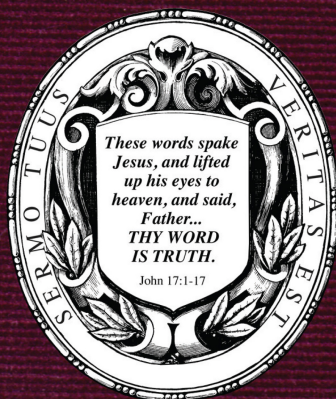


A Biblical Case for Total Inerrancy

How Jesus Viewed the
Old Testament

Robert P. Lightner



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Lightner



The Baptist Standard Bearer, Inc.

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Thou hast given a *standard* to them that fear thee;
that it may be displayed because of the truth.

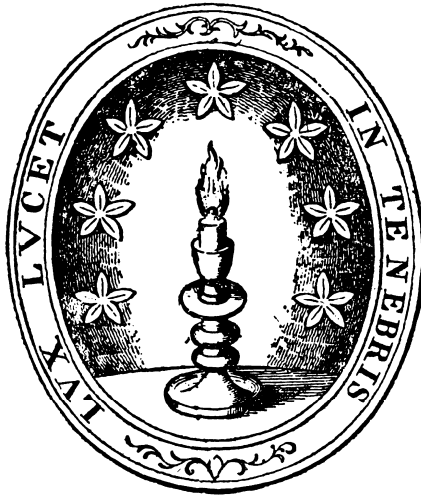
-- Psalm 60:4

Reprinted in 2007

by

THE BAPTIST STANDARD BEARER, INC.

No. 1 Iron Oaks Drive
Paris, Arkansas 72855
(479) 963-3831



THE WALDENSIAN EMBLEM

lux lucet in tenebris

“The Light Shineth in the Darkness”

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ISBN 1579786502

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Foreword

At no time in her history has the Church of God been free from the attacks of the enemy. Satan is many-wiled, and he employs his full arsenal to undermine the people of God and, were it possible, to destroy the Church.

Today he is concentrating upon the very foundation of the Christian Faith, the Word of God. Satan says very many complimentary things about the Word of God, but there is one thing that he demands. We may admire the Scriptures as much as we wish, but we must not insist upon their absolute trustworthiness. And, indeed, the thread of unity that binds together almost all modern discussions of the Bible is that the Bible, whatever else it may be, is not to be regarded as infallible and inerrant.

Professor Lightner's book forms a refreshing contrast to much that is written upon the Bible. We say refreshing advisedly, for the neo-orthodox view of the Bible is really quite dull and uninteresting. It has an air of unreality about it that cannot be completely downed, no matter how orthodox is the phraseology in which it is couched. But the old historic Christian view of inspiration, the view which finds expression in the great creeds of the Church, and, for that matter, in the Bible itself, is full of life and vigor and power.

It is that view which Professor Lightner presents in these pages. Nor does he merely repeat what has been said time and time before. He points out the relevance of the Scriptural view of inspiration for today. His work will create in the heart a deeper love for the Bible and for the Christ of Whom the Bible speaks. If anyone asks, "In the welter of modern opinion, what should I believe about the Bible?" this book will answer his question. May many find their Christian faith strengthened through the reading of this work.

Edward J. Young

Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Introduction

This is a book about the most wonderful person and the most wonderful book in the world. Now the world has witnessed a lot of persons and a lot of books and therefore my very first sentence will undoubtedly be challenged. Jesus Christ, the living Word, and the Bible, the written Word, are different from all other persons and books not only in degree but also in kind. Both Christ and the Bible are divinely supernatural. Many are willing to acclaim Christ as a very good man, one who was nearer to God than any other man. He is far more than that; *He is the Son of God*. Likewise many will readily admit that the Bible is a good book, a book containing truth about God. It is far more than that; *it is the Word of God*.

Christ and the Bible are the two impregnable forces upon which Christianity stands or falls. This is true because God, who is ultimate authority, has relegated divine authority to the Bible and Christ is the central theme of Scripture. It is a very popular thing these days to talk about both of these doctrines. Not all of the talk, however, is true to the Bible's testimony about itself and Christ. The truth is that both of these cardinal doctrines of Christianity are under severe attack today.

