

Bible Witness

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HOLY SCRIPTURES



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P.



▲ A Morning Thought from Scripture

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“Baruch Writing Jeremiah's Prophecies” by Gustave Doré, wood engraving. Illustration of the record of Jeremiah 36.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

Beloved in Christ,

With this issue, Bible Witness has entered its 24th year of publication. We bow before the Lord who has enabled us to carry on publishing His glorious truths till this day. No better way can we express our present sentiment before the Lord than by borrowing David's words, "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chronicles 29:14).

Our earnest desire and prayer is that God will help us place the glorious truths of His Word in the hands of many more of His people through the distribution of Bible Witness. Hitherto, God's good providence has been guiding our church, Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, to reach new areas of the world to establish and support Gospel stations, churches, and Bible institutes. With more minds and hands to labour with us, and through more prayers and generous support from all who love God's kingdom, we look forward to fulfilling our desire in the coming years.

The articles in this Bible Witness issue on the "Doctrine of Scripture" (Bibliology) are vital for strengthening the confidence of God's people in the Scriptures, especially considering

today's unbelief and critical approach to Scripture. May the labour of God's servants in writing, publishing, and bringing to you those articles benefit you immensely.

The Bible is God's special revelation, communicating otherwise unknown and unknowable truths about Himself and the history of His dealings with people, which He wants man to know. While God has revealed certain truths about Himself in nature (which can be understood through His providential work in nature and man's conscience), His plan and work of redemption through Jesus Christ are revealed through the Bible. The specific focus of the Bible is Jesus Christ, the Son of God whom God the Father has sent to save sinners. This special revelation was communicated to selected men, such as the prophets and apostles, through divine appearances (theophanies), dreams, visions, audible voices, miracles, angels, and Jesus Christ Himself. God alone is the Source of truths communicated through various means of special revelation, which was done under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

Then the truths which God had specially and specifically revealed for the intent of man's redemption and edification, were written in the 66 books of the Bible (39 in the O.T. and

27 in N.T.). This process is known as inscripturation (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible has been written and compiled over a period of 1,500 years, through the pen of about 40 human writers being inspired by God—thus keeping the Holy Book from error. The Bible is not the word of men; it is the Word of God. It is Holy Scripture, the Sacred Writing (Romans 1:2; 2 Timothy 3:15). The Bible, being God's inspired, infallible, inerrant truth, is His pure, authoritative voice to His people. God has promised to preserve the Bible perfectly forever, and as such, He has kept it pure in all the ages (Psalm 12:6–7; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; 1 Peter 1:23, 25) so that His people may be blessed with His truth throughout the centuries. Today and forever, we can trust every word of it, put all our hope in its message, and build our lives on its doctrines, promises and counsels.

We count it a great privilege that God has graciously called us to be a witness to the truths of His Word, hence the name of our publication, Bible Witness. "In God will I praise his word: in the LORD will I praise his word" (Psalm 56:10). "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name" (Psalm 138:2).

Heartily in the service of the Lord,
Prabhudas Koshy

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INSPIRATION

OF THE SCRIPTURES

EPHREM CHIRACHO

Holy Scripture is the revelation of the living and true God to man. It reveals God's Person, His purpose, will and ways. Therefore, it is the highest divine authority on earth to guide man's life. It leads sinners to salvation (cf. Galatians 3:24), saving those who believe in Jesus Christ (cf. Romans 1:16–17; 1 Peter 1:23–25). It is the spiritual milk and meat for the

growth and maturity of believers in Christ. It is the divine (verbal and plenary) inspiration of Scripture that renders what has been recorded in it as the very Word of God (cf. 2 Peter 1:20–21; 2 Timothy 3:16).

Scripture gives divine light which shows us the righteous path, wherein we should walk as children of light and

receive God's blessings in our lives and ministries (Psalms 119:105; cf. 128:1–6). It is the spiritual sword, wherewith we effectively defeat the enemy of our souls (Ephesians 6:17; cf. Matthew 4:1–11). It is the source of divine comfort in our sorrows, the anchor of the soul in storms of life, and the basis of our hope in our pilgrimage to our celestial home.

Notwithstanding, there have been sadly many so-called Christian scholars and ministers who undermine the inspiration and authenticity of the Bible. As such, fighting steadfastly the good fight of faith for the Word of God, with regard to its inspiration, is most needful in our earnest "contend[ing] for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3b). This article shall affirm its divine inspiration by highlighting the dangers of doubting and denying the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Bible.

INSPIRATION GUARDS AGAINST UNDERMINING FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Our faith is built upon the solid rock of the reliability and authenticity of the Holy Scriptures. And this, in turn, is founded on the truth of the plenary, verbal inspiration of the Word of God. Although the mode of inspiration varies, yet, "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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Thus, Scripture is the final divine authority in matters of Christian faith and practice. As such, it is the sole reliable source for the

saving knowledge of the living and true God, and of His Son Jesus Christ our Redeemer (cf. John 17:6–8).

Thus, undermining the inspiration of the Bible strikes a deadly blow to the very foundation of our Christian faith. Therefore, every born-again Christian has the responsibility to watch against any attempt at undermining biblical inspiration of Holy Scripture, as well as to counter this malicious attack against God's perfect and holy Word.

INSPIRATION GUARDS AGAINST DOUBTING AND DENYING OF GOD'S TRUTH

The living and true God has revealed Himself and His will for mankind in the Holy Scriptures. From God's work of creation to Christ's work of redemption, all that we are to know, believe and do in our relationship with our Creator and Redeemer, are revealed in the written Word of God. We can know Christ and His redemptive works only through the infallible and inerrant records of the Holy Scriptures (cf. John 20:31).

Therefore, when one begins to doubt the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Bible, one will lose confidence in the veracity of God's truth. And such doubt will gradually lead to blatant denial of the Bible and the God of the Bible! Sowing seeds of doubt in God's Word is an effective instrument that Satan had used to lead Eve to rebellion and sin. He asked her through the serpent: "Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Genesis 3:1b). After he had managed to make her doubt the trustworthiness of God's Word, he led her to its utter denial, saying, "Ye shall not surely die

... (but) ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Genesis 3:4-5).

Sadly, man’s denial of God’s Word and transgression of its commands resulted in guilt, misery, separation from God, plus spiritual, physical and eternal death (cf. Genesis 3:6–24). Denying the divine inspiration and, therefore, infallibility and inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures has led people to regard the Bible as mere opinions and teachings of imperfect men. And faith in such fallible words of men will not have the divine power which brings salvation to sinners and spiritual growth to believers in Christ.

INSPIRATION GUARDS AGAINST DIMINISHING OF GOD’S AUTHORITY OVER OUR LIVES

We can authoritatively preach and teach God’s Word only when we trust in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. The main goal of those who deny Scriptural inspiration is to dethrone God from His authoritative rule over their lives. Unbelieving men have created various theories, such as Darwinian Evolution, Theistic Evolution, Natural Inspiration, Thought Inspiration and Partial Inspiration, in an attempt to discard personal accountability to God for their unbelief, sinful passions and wicked actions. That is why many professing Christians who backslided because of denying the inspiration of the Scriptures, ended up departing from the Christian faith and even embracing atheism!

