "star" is *astron*, from which "astrology" comes).

Worship them

The Greek for this expression as it appears in Acts 7:43 is *proskunein autois*; the Greek Old Testament does not use the expression in the corresponding passage in Amos 5:26. So the difference between Acts and Amos is not a matter of the former following the Septuagint. An eminent textual scholar such as Aland, in the text of the New Testament produced for translating the New English Bible, does not regard "worship them" as part of the quotation from Amos.¹⁶ If this is the case, then there is no problem. This solution would leave "yourselves" not as a conflicting term placed in parallel with "worship them", but as a term which is not quoted at all; and thus "worship them" would be a Divine commentary newly added in the revelation through Stephen.

Now although another possibility will be proposed below respecting "worship them", a fictional difficulty with the above suggestion ought here to be addressed and dissolved. People often feel intuitive difficulty with accepting that a quotation can break off in the middle and have bits inserted which are not part of the quotation at all. But intuition is no guide since it merely mirrors what one naturally expects. There are good Biblical grounds for accepting the occurrence of quotations which break off and have non-quotation items inserted; these will be termed *expansions* in what follows. The topic of

16. K. Aland, M. Black, B. M. Metzger, A. Wikgren (eds.), *The Greek New Testament* (United Bible Societies, London, 1966), p. 443.

expansions is too extensive to develop here; but one brief clear example of it will suffice for the present purpose. In Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11,17,21, the phrase “after the *order* of Melchisedec” is quoted from Psalm 110:4. But in Hebrews 7:15, midway within the sequence of these quotations, this quotation is broken by the omission of “order”, with “after the *similitude* of Melchisedec”. Here “similitude” is inserted to expand on the consequence of the order in relation to the manifestation of God in Christ. Hence a knowledge of the term excluded (“order”) together with a perception of the word inserted (“similitude”) not only yields an understanding of each of these two expressions; it also provokes a further piece of insight: the significance of the relation between what was omitted and what was inserted. So the use of expansion is a teaching device which provides new knowledge of the implications of the quotation.¹⁷

The foregoing contrasts with an alternative way of explaining the relation between the Amos “to yourselves” and the Acts “to worship them”. This alternative results from recognising that the meaning of a phrase is not an isolated label when used in a sentence—its sense is built up in various ways, such as cross-references to earlier parts of the sentence, and by being influenced by the associations of these parts.¹⁸ Notice that “them” in “to worship them” does not refer directly to the gods; it refers back to the “figures” which embody these gods. This slight, albeit significant, shift of attention highlights the typical aspect of the gods. You will recall that in a previous section (**Images: figures**) it was shown that the term “figures”/“images” picks out the way in which a false god personifies its worshipper, in certain respects. Since “to worship *them*” refers back to this prior use of “figures”, it follows that “to worship *them*” is lifting this personificatory sense into the meaning of “to worship *them*”.¹⁹ This exposes the allusion built into “images” where the created likeness of God distorted by idolatry serves to link “to worship them” in Acts with “to *yourselves*” in Amos. Crudely put, the figures of Moloch and Chiun just *are* the selves of the worshippers. Wherever such an equation is struck in Scripture, there are strong linguistic grounds for it. Frequently an explicit rule or theorem will occur in some related passage with which to depict the principle used in such a context. For example: “They that make them are like unto them” (Ps. 135:18). The theme of the psalm is apposite to the point of analysis here:

Yahweh’s deliverance of Israel from Egypt is contrasted with the idols of the nations. The employment of “like” is the pivot on which worshipper and idol are identified in the psalm. Effectively, this use of “like” presents the equation deployed in Acts’ alignment of

“*which ye made to worship them*”
with

“*which ye made to yourselves*” in Amos. The psalm’s use of “make” and “them” is parallel with terms in the Amos/Acts quotation, which gives the application of the psalm-statement to the quotation a further contextually apt basis. It is important, as well, to appreciate the unusual stylistic detail in Acts’ “*which ye made to worship them*”: “them” could have been omitted, if a general point was being made. “Them” is added as a dangling pronoun so as to highlight and stress its identification with “yourselves” and the “figures” of the gods which are like the worshippers.

The principle in the foregoing paragraph is not generally recognised by theologians. It is that the Bible’s own exposition and thus its use of language should be used to construct what the Bible’s meaning is. For example, the concept of being a synonym which the Bible employs is discovered by how the Bible interrelates terms—not by consulting a commentary or dictionary. (Of course a quotation is a case of synonymy: the fact that it is a quotation is precisely because it is a synonym of its quoted source.)²⁰

17. Technically, this is use of tautology and variable, with multiple values being substituted (cf. *BSL*, pp. 160, 165-7). This is where a proposition is re-expressed in a different way so as to preserve the same truth, but whose reformulation contributes new information.

18. It should be noticed that all these interrelations of a word with its context just are the meaning which is being quoted: quotation is not merely reproducing something like a jigsaw piece; it is more akin to recreating a room’s contents in a different location. The wrong model of meaning induces scholars naively to restrict the fulness of connections in contexts.

19. It is helpful to think of the relation between a name and a pronoun to illustrate how this “lifting . . . personificatory sense into the meaning” is achieved. If we say “he” in a sentence with a proper name as its subject, then the “he” just *is* the meaning of the proper name because “he” refers back to the proper name. So it is with levels of sense in “them” and “yourselves”. They are gathered into one group because they refer back to the manifestation of the worshippers in their types of the gods.

20. Cf. *BSL*, pp. 50-3.

It may be felt, at one level rightly, that so far the discussion in this section has all too conveniently ignored the fact that “worship” occurs in the Acts quotation, but it is not in Amos. Well, there is some more evidence to present on that account. But prior to mentioning this, the relevance of the above discussion to the issue should be realised. The orbit of associations created by the juxtaposition of “images” and “which ye made to yourselves” in Amos obtrudes onto the sense of “worship”. This orbit arises not only because the theme is about worship, but also owing to the puns on the nature of the worshipper’s relation to the thing worshipped. The following information closely matches this state of affairs.

Amos has “to yourselves”, and Acts employs “to worship them”. But there is no word for “to” in the Greek of Acts. So actually the original expressions behind these English terms are rather like matching “to yourselves” and “worship them”. In other words, “worship” in Acts is substituted for “to” in Amos. The word “to” in English is supplied merely to complete the English style of phrasing in Acts. However, the Hebrew of Amos has a term identical to “to” which the Amos AV properly translates as such. At this stage there is a twist to the tale. The Greek word rendered “worship” (*proskunein*) itself has the preposition for “to” in it as part of its meaning. Notice, this is not a word which in the Greek corresponds to the “to” which appears in the English translation. The Greek item is *pros*; and it is part of *proskunein* which is the Greek word used in Acts. The second half of the term, from *-kuneō*, has the literal sense of “to kiss (the hand)”. But here *pros* and *kuneō* are employed to provide the sense “worship”, which perhaps originates with the literal kissing of the hand ritual. The two elements are metaphoric in Acts since they bear the meaning “worship”. Nevertheless, in a certain sense, half of the Greek word for “worship” has a figurative use of “to” (*pros*) in it. So at this level of sense, the Hebrew for “to” in Amos matches the Greek of *pros* in Acts. Since the Greek use of *pros* is figurative, it is at this level at which it is correct to seek a parallel with the Hebrew. Reverting to the conclusions culled from the foregoing discussion, the force of “to” in Amos’s “to yourselves”, roughly stated, is “to worship yourselves”. Namely, the Israelites were worshipping figures of themselves. To catch the nuances both of making the thing worshipped and being the worshipper who is worshipping himself, typically speaking, the Hebrew of Amos

loads “to” with the two functions: making images, and worshipping them. Clearly “which ye made to yourselves” is not solely asserting that the Israelites made themselves images—otherwise it would have said that. The “to” contributes an additional feature of self-devotion: “to yourselves” programmes in this devotional characteristic. Why does Amos do this? It is so that the very act of making these images is seen to be a form of devotion to themselves, to be reflected in their subsequent worship. Acts 7’s use of *proskunein* converts this framework of associations into Greek. And this is subtly achieved by utilising a Greek word which has the identical preposition’s meaning of “to” which the Hebrew has. The remaining part of *proskunein*, the *-kuneō* element, is no evidence of an extra piece of meaning which differs from the Hebrew, for it is metaphoric and serves only to support the devotional associations of which the foregoing speaks.

Therefore: and

The Hebrew for “therefore” in Amos is simply the common term for “and” (*we*), which appears in Amos 5:20 and is there translated “and”. Likewise the Greek translated by “and”—*kai*—is the ordinary word for “and”. So the original languages are synonymous here. The AV translators may well have used the translation “therefore” because of an awareness that a relation of consequence obtains between the statements before and after the use of “therefore”.²¹

Will I: I will

These alternative word orders do not differ like this in the Hebrew and Greek. They are part of the grammar of the respective Hebrew and Greek verbs which follow them, and not separate words in the original languages. The translator may have put in “will I” instead of “I will” for emphasis; but there is no such variation in the original to gain this effect. The emphasis occurs in the same way in both texts.

Cause . . . to go into captivity: carry away

Different though these translations are, the Hebrew and Greek are quite clear and match in sense. The variety of renderings reflects the richness of the original languages.

