2 Timothy - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

On the Inspiration and Divine Authority of the Scriptures, 2. What Is Inspiration?

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By inspiration we mean that which is God-breathed. We are told “all [or every] Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” It might be rendered “every Scripture is God-breathed” (2Tlm. 3:16). The Scriptures are therefore a revelation from God; and their force or authority to our hearts and consciences flows from that fact. If Scripture be not God’s word, it has no more value to us than the writings of good men; but it is His word, hence it comes to us with the authority, love, wisdom and holiness of God. Though its pages run over thousands of years, take us back before time was, and lead our thoughts on to the eternal state, and some of its books were written more than three thousand years ago, it is unlike any other book, for it is always new. Take up an ordinary volume of human composition, written two or three hundred years ago, or even go back to one of the Fathers, and you will find you have scarcely patience to read a few pages; but Scripture, as we have said, though old, is always new. It carries with it a freshness and power to the heart and conscience, as no other book does; and all the changes in the world and in mankind never seem to affect it. It warns us against “men” and their “philosophy,” ritualism and its imposing ordinances, and of putting “tradition” in the place of authority instead of Christ. While addressing itself to the heart and conscience, it has always a voice of instruction and blessing to those who believe and receive its words from the mouth of God. Those who do not believe, cannot understand it, for “by faith we understand.” Such only know its blessedness. “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,” and we have “joy and peace in believing.” To the rationalist Scripture is inexplicable, to the ritualist it is confusion, to the infidel it abounds with mistakes, to the literary man there are inaccuracies and contradictions. Such, however, little know that God hath said that

the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

The Bible is the only book that faithfully tells us what we are, and that even to the discerning of the thoughts and intents of the heart. This shows it to be divine, for God only searches the heart. It also truly reveals God, so that when the word is received, it brings our souls into the consciousness of God having to do with us. This also shows its divinity, for “the world by wisdom knows not God.” The variety of aspects in which the Son who came forth from the Father to save sinners is presented to us — His personal glory, moral perfectness, finished work, walk, words, ways, life, death, resurrection, ascension, glorification, present offices, and future judgments and reign — as the leading truths of Scripture, give it also a divine character. Its unity, too, carries with it the stamp of divinity as nothing else could. The way in which the different parts are adapted to each other; types in the Old Testament having their antitypes in the New; a multitude of prophetic statements in the former having their accomplishment in the latter, and the immense number of quotations in the New from the Old Testament, to prove the soundness of the doctrines taught, combine to give it a divine character which is incontestable. It is not then surprising that an inspired writer should commend “the word” to us as if in its operations it possessed divine attributes.

The word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged 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).

A professing Christian lately said, “There are many opinions about the Scriptures”; to which we replied, “How can that be, if they are the utterances of God to us? for surely, then, we have only to hearken to His voice, and seek to do His will.” How little did this man think that he was, in the vanity of his mind, imagining that he was competent, as a fallen creature in Adam, to sit in judgment on the things of God, and thus take ground with rationalists and infidels, instead of bowing to Scripture as God’s word, and allowing it to judge him. Alas! such is the pride of man in these last and closing days, that many prefer their own opinions to Scripture, and, as of old, make void the word of God, that they may keep their own tradition. Hence, also, the word is being solemnly fulfilled in men’s rejection of holy Scripture, that “seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

If we have not “the words of God,” we have no basis for faith, and must therefore be tossed about with irremediable uncertainty; but having divinely-given communications, we have on their authority divinely-given certainty as to eternal salvation. By it we have present assurance, founded on the redemption-work of our Lord Jesus Christ, that our sins are forgiven, that we have eternal life, are the children of God, and shall not come into judgment (Acts 10:43; John 3:36; Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:1). If such are asked why they believe on our Lord Jesus Christ? and why they have such certainty as to their present and eternal blessings? their reply will be “Because God in His word says so, and faith needs no other authority for confidence, and no other rest for the heart and conscience.”

The days are indeed evil and perilous. Time was when heathen idolaters were those who chiefly scoffed and mocked at the Scriptures being God’s own revelation of His mind; and later on, avowed infidels in Christendom treated the subject with scorn and ridicule; but in our day it is those who profess to be servants of Christ, and guides of the flock of God, who are so busily engaged in undermining the eternal verity of the holy Scriptures, and their divine authority. This, too, is seldom attempted as a whole by one person; but by different persons in various places, so that it may be, by Satan’s artifice, the less manifest. At this moment there is scarcely a vital and fundamental doctrine of Scripture, that is not being assailed or corrupted within the length and breadth of Christendom.

What has especially stirred many hearts at this time, is the consciousness of the appalling state of souls in the neglect of the Scriptures, and the skeptical thoughts that are current among professors of Christianity as to their divine authority. Not that we imagine that we have power to lead any to see and act differently, for we are told that “no man knoweth the things of God, but the Spirit of God.” The prayer, however, of not a few, has been that God will yet work by His word, and bless and help souls according to His own thoughts, and for His own glory.