

**“THE WORD OF GOD:  
Its Divine Inspiration, Infallibility, And All-sufficiency for Salvation.”  
Church Association Tract 401**

**JAMES MADEN HOLT, M.A.**

Being a Paper read at the Church Association Day of Prayer, February 1st, 1909.

The subject on which I am asked to speak to you this morning is one of the most important which can occupy the attention of a human being. I feel deeply my incapacity to treat it as it ought to be treated, and whilst asking the aid of the Spirit of Truth to enable me to say something worthy of the occasion, I beg your kind indulgence in my feeble efforts to deal with so solemn a subject. All I can do is to remind you of truths with which you are already familiar. Let me say at once I address you as Churchmen and members of the Church Association assembled for humiliation, prayer, and praise. My subject is “The Word of God : Its inspiration, infallibility, and all-sufficiency for salvation.” I pass over, as unsuited to our present object, questions of grave importance as to the genuineness and authenticity of the books, or the integrity and purity of the text of our Bibles. We are satisfied from internal evidence that our Scriptures are not the work of ungodly men. We believe Jesus of Nazareth to be “Christ come in the flesh,” and accept His testimony as that of the Only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Hence we start with the conviction that our Bible is properly designated the Holy Scriptures—the Word of God.

The Word of God!—a message from “the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose Name is Holy” ! The Almighty, Everlasting God !—the glorious Being Whom “the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain,” infinite in power, in wisdom, and in goodness; our gracious Father,—our Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier! Do we realize as we open our Bibles what it is we hold in our hands? The Word of God! How wonderful that He should condescend to communicate with us who have so grievously rebelled against His authority! turned our backs on Him,

Him, and committed idolatry of the worst kind by following the devices and desires of our own hearts, setting self on the throne to which He alone has a right. “Hear, O heavens! and give ear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken,” and what He said of Israel is tearfully true of us. He sees us just as we are. Let us praise Him that He hath sent His Word—“the Word of His grace” —to heal us.

On the present occasion our experience of the exceeding great goodness of our heavenly Father during the past year may well stimulate us to deep humiliation on account of the weakness of our faith and of our want of appreciation of His Word, as well as to heartfelt gratitude for our deliverance and for His exceedingly precious promises. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me.” Let us, then, now “offer unto God thanksgiving and pay our vows unto the Most High.”

God hath spoken in His holiness! and our Bible conveys to us by human agency the revelation which He has been pleased to make of His character, purpose, wisdom, and power, acquainting us with His thoughts to us-ward;—disclosing to us sinners not only His perfect holiness, justice, and truth, but also the marvelous love by which, in the riches of his grace, He made provision, before the foundation of the world, for the reconciliation, justification, and sanctification of the chief of sinners. Just think of it! The possession of His Word shows that He, Who “dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto,” Who “sitteth on the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants are as grasshoppers” — “remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endureth for ever”! Let us humble ourselves before Him, as we read that “all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass; the grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away; but the Word of the Lord

endureth for ever. And this is the Word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.”

We claim for both the Old and the New Testament the title of the Word of God. The very title implies that they are inspired, breathed forth by God Himself—how, we know not—but conveyed to us by men whom the Holy Ghost, according to His good pleasure, qualified to communicate His will,—to declare to others what He showed to them. They tell us things we could not have known had He not revealed them. Though we know not the number of the men by whose agency the Bible was composed, we find all tell the same story respecting God and fallen man,—sin and its remedy.

This strongly confirms the claim of the volume to inspiration as evidence of the work of one mind; and its Divine authority is further confirmed by the fact that it describes the holiness of God, and the perfect purity of His moral law, in a manner beyond the conception of unaided human nature, and reveals the thoughts and intents of our hearts in a fashion deeply humiliating to the sons of men. The Old Testament comes to us from the custody of the Jews, who regarded the text of their sacred writings with the greatest reverence; and as accepted by our Lord Jesus Christ and His accredited messengers as the Word of God. The New Testament puts into our hands books recognized by the Primitive Church as written by men who had hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus—men the majority of whom in the days of His flesh were His constant companions and were commissioned directly by Him “to teach all nations.” We claim inspiration for both Testaments. How the Lord the Spirit was pleased to effect this we know not. Doubtless in various methods, dividing to every man severally as He pleased. We read of “visions and revelations of the Lord.” The Five Books of Moses abound with instances in which the Lord spake to the Patriarchs, or to the leaders and Judges of the Hebrew people. The Prophets all spoke in the name of the Lord, and nearly all of them employ the phrase “Thus saith the Lord.” For the New Testament, we rely on the very words of the Lord Jesus, recorded by St. John : “But the Comforter, Which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. “When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth. . . . He will show you things to come.” Thus it is on the authority of the Scriptures themselves that we believe their inspiration, and therefore call them the Word of God ; and the conviction is confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit in the heart of the believer.