Dear Christian, God rules over our life through His perfect and inerrant Word. We know God, believe in Him,

walk before Him, worship Him and serve Him acceptably through the divine light of the Holy Scriptures. That is why doubting or denying the inspiration of God’s Word exposes the believer’s soul to great spiritual dangers. Many Christians who listen and subscribe to subversive views about the Scriptures will gradually become disillusioned in their walk with God, and disheartened in their service for Him. And sooner or later, they will lose assurance of their salvation and waver in their hope of inheriting eternal glory in Heaven. Such double-mindedness and instability of soul are a slippery slope towards confusion, unbelief, hopelessness, and even giving of oneself over to shameful immorality of all kinds (cf. Romans 1:18–32)!

CONCLUSION

Therefore, true children of God, especially ministers of the Gospel, must guard their hearts against the unbiblical denial of Bible inspiration. For the sake of God’s glory and the well-being of our own souls, may the LORD help us all to maintain our reformed biblical conviction of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Holy Scriptures. It behoves us to therefore “fight the good fight of faith”, “that [we] may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom [we] shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life” (Philippians 2:15–16a). Amen. ■

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REGGOR B. GALARPE ————— AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

One of the five “Solas” of the 16th Century Protestant Reformation is “Sola Scriptura”, which means Scripture alone is the supreme and final authority on matters of faith and life. It stands in contrast to the prevailing but erroneous teaching during the “dark ages” of church history, where the authority rested on the church and

its clergy and hierarchy, culminating in the absolute power of the pope. “Scripture Alone!” is no mere battle cry of the Reformation, but is actually a precise summary of the historical, biblical Christian faith.

Scripture alone is the standard by which all teachings and traditions

of the church must be measured. As Martin Luther so eloquently stated when told to recant his teachings, “Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason—I do not accept the authority of the popes and councils, for they have contradicted each other—my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. God help me. Amen.” However, living in a time when most people detest having authority over them, it is sad that many of God’s people have not shown great respect and reverence for the authority of Scripture. Thus, we need to rediscover this fundamental doctrine.

AUTHORITY FOUNDED IN ITS DIVINE AUTHOR

“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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). This means that all of Scripture is “breathed-out” by God, so that when Scripture speaks, God speaks. Because the Bible is given by inspiration of God, it is profitable in teaching us the truth about God and instructing us on the kind of moral conduct God requires of us. The purpose is “that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” For this reason, we cannot take the Bible lightly but reverently, giving it due authority, as it is the very Word of God!

Moreover, 2 Peter 1:20–21 tells us, “Knowing this first, 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 Ghost.” Now, the “prophecy” here refers not just to the Major and Minor Prophets of the Old Testament, but to the entire Old Testament—and so by implication, to all of the New Testament. Thus, the entire Scriptures are not of human origin, nor the result of human will, but are revelations by God through the Holy Spirit, who superintended the human writers to compose and record, without error, the exact words that God wanted them to write. Being divinely inspired, it logically follows that the Bible reflects God’s perfection, which should be manifested in its inerrancy and infallibility. That’s why we can have the confidence that just as God is absolutely free from all error, so is His Word—the Bible—without error and not capable of committing error. Thereby making it our sole, sure, and supreme authority on faith and life!

We can have the confidence that just as God is absolutely free from all error, so is His Word—the Bible—without error and not capable of committing error.

AUTHORITY AFFIRMED BY SCRIPTURE ITSELF

When you read through the Old Testament, you will come across the phrase, “Thus saith the Lord”, hundreds of times. This fact is affirmed by the New Testament, when it says that “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1–2). This confirms that both the Old and New Testaments are the very words of God, inspired (“spoken”) by God, thus proving their authority.

It is also worth noticing how the Lord Jesus would quote the O. T. in His teachings and showed utter confidence in the O. T. being the Word of God. Take, for example, the words of the Lord in Matthew 22:31, “...have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God...?”. This is in reference to an O.T. passage which the Lord described as the Word of God (“spoken unto you by God”). The same observation is made concerning Jesus’ disciples in their writings. For we read in 1 Corinthians 10:11, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come”; as well as in Romans 15:4, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

Even those who opposed Jesus during His earthly ministry, though they strongly disagreed with the Lord and

could not accept Him as their Messiah, never had any doubts about the O.T. Scriptures being the Word of God. It is just sad that while they acknowledged the authority of the written Word, they rejected the Living Word! Assuredly, Scripture itself affirms its supreme authority, which should be ours as well in all aspects of life.

AUTHORITY FOR ALL TIME

Certainly, we take encouragement that many Christians today would confess that the Bible is the Word of God and the final authority on faith and life. Yet, it is sad to see a great discrepancy between their public confession and personal conduct, for many have actually turned to other sources of authority for their everyday life. In recent times, we are seeing the strong influence of liberalism, individualism, and the so-called “post-modernism” (which emphasises that “what is true to you need not be necessarily true for me”, and that “we just have to acknowledge the plurality of truth”). Unfortunately, many have bowed down to the pressure and influence of such humanistic thinking, becoming critical towards and even undermining any form of established authority, including that of the Scriptures!

This attitude can be seen among many in Christendom today, especially in their views on contemporary civil and social issues like “same-sex” marriage, alternative lifestyle (homosexuality), racial prejudice, social justice, and even concerning church matters like the ordaining of women for the ministry. Instead of adhering to the timeless truths of the Bible, they look to psychology, sociology and other

fields of science for supposed solutions to social ills and their personal needs. Such an attitude has promoted unbiblical tolerance that weakens the church's stance on doctrinal errors and sin. Such a mindset has also skewed the church's understanding of right and wrong, thereby undermining the church's testimony.

The sad reality in the contemporary church scene is that many have abandoned the authority of Scripture as they believe that it has lost its relevance in our time. Thus, we see more and more Christian individuals and churches moving towards the way of the world, towards compromise and apostasy! Be established in your heart concerning this fact: Scripture is the Word of the Eternal God. As such, the authority of its teachings, precepts and counsels is for all time. To ignore the authority of Scripture is to ignore God, who is its Author. The right response to the Scriptures ought to be one of complete surrender and submission, to the glory of God! ■

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INERRANCY & INFALLIBILITY OF THE SCRIPTURES

— PAUL CHENG

“Inerrancy” means “without error”. “Infallibility” means “incapable of failing or making mistakes”. Essentially, an inerrant word **does not** err, and an infallible word **cannot** err! Together these two terms, when used to describe the Scriptures, speak of the total truthfulness and reliability of God's Word. Inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures pertain not just to passages that speak about faith and salvation, but also apply to Scriptural verses concerning science, history, geography, and all subject matters.

BASIS OF BIBLICAL INERRANCY AND INFALLIBILITY

The doctrine of Scriptural inerrancy and infallibility indicates a perfect Author. It is based on the nature and character of God; God does not lie (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18), and is always true (Romans 3:4). God changes not (Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 1:11–12); He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13), and is sovereign (Isaiah 55:11). Since God cannot err, and the Bible is His Word, therefore the Bible cannot err. If one believes that God is true, perfect and infallible, then by logical extension, all Scripture must also be inerrant and infallible. Thus, it is an inescapable fact that the Bible, being the Word of God, is without mistakes in everything it affirms.

