

To the Board of Trustees of the  
Southern Bapt. Theology Seminary —

Dear brethren

It having lately become apparent to me that my views of Inspiration differ considerably from those of the body of my brethren, I ask leave to lay my opinions on that subject before you and submit them to your judgment.

At the outset I may say that I fully accept the Irish Article of the "Fundamental Principles" of the Seminary: "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience", and that I have always taught and do now teach in accordance with and not contrary to it.

It is in the details of the subject that my divergence from the prevailing view in the Denomination occurs. This divergence has gradually increased in connection with my studies from year to year till it has become perceptible to myself and to others.

In looking for light on Inspiration my resort has been and is to the Scriptures themselves alone, and I rest myself wholly on their testimony. It seems to me that while they declare the fact of divine inspiration they say nothing of the manner of its action: we are told that ~~the~~ men spake from God, ~~came~~ along by the Holy Ghost, and that all scripture is given by inspiration

of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness - that the man of God may be ~~perfect~~ complete, thoroughly furnished for every good work. The object of the scriptures is here said to be an ethical-spiritual one - they were given man for his guidance and edification in religion, as Our Lord also says: sanctify them in the truth; thy word is truth.

As nothing is said of the mode of operation of the Divine Spirit, of the manner in which the Divine saving truth is impressed on the mind, of the relation of the Divine influence to the ordinary working of the human intellect, we must <sup>as to these points</sup> consult the books of the Bible themselves and examine the facts. Against facts no theory can stand, and I prefer therefore to have no theory, but to submit myself to the guidance of the actual words of the Holy Scripture.

As the result of my examination I believe that the Bible is wholly divine and wholly human. The Scripture is the truth of God communicated by him to the human soul, <sup>appropriated by it</sup> and then given out with free human energy as the sincere, real conviction of the soul.

To undertake to say a priori what must be the outward form of God's revelation of himself to man, seems to me presumptuous. If rationalism be the decision of religious questions by human reason, then it appears to me to be rationalistic to say that a Divine revelation must conform to certain outward conditions, to insist, for example, that it must be written in a certain style, or that it must teach certain things in Geography or Astronomy or similar matters.

I hold all a priori reasoning here to be out of place, and all theories based on it to be worthless. Such procedure seems to me out of keeping with the simple, reverent spirit appropriate to him who comes to search into the truth of God.

For this reason I am forced to discard the theories of some pious men as Fichte and Wordsworth, who have proceeded in this a priori way, and to keep myself to the facts given in the Bible itself.

These facts make on me the impression that the Scripture-writers are men who have received messages from God and utter them under purely free human conditions. The inspired man speaks his own language, not another man's, and writes under the conditions of his own age, not under those of some other age. His personality, his individuality has the freest play, all under the control of the guiding divine spirit.

In illustration of what I mean I refer to 1 Cor. 1:14-16, where Paul first says that he had baptized nobody at Corinth but Crispus and Gaius, then a while after, remembering himself adds that he had also baptized the household of Stephanas, and finally, <sup>coming to doubt his memory,</sup> declares that he doesn't know whether he had baptized any other persons. Here, if we indulge in arithmetical criticism, is a flat contradiction; but if we see simply the free play of the writer's mind under the ordinary conditions of human thought, there is no difficulty. And if anyone ask me how this perfectly free play of thought consists with divine guidance, I answer that I can tell that no more than how supernatural divine power coexists with free action of the soul in conversion, or how I exist at all, or how in general the finite and the infinite can coexist.

I find that the geography, astronomy and other physical science of the Sacred Writers was that of their times. It is not that of our times - it is not that which seems to us correct. But it has nothing to do with their message of religious truth from God. I do not feel authorized to impose on divine revelation the condition that it shall accord with modern geography and geology, nor to say that

I will not accept it except on this condition. It seems to me that geography has nothing to do with religion. The message is not less divine to me because it is given in Hebrew and not in English, or because it is set in the framework of a primitive and incorrect geology.