The Hebrew for the expression “cause . . . to go into captivity” is *hgl(y)thy*. As you see it is only one word. Nevertheless, the English

precisely translates the Hebrew; nor is the AV paraphrasing the Hebrew. An earlier section (**But: yea**) furnishes the principles by which this issue can be clarified: meaning has different levels, rather like the floors of a building. Just as the word “temple” isolates a building’s identity with one word, so it is complementary to this fact that one can also employ the term “holy place” to identify an aspect within the temple. This is a model with which one can tackle the above “cause . . . to go into captivity”. In this expression there are three floor-levels of meaning: (a) cause, (b) to go, (c) into captivity. The sense of (a) arises because of the grammar of the term. This is marked by the first “h” which begins the word; it indicates a grammatical form which punches in the sense of “cause” when the word is used,²² and it is a well-known phenomenon in the Bible. (b) is a literal translation of the stem within the word; this is *gālāh*, which is more or less the ground floor meaning. In Amos 6:7 this stem is used and translated “go” as a fitting backhand allusion to the literal sense within the current quotation, which helps to sustain (b) as a proper element in the Hebrew interpretation. (c) regularly translates the Hebrew stem, for instance in Amos 1:15 and 2 Kings 24:15. The form and position of the Hebrew term which stands behind “cause . . . to go into captivity” pushes all three (a), (b) and (c) senses into usage, with “into captivity” standing as a sort of top floor to stress the terminus of the going.

The translation “carry . . . away” in Acts is not incompatible with the Hebrew. It might have been better for the AV to have maintained one rendering for both Hebrew and Greek, although its Amos translation, as can be seen from the above, correctly exposes features in the deep structure of the Hebrew meaning. That the Greek can be placed in parallel with the Hebrew can be appreciated from 2 Kings 17:33. Here the Hebrew stem and the point of grammar mentioned as (a) above are the same as Amos’s use. But the AV deploys “carried away” in Kings to produce the Hebrew meaning, which is effectively the Acts translation for Amos. The Greek for “carry . . . away” is also one word with more than one sense within it, being rare in the New Testament but frequent in the Greek Old Testament. It is *metoikiō*, and the prefix *met(a)* carries a sense of cause which matches the Hebrew of Amos. The stem remaining in the Greek is a figurative use of the stem for “to

dwell” to depict the facet of “going” from a dwelling to dwell in captivity. But since the “dwelling” value is figurative, this matches the Hebrew element which Amos 5:27 renders “to go”.

Conclusion

The main conclusion produced by the above analysis is that Acts accurately quotes the Hebrew text. This study has also obliquely demonstrated that the structure of meaning which the Bible displays is distinct from the ways in which theologians make assumptions about the nature of meaning. These false assumptions form the basic reason why it is fashionable to drive a wedge between the texts of Amos and Acts. Once this separation between Amos and Acts is made, it is common to make each book appear to be an heretical conformist serf of the culture *against* which it was written. But this follows the very heretical route which Amos and Acts castigate. This sort of theological method, we have seen, ignores the intricate, dense and subtle texture of Biblical language, and instead imposes an artificially simple caricature of the relations of meaning in quotation. That this nature of meaning should be misinterpreted by those who do not believe in revelation in the Bible is not surprising. God’s meaning is alien to human intuition. The recent presentation of the Bible as a mythological way of thinking merely implements the consequence of the linguistic distortions produced by such theologians. Those who follow this mode of theology reflect the same type of view embodied in the culture which Amos attacks, for they are saying that Amos is part of that culture. This movement attempts to reduce the Bible to conjectured linguistic patterns which its contemporary antagonists displayed. Therefore when an alleged misfit is found between Amos and Acts it is as a function of imposing the patterns on to the Bible that this misfit is supposedly known. But since the initial premise is false, so is the conclusion: the above analysis has found that Amos and Acts fit one another.

21. “Therefore” together with “and” can be partly equivalent respecting their truth (i.e. tautologous; cf. *BSL*, p. 160). The term “therefore” has the meaning of “and” contained in it, although this does not exhaust its sense—“therefore” has the additional sense of consequence.

22. This is what is termed the *hiph'il* formation.

INSPIRATION AND THE HUMAN ELEMENT

STEPHEN PALMER

The problem

“WHAT SHALL be said then about the individuality of the writers being preserved in their work? . . . Because God was the ‘inspirer of the ancient seers’, must it be concluded that all would use the same idiom, and all express themselves the same way? . . . The fact is, God so used the writer that in the resulting prophecy or epistle as the case may be, the personality of the writer is not obliterated, and yet the words are claimed by God as His. If it be pressed, How was this done?—it has to be answered that this is confessedly a miracle”.

These remarks quoted from Brother John Carter¹ express the orthodox Christadelphian view of this difficult subject. On the one hand there is an unshakeable belief in verbal inspiration, and on the other hand there is a deeply cherished idea that the Scriptures ‘bear the impress of the character’ of the prophets and apostles who recorded Scripture. But is it a fair argument to call upon a miracle to cover the point where the two ideas would otherwise appear to pull in opposite directions? In practice, the way in which the subject of the individuality of the books of Scripture is often dealt with leads far away from the Scriptural claim to be verbally inspired, and we should tread warily when following that line of study. This article, in refuting the liberal view of the human contribution to Scripture, but also in challenging the traditional Christadelphian assumption that the Scriptures ‘bear the impress of the character’ of the writers, is aimed at stimulating a more profitable approach to the study of this aspect of Scripture.

Literary style

The fact we have to deal with is the existence of different styles of writing and expression in different parts of Scripture (though ‘literary

style’ stands for an elusive concept, and few attempt to define it in relation to Scripture). As far as modern theologians are concerned, literary style provides the main basis for certain types of higher criticism. For example, it is supposed that different noncanonical sources of the Scripture can be dissected out by recognising different styles. Critics can do this without any qualms because they do not believe that Scripture is verbally inspired. Even conservative theologians follow this method of study, as the following example from F.F. Bruce shows. In the book *New Testament Documents* he states: “There is no doubt that the fourth evangelist has his own very distinctive style, which colours not only his own meditations and comments but the sayings of Jesus and John the Baptist”.² If John put words in the mouth of Jesus which Jesus did not speak, then we do not have an accurate account of the Lord’s ministry.

Views expressed in some modern Christadelphian writings, arguing from the assumption that literary style betrays the mind of the human writer, are only slightly less destructive, inasmuch as they divert attention away from the message revealed towards speculations about the writer which can never be proved. For example, we may believe that the Gospel record of Luke gives us a unique insight into the work of the Master and that it has a “singular charm”; but are we correct in assuming that these features reflect the fact that Luke had “a notable literary talent” and was “evidently a man of large sympathies”?³ Such assertions could only be supported if we had uninspired writings of Luke to compare with Scripture, since the effect of the

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1. *The Oracles of God* (The Christadelphian, 1966 edition), p. 80.
 2. (The Inter-Varsity Fellowship, 1968 edition), p. 57.
 3. *The Christadelphian*, July 1980, p. 251.
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Holy Spirit upon Luke, whatever its mechanism, must, by any account of inspiration, have influenced the style of his writing.

An example of style in Mark

It may be helpful at this stage to consider an example of literary style. In the Gospel of Mark the Greek word *eutheos*, usually translated “immediately” or “straightway”, is used 40 times, compared with 40 times in the whole of the rest of the New Testament. The word imparts an urgency to the narrative which, it has been said, reflects the eagerness and energy of the writer; and this is said to fit with the character of Peter who, it is alleged, was the ‘mastermind’ behind the Gospel. But how then should we understand Mark 4:3-20, where the same word is attributed four times to the Lord Jesus in the parable of the sower? Did the Lord *actually speak* the words, or did Mark embellish the parable in a way fitting his own understanding and bias? If the latter is the correct explanation, then we can have no confidence in the Gospel records, and cannot be certain that the Lord Jesus did say the things he is recorded as having said. If the Lord did speak these words (and we do not doubt that he did), it follows that Mark selected these incidents, just as the other Gospel writers selected different aspects of the Lord’s sayings. (There is no reason to doubt that the Lord spoke the same parables several times on different occasions and with minor variations in detail.) In the case of *eutheos* Mark would have selected these words from the Master’s lips in harmony with the use of the word in the narrative. But in what way did this selection work? Does it reflect the interests of Mark (or Peter), which meant that he would have particularly remembered this word? Such a view is contradicted by the Lord Jesus, since he says of the promised Comforter that “he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (Jno. 14:26). Therefore, if Mark (or Peter) did select, it was from an unlimited choice. The personal foibles of their memories could not limit their scope.

But it is just this selection of events and the vocabulary used to describe them which make up the themes and the style of the book. For example, in Matthew, emphasis is placed upon the sayings of the Lord which were quotations from, or allusions to, the prophecy of Daniel, and the theme of the narrative is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the king from heaven who will fulfil the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7. In Mark a main theme, I suggest, is a development of

Malachi 3:1, which is Mark’s opening quotation. That prophecy says: “The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple”. The suddenness of the coming of Messiah is developed in Mark in several ways, but particularly relevant to this discussion is the word *eutheos* (“straightway”), which makes up one aspect of the literary style of the Gospel. Since the apostles and prophets were under the influence of the Holy Spirit which was to lead them into all truth, it follows that the theme of Mark reflects *the choice of God*; and since the style of the Gospel record is an integral part of the development of the theme, the style must also be God’s.