Come to think of it, how can the Bible make infallible pronouncements about salvation, redemption, doctrines, prophecies and so forth, if God has no infallible knowledge? How can God produce an inerrant and infallible Book, if He cannot supernaturally inspire and then preserve His Word from error? The doctrine of inspiration and preservation, and the consequent inerrancy and infallibility, must go hand in hand! A deviation from the orthodox view of God will lead to an unorthodox view of Scripture!

TESTIMONY OF BIBLICAL INERRANCY AND INFALLIBILITY

The Testimony of Christ

The doctrine of biblical inerrancy and infallibility was affirmed by Jesus Himself, who said that every jot and tittle of the Scriptures had been faithfully transmitted and preserved without error (Matthew 5:18; cf. Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33). His declaration that “[God’s] word is truth” (John 17:17), and that “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35b) further attest to this truth.

The Testimony of the Apostles

The apostle Peter testified in 2 Peter 1:19, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts”. By using the comparative adjective “more sure” (more stable, firm and steadfast), basically Peter was comparing Scripture (which is “a more sure word of prophecy”) to the eyewitness account of Christ’s majestic transfiguration on the mount (cf. 2 Peter 1:16–18; Matthew 17:1–6). If his eyewitness account is affirmed as reliable, then what more Scripture, which is a recorded document that could be verified (cf. Acts 17:11)! This is the apostle Peter’s way of emphasising the inerrant and infallible nature of Scripture.

Moreover, the apostle Paul exhorted, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16). In this classic text on biblical inspiration,

Paul is implicitly affirming the inspired Scriptures’ inerrancy and infallibility. One more apostolic testimony will suffice. In warning against adding unto or subtracting from “the words of the prophecy of this book” (Revelation 22:18–19), the apostle John is pointing to the complete canon of Scripture, and thereby the “forever settled” (which implies the inerrant and infallible) nature of Scripture (Psalm 119:89).

The Testimony of the Church

Moreover, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy and infallibility has been resolutely held by the church throughout the centuries, be it during the pre-Reformation, Reformation, or post-Reformation periods. This is readily evidenced by the historical creedal statements of the church on the Scriptures. For example, the Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 1, section 8) states that the Scriptures “...being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic; so as, in all controversies of religion, the Church is finally to appeal unto them.”

DANGER OF DENYING BIBLICAL INERRANCY AND INFALLIBILITY

Often the argument against biblical inerrancy is that God used fallible men to write Scripture, and thus the product of their work (the Bible) might contain errors. But 2 Peter 1:21 refutes, “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 Ghost.” The words were

transcribed by fallible men who were “moved” (superintended) by the Holy Spirit, removing any room for human error. Under His divine providential guidance, God had supernaturally used finite human writers, with their vocabularies and styles, to produce the final product (Holy Scripture), which is perfect.

Others advocate that the Bible is limited in its inerrancy. They insist that in terms of scientific theories, the Bible is not totally inerrant. Although the Bible was not written as a science book, yet when it speaks concerning matters of science, it is scientifically accurate. For the record, God created the universe ex nihilo, that is, out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3); the earth is spherical in shape (Isaiah 40:22), rotates upon its axis (Job 38:13–14), and is suspended in space (Job 26:7); the stars cannot be numbered (Jeremiah 33:22), and they differ in magnitude (1 Corinthians 15:41). Some of these biblical facts were ridiculed by the scientific world in the past, but have since been proven to be true. To date, not a single scientific fact mentioned in Scripture has been proven to be inaccurate. It is foolish to deny biblical inerrancy and infallibility. Similarly, the refusal to affirm literal historical events (like the Fall, the Global Flood, the parting of the Red Sea, Jonah being in the great fish’s belly for three days and three nights) is to deny biblical inerrancy and infallibility.

But the point is, if the Bible is partially inerrant, then it would not be totally trustworthy. Every word is important as it is a part of what makes up the whole meaning. Changing a part can change or distort the whole meaning. One cannot

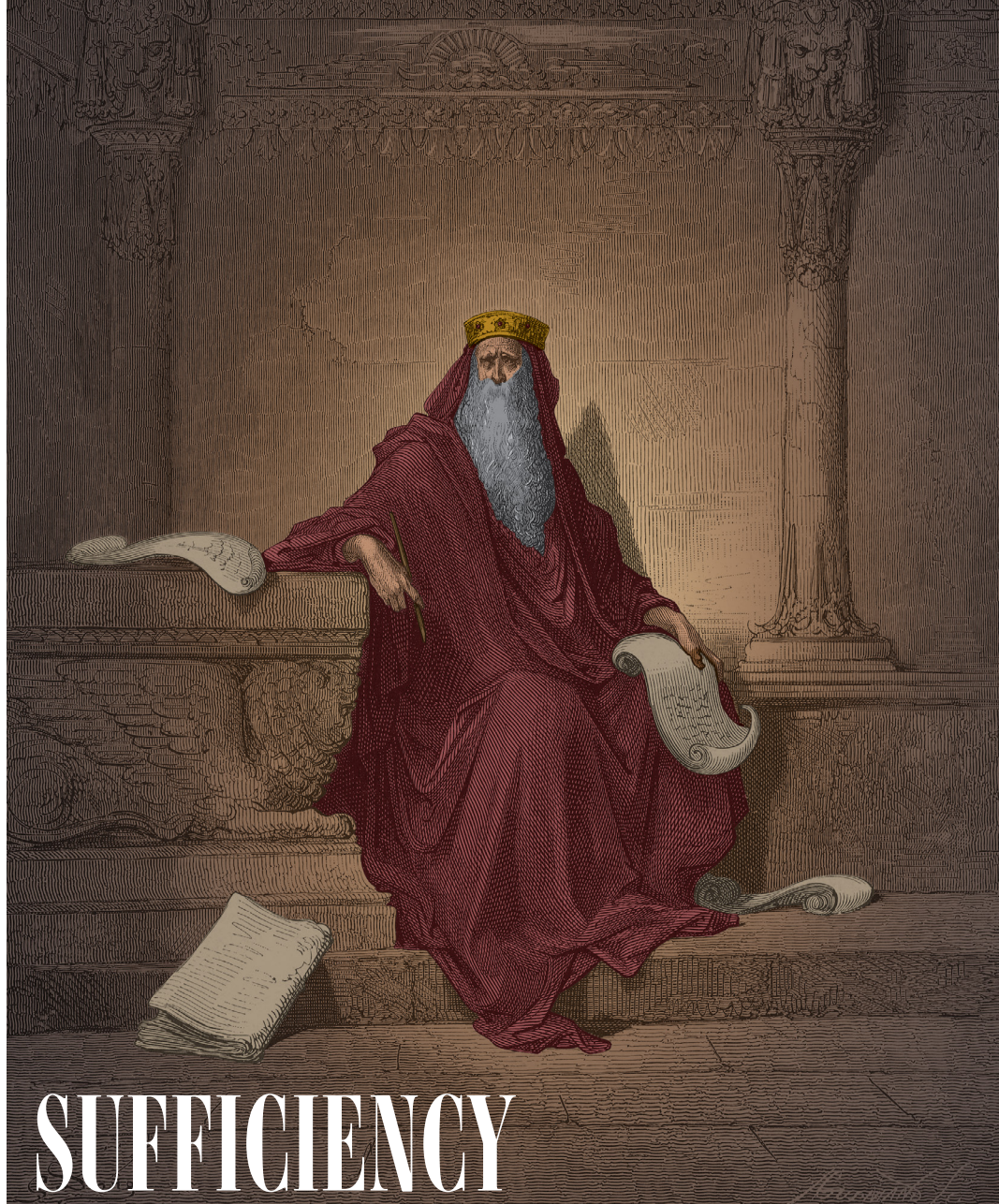
trust the Bible in anything unless one can trust it in everything. The Bible is the written Word of God, not just part of it, and hence it is wholly without mistake. The partial belief of biblical inerrancy can be just as dangerous as omitting the doctrine entirely, and can lead to perilous consequences.