When the Psalmist says (Ps. 121:6): "the sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night", it does not matter to me whether the moon is really injurious at night or not, for the obvious religious thought is independent of this outward form.

Or, when discrepancies ~~occur~~ or inaccuracies occur in historical narrative, this does not even invalidate the documents as historical records, much less does it affect them as expressions of religious truth. I am slow to admit discrepancies or inaccuracies; but, if they show themselves, I refer them to the human conditions of the writer, believing that his merely intellectual status, the mere amount of information possessed by him, does not affect his spiritual relation to God or the validity of his message of spiritual truth. If our heavenly Father sent a message by the stammering tongue of a man, I will not reject the message because of the stammering.

My position is the same when I find that political details have not fallen out in accordance with the form in which the prophets clothe their religious exhortations. If Hosea looked for a captivity of Ephraim in Egypt (Hos. 9:3), or Isaiah for political friendship between Assyria, Egypt and Israel (Isa. 19:23-25), that is the mere clothing of their real thought. The prophets uttered everlasting truths, which are embodied and fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and with which the geographical and political details have no essential connection. To them Israel was the centre and hope of the world, and the prospective possessor of all prosperity; and the spiritual

gist of their teaching has been perpetuated in Christ, while the merely outward has passed away.

The prophets and priests were not <sup>only</sup> preachers of religion, but also writers of religious history. The <sup>early</sup> history of Israel was for a long time not committed to writing, but handed down by oral tradition, under which process it was subject to a more or less free expansion. In this expanded form it was received at a comparatively late time by the prophets and priests, who put it into shape, and made it the vehicle of religious truth. All historical writing in Israel <sup>that has come down to us</sup> was of the nature of a sermon; it was composed not for the sake of the facts but for the lessons they taught. The idea of scientific history did not then exist - it was all pragmatic, that is, written for the purpose of inculcating a truth. The traditional history is treated by the Jews of Israel in the spirit of profound trust in God and regard for his law. I can no more demand historical science in the Scripture than geological science; I regard them both as being outside of the domain of religion.

The same thing I hold in respect to the Levitical Law, which grew up, as it seems to me, from generation to generation on a Mosaic basis, and could thus be called Mosaic.

In one word, I regard the Old Testament as the record of the whole circle of the experiences of Israel, the people whom God chose to be the depositary of his truth, all whose life he so guided as to bring out of it lessons for men's instruction, which he then caused to be written down for preservation. The nation lived out its life in a free, human way, yet under divine guidance, and its prophets, priests and psalmists recorded this spiritual-religious history under the conditions of their times. The divine truth is presented in a framework of relatively unessential things, as

Christ in his parables introduced accessories merely for the purpose of bringing out a principle, so that the parable of the Ten Virgins, for example, may properly be said to be the framework or vehicle of a religious truth. As a whole the parable may in a sense be called a religious teaching, but, speaking more precisely, we should say that a part of it is such teaching, or that this teaching is contained in it.

What I have said of the outward form of the Old Testament applies, as I think, to the outward form of the New Testament. I will not lightly see a historical or other inaccuracy in the Gospels or the Acts; but if I find such, they do not for me affect the divine teaching of these books. The centre of the New Testament is Christ himself. Salvation is in him, and a historical error cannot affect the fact of his existence and his teaching. The Apostles wrote out of their personal conviction of the reality of the truth of Christ. If Paul makes a slip of memory, as in the case above cited, that cannot affect his spiritual relation to Christ and to the Father, nor detract from his power as an inspired man. If his numerical statements do not always agree with those of the Old Testament (as in Gal. 3:17 compared with Ex. 12:40), that seems to me a matter of no consequence. If the New Testament writes <sup>sometimes</sup> quote the Old Testament in the Greek Version, which does not correctly render the Hebrew (as in Heb. 10:5 quoted from Ps. 40:6), that does not affect the main thought or the religious teaching. And it may be that in some cases my principles of exegesis lead me to a different interpretation of an Old Testament passage from that which I find given by some New Testament writer (as in Ps. 40:6 above mentioned); but this again I look on as an incidental thing, of which the true religious teaching is independent. <sup>[See additional leaf]</sup> In these men the Spirit of God dwelt, and out of their writings comes a divine power; recognizing

in them a divine element, I cannot reject it because of what seems to me outward or non-spiritual limitation. I do not condition divine action, but accept it in the form in which I find it.