The implications of this view of literary style are vastly different from the popular view. In the case of the Gospel of Mark we may study the passages which only Mark records, not to learn about Mark, the man, but to discover which aspects the Spirit is highlighting. An example may illustrate the point. In Mark 14 there is an account of “a certain young man”, who followed after Jesus but who then fled naked when the other “young men” arrested him (v. 51). Only Mark records this. Was this because only Mark knew? Or because only he was interested in the incident? And how does the recording of this incident develop the theme of the record? An expositional answer can be developed in this way. In Mark 16:5 there is another unique reference to a “young man”. This second young man was sitting on the right side of the sepulchre where the Lord Jesus had been laid; but, in contrast to the young man who fled naked, this man was “clothed in a long white garment”. The significance of the contrast between these two men who appear in the record either side of the resurrection is found in Mark’s second opening quotation, from Isaiah 40. At the end of that chapter the power of the Almighty to perform His word is described in the following terms: “He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might He increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles” (vv. 29-31). The two young men, one naked and mortal, and the other fully clothed and immortal, demonstrate the meaning of the prophecy. Man at his best and in his natural state is naked and ashamed before the presence of Christ. This is typified by the first young man. Man clothed in righteousness and immortality is the result of the work of God through the resurrection of His Son

and is typified by the angel who sat at the empty tomb. The selection of these incidents involving the young men teaches the promise of immortality through the Lord Jesus. No doubt we will continue to speculate about the identity of the first man, but this is to miss the main point of the record.

Whose style?

It has been shown from the above example of style in Mark that literary style in Scripture is an integral part of the unique revelation through the particular apostle or prophet. It cannot therefore be construed as a proof that the mind of the writer is therein revealed. The tone as well as the choice of material and the vocabulary used to record them are as much part of the message of Scripture as the historical details. But if the style is wholly God's, does it follow that the style cannot also in some sense be that of the writer? The argument developed in this section is that the style of writing is determined by the form, content and emphasis of the message, and was suited perfectly by God to the needs of the people to whom it was delivered (as well as being profitable for later generations), but at the same time God raised up prophets and apostles who could become one with the message. The harmony between prophet and prophecy does not prove that the prophet made a causal contribution to Scripture. On the contrary, it can be explained by the fact that God raised up men fit to deliver the message and to become part of it.

The emphasis in this approach is upon the man being fitted to the revelation rather than the reverse. For example, Jeremiah was predestinated in his work as "prophet unto the nations". He was to play a central role not only in delivering the prophecy but also in its content, enabling, through his experiences, the Word of God to take its predetermined shape. Yet at the same time the words in his mouth and, by implication, the words which he wrote were put there by God (Jer. 1:5-9). Jeremiah, the man, therefore becomes a legitimate subject for study, since his circumstances, thoughts and feelings are revealed in the book. But here we are not studying insights provided by the will of Jeremiah. Rather are we studying the result of the providential work of God in raising up Jeremiah to be a fitting example in the prophetic enactment. We are not at liberty to assume that the content of the prophecy stems from Jeremiah's character independently of the will of God, since the message was God's. At the same time, because Jeremiah was providentially raised

up for the task there is no reason to object to the possibility that Jeremiah in all respects was in complete harmony with the message, and that even the vocabulary and idioms used in the prophecy may have been in some ways the vocabulary and style of Jeremiah, the man. But the only way we could ever know this would be if we had uninspired writings or sayings of Jeremiah, which we do not have; and to speculate upon it is as unproductive as trying to work out the pathways of providence.

In accordance with this approach, when we study the unique styles of Scripture we should be looking, not for the hidden character of the prophet, but for the reason that the particular style (however we may define it) was chosen by God to convey perfectly His revelation. We are led to study the context of the revelation, to appreciate the audience to whom it was first delivered, before going on to ask why a particular man was raised up to deliver this message. For example, if in the purpose of God a record of the ministry of Christ was to be written which emphasised the humanity of Christ and which was to use insights into human suffering, how appropriate to raise up a physician for that task who may have been uniquely in harmony with this revelation. If the Lord intended a record to be written which detailed places, distances, and so on, to prove the authenticity of Christ's ministry, who else would be chosen but an eyewitness of many of (though not all) the things he wrote about? But John was not the only eyewitness, and the choice of John cannot therefore be attributed to John himself. Furthermore, when the other apostles bore witness in John 21:24 to the truth of what John recorded, they did so by the command of Christ (see Jno. 15:26, 27); so that, by virtue of the authority vested in them by the Holy Spirit, they could give the stamp of authenticity to the whole record.

Inspiration in the first person of the prophet

The combination of (a) the prophets being given words to write from God and (b) the providential hand of God in raising up prophets who would be so much a part of the revelation as to be living declarations of its truth, does not allow us to take a simplistic view of passages of Scripture which are expressed in the first person of the writer. How then should we understand the use made of "I" in Scripture when the subject is the prophet? Two Scriptural examples are examined to demonstrate Scripture's own com-

mentary on this point.

The first example is in Isaiah 8:18, where the prophet records, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts". The personal pronoun in this passage clearly refers to the prophet himself; and yet this passage is quoted in Hebrews 2:13 about the Lord Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews does not consider it necessary to demonstrate that a passage referring in the first instance to Isaiah could in fact be speaking prophetically about Christ. He requires that it could, and assumes his readers would do the same, since that passage is used by him to prove a different point from that which is being made in the first instance in Isaiah 8. The quotation from Isaiah 8 proves that the Christ was to be a flesh and blood relative of his "children"—his disciples. It must follow that the events which took place in the lives of Isaiah and his children were controlled by God, so that what was true of them was prophetic of Christ and his disciples, with the relevant details of style in the Isaiah record being a necessary consequence of this situation.

This incident proves that when a prophet speaks in the first person it cannot be assumed that he is speaking of himself. When Isaiah said "I", it was the Spirit of Christ speaking *as Christ*. What may on the surface appear to be a human comment upon Divine revelation, or an individual insight provided by the writer, is shown by Biblical usage of the passage to be as much part of the Word of God as the "Thus saith the Lord" passages. The miracle entailed in this is not how two contradictory lines of argument can be reconciled, but how the ways of providence worked to produce in a man's life the type of Christ, so that the prophecy, structured sometimes upon the experiences of the prophet, portrays throughout the Spirit of Christ.

The second example is the prophecy of Balaam in Numbers 23. The record emphasises that the words which Balaam spoke were, as Balaam insisted, "the word that God putteth in my mouth" (Num. 22:38). The operation of inspiration is described in this way: "And the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return into Balak, and *thus thou shalt speak*" (Num. 23:5). The words Balaam was caused to speak included the following: "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?" (23:8). Balaam's own ideas may have been quite opposite to those expressed by the inspiration of God, for it appears that Balaam would have sold his services to Balak if he had been allowed to by the angel.

Even so, Balaam was given words to speak which included expressions which would have been interpreted by Balak as portraying Balaam's own mind on the matter. Balaam may not have wanted to agree with the words which the Spirit put in his mouth concerning himself ("How shall I . . .?") since he had a mercenary nature, and he would have had to listen to his own words to learn how he should be thinking. If this was the case, the Spirit would have operated to overrule the thoughts of Balaam. If, however, Balaam had agreed with the prophetic word, inspiration would have operated with exactly the same result, although the mechanics of inspiration may have been different, for in this case the Spirit would have operated in harmony with Balaam's thoughts. Whichever way it was, the result was that Balaam spoke exactly the words given to him by the Spirit, even though he spoke of himself.

Inspiration and the Psalms

The precedents of Isaiah and Balaam can be profitably applied to other Scriptures to understand how it is possible for men to speak of their own experiences, and at the same time be speaking the Word of God and be referring, not to themselves, but to Christ. Particularly is this helpful when studying the Psalms.

In 2 Samuel 23 the two ideas of the inspiration of Scripture and the role of the prophet are brought together. Verse 1 reads: "Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said . . .". But note what David did say in verse 2: "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue". David's claim is not that God's ideas were put in his mind so that he could express them in his own words. It is that the words David spoke *were* God's words. These verses caution us not to impose our own preconceived notions about the possible ways in which inspiration worked. It is proper, however, for us to ask in what way the fact that the Psalms of David were written by David affects the way in which we should interpret these revelations.

To answer this question we should allow Scripture to lead us. In Acts 2:34 Peter, through the power of the Holy Spirit, quotes from Psalm 110. He introduces his quotation in this way: "For David . . . saith himself . . .". Emphasis is placed upon the identity of the prophet so that the interpretation of the psalm might become clear. The psalm says: "The Lord said unto my Lord . . .". In this statement three persons are identified: Yahweh, David's Lord, and David. By emphasising that the psalm was written by

David, Peter is drawing attention to the identity of the one who would sit at Yahweh's right hand. It was not to be David, for David said: "The Lord said unto *my* Lord". It was to be David's *Lord*, and therefore one greater than David, for David called him "Lord". But even though this argument hangs upon the fact that it was the man David who recorded the psalm, the psalm still has the force of God's Word, for otherwise it would not have proved Peter's point.

In Psalm 110 the interpretation is straightforward because we can readily see that "my Lord" was David's Lord. "My" relates to David. This feature cannot, however, be generalised to all the psalms, as another New Testament commentary shows. Earlier in Acts 2 Peter quotes Psalm 16: "*I* foresaw the Lord always before *my* face . . . Thou wilt not leave *my* soul in hell . . . Thou hast made known to *me* the ways of life" (vv. 25-28). A straightforward reading of the "I"s and "my"s of David's psalm would lead to the conclusion that David was speaking of himself. Yet Peter argues that the psalm could not be speaking of David, *even though David wrote it in the first person*. The psalm deals with the resurrection from the dead which was to take place before putrefaction of the body took place; but David "is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day" (v. 29). Therefore the psalm could not have been speaking about David. The necessary inference which follows is given by Peter as: "*Therefore* being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; *he seeing this before* spake of the resurrection of Christ". Peter shows that David "speaketh concerning him" (v. 25), even though David says "I". The "I" referred not to David himself, but to the unborn Christ who was "in his loins".