It is my firm conviction that the present cries of a return to the theology of Jesus and Biblical theology are for the most part not genuine. Very frequently non-conservatives, and all too frequently conservatives, have desired to claim the Saviour while at the same time deviating in varying degrees from His view of Scripture. One hears much these days about the words and deeds of Jesus. Away with Paul, give me Jesus—this is the cry. Jesus and Paul are not in conflict. Paul's view of the inspiration of Scripture expressed in 2 Timothy

3:16 finds perfect agreement with Christ's view expressed in Matthew 5:17, 18 and John 10:33-35. Let us return to the teachings of Jesus but let us not forget what He taught about the Scriptures. You cannot have the Saviour unless you accept His view of the Scriptures also. He will not be divided. His teaching is not open for picking and choosing.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

I have two basic purposes for the writing of this book. *First* is the determination of precisely what Christ taught concerning the Scriptures. By no means is Christ's teaching concerning the Scriptures to be viewed as more inspired than other records of Scripture. His words are not to be construed in red-letter fashion as more authoritative than the rest of the Bible. In one sense then, this study is merely one aspect of the Bible's witness to itself. In another sense, however, it is more than that since Christ is the church's Lord and since He said so much about the Scriptures.

This investigation into what Christ explicitly and implicitly taught concerning the Scriptures should provide clear guide lines for the followers of Christ. Certainly, the servant ought not be above his Lord here any more than in any other area. It is hoped that this study will aid in answering the following questions. Has the Christian church been correct in accepting the Scriptures as the infallible revelation of God? Is the orthodox branch of the church right in maintaining that same view today? What view of the Scriptures may the individual justifiably attribute to Christ and thus hold for himself? That Christ's view of Scripture provides a guide for the believer to follow is acknowledged even by those who do not entirely agree with it. T. W. Manson, who is by no means a friend of conservative orthodoxy, was honest enough to admit this fact: "In a word, our Lord's treatment of the Old Testament is based on two things: a profound understanding of the essential teaching of the Hebrew Scriptures and a sure judgement of his own contemporary situation. There is nothing trivial or artificial about his use of the Old Testament: throughout we feel that we are in touch with realities, the realities of divine revelation and the realities of the historical situation. I suggest that this should provide the standard and

pattern for our own exegesis of the Old Testament and the New."¹

Second, this presentation should allow one to evaluate the validity of present day claims of a return to the theology of Jesus and the Bible. Edward J. Young has put the present issue plainly when he said: "Was Jesus, however, justified in so regarding the Old Testament, and are Christians today justified in sharing his opinion? This question is pertinent, indeed; for now, as probably never before, this traditional attitude is being questioned and doubted and attacked. What grounds has the Christian for his belief that the Old Testament Scriptures are the very Word of God? How may he be sure that these writings are indeed authoritative and reliable?"²

PERTINENCE OF THE STUDY

Such a study as this, in the science of Biblical theology, is very pertinent to the needs of the present day.

It is pertinent first of all because of the importance of the doctrine of the Scriptures. This is the most important of all doctrines. Objection may be raised by some to such a claim. It is frequently argued that the person and work of Christ are the most important of all Biblical studies. Without any desire to detract from the Saviour it must be said that unless the Biblical record about Him is infallible we have no sure way of knowing whether or not we are believing right things about Him. If God's revelation in the Bible may not be trusted entirely how are we to know when it is to be trusted. If the fountain is corrupt and contaminated so is all the water which flows from it.

Christ is the apex of divine revelation. He is the personification of truth and without Him the Bible would not be complete. If the study of theology could be visualized as a building, the doctrine of the Scriptures would serve as the solid foundation upon which the entire structure rested and

¹ T. W. Manson, *The Old Testament in the Teaching of Jesus* (Manchester: The Librarian, The John Rylands Library, 1952), p. 332.

² Edward J. Young, "The Authority of the Old Testament," *The Infallible Word*, ed. N. B. Stonehouse and Paul Wooley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1953), p. 54.

the doctrine of Christ would be seen as the climactic capstone crowning the edifice.

Therefore, regardless of how seriously and piously one may talk about truths contained in the Bible there can be little progress made in these areas unless the Bible is accepted as infallibly authoritative. It is pure theological double-talk and intellectual dishonesty to discredit the authority of the Bible and at the same time to seek refuge in its teachings on other matters, however important they may be.