Need I add instances in which the Lord Jesus always treated the Old Testament as the Word of God? When He said “It is written,” can anyone doubt that he regarded the passages quoted from the Old Testament as the Word of God? When he quoted Psalm cx. He introduced it thus : “For David himself said by the Holy Ghost.” As recorded in John xiii. 18 and xv. 25, the Lord directly attributed incidents in His own life to predictions in the Hebrew Scriptures, just as He expounded to the travellers to Emmaus the things written by Moses and the Prophets concerning Himself. David claimed inspiration when he said (2 Sam. xxiii. 2) : “The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His Word was in my tongue.” Matthew, Luke, John, Peter, Paul, and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, all join in attributing inspiration to the Old Testament Prophets. Peter describes them as “holy men of God” who “spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” ; and Paul says, “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the Prophet.” Need I say more? I appeal to your own experience. The inspiration of the Scriptures is established for us beyond doubt.

My theme requires me also to enlarge upon the infallibility of the Word of God. How can it be otherwise? The Holy Scriptures being records, as St. Paul puts it, “in the words which . . . the Holy Ghost teacheth,” their infallibility is at once indisputably established. Let us, however, beware of attributing infallibility to ourselves. We may misunderstand the Word, but that does not impair its infallibility or its authority. “For ever, O Lord, Thy Word is settled in heaven.” Let our attitude be one of humble waiting upon God. “Open Thou mine eyes!” “Give me understanding that I may know Thy testimonies!” “That which I see not, teach Thou me!” To accept the Scriptures as the Word of God is to proclaim their infallibility. But the purport of my theme probably is to insist on the infallibility of the Word as the final court of appeal, in contrast with that claimed for the Bishop of

Rome or for the Church. No man acquainted with the history of Christianity, and especially with that of the Popes, can accept the preposterous doctrine of the Vatican Council. The opposition of the most learned Roman Catholic theologians, and their refusal to concur in the decision of the Council of 1870, shows that it is regarded as untenable even by well-informed Papists. It is fatal to the character of the Roman Communion as a Christian Church. What saith the Scripture? "To the law and to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The man who speaks as God speaks may claim infallibility, not for himself, but for God's Word. We repudiate the alleged infallibility of the Bishop of Rome, and also that of the Church. What is the Church? "A congregation of faithful men"—but of fallible men. Where does the infallibility reside? Catholic consent is practically a myth. If it were true, it would only be the consent of fallible men. No doubt it is alleged to be the consent of men in whom the Holy Ghost dwells and works; but how can that alleged fact be established except by their agreement with the written Word? Are there not tares in the finest wheatfields? "General Councils may err, and have erred, even in things pertaining unto God" ; and as loyal members of the Church of England we assert that "things ordained by them a necessary to salvation have neither strength nor authority unless it may be declared that they be taken out of Holy Scripture." Then they have strength and weight, for the Word of God is infallible. "Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy name." Even Balaam knew better than to doubt the power and faithfulness of God (Num. xxiii. 19). Knowledge, faithfulness, and power are pillars of infallibility.

The next point is the all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture for salvation. This is the principle on which the English Reformation was based. "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation, so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of the faith or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation." The importance attached by our Church to the study of the Bible, and its estimate of its all-sufficiency, is especially to be noted in the predominant position assigned to the Holy Scriptures in the Ordinal. The Word of God is set forth as the source whence the clergy are to derive spiritual food for themselves and for "the Lord's family." This is the doctrine of the Church of England because it is the teaching of the Holy Ghost. He asserts the sufficiency of His Word—i.e., the sufficiency of His plan and purpose for the salvation of sinners, as revealed therein. Writing by the pen of the Apostle Paul the Holy Ghost says to Timothy concerning the Old Testament: "From a child thou hast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ"; and concerning the New Testament, writing to the Romans : "The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." Both passages associate salvation with faith, and "faith," says the Apostle, "is the gift of God" ; it "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The Word contains all that a sinner needs to know for his soul's health; and the central fact revealed in the Word is the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all—the one offering by which he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. The whole Bible is full of this. "To Him give all the Prophets witness that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts x. 43) : "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. xix. 10). The Lord Jesus, before He ascended on high, reminded His disciples how He had told them that all things must be fulfilled concerning Himself which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms—the three great divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures. To His enemies he had said : "Search the Scriptures (the same holy records) for in them ye think ye have eternal life ; and they are they which testify of Me." The knowledge of the salvation which is in Jesus Christ is the thing we need ; and that is the theme of the Word. The written Word reveals the Living Word Who was in the beginning with God and was God, and Who came "to seek and to save that which was lost." The all-sufficiency of the Word of God is found in the all-sufficient Saviour of Whom it tells, and in the all-sufficiency of God the Holy Ghost, the true Vicar of Christ. It is the voice of the Spirit. He works in it and by it. "Who worketh in us" to hear and learn of His good pleasure, "dividing to every man severally as He will."

The conclusion of the whole matter is that the Bible reveals a salvation which is wholly of the Lord; and as the Homily "On the Misery of all Mankind" puts it, "the Holy Spirit in writing the Holy

Scriptures is in nothing more diligent than to pull down man's vain glory and pride." In the wisdom of God, the Word of His grace, in its inspiration, its infallibility, and its all-sufficiency, fulfils his purpose that no flesh shall glory in His presence, but, according as it is written, "He that glorieth, let Him glory in the Lord." God grant us severally grace to realize, to value, to hold fast the treasure we possess in His Word, and enable us to say with Romaine, "Upon every reading of the Bible it grows more precious to me, as it did to David ; because it is not only the discovery, but is become also the conveyance, of the unsearchable riches of Christ; these are revealed in the Word and applied by the Word."