In the case of Psalm 16 Peter's argument is not based on any indication in the psalm about the identity of the "I", but on the fact that the psalm spoke of things which could not have been true of David. Once again, however, we cannot generalise this truth to apply to all the psalms, for there are some psalms which speak of things which apply both to David and to Christ equally well. For example, when David was moved to write of the treachery of Absalom and Ahithophel (Psalm 41) he was also recording prophetically the treachery of Judas. David's experiences, upon which the psalm is structured, were providentially controlled so that he was a type of Christ. The words put in his

mouth by the Holy Spirit were therefore meaningful both to his own life *and* to the work of Christ. On the other hand, there are psalms in which it is not possible for the "I" to refer to Christ, since they speak of David's sins. Sometimes the identity of the "I" is switched within the same psalm. The following example illustrates the point.

In Acts 1 Peter quotes Psalm 69 and begins his argument: "Men and brethren, this Scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David spake . . ." (v. 16). The passage quoted is of Judas, and so it related to the days of the Lord Jesus. When we look at verse 5 of the psalm, however, that cannot be referring in a direct sense to Christ because it says, "my sins are not hid from Thee . . .". Between this verse and verse 9, which is quoted of Jesus in John 2:17, there is no indication in the structure of the psalm that the identity of the person speaking has changed. We have to conclude, therefore, that part of this psalm is speaking of David and another part of the same psalm is speaking of Christ. Only a careful searching of these Scriptures will enable us to "rightly divide" them; but the point is established that, whether David was referring to himself or to Christ in the psalm, what he wrote was, as Peter affirmed, by the Holy Spirit.

When we look at psalms such as Psalm 51, which present to us the open heart of a repentant man, we are directed to see in the psalm words given to David by the Holy Spirit about himself. The example of Balaam opens up the possibility that David may have had to learn the truth of those things he wrote about himself, and to strive to make those thoughts his own. It is certain that at times, and in such psalms, David did not readily understand what he wrote, and like the other prophets mentioned in 1 Peter 1:10-12, he would have had to search his own writings to understand their significance. David, like the Ethiopian eunuch, would have had to ask: ". . . of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" (Acts 8:34).

Conclusion

It needs to be stressed that the discussion developed in this article is not about the mechanics of inspiration. The questions raised are not about whether David wrote down the Psalms with his writing hand, as it were, being moved by an angel; or whether he had to concentrate his thoughts before the words came. The neurophysiology of inspiration has not been revealed to us. What the discussion is about is

how the words given to the prophets could be God's Word and yet could have differing literary styles and also reveal the character of the prophet. The answer proposed is that style is determined by the nature of the message, even when the prophet apparently is speaking of himself in the first person, and this is where our

studies should concentrate. The signs we may see of the character of the prophet being preserved should not be interpreted as an incomplete attempt at 'obliteration' of the individuality of the writer by the Spirit, but should be seen as an integral part of the revelation.

INSPIRATION AND TEXTUAL DETAIL IN SCRIPTURE

PETER FORBES

How the Bible presents its own case: in the Old Testament

AS ISRAEL journeyed in the wilderness, towards the land of promise, "Balak the son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. And Moab was sore afraid . . . He sent messengers therefore unto Balaam . . . saying . . . Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people" (Num. 22:1-6). But God said to Balaam: "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people" (Num. 22:12). Yet Balaam succumbed to the lure of the "wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15) and went to Balak. After his encounter with the angel — when "the dumb ass . . . forbad the madness of the prophet" (2 Pet. 2:16) — he was commanded by the Lord to go with the men, but was also told: ". . . only the word that I shall speak unto thee, that thou shalt speak" (Num. 22:35). Balaam was in no doubt what the Lord meant by that statement, for, on hearing the promises of Balak, he said: ". . . have I now any power at all to say any thing? the word that God putteth in my mouth, that shall I speak" (Num. 22:38). When Balaam received a revelation from God, we are informed that "the Lord *put a word in Balaam's mouth*, and said . . ." (Num. 23:5). The Word of God spoken through the prophet highlights the prophet's impotence to assert anything other than God's Word, when he is compelled to say: "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?" (Num. 23:8).

Understandably, Balaam's response angered Balak; but so great was his fear of Israel that he endeavoured still to secure his own ends, as a

consequence of which Balaam was compelled—yet again—to say: "Behold, I have received commandment to bless . . . and I cannot reverse it" (Num. 23:20). Balak departed despondent; but Balaam, when he saw "that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel . . . went not, as at other times, to seek for enchantments . . . and the Spirit of God came upon him" (Num. 24:1-2), and he, through the Spirit, gave those wonderful prophecies contained in Numbers 24.

The details in this narrative are highly instructive in helping our understanding of the way in which God has revealed His Word. Noting them, we see:

1. that God told Balaam that he should not curse Israel;
2. that Balaam's own inclinations were selfish and basically godless;
3. that Balaam was only able to speak the words that God gave him (and that Balaam recognised that fact).

From the above it is very clear that Balaam recognised that, in terms of speaking the Word of the Lord, his own inclinations about what should be said were subjugated, and that he was obliged to speak *only* the words that God put in his mouth. In the case of Balaam we are not even dealing with an individual like Moses, who was basically inclined to hear the Word of the Lord, but with one who "loved the wages of unrighteousness"; and the Lord ensured even with a man like this that *only His words* were spoken. We note that the Scripture says clearly that it was the *words* of God which were spoken through the prophet, not that the prophet

presented God's *ideas* in his own words. In view of this, we are compelled to recognise that when God spoke words to Balaam for the ears of Balak, Balaam was the mouthpiece through which God spoke, and Balaam's inclinations played no part. The example of Balaam is proof positive that preserved in Scripture we have the words of God rather than His ideas expressed in the words of the prophets. As an aside, lest anyone may feel that in some way Balaam was deprived of what we may call "free will", we may note reassuringly that Balaam himself raised no such objection.

Whilst we have considered Balaam at some length, we do well to note that he is not untypical of the prophets of the Lord. Of Moses we are told that he "wrote *all the words* of the Lord" which were communicated to him at the time of the giving of the law at Sinai (Ex. 24:4). On numerous other occasions also, Moses informed Israel of God's will in such phrases as: "And the Lord spake unto me, saying . . ." (Deut. 2:2). The prophet Nathan was also told precisely what to say to David when the Lord said: "Go and tell My servant David, Thus saith the Lord" (2 Sam. 7:5). The narrative continues with a verbatim account of what Nathan had to say—of which we are told that "according to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David" (v. 17).

Some might feel that in the use of the word "vision" here the Spirit is saying that Nathan actually saw a pictorial presentation of what the Lord wanted him to convey to David, and some would even infer from this that Nathan may have used his own words to present the vision to David. But the record will not sustain such an interpretation, for it says—in *the context of a verbal presentation* of what God had said—that Nathan spoke "according to all these words" (v. 17). Any concept of the words being given "in a vision" must take account of the fact that God gave the words to Nathan, and that Nathan gave God's words to David.¹

At a later date, Jeremiah was commanded by the Lord: "Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book" (Jer. 30:2). On another occasion, when Ezekiel had before him the elders and was in a trance, he saw a vision (see chapters 8-11), after which he records: "And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and said unto me, Speak; Thus saith the Lord . . ." (11:5).

The examples of Moses and Jeremiah reinforce the conclusions drawn from the case of Balaam. The examples of Nathan and Ezekiel help to demonstrate how that, while seeing a

vision, a man of God was still able precisely to present the actual words which the Lord gave him. These examples are far from exhaustive, but they all serve to show that the prophets presented the words of the Lord.

How the Bible presents its own case: in the language of Jesus

Moses said (speaking for God): "I will raise them up a Prophet . . . and will put My words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deut. 18:18). Peter, in Acts 3:23, demonstrates that Moses was speaking of Christ. Evidence in the language of Jesus demonstrates that Jesus spoke the Word of the Lord in the same way as did the prophets under the Old Covenant. Jesus said: "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father Which sent me, He gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (Jno. 12:49); or again: "I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge . . . I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father Which hath sent me" (Jno. 5:30); or again: "When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things" (Jno. 8:28). In these examples we can see *how* he spoke the words of God—he even picks up the word "command(ment)" (12:49) out of Deuteronomy 18.

Whilst the examples cited are all from John, it would be foolish to argue that the evidence is biased or faulty. The Spirit through John presents certain facets of the mission of the Lord, one of which is the way in which he spoke the Word of God. Implicit in the other records is the same fact, borne out by the structure of the language and the deductions which Jesus expected his hearers to make. For example, consider the incident of the man sick of the palsy (Mk. 2): "Who can forgive sins but God only?" (v. 7). The act, and the words of Jesus—"Son, thy sins be forgiven thee" (v. 5)—were intended to demonstrate that he had come in the name of the Father.² In the fullest sense Jesus spoke the words of God.

1. In view of the way in which verbal inspiration operated in the visions considered here, one should be very cautious of adopting less precise views about other visions, even in the case of visions where we are not told as explicitly how the Word was given. It would be silly to argue from an absence of Biblical evidence, especially when the argument contradicts data presented elsewhere in Scripture on the same topic.

How the Bible presents its own case: in the New Testament Letters

To make the claim that one is able to say "grace to you, and peace, from God our Father", as many of the Epistles do, requires that the writer has received a revelation from God which at least permits him to make such statements. More precisely, it requires that he has been told to make such a salutation. Explicit in such salutations is the fact that the words used were given to the writer by God to pass on to the ecclesias. The fact that Peter refers to the writings of Paul as "Scripture" ("... even as our beloved brother Paul . . . hath written unto you . . . which they that are unlearned . . . wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures"—2 Pet. 3:15), coupled with the fact that there is never any dispute about the inspiration of the Epistles, even though there are disputes about the credibility of individuals,³ indicates that their inspiration was not doubted in the first century. We have seen from the Old Testament and the Gospels what form inspiration takes, and must conclude, in the absence of contrary evidence, that such was the mode of inspiration in the Epistles.