CONCLUSION

The doctrine of inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures is foundational to all other essential Christian doctrines. All doctrines, be they concerning theism, anthropology, soteriology or eschatology, derive their authority from the divinely inspired and preserved Word of God. If the Bible is capable of making mistakes, then all the fundamental doctrines would fall apart. The doctrine of Scriptural inerrancy and infallibility is the fundamental of all the fundamentals. As one theologian aptly said, “If the fundamental of fundamentals is not fundamental, then what is fundamental? It is fundamentally nothing!”

Inerrancy and infallibility of the Scriptures assure the church that she can completely trust in the Bible for salvation, faith and practice. It enables the Word to be preached in its entirety, with confidence, power and authority. The church, being “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15b), must propagate this fundamental doctrine, which is most foundational—for “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3). ■

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SUFFICIENCY

OF THE SCRIPTURES ——— *SAMSON HUTAGALUNG*

Holy Scripture is sufficient as the rule of our faith and practice, as corroborated by Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 1, section 6)—“The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may

be deduced from Scripture.” Though this statement is frequently cited by churches in their creed, in reality, many professing Christians do not consider the Bible as sufficient to guide their affairs in life. Many fail to pattern their lives on biblical principles, but have rather adopted secularism as their way of life. Such secularism is also manifested in churches adopting

worldly music in worship, and humanistic psychology in counselling, betraying their lack of belief in the sufficiency of the Scriptures.

The Bible is not only sufficient for our faith and spirituality, but also all aspects of our physical life and practice on Earth. When the LORD commanded the Israelites to “keep all his statutes and his commandments” (Deuteronomy 6:2) and to “teach them diligently unto [their] children” (Deuteronomy 6:7), it presupposes that Scripture is sufficient to guide them in their day-to-day living concerning all issues of life, both spiritual and physical. Similarly, when God commanded Joshua to “observe to do according to all the law ... [and] turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:7), it tells us that God knows what man needs in this life, and He has given Holy Scripture as the rule of faith and practice in life.

The Bible is not only sufficient for our faith and spirituality, but also all aspects of our physical life and practice on Earth.

SUFFICIENT FOR SALVATION

Scripture is the only source by which God’s plan of salvation is made known. It declares Jesus as the only Saviour of the world (John 3:16), and the only way of salvation (John 14:6), which is solely through His atoning sacrifice on the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18). Anyone who believes in Christ and His Gospel shall be saved, “for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). The Gospel of Christ is the only message sinners need in order to be saved. No one will be saved without knowing the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

Sufficiency of the Scriptures for salvation also means that there is none other way of salvation outside of the Scriptures. That is why Paul condemned those who propagate “another gospel” (i.e. the Judaizers’ “gospel”), which was not the true Gospel (Galatians 1:6). “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8–9). In Holy Scripture, God has revealed everything that man needs for salvation and it is sufficient. No one should add to or subtract from it (Revelation 22:18–19). What man needs is to study it (2 Timothy 2:15), and believe it (John 20:31)!

SUFFICIENT FOR SANCTIFICATION

Jesus’ High Priestly prayer in John 17 reveals that Scripture is sufficient for our sanctification—“Sanctify them

through thy truth: thy word is truth” (v. 17). It tells of Jesus’ confidence in God’s Word being able to sanctify those who believe in Him. The Word of God is what believers need to keep them holy (Psalm 119:9). Without Scripture, they will not be able to have a full separation from sin. It is their guide to holy living. For that reason, it is required of believers to know, study, and keep God’s Word in their hearts and meditate on it day and night (Psalm 1:2; cf. 119:97), so that their life will “[bring] forth his fruit (of righteousness) in his season” (Psalm 1:3).

Living a holy life is not possible without the abiding of God’s Word in us (cf. John 15:4, 7). We need God’s Word to enable us to fight and mortify the deeds of the flesh. Paul further emphasised the sufficiency of Scripture in this spiritual battle believers face in order to “be able to stand against the

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wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). He commanded believers to “put on the whole armour of God, ... having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:11, 14), and to “take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17). The inclusion of the Word of God in the list indicates that without it, no one will win this battle against temptation and sin. Undeniably, Jesus’ usage of Scripture to defeat Satan when He was tempted in the wilderness (cf. Matthew 4:3–11), provides us with the best example of the sufficiency of Scripture in our fight against temptation of sin.

SUFFICIENT FOR DOCTRINE

God’s Word is “a lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path” (Psalm 119:105) to guide and order our life aright. All things pertaining “unto life and godliness” (2 Peter 1:3) have been given unto us through the knowledge of His Word. Abiding in Christ and in His Word is the key to victorious Christian living. The precepts and doctrines of God’s revealed Scriptures will stand us in good stead for all our challenges in life.

The sufficiency of Scripture to guide us in living for God is corroborated by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:16–17, “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, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” A good knowledge and a believing heart that embraces Scripture will teach a man to live uprightly and acceptably unto God in all things.

Blessed is the man who inclines his ear and applies his heart to all the instructions and doctrines in the all-sufficient Scriptures.