As to criticism (questions of date and authorship) and exegesis, these stand by themselves, and have ~~nothing~~ nothing to do with Inspiration. The prophecy <sup>in Isa. 40-56</sup> is not less inspired if it be assigned to the period of the Babylonian Exile and the "Servant of Jehovah" be regarded as referring primarily to Israel. These are questions of interpretation and historical research in which, as it seems to me, the largest liberty must be allowed. If some of the Psalms should be put in the Maccabean period (B.C. 160) this is no reason for doubting their inspiration. God could act as easily on men in the year B.C. 160 as in B.C. 400, or B.C. 700.

It is proper to add that the above statement of my views of Inspiration is the fullest that I have ever expressed. Some things I have not thought it expedient to state to my classes in the Seminary. At the same time I regard these views as helpful for Bible-study; if at first they seem strange, I am convinced that they will appear more natural with farther study of the text.

I beg leave to repeat that I am guided wholly by what seems to me the correct interpretation of the Scriptures themselves. If an error in my interpretation is pointed out, I shall straightway give it up. I cannot accept a priori reasoning, but I stake everything on the words of the Bible. And this course I believe to be for the furtherance of the truth of God.

And now in conclusion I wish to say distinctly and strongly that I consider the view above given to be not only lawful for me to teach as Professor in the Seminary, but one that will bring aid and firm standing-ground to many a perplexed mind, and establish the truth of God on a surer foundation.

But that I may relieve the Board of all embarrassment in the matter, I respectfully tender my resignation as Professor in the Southern Dept. Theological Seminary.

Respectfully submitted,

May, 1879.

C. H. Joy,



[Insert on p. 6 of MS.]

I should add that in the majority of cases I hold that the New Test. quotations correctly represent the sense of the Old Testament, and that there is always a true spiritual feeling controlling them. I think that Peter's discourse in Acts 2<sup>d</sup> gives the true <sup>spiritual</sup> sense of the passage in Joel, and <sup>so</sup> many references of O. Test. passages to Christ throughout the New Testament. It ought also to be noticed that ancient ideas of quotation were different from ours. Ancient writers cite in a general way from memory for illustration, and permit themselves, <sup>without remark</sup> such alterations as a modern writer would think it necessary to call attention to. This is to be regarded as simply a difference of habit arising from the difference of the times. This freedom of quotation in Scripture-writers does not, for example, affect their <sup>general</sup> honesty and truthfulness, nor their spiritual train of thought, nor their spiritual authority. It is only a human condition of the divine truth they utter.

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Communication of  
Dr C H Joy

I.  
Report on Dr. Joy's  
Comm. resignation



The Committee to whom was re-  
ferred the communication of Dr. Joy  
beg leave to report:—

They have had under protracted  
and serious consideration the matter  
committed to them. They sought con-  
ference with Prof. Joy, and in addition  
to the carefully expressed paper pre-  
sented to the Board along with his  
resignation, they had a very free and  
candid expression of his opinions on  
some of the points less fully expressed  
in his written communication.

While deeply impressed with the  
beautiful Christian spirit of our beloved  
brother, they cannot but recognize, what  
he himself asserts, that there is a diver-  
gence in his views of inspiration from  
those held by our brethren in general. In  
view of this divergence, your Committee

feel constrained to recommend to  
the Board the acceptance of Prof.  
Joy's resignation. - In this recom-  
mendation they concur unanimously.

In behalf of the Committee  
James J. Furman  
Chairman