A clear understanding of the mode by which "men of God" spoke by the Holy Spirit is no mere academic matter; it relates clearly to matters of exposition, for 2 Peter 1:20,21 says that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit". Peter links the inspiration of the Scriptures to their interpretation. Christadelphians have, rightly, asserted that any part of the Scripture can be understood by recourse to other parts of the Word. Such a principle rests on the assertion made by Peter. Without God having given the very *words*, the parallels and word usages which we use in determining our doctrines would lack the precision needed to define clearly "the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ".

The concept of style

Whilst a more substantial treatment is warranted to present a complete case on the questions of style and authorship, the following is presented to highlight some of the weaknesses and assumptions made by higher critics, and which are imported into some Christadelphian treatments of these questions in Scripture. To claim that a particular phrase or idea which

recurs in the writings of, say, Paul, indicates that in some way his own identity or personality has produced it, is to ignore certain important details:

1. We possess no manuscripts of Paul which were *not* given by inspiration, so we have nothing against which to validate the claim that the phrase is of Paul's preference as opposed to its being solely produced by inspiration;
2. We would need to be able to establish conclusively that the phrase *is* one used exclusively by Paul, and that it does not form a part of a typical structured argument used by the Holy Spirit in other writers;
3. We ought to analyse each occurrence of the phrase in context, rather than in isolation, in order, first, to ensure that the needs of the recipients of the Epistle or the prophecy are considered, and second, to establish whether their common needs are not the determining factor in the use of the same phrase in different places.

For example, if a particular phrase or language structure, whilst being exclusively used in Paul's Epistles, occurs only in the context, say, of answering a point to do with circumcision, then we have already identified an alternative explanation of its use, namely, that it is being used *by the Spirit*, independently of the writer's inclination, to answer a recurrent problem. If the problem is recurrent (as many problems dealt with in Scripture are), then the answer will, in essence, be the same each time it is presented.

The principle can be illustrated by an example of the common use of the same Old Testament language by two different writers in the New Testament. Paul (in Romans 9) and Peter (in 1 Peter 2) both appeal to Isaiah 8:14 and Isaiah 28:16. Substantially similar points are made by these two writers using the same (and other) parts of Scripture. Whilst space precludes a consideration of the details in this example, it is instructive, in personal study of it, to examine the use of language by the two apostles in relation to this whole question of style.⁴

2. For a more detailed consideration of this aspect of the mission of Jesus see: John Thomas, *Phanerosis*, and Arthur Gibson, *Biblical Semantic Logic* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1981), ch. 2.2 and all of ch. 3.

3. For example, consider the attitude in 1 Corinthians 9: "Am I not an apostle? . . . are not ye my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord" (vv. 1,2).

4. We might ask, Is it the author, or the recipients of the

Inspiration: just words, or whole sentences?

So far we have demonstrated that the Lord moved men to write down the words which He commanded; we have not considered the issue of sentence structure. May it not be, some may say, that the words are God's but that they are structured according to the temperament and inclinations of the writer, hence displaying his individuality? But we have shown above, first, that the question of establishing the individuality of the author is fraught with difficulties. So we cannot assume that the author's preferences are manifest. If we wish to sustain such a view, evidence must be produced. Secondly, the Word of God presents to us what God intends us to understand at a particular point in time about a specific topic. That is, we need to understand the meaning of the words and their construction rather than merely identifying and recognising individual words in isolation. A given group of words can be arranged in more than one way to emphasise different aspects of an idea or to present completely different ideas.

An example may be helpful here. "God is love" (1 Jno. 4:8) is seemingly presenting "God" and "love" as in some way being identical by the use of the word "is". However, it is clear that the meaning is substantially altered if we rearrange the word order to "love is God". Clearly, the "is" operates in ways other than absolute equivalence. The word order governs the meaning of "is" in this example. This shows that context regulates meaning: there is no such thing as a simple, self-evident meaning of "is"; study of the Biblical context is essential to understand its meaning properly.

It has been demonstrated elsewhere that the sentence is, in fact, the shortest complete unit of meaning. Whilst individual words have meaning, that meaning, if it is outside the context of a sentence, is not complete (except in the case of proper names).⁵ The meaning of words, or groups of words, is precisely fixed by their use in a complete sentence. Therefore the

grammar and sentence structure must be God's, as well as the words, if we are to claim that the Bible presents God's words to us. Nor is this only an academic point of linguistics or semantics. For, in the context of proving the resurrection, Jesus appealed to Exodus 3:6, "I am the God of Abraham" (Mt. 22:32), and for this appeal to have any validity it requires that even the tense of the verb was determined by the God Who claimed in Exodus to be the God of Abraham. Or again, to sustain the claim in Hebrews 7:20,21 that Jesus's priesthood was confirmed by an oath, Psalm 110:4, "The Lord hath sworn . . .", must mean precisely that, for the apostle says: "And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest . . . but this with an oath by Him That said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec".

Some Biblical examples

Genesis 22:2 provides a thematic example: "And He (God) said, Take now thy son, thine *only son* Isaac . . . and offer him . . . for a burnt offering". Abraham believed "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead" (Heb. 11:19). Abraham, said Jesus, "rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (Jno. 8:56). The phrase translated "only son" is rather rare in Scripture. In Psalm 22:20 we find it translated as "darling": "Deliver my soul from the sword; my *darling* from the power of the dog". The psalm is prophetic of Christ's death and resurrection, as is clear from the use made of the psalm in the Gospels. The same phrase is found in Psalm 35:17: "Lord, how long wilt Thou look on? rescue my soul from their destructions, my *darling* from the lions". It can be shown that Psalms 22 and 35 are speaking of the same historical event in the life of David.⁶ Amos 8:8-10 has: "Shall not the land tremble . . . And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon . . . and I will turn your feasts into mourning . . . and I will make it as the mourning of an *only son*, and the end thereof as a bitter day". Clearly here again we have an association with the death of the Lord Jesus, described in Mark 15:33: "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour". As a consequence of the death and resurrection of the Lord, the feasts of the law were superseded, and in A.D.70 they were terminated, at least in the form prescribed in respect of the temple. The quotation in Amos also speaks of the *only son* of the God of heaven.

message and their needs, which determine the style? Without adequate proof to support one or other of these options, both remain equally valid hypotheses, and both need analysis to establish which, if either, is true. Assumptions based on higher-critical analysis, smuggled in via commentaries, will not do, and require explicit testing by the use of God's Word.

5. See *Biblical Semantic Logic*, ch.3.

6. See Peter Forbes, "Purge me . . . and I shall be clean", *The Testimony*, May 1976, pp. 163-166.

Of the time of the return of the Lord, Zechariah says: "I will pour upon the house of David . . . the spirit of grace . . . and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his *only son*" (12:10). This brief example, which could be expanded further, demonstrates the precision in the way God has caused His words to be recorded.

In 1 Corinthians 10:2, talking of Israel, Paul says they "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea". Our baptism into the saving name of Jesus involves us in a covenant with God — the New Covenant, whereby our sins and iniquities are remembered no more (see Hebrews 10:16,17). How is it that Israel were baptised into Moses? And where is the evidence of a covenant being established at the time of the passing through the Red Sea? Such questions are pertinent, for a parallel is being drawn between Israel and those in Christ. The pattern of covenant-making is outlined in Genesis 15. Abram "took unto him all these (the animals), and **divided** them in the midst" (v. 10), and "**when the sun went down . . . behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces**" (v.17). "In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram" (v.18). The making of this covenant involved dividing the animals into parts and a burning lamp passing between them.⁷ Now Psalm 136 talks of the wonderful acts of the Lord towards Israel, interspersing the account with the refrain "for His mercy endureth for ever". One instance is: "To Him Which divided the Red sea into parts . . . and made Israel to *pass through the midst of it*" (vv. 13,14). The Spirit, speaking through the psalmist, is here using covenant language to advertise that in passing through the Red Sea Israel actually entered into a covenant with God. 1 Corinthians 10 picks up this detail from the inspired Word so that the parallel can be made. Without inspiration's precision in the textual detail of Scripture, Paul's argument would be very seriously weakened.

Exodus 25:17-22 says, "And thou shalt make a mercy seat . . . And thou shalt make two cherubims . . . in the two ends of the mercy seat . . . And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat . . . And there I will meet with thee". These things "serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things . . . for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). We are informed elsewhere in Hebrews of the significance of some parts of

the tabernacle. The veil was the flesh of Jesus (Heb. 10:20). A description of the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement is the background here, with the ark of the covenant, and the cherubims of glory overshadowing the mercy seat.⁸ In Romans 3, after demonstrating that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (v. 20), Paul continues by saying: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiation* through faith in his blood" (v. 24). The precision of Scripture, in the way a detail is taken here from the law and is applied to the Lord Jesus, gives us a deep insight into God's plan of redemption, for the word translated "propitiation" only occurs once more in the New Testament, where it is translated "mercy seat" (Heb. 9:5). Such textual detail is the hallmark of the verbal inspiration of Scripture.

Conclusion: implications of denying verbal inspiration

Some readers may admit that they can see that the way inspiration has been presented in this article can be helpful in understanding some of the detail in Scripture; but those who are not students may wonder whether it matters that they should have a clear and accurate understanding of the mechanics of inspiration. Is it not enough to say that the Bible is accepted as the "wholly inspired Word of God"? A superficial consideration of the question may lead us to think that such an attitude might be acceptable. However, once some of the implications are presented, the importance of the issues will be seen.