SUFFICIENT FOR A BLESSED LIFE

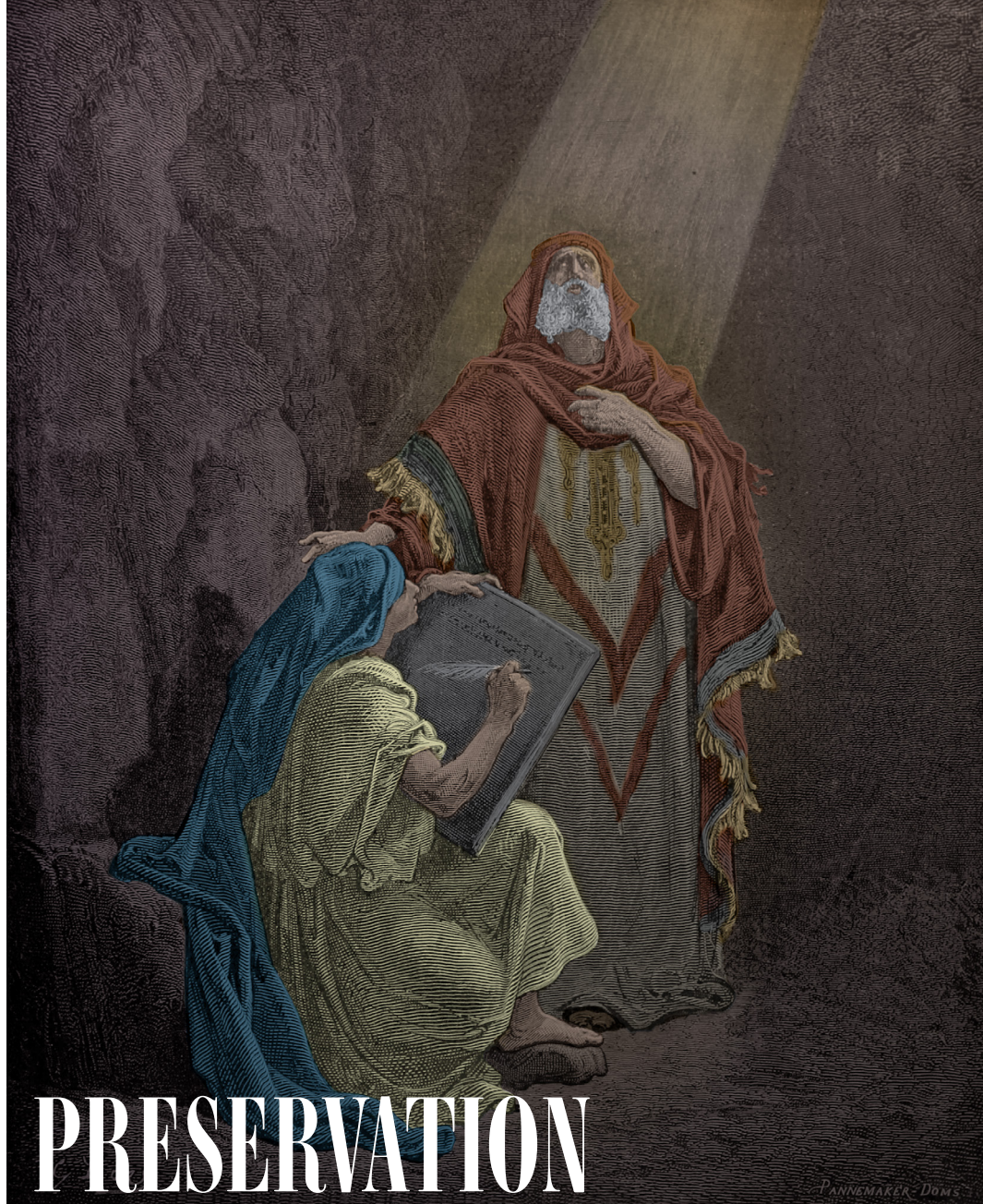
Material wealth has been proclaimed by the world as the source of man’s joy and happiness in life, but the Bible asserts otherwise. Scripture stresses the inadequacy of wealth for a happy life (Proverbs 11:4, 28). Wealth is temporary (Proverbs 27:24), and whoever trusts in it will be ensnared (1 Timothy 6:9). God is the source of all blessings and happiness in life. When we put our trust in God by obeying His truth, our life will be blessed, for “God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work ... being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness” (2 Corinthians 9:8, 11).

Christians should thus seek and please Him who alone can fill our souls with confidence and joy. How do we please and seek God? The Bible says, “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Hebrews 11:6). To diligently seek God is to “search the scriptures; for ... they are they which testify of [Christ]” (John 5:39). Scripture is key to a blessed spiritual life, which is affirmed by Jesus—“Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (Luke 11:28). Indeed, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep (i.e. order their lives according to) those things which are written therein (in the Scriptures)” (Revelation 1:3).

CONCLUSION

Scripture is the most important record God has given to mankind. From the Scriptures, we are able to see God’s plan of salvation. Through the Scriptures, we shall furthermore be “transformed by the renewing of [our] mind, that [we] may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). Truly, blessed is the man whose “delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water ... and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:2–3). Such is the sufficiency of Scripture for our salvation, sanctification, doctrine, and blessed living. Amen. ■

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OF THE SCRIPTURES ——— DONALD DELA CRUZ

Preservation of the Scriptures is a very vital doctrine to every Christian. It assures the believer that he has the same Word of God which saints of the past had access to. This truth is very crucial because it means that there will be an authentic source text for the translation of the Bible into the languages of the common people for all generations. Scriptural preservation

means that God has guaranteed the church the availability of His revealed Word all through the ages.

The inspiration and preservation of the Scriptures are twin doctrines. To neglect one is to abandon the other. The Westminster Confession of Faith (chapter 1, section 8) states: “The Old Testament in Hebrew (which was the

native language of the people of God of old), and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it was most generally known to the nations), being immediately inspired by God, and by His singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentic.” Dean John Burgon affirmed these twin doctrines when he wrote in his work, *The Traditional Text*, “There exists no reason for supposing that the Divine Agent, who in the first instance thus gave to mankind the Scriptures of Truth (through inspiration), straightway abdicated His office; took no further care of His work (through preservation); abandoned those precious writings to their fate.”

While the doctrine of inspiration is not widely questioned, doubts about the doctrine of preservation are surprisingly prevalent. This is despite the fact that there are more Bible verses asserting Scriptural preservation than inspiration. May God give us eyes of faith, and deliver us from a heart of unbelief that denies the overwhelming evidence of Scriptural preservation.

PRESERVED BY GOD’S PROMISE

Scripture reveals that God will preserve His Word. In Psalm 12:6–7, it is stated that “The words of the LORD are pure words ... [The LORD] shalt keep them ...[and] shalt preserve them from this generation for ever.” In other words, the LORD will see to it that His inspired words are “kept pure in all ages”—“by His singular care and providence”.

God did not assign the responsibility of Scriptural preservation to His prophets, or apostles, or to any group of faithful men. Faithful men may strive to

defend God’s Word in their generation but they will not live forever. Even if they passed the faithful Word to the next generation, there is no guarantee that their children will defend the pure and unadulterated Word of God. Fallible man, with all his limitations, is too feeble for such an awesome task. God is the only One who is qualified to carry out this task. He is eternal, and therefore He will not let His Words be tainted through the passage of time. Jesus reminds us that “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35). This is a reminder that the perfectly preserved Scriptures will outlive all earthly existence. God is simply assuring us that His Word will be perfectly intact, down through the ages.

PRESERVED BY GOD’S POWER

The Scriptures will surely be preserved because of the capability of the Preserver. The prophet Jeremiah declares, “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27). Our Omnipotent, Almighty God can do whatever He says. Nothing can stop Him. He has promised to keep His Word, and we must not doubt His ability to do so. What will happen if man tampers with God’s Word? The answer is God will intervene. The notion of man attempting to corrupt and destroy God’s Word is not new. We have biblical accounts of how evil men used their human authority to destroy God’s Word, but to no avail.

In Jeremiah 36, the LORD had spoken through Jeremiah words “against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations” (v. 2). Then Jeremiah called Baruch (his scribe) to write those words

on a scroll. After God's message was completely written, Baruch was to read them in the LORD's house (vv. 4–6). The scribes and the princes heard the message and confiscated the scrolls, and reported to Jehoiakim, king of Judah. The displeased king did not allow the reading thereof to be finished, but instead cut the scroll with a penknife and cast it into the fire (vv. 22–23). He thought that destroying the written word would erase what God had said. However, God did not allow His message to be hidden from His people. After the sacrilegious act of the king, the LORD commanded Jeremiah to take another scroll. The LORD dictated to Jeremiah not only the very words which the king had burned, but also added more words (vv. 27–28, 32). Man may foolishly challenge God and His Word, but how can a mere creature overpower his Creator? Despite the actions of Jehoiakim, God preserved His Word!