First, if it is clear that every word of the original manuscript was given by God, and that the language structure in the original was God's, then we are obliged to accept verbal inspiration; and that should really be the end of the matter. The verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is one of the distinctive doctrines which cause us to be separate from Christendom generally. Would anyone of us dream of minimising the importance of the promises to Abraham and the way they are presented in Scripture? One would

7. See John Adey, "Divine divination", *The Testimony*, August 1977, pp. 283-286, for a more detailed presentation of some facets of "cutting a covenant".

8. For a more detailed analysis of the presentation of the tabernacle in the Epistle to the Hebrews, see: Peter Forbes, "Some details in the Letter to the Hebrews: the Tabernacle", *The Bible Student*, March/April 1978, pp. 15, 16.

hope not. The matter of inspiration is no different (see the Statement of Faith).

Secondly, and just as important, a muddled understanding or presentation of inspiration can lead to spiritual confusion and even shipwreck. There are certain areas of both Old and New Testaments which are difficult to understand. 1 Corinthians 11 is such an area, where, through the Spirit, Paul discusses the question of coverings. Whatever the meaning of the passage concerned, it is dangerous and wrong to dismiss the matter as of little importance on the basis that "Paul is only giving his own opinion". Yet the writer has heard just such a view expressed—by a sister, on a campaign, during discussion on the daily readings. The sister suggested that whatever Paul was saying, it was not binding on believers anyway. On being invited to square her comment with her understanding of 2 Timothy 3:16 ("All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . .") she said she felt there was no need to answer since she was satisfied that she had not violated "her own understanding of inspiration". But unless we are clear in our minds that all the Scripture is God's inspired Word — both the ideas, and the language structure in which those ideas are expressed — we shall be in no position to defend

our faith or to appreciate in our own experience that "the Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

Finally, let us reflect again on the fact that "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20,21). Let us give due emphasis to the fact that there is a causal relationship between the interpretation of Scripture and the mode by which it was given. Because it was God-given, our opinions about its interpretation are worthless—the Spirit-Word itself, in all its parts, must be the interpreter or the final arbiter of interpretations. Without a clear, Biblical understanding of inspiration and its implications for the detailed study of the text of Scripture, our own opinions about the relevance or importance of points of doctrine or exposition are likely to pervert our understanding of "the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ".

INSPIRATION AND HISTORICITY: THE CASE OF GENESIS AND EBLA

ARTHUR GIBSON

Introduction

THE FOLLOWING remarks deal with only some elements in Genesis 1-11 as they relate to archaeology. This discussion is within two perspectives. First, inspiration—what is the practical significance of a text which is revelation from God? Secondly, historicity—in what way does the relevant text of Genesis correspond to history? The answer to these two questions, summarily stated, is that in Genesis 1-11 we have not only a definition of the foundations of human life and societies, but also an omniscient overview of these states of affairs which no person descended from Adam could have

produced.

Ebla

Ebla is an archaeological site in Syria which has yielded some 20,000 tablets from before and at the time of Abraham. An earlier review documented some aspects of the discovery of Ebla and the tablets.¹ The current sketch will avoid repeating the contents of that review, and will concentrate on reconstruction of the relevant tablets' value.

1. Arthur Gibson, "Tell Mardikh: discovery of an empire", *The Testimony*, Oct. 1976, pp. 377-386.

Genesis institutionalised

Since 1754, and increasingly in this century, establishment scholarship, largely within the confines of orthodox theology, has attempted to place Genesis in a mythological institution. Particularly is this the case with the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Consequently, scholars have largely lost track of the complex data and interpretations which need to be assessed when attempting to construct Genesis as history. Genesis is very often deemed irrelevant to archaeology because it is assumed to be mythology, and the deep conceptual topics which require investigation and structuring are not given an airing, let alone synthesis. A typical example is the creation narrative in Genesis 1-2.

Creation at Ebla

Although much of what is stated about Ebla has to be provisional in detail because new forms of language have been found, some basic themes in texts are clear. Parts of five of these tablets contain a creation narrative which can be translated as follows:

Lord of heaven and earth.
The earth did not exist,
Then you created it.
The sun was not established,
Then you created it.
You had not yet made illumination:
Then the Lord's word empowered it . . .

With slight variations this narrative is repeated in the tablets, and to it is attached a list of descriptions applied to "the Lord". Unusually, but not uniquely, "the Lord" is not identified in the tablets. So theoretically it might be a remnant of a monotheistic theology; but it is more likely, with the polytheism at Ebla, that the unspecified subject of "the Lord" is a pagan deity such as Ninurta. However, there is a third type of possibility, that this text is aimed at an "unknown" God such as that indicated in the inscription mentioned in Acts 17:23.

Previously discovered tablets on creation were directly about monsters and animal-type gods, with bits of animal being used in creation to produce items such as the earth. Characteristically, these sorts of tablets are from about the seventh century B.C., although it is usually assumed that they go back to much earlier originals. Even so, it is this latter type of monster narrative which has often been applied to the Bible, allegedly to show that the first few chapters of Genesis rely on or reflect Mesopotamian myth and legend. One case of

this is the chaos monster, which some theologians have connected to the Hebrew word for "deep" (*tehom*), as though Genesis reflects some aspect of the attendant mythology. This expression's equivalent has now turned up at Ebla without the mythological sense, which undercuts the 'need' to propose a mythological sense in Genesis 1.

But the foregoing creation narrative from Ebla provides a more specific argument for not having to link creation with monsters and animal gods. The text from Ebla offers an abstract creation sequence with the "word" as the means of creation. It is not synonymous with Genesis 1; yet it has strong similarities to the Biblical creation narrative, which does not show any dependence. And the closeness of relations could be because Ebla scribes read Genesis 1-2 and reacted to it with a version which was derivative. The Ebla narrative does show that in about 2400 B.C. writers were capable of expressing abstract non-bestial non-evolutionary accounts of the origin of life. So those scholars who have maintained that such a sophisticated explanation could not have been given at this early date are wrong. Of course, for those who believe in the inspiration of Genesis, this scholastic criticism of Genesis would hardly merit attention. But these scholars claimed that the type of language used in Genesis did not exist at this early date and was typical of, for example, the seventh century B.C. This view was used to push Genesis to a late date. With the Ebla creation tablets, and other data, this late-date and non-early-writing-of-Genesis thesis collapses in on itself. This relates to inspiration not only in historical but also in doctrinal terms: the late dating of Genesis has been part of a device to oppose Genesis and the claims of its language and history. Once the opposition was made, it was used to argue that it was not compatible with verbal inspiration. It follows from the above outline that the Ebla material destroys the basis of this opposition. Hence we can position Genesis 1-2 back as far as the Bible puts it.

Sodom

An early report by the linguist then in charge of the Ebla tablets which were found in 1975-6 stated that in them there appear names of the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim, and Bela/Zoar. This report has *not* been withdrawn, although it appears that the names occur on a number of tablets and not on one as at first thought. Some of the interpretations have problems, but they all have a probability of

being correctly interpreted. Sodom, for example, has now been found referred to on at least sixteen occasions in the tablets. One scholar, not unknown for his antipathy to this sort of Biblical connection, has suggested that the use of "Sodom" is of a place in Syria, and is not the Biblical Sodom. But there is no context in the Ebla tablets which supports this view, and no evidence has been offered by the scholar. No tablets outside Ebla refer to a name "Sodom". So there are no grounds for supporting the opinion that its location is in Syria. In addition, with the Biblical uses already in a narrative which groups the five cities of the Plain, it seems prejudiced to offer another unknown location as the candidate for the Ebla name 'Sodom'. Thus the critical folklore studies of Genesis, which consign Sodom to the mythical realm so that the inspired text seems to dispute history, are themselves mythologies.

Sodom as a boundary

Genesis 10:19 records that the boundary of the Canaanites is "as thou goest, unto Sodom". This is in the present tense. Therefore Genesis 10 was revealed before the destruction of Sodom. Such internal evidence is confirmed at the archaeological level by the foregoing evidence. It is worth noting that the present-tense Sodom reference is typical of other place names in Genesis 10. Genesis 10 is God's map of national boundaries as they actually ought to be, not as a theologian designated them. There would be no such knowledge without revelation. So to mythologise Divine geography destroys the foundations of nations.

Babel

The foregoing merely documents a modern violation which in a way the recipients of the inspired record in the third millennium themselves committed. All the descendants of Noah were given territories in Genesis 10. But they promptly migrated to one location, to Shinar. Actually, on one interpretation this could be restricted to the Semites. But it should be seen that the former view has a strong basis in the text: in Genesis 11:1 it states: "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar" (RV). It appears that the reference to "one language" is a way of grouping all the families in chapter 10 under the umbrella term "they" to emphasise, by language, the one group. The families of

Noah moved from Ararat south west into Palestine, but then migrated in the direction of Babylon— to Shinar.

Ebla appears to have been built by people migrating back from Shinar after Babel. (It is possible that the "Obal" of Genesis 10:28 is a name which later was used to name Ebla—the vowel variations are not material to the connection.) Two Ebla narratives describe the Flood and the subsequent political relations in southeast Mesopotamia. One of these documents relations between Erech (Gen. 10:10) and a place called Aratta (this latter place is unknown, but thought to be east of Erech). Erech, as Genesis informs us, was founded by Nimrod, and this, together with Babel, Accad and Calneh, formed the beginning of his kingdom. (It is interesting that the etymology for "Nimrod" seems to occur in Eblaite, where it means "leopard-god". His being a mighty hunter against the Lord—leopard hunter, aptly reflects this.) This group of Nimrodian cities is in the land of Shinar, as Genesis 10:10 states, to which Noah's families migrated to build the tower of Babel. "Shinar" matches the later "Sumer" in Sumerian. And Kramer, the world's leading Sumerian scholar, has proposed that this Sumerian term "Sumer" probably identifies with "Shem" (the different letters are standard changes which happen when this type of word passes between the two languages). If this is correct, it compares well with the Semites and related families migrating into Shinar. It may be that the term "Shinar" also derives from a mythological use in Sumerian where it represents deification, which combines well with the false worship theme of Babel. This collection of information shows how Genesis 10 is giving a definition of the foundation of societies in relation to their attitude to God's will. The information concurs with archaeological data; but it is the inspired record which offers the proper structuring of the data, and adds material unknown to early civilisation.