PRESERVED BY GOD'S PRONOUNCEMENT

In the time of Jesus' earthly ministry in the land of Israel, the scrolls written by the hand of the prophets (known as *autographs*) were long gone. The Scriptures found in the synagogues were faithful copies (known as *apographs*) of the original scrolls. It is widely thought that the autographs perished because of normal wear and tear through frequent use. Surely, Jesus was very aware of the absence of the autographs in His day. Yet, He never doubted the authenticity of the copies of the Old Testament Scriptures used in the Temple and synagogues. Jesus accepted the copies of the Scriptures as the very Word of God. In Luke 4:16–21, we read that the minister in

the synagogue took out a scroll and gave it to Jesus. He read a portion of the writings from the book of Isaiah (61:1–2). After reading, Jesus returned the scroll to the minister (v. 20), and He pronounced that what He just read was Holy Scripture (v. 21).

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He pronounced to His disciples the Great Commission to evangelise the world (Matthew 28:18–20). He emphasised that the basis of the Great Commission is the Bible. They must teach the people to observe all things whatsoever He has commanded. In order to fulfil the Great Commission, preservation of all the words of the Bible is necessary. Indeed, preserved copies of the Old Testament were cited in the New Testament. In Acts 8:26–35, the Ethiopian eunuch had a copy of a portion of the Scriptures and was reading from Isaiah. He could

**Man may foolishly
challenge God and
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overpower his Creator?**

not understand what he was reading. The Lord then sent Philip to provide explanation. This portion was described as “the place of the scripture which he read” (v. 32). The copy which the eunuch was holding was regarded as Scripture. The same idea is communicated in Acts 15:21, where it is said that the Scriptures (written by “Moses of old time”) were “being read in the synagogues every sabbath day”, in every city where Christ was preached. Multiple copies of preserved Holy Scripture were needed to achieve this.

For the record, preserved copies were found even in other countries outside of Israel. In Acts 17:1–2, Paul went to Thessalonica (a city in Greece) and found a synagogue of the Jews. He preached there for three sabbath days. The synagogue had its own copies of the Scriptures, for Paul “reasoned with them out of the scriptures” (v. 2). In Acts 17:11, we gather that the Bereans had copies of the Scriptures in their possession because they were able to check what Paul taught on a daily basis. Alexandria of Egypt also had such preserved copies of the Scriptures because Apollos, being “mighty in the scriptures”, must have had access to them (Acts 18:24). That's not all. Even the family of Timothy also had access to the Scriptures because Paul commanded him to “continue thou in the things which thou hast learned ... and that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures...” (2 Timothy 3:14–15). For all these copies to be authentic, they must have been preserved, word for word.

CONCLUSION

The doctrine of preservation of the Scriptures is very foundational to

Christianity. The preserved Bible is the rock of the Christian faith. The Bible is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). If there is no assurance of the preserved Scriptures today, then the foundation on which they rest remains shaky. “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psalm 11:3). But praise be to God, who has affirmed that He will preserve His Word according to His promise, power and pronouncement. No one can question God. The Lord has said it, then it is forever settled. ■

REVEREND DONALD DELA CRUZ is the pastor of Gethsemane Bible-Presbyterian Church, Pangasinan, the Philippines.

BIBLE TRIVIA—DEUTERONOMY

31 & 34

SARAH YONG

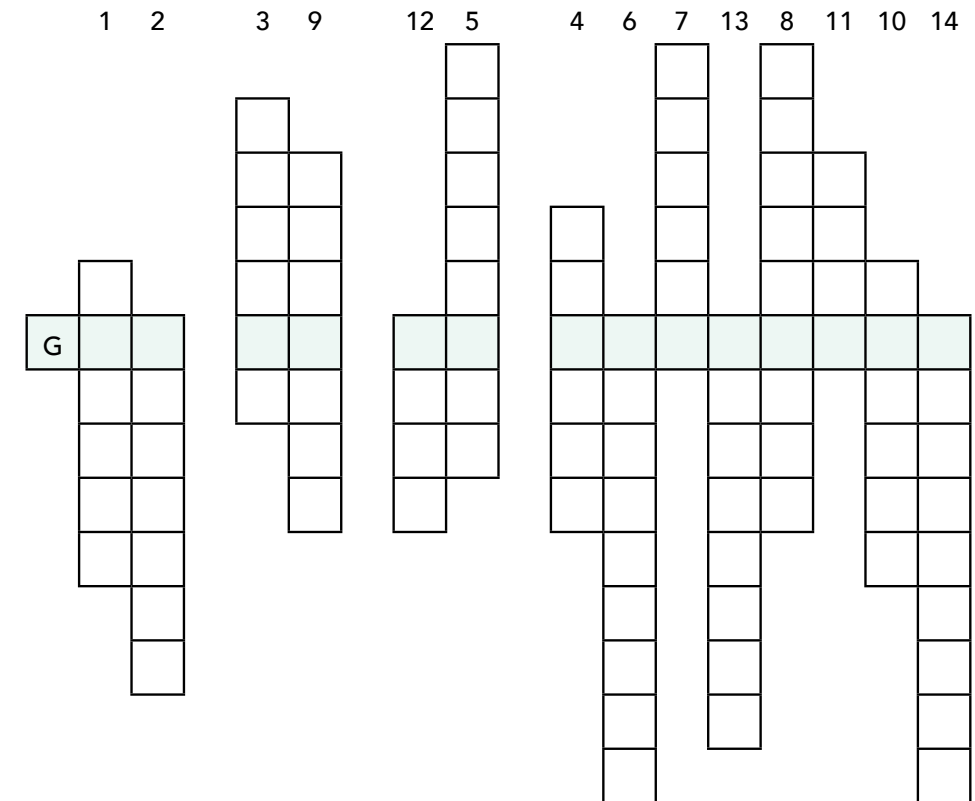
In these two chapters, we see how God had prepared a new leader for the children of Israel as they approached the Promised Land.

A. Read the two passages, and complete each of the following statements by providing the missing word in the blank. [Hint: Unscramble the word given in brackets for the answer to each blank. Note that the first and last letters are correctly placed.]

- Moses spoke to the people and reminded them that the LORD had forbidden him to go over the river _____. (Jadron)
- The LORD God would go over before the people, and _____ (drostey) the nations so that they could possess them.
- Moses exhorted the people, "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be _____ (arifad) of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee."
- Moses called unto _____ (Juhsoa) and said unto him, "Thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it."
- The LORD would go before them and be with them, so they should fear not, neither be _____ (dasyemid).
- The LORD called Moses and Joshua to present themselves in the _____ (trencablae) of the congregation, that He may give Joshua a charge.
- The LORD appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the _____ (plialr) of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.
- And the LORD said unto Moses, "Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and will forsake me, and break my _____ (cenavnot) which I have made with them."
- The LORD further declared, "My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will _____ (fasrkoe) them, and I will hide my face from them, and troubles shall befall them."
- And the LORD gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be _____ (srotng) and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with thee."