The fact of Ebla's knowing about relations between Erech and Aratta has an unexpected connection with the Babel builders. A recently retrieved part of a Sumerian inscription also mentions relations with Erech and Aratta. It names Enmerker as a king of Erech in the context of a fuzzy account about his threatening Aratta with war if it does not supply him with its stone- and metal-workers to build a special temple to the god Enki. This is combined with the claim that it was this god who ended the golden age when all men spoke one language by

confusing their tongues. Although this explanation is attached to the wrong god, it has clear parallels with Genesis 11.

Ebla used very early Sumerian of a form slightly older than that known before the 1975 excavation, although its Sumerian is similar to that used at Fara. No Sumerian was known at all from Syria or Palestine prior to the Ebla excavations. This discovery of Sumerian shows that soon after Babel, in keeping with Genesis 11:8, people spread out away from Babel in great haste. The absence of such sites had previously induced many scholars to pour scorn on the claims of the Biblical Babel narrative, partly because they insisted that Sumerian was used in a small area in south Mesopotamia. This is now known to be false, and requires revision of theories which were developed from this view.

Not only have false theories been adopted, but archaeological data have been ignored. For example, in Tataria in Rumania and in Germany near the Danube early ideographic Sumerian tablets have been found—in the 1960s and earlier. These were discovered with objectively datable pottery ware which complies with a date soon after Babel. But they so opposed anything which scholarship had accepted that they were completely neglected. However, they are in the same type of ideographic Sumerian which has been found at Erech near Babel. Because there was no Sumerian used between Erech and Rumania and Germany, it was thought unaccountable that the texts are authoritative. But it is now recognised that the European Sumerian tablets are genuine, and Ebla was perhaps a transit point for some who went on to Europe. (It may not be without significance that the early demonology of Rumania (Transylvania)—not unrelated to the Dracula motifs—has Mesopotamian counterparts in some traditions. Were Dracula's ancestors Sumerian?)

This has a parallel in other phenomena: a lot more goes back to Babel (Babylon) than a general scholastic consensus has hitherto admitted. Hislop's *Two Babylons*, although crude in its treatment, correctly assesses the basic position.

Even with such apparently Canaanite false gods as Baal, one can now detect their appearance in southern Mesopotamia. "Baal" was used as a proper name (*ba-al*), and as a title (*be-lu*—"lord") at Ebla, and in such southern Mesopotamian sites as Ur and Abu Salabikh. Migrating from the promised land, after arriving there from Ararat, the people arrived in Shinar, constructed Babel, were spread abroad and some returned to Palestine. Unfortunately, they had not learned their lesson, and took the culture with them. That some arrived in Ebla speaking Sumerian may complement the above data and show that the Sumerians were originally Hebrew-speaking Semites or Canaanites who had the new Sumerian language imposed upon them by God at Babel. This would solve the problem of their origin and language.

Conclusion

The above selective brief review of strands of information found at Ebla is typical of a large group of data. History is a mirror of inspiration when revelation describes history. This forces an immensely close interrelation between inspiration and history. Inspiration produces revelation which embodies the quality of inspiration. So whenever history is being described and referred to by inspired narrative, it has to be true. Critics of the book of Genesis often oppose it at the point where Mesopotamian culture conflicts with God's description of that culture. On these matters Genesis is intensely rich, deep and yet straightforward. The quality of the relations, connections—the map of history—in Genesis is exactly how God views history. For these reasons, critics are complicatedly naive and underestimate Genesis. They reduce deep truths to mythology by conforming to the culture which in ancient times Genesis opposed. They view the pagan culture as primary, and Genesis as a deviant. But this is to fall into the same error which those did whom God criticised in Genesis. We ought to learn from this when thinking out our own relation to God's Word and to the world.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

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INSPIRATION DEFENDED: CHRISTADELPHIAN VIEWS

NO "UNIMPORTANT DETAILS"

The phrase "unimportant details" involves an unwarrantable assumption. It affirms that there are details in the Bible which are not important. In this we have an illustration of the strange perverseness of the human mind, which, to escape one position alleged to be unsound, rushes into another of its own devising. That the contents of the Bible are not all of equal importance, may, without any dishonour to it, be admitted. But to describe them as of relative importance is very different from saying that any are unimportant. Though there be some details which we do not deem to be important, are we to conclude that they are so esteemed by Jehovah? Is our standard of importance that by which He is to be guided? Is our fallible apprehension of His infallible work to decide that there is any item, however small, which might have been left out? Are we to be so arrogant as to assure omniscience, and to say that any item which does not appear to us to be important can be of no possible importance to anyone else? The Bible has been given, not for one man, but for many; not for this generation only, but for a hundred or more in the past, and we know not how many in the future; not for an age, but for the duration of the human race. Many things which seem unimportant to us may have been of no small importance to those to whom the writings were first given; nay, it is not merely may, but must have been. And how often have not little items, apparently insignificant, and passed over by the many, been shewn to have a meaning and an importance not previously noticed? Where, then, is the fallible being prepared, in all reverence, to affirm upon sound evidence, that this list is exhausted? Until a demonstration to this effect appears on the scene, it would be well for those who desire to be clothed with humility and wisdom to cease contending for "unimportant details", erroneous or otherwise.

J.J. Andrew, *The Christadelphian*, 1885, pp. 561-2.

INSPIRATION AND PROVIDENCE

Between inspiration and providence there is a marked difference. In inspiration God's action is direct, and, therefore, results in a perfect expression of His mind; but in providence His control is not so complete as to prevent a man manifesting his mental proclivities. On the contrary, God often uses them—even when of an extreme character—for His own purpose. Hence the difficulty which many have in recognising the hand of God in human affairs. They fail to perceive that the action of one is counterbalanced by the action of another, and that the combined results are so carefully adjusted as to fulfil God's purpose in the exact way and at the precise time which He designed. A narrow view sees only defect; but a comprehensive one—especially when impartial and retrospective—can see that there has been nothing wanting.

J.J. Andrew, *The Christadelphian*, 1886, p. 81.

THE JOTS AND TITTLES

An inspiration that did not select the words of the message it intended to convey would be an imperfect inspiration, and God does not do His work imperfectly. An inspiration that did not give us an infallible writing would be an inspiration which we could not trust for guidance. To say that the jots and tittles are not inspired and infallible is to say either that God did not give us the jots and tittles, or that God can make mistakes. To say the first is to take away the reliable character of the Scriptures; to say the second is to utter blasphemy.

Thomas Sturgess, *The Christadelphian*, 1889, p. 552.

INSPIRATION AND THE RECORDING OF HISTORY

Man could not be trusted to write divine history. The written history of God's work is the principal part of the work of God in a day like ours. It is the principal illustration of His mind and will. In the writing of such a history man would leave out that which was divinely essential—the record of man's continual failures and sins—whoever might happen to be affected; and he would insert that which was immaterial—the mere political gossip of the age, tending either to human exaltation or depreciation according to the prejudices of the moment. And in all cases, he would be liable to err in his representations, and, therefore, could not be trusted to give us a writing on which the children of God could rely. Things might be 'infallibly true' in themselves, as it is inaptly phrased; but the record of them for divine purposes is an affair of correct knowledge, divine discrimination as to what is important, and unsparing fidelity in the record of the things selected. All these things required inspiration. The things might be known in the mass without inspiration; but only inspiration could assort and select for divine ends. It is a question of the divine use of human materials, and for this divine guidance was necessary.

Robert Roberts, *Is the Bible the Work of Inspiration?*, p. 9.

THE CRITICS' FAILURE

The Spirit was the author of all the sayings and doings recorded, and could therefore paraphrase or vary the description of His own acts or utterances, with the liberty that any author exercises in reference to his own productions. It is the failure to recognise the all-prevailing presence of the Spirit of God in the production of these writings that creates the difficulties of criticism. Rules applicable to merely human productions are applied to a class of composition which is outside the ordinary literary category altogether. There is no parallel between a human writer who puts down his own thoughts and impressions merely, and one whose mentality is fused for the time being with a guiding mind outside his own, whose servant he is, and under whose influence he may even write things he does not understand.

Robert Roberts, from the Preface to *Nazareth Revisited*.

PAUL'S CLAIM TO INSPIRATION

It is true that Paul boldly claimed inspiration and, what is more important, established his claim by the exhibition of 'special miracles' which God wrought by his hands (Acts 19:11). Thus God bore him witness "with signs and wonders and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will" (Heb. 2:4). He spoke as the oracles of God, healed the sick, raised the dead, and inflicted judgments on the adversary.

But did the gifts of the Holy Spirit forsake him when he began to write? Was it less important that the message written for many generations to come, and to be multiplied into innumerable copies among all peoples, nations, multitudes and tongues, should be guided by the same Holy Spirit? Common sense would suggest a negative answer. But happily we are not left to our own fallible deductions. Paul *does* claim inspiration for his writings: "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. But if any man be ignorant let him be ignorant" (and let him not pose as a prophet or a spiritually-gifted man)—1 Cor. 14:37,38.