- And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of _____ (Pagsih), and the LORD showed him all the land which He swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob.
- Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of _____ (Maob), according to the word of the LORD, and God buried him in a valley.
- Moses was an 120 years old when he died; his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated, and no man knoweth of his _____ (spechrlue) unto this day.
- Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands upon him; and the children of Israel _____ (hraeneked) unto him as the LORD commanded.

B. Fill in each answer from the above 14 statements (to be written vertically down) onto the crossword below, according to its corresponding number. A biblical message for God's children will then be revealed by reading horizontally across this crossword. What is the message?



Joan Waste

(1534-1556) - Part II

Retold by Jenny Lok
Illustrated by Andronicus Koshy



With each passing day, Joan grew in the knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures.

Often, while twisting ropes or knitting, she would recite long passages of Scripture aloud to help her recall God's Word.

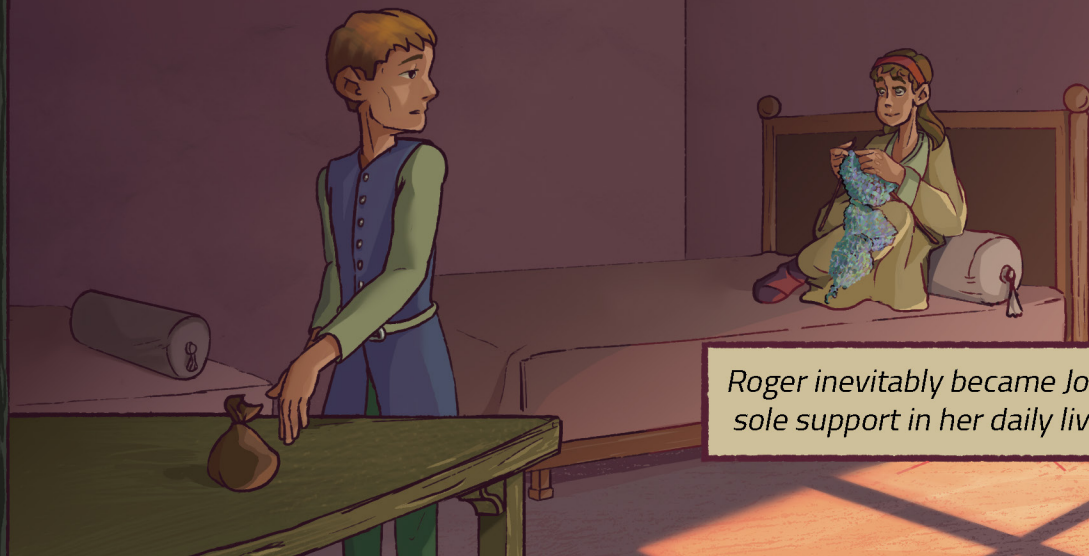
Gradually, Joan had no difficulty reciting Scripture from memory.

Furthermore, she could even "refute all the false religion that flourished all around her in Derby, and to rebuke those that sinned against the teachings of the Word of God."



Nonetheless, the peace, quietness and bliss that Joan had enjoyed till her late teens vanished when King Edward VI died of consumption (or tuberculosis) in early 1553.

Joan's parents had also died close to this time, and thus she and her twin brother Roger were left to fend for themselves.



Roger inevitably became Joan's sole support in her daily living.

Dark days followed the death of King Edward VI. There was a royal battle for the throne the moment the young king died. King Edward's last prayer had been:

O Lord God, save thy chosen people of England. O my Lord God, defend this realm... and maintain the true religion.



Little did King Edward VI know that after his death would come terrifying trials for the Protestants in England.


Queen Mary I (half-sister of Edward VI) ascended the throne and, being a Roman Catholic, sought to bring Protestant England back to the Catholic fold.

The old heresy laws were revived and anyone who was not of the Catholic faith, as demanded by Queen Mary, would be deemed a heretic, a crime punishable by death at the stake!



What followed were the "infamous Marian Persecutions" – which saw many prominent Protestants, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer, burned at the stake for promoting the Protestant faith.

The Catholic mass was reinstated, and it was an offence not to participate in it. Those in England who were Catholic at heart gladly did so, but not for Joan. She refused to bow down to the false Roman Catholic teachings, which included the belief that "the bread and wine changed into the actual body and blood of the Saviour during the Mass" (also referred to as Sacrament of the Altar).



I believe only the things
taught by Holy Scripture and by godly,
Bible-believing men!


*In the summer of 1556,
Joan was summoned to appear
before her accusers – the Bishop
and his Chancellor, Dr Draicot –
to answer to the charge of heresy.*

*She reminded those present that
many godly saints before her would
rather be martyred for their faith
in Christ (and she was willing to
do the same) than embrace
the doctrines of Rome.*


Are you prepared to
die for your doctrine?

If not, then for God's sake trouble me no more.
I am but a poor, blind, uneducated woman,
but with God's help I am ready
to yield my life in this faith.

*The Bishop and Dr Draicot, his Chancellor, were
exceedingly angry and tried to make a last attempt
at changing Joan's mind about rejecting the
"Sacrament of the Altar".*



I only believe that partaking of the
Lord's Supper is to remember the Lord and
His death on the cross. The bread and wine
are only symbols, representing the body
and blood of Christ respectively, and
therefore remained unchanged.



If you want me to believe in your
'Sacrament of the Altar', then are you
prepared to answer for me on
the Day of Judgment?

*Both the Bishop and his Chancellor were
trapped, for they were far from being
prepared to answer for a "heretic" like Joan.*

I will answer you no more.
Do your pleasure.

*She was determined not to give in to threatenings of "imprisonment,
torture and death". Officially declared a heretic, Joan was brought away
by the bailiffs of Derby to the prison for the next five weeks.*

*During this period, Joan's accusers never stopped persuading her to
deny the biblical truths that she so dearly embraced.*

However, she did not waver a single moment.

On 1 August 1556, Joan was taken from her prison cell to the "All Saints Church".

In his loud, grating voice, Dr Draicot began

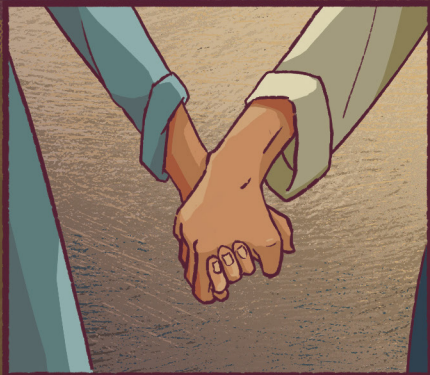
This woman is condemned for denying the Sacrament of the Altar to be the very body and blood of Christ, ... and is for this reason cut off from the body of the Catholic Church. She is not only blind in her bodily eyes, but also blind in the eyes of her soul..., so her soul will be burned in hell with everlasting fire...There it will remain, world without end.