Charles Walker, *Thoughts on Inspiration*, pp. 29, 30.

PARTLY HUMAN AND PARTLY DIVINE?

A partly human and partly divine Bible would only be of value if the human mind were sufficiently enlightened to distinguish infallibly between its human and divine parts; or if, as the Romanists claim, the church itself were infallible. And to believe either of these two things would involve expunging still more passages from the Bible, as intrusions of human error.

Peter Watkins, "The inspired Scriptures", *The Christadelphian*, 1961, p. 296.

TRANSCRIPTION AND TRANSLATION: THE OLD TESTAMENT

It is true that the original documents are lost and that copyists are always subject to error, yet the evidence seems to show that there has been a remarkable preservation of the original texts. About 1780 Kennicott examined over 600 Hebrew manuscripts. In his book *A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament* (1926) Prof. R. Dick Wilson says Kennicott found in these manuscripts 284,000,000 letters, among which were 900,000 variations (called variants), or one for 316 letters; but since 750,000 of these are trivial variations of "w" and "y" (two Hebrew letters used as vowels) the significant rate of variation is really one for every 1,580 letters. This remarkable preservation of the text is to be explained by the reverence with which the Jews treated their holy books, the measures they took to preserve them and the great care with which they copied them. Although the oldest extant manuscript up to recent times was the Leningrad, dating from the ninth century, this is because it was the practice of the Jewish scribes to destroy old copies when a new one was made, and in fact the text can be traced to a much earlier date. The Massorettes, Jewish scholars of 600 A.D., received a text already traditional and revered, and the Jewish commentary, the Talmud of the third century, had a fixed text behind it. Various translations witness to the existence of the text several centuries before that. The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in 1947, bring down the date of the earliest extant manuscripts of the Old Testament to the century before Christ and reveal a significant agreement with the Massoretic text upon which our translations are based. To quote Albright again: "It cannot be insisted too strongly that the Isaiah scroll proves the great antiquity of the text of the Massoretic book, warning us against the lighthearted emendation in which we used to indulge" (*Bulletin of Amer. Schools of Oriental Research*, April 1950, page 6). And with the psalms in mind: "One thing is certain: the days when Duhm and his imitators could recklessly emend the Hebrew text of the poetic books are gone for ever . . . We may rest assured that the consonantal text of the Hebrew Bible, though not infallible, has been preserved with an accuracy perhaps unparalleled in any other Near-Eastern literature" (Quoted in Rowley's *Old Testament and the Archaeology of Palestine*, page 257).

We may take it then that although we are not able to recover every single letter of the original manuscripts of the Old Testament (that is what Albright means by "not infallible" above) and although the text we do recover is a consonantal text requiring a certain amount of interpretation by the addition of the vowel pointing (the work performed by the Massorettes in the seventh century A.D.), yet we have an Old Testament text so near to the original as makes no difference in any vital respect; we may have every confidence in it.

Fred Pearce, "The inspiration of the Bible", *The Christadelphian*, 1965, p. 102.

WITHOUT ERROR

When we assert that the Bible is without error, we mean that its statements are not contrary to fact. It is very important that we appreciate what such a conception of the Bible does *not* demand: it does *not* demand that each writer shall give his account in exactly the same words (yet each will tell the truth); nor that each writer shall recount every detail of the incident (yet he will tell sufficient for his own purpose, from his own standpoint). The diverse details which are yet not contradictory, and the way in which the accounts supplement one another, are at least a sign that the narratives are genuine, and not the result of collusion. With these considerations in mind we may freely acknowledge that sometimes we may not be able to offer a complete explanation; but the right reaction in these cases is, remembering that our information is incomplete (we were not there anyway!), *not* to condemn the Bible but to reserve judgment.

Fred Pearce, "The inspiration of the Bible", *The Christadelphian*, 1965, pp. 152-3.

BY INSPIRATION OF GOD

The God-breathed Word

The phrase “given by inspiration of God” is represented in the Greek of 2 Timothy 3:16 by one word, *theopneustos*, meaning literally “God-breathed”. The key to our understanding of this verse and of the Biblical doctrine of inspiration lies in the fact that here the reference is not to *inspired men* but to *God-breathed Scripture*. The meaning of *theopneustos*, used nowhere else in the Greek versions of either the Old Testament or the New, can be clearly illustrated from Scripture, and its message is profound yet simple to grasp.

“Spirit” and “Word”

In Gen. 1:2 it is recorded the “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light; and there was light”. Here is the first equation made between the activity of God’s *Spirit* and what He *said*. When we read the Psalmist’s comment in Psa. 33:6, 9—“By the *word* of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the *breath of his mouth* . . . For He spake and it was done; He commanded and it stood fast”—we see that the movement of God’s Spirit, His “breathing-out” and His word, are closely related ideas. The Hebrew and Greek words used in the original and Septuagint versions emphasise this close relationship. The Hebrew word for “spirit” (*ruach*) in Gen. 1:2 is used frequently in the Old Testament for “breath” as well, including man’s breath, but usually in the special sense of the breath which God has put into the nostrils of every living thing—the life which is essentially in His hands. The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*, used frequently in the Septuagint with both senses of *ruach*, spirit and breath—and the New Testament word *theopneustos* is composed of the two Greek words for “God” and “spirit” or “breath”. The Scripture, which is God-breathed, must, like the first recorded God-breathed word, be immediately authoritative, and of creative power in those that receive it.

Aldred Nicholls, “By inspiration of God”, *The Christadelphian*, 1968, p. 357.

FALSEHOOD IN INSPIRED SCRIPTURE

It is sometimes said that certain speeches in the book of Job are not inspired. This way of speaking is a muddled attempt to get at a partial truth; narrowly construed, the attempt fails. The Bible states: “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16); how do we square this “all” with uninspired speeches in Job? The answer is that these speeches are the result of *inspired recording* of uninspired speeches. To say, without recognition of this point, that the speeches are uninspired is already to concede too much and to provoke the false problem of a Bible composed of collections of secular and inspired texts—which it is not. God recorded and positioned and commented upon these speeches; these features are interwoven with the work of inspired recording. So to expose the fact of Divine recording is not to introduce a merely peripheral item. If ignored it distorts analysis and causes fictional problems.

It is helpful to contrast inspired recording with *inspired content*; the latter covers Scripture of which God was author. Of course inspired content includes the act of inspired recording, but *what* is said is inspired. The difference is that with inspired content God is being quoted, whereas with inspired recording secular agents contributing their own opinions are being quoted by God. In fact the notion of quotation is central to inspired recording respecting how we unpack related issues.

Arthur Gibson.

THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE: A CHRONOLOGICAL BIBLIOGRAPHY

REG CARR

This list is by no means exhaustive. Only items of major interest are mentioned. Not all the items are, however, of equal value; some are included only because they give a clear picture of some of the shades of opinion on inspiration. Those marked with an asterisk are recommended as substantial contributions to the argument in favour of verbal inspiration.

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(continued from inside front cover)

It is in that tradition that the present issue of the magazine has been prepared; and it is hoped that the setting aside of a whole number devoted to the subject of inspiration will both serve to stress its importance as a foundation doctrine and also provide a much-needed opportunity to consider the topic in some depth.

“Theories of inspiration: the Christadelphian experience” is intended to set the scene for a discussion of inspiration by recalling some of the history of the doctrine within the Brotherhood. It shows that there are important lessons to be learned from the past.

“Inspiration and revelation” comes to grips with the modern critical approach to the production of the Scriptures, and reinforces the view that verbal inspiration is the medium of Divine revelation in Scripture.

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“Inspiration and the human element” offers a radical approach to the sensitive area of the relationship between the men and the message of Scripture. The emphasis in the article comes down firmly on the Divine side of the “inspiration equation”, and the writer opens up the prospect of a rich new vein of expositional insights.

“Inspiration and textual detail in Scripture” is concerned to illustrate verbal inspiration by a series of carefully analysed examples from the Old and New Testaments. It also sounds a warning note about the implications of rejecting the doctrine.

“Inspiration and historicity” uses some of the recent discoveries at Tell Mardikh/Ebla to demonstrate conclusively that the very fabric of the text of Genesis embodies the quality of inspiration. Rather than simply showing that Genesis is historically accurate, it establishes that the Biblical text itself is a revelation from God.

“Inspiration defended: Christadelphian views” reproduces a number of helpful passages on problem areas within inspiration.

“The Inspiration of Scripture: a chronological bibliography” both gives an overview of the literature of the subject, and also provides a basis for further study.

The whole special issue is published in the hope that it will encourage, inform, stimulate, and warn. It is dedicated by its authors and editors “to the glory of God and the honour of His Word”.

Reg Carr & Arthur Gibson.

THE TESTIMONY

Annual Subscription (from 1st January, 1982):
£7.70 ENGLISH CURRENCY

post paid to any part of the world (except U.S.A. which is U.S. \$16.50 post paid
and Canada which is Can. \$18.00 post paid).

By Air Mail U.S.A. **\$28.25**, Canada **\$33.50**, Australia and N.Z. **£14.50**, other
countries outside Europe **£13.50**.

**Multiple orders (3 copies or more) through Ecclesial Bookstalls in
Great Britain, 55p per copy.**

PUBLISHED ON 15th OF EACH MONTH

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*Copies are obtainable from Ecclesial Bookstalls or through appointed Agents, or by
post from the Subscriptions Secretary, to whom all correspondence relating to the
issue of the magazine (including changes of address) should be addressed.*

Make remittances payable to "The Testimony Magazine".

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Published on behalf of *The Testimony* Committee (**Christadelphian**) by Richard
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613968.

Printed by Giles Reprographics, Loddon, Norfolk.