Contrary to what Dr Draicot had said, Joan knew with great assurance that she would enter Heaven's eternal rest upon death – "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

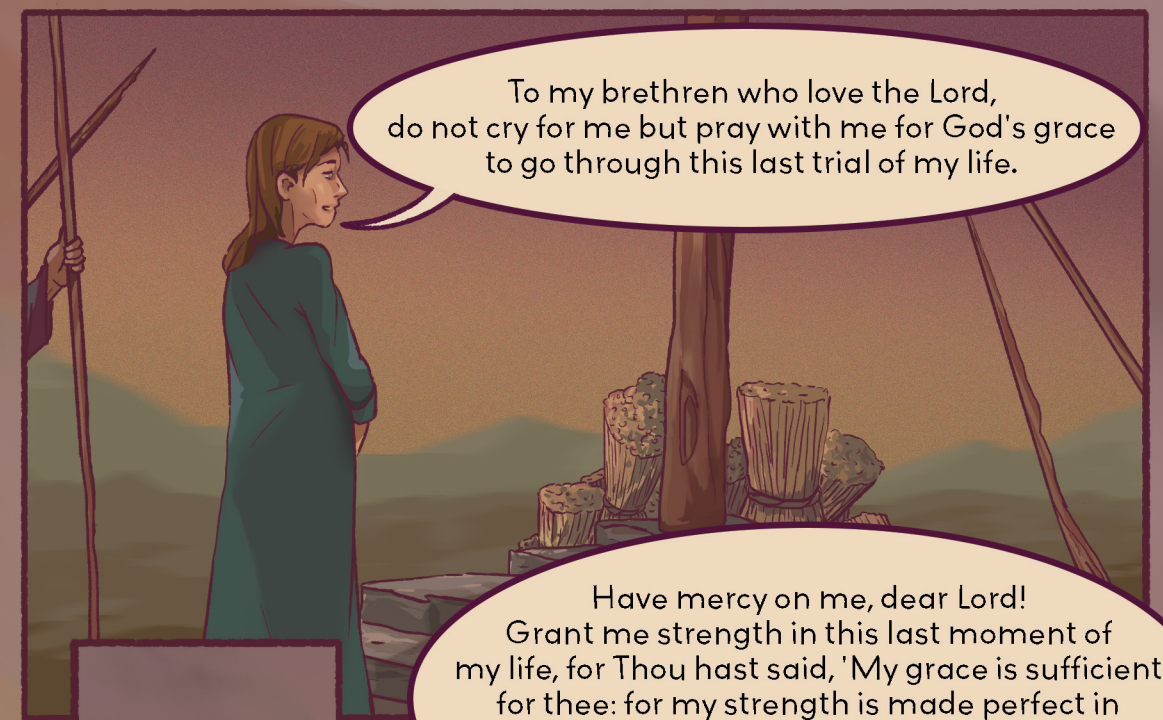
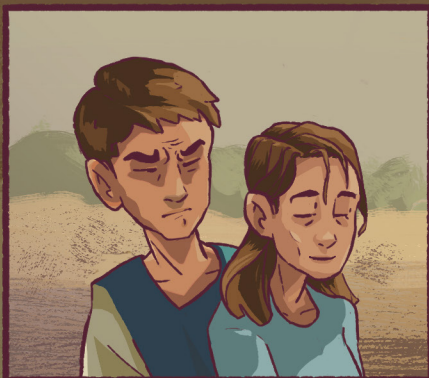
Dr Draicot forbade anyone to pray for her, and condemned her to be burned at the stake.



A huge crowd followed Joan – some weeping sorrowfully and others hurling insults at her – all the way to the nearby Windmill Pit, where a pyre had been built in preparation for her execution.



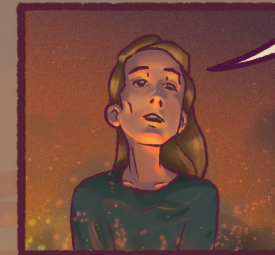
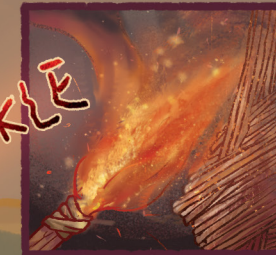
Throughout the short journey, Roger gently held the hand of his frail, blind twin sister, who could not see the immense pain and agony on his face.



To my brethren who love the Lord, do not cry for me but pray with me for God's grace to go through this last trial of my life.

Have mercy on me, dear Lord! Grant me strength in this last moment of my life, for Thou hast said, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9). Oh, my Saviour, receive this unworthy soul unto Thy glorious presence!

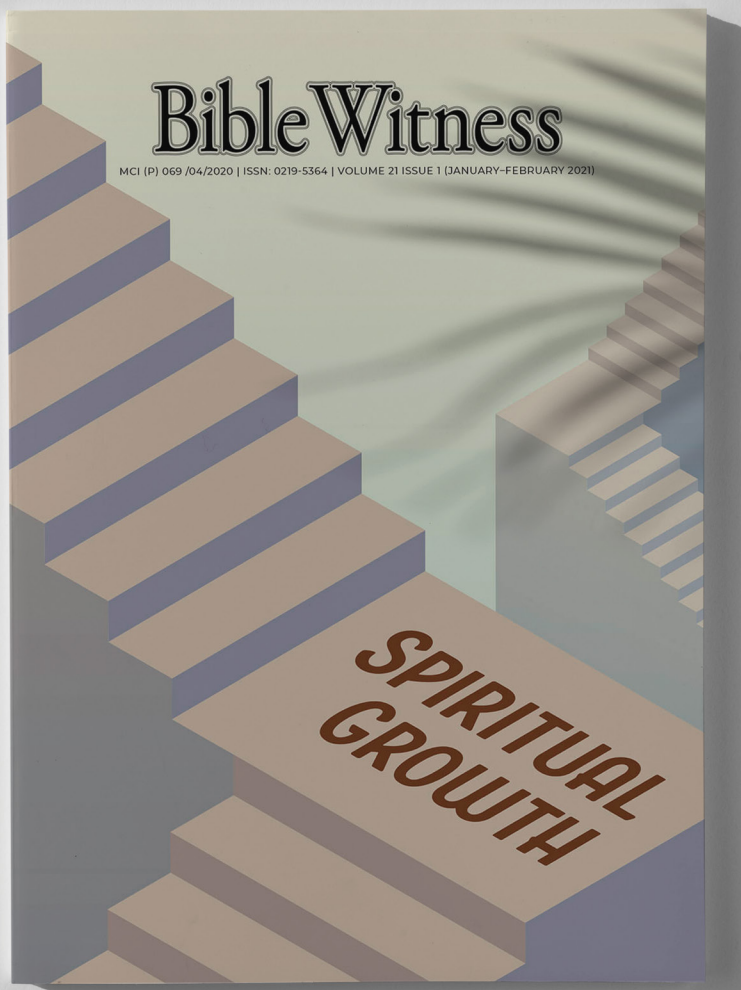
CRACKLE



Smoke and flames soon engulfed the sightless but courageous soul, who stood in silent prayer amidst the wailing and shouting in the crowd.



Indeed, Joan did not die in vain, for "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15). Besides, God had promised in James 1:12 – "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." Despite her physical blindness, Joan trusted God and persevered in living for Him and His truths. As such, God was pleased to bless her with such amazing spiritual sight that she could comprehend deeply the things of God, unlike her enemies whose minds were darkened and totally unable to grasp any spiritual truth. Blind and needy Joan might be, yet her life had never been a wasted one. Instead, Joan Waste had become "an instrument used by God to encourage generations of [His] people through trials and troubles" in times of persecution.



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