Secondly, the subject at hand is important because we are witnessing today a resurgence of what is being referred to as "Biblical theology." The rise of neo-orthodoxy has elevated the thinking of contemporary liberalism whereas in classic liberalism there was a candid denial of the worth of the Bible. Liberal theologians of prewar days made no apologies for their denial of the inspiration and authority of the Bible. The pendulum has swung back and now liberals are willing to talk about "rediscovering the Bible," the "theology of Jesus" and "reading the Bible from within." Some of today's liberals wish to condemn the views of their forefathers as heretical. It is because of this new interest in the Bible that many have been deceived into thinking that liberals have turned conservative. There could be no more erroneous conclusion than that. While this study does not deal extensively with the contemporary liberal view of Scripture the study aims to provide the facilities to determine to what extent the "Biblical theology" movement is consistent with the teaching of Christ concerning the Scriptures.

In the third place, the person of Christ makes this study of pertinent value. If He is the apex of God's revelation, if all revelation culminates in Him, then what He said about that revelation is of utmost importance. If He was all that He claimed to be—the divine Son of God—then what He said ought to be obeyed.

THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF THE STUDY

The study of any subject proceeds on the assumption of certain presuppositions and this is no less true of the study at hand. There are three basic and underlying presuppositions upon which the writer has based this study.

Concerning the person of Christ

This study proceeds on the premise that Jesus Christ is all that He claimed to be and the New Testament writers made Him out to be—the divine Son of God, very God of very God. The Biblical testimony concerning His perfect humanity is also accepted along with the fact that in the kenosis He did not empty Himself of any attribute of deity which He eternally possessed. Walvoord's summary of this theanthropic person is accepted as true to the Biblical testimony and is the basis upon which this study proceeds. He writes: "In the Person of Christ are two natures, inseparably united, without mixture or loss of separate identity, without loss or transfer of properties or attributes, the union being personal and eternal. The fact that the two natures maintain their complete identity is essential to the doctrine and may be proved without great difficulty. A comparison of the attributes of the human nature and the divine nature will demonstrate that each must belong only to its corresponding nature, though the attributes of either nature belong to the Person of Christ. Because the attributes of either nature belong to Christ, it is proper to refer to His natures as being theanthropic. There is no mixture of the divine and human to form a third substance. The human nature always remains human and the divine nature always remains divine. Christ is therefore both God and man, no less God because of His humanity, and no less human because of His deity."³

The acceptance of the above view of Christ means the rejection of the usual explanations of the New Testament teaching concerning Christ's view of Scripture by those who refuse it. Those who deny the view of Scripture which Christ espoused usually base their denial on the following considerations:

The ignorance of Christ: This attempt to invalidate Christ's testimony to the Old Testament ascribes no more knowledge to Christ than that of His contemporaries. Those who hold this view usually argue that His knowledge was adequate for the delivery of doctrines but did not extend to

³John F. Walvoord, "Outline of Christology" (unpublished class notes in Christology 106, Dallas Theological Seminary, n.d.), p. 19. (Mimeographed.)

questions of scholarship and criticism. Appeal is usually made to a kenosis theory of incarnation. Packer explains the view: "On this kind of view, the process of incarnation involved such a resignation of divine knowledge on the Son's part that in matters of this kind He inevitably fell victim to the prejudices and errors of His own age. He became a man of His time, it is said, so that naturally His views about the Old Testament were those of His time; but they need not bind us."⁴

This view must be rejected because it does not take into account Christ's claims that what He taught was divine truth. The acceptance of the perfect humanity of Christ precludes the fact that limitations were involved in the incarnation. The Lord did say, "But of that day or that hour knoweth no one, not even the angels in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13:32). However, in the very immediate context He gave the assurance that what He did say was as unchanging and certain as "heaven and earth" (Mark 13:31). The view under consideration also fails to see the importance and vital place of the Old Testament in Christ's teaching. It assumes that His views of the Old Testament are unessential and can be discarded without loss to His authority.⁵

Tasker has evaluated the fallacy of such an approach to the teachings of Christ: "Indeed, if He could be mistaken on matters which He regarded as of the strictest relevance to His own person and ministry, it is difficult to see exactly how or why He either can or should be trusted anywhere else."⁶

The accommodation of Christ: This attempt to reject Christ's view of the Old Testament will be dealt with more fully in a subsequent chapter. Here the attempt needs only to be defined and stated. Wenham explains this view as follows: "The use of Scripture as a court of appeal in controversy is undoubted, but it again suggests the possibility that Jesus is simply taking His contemporaries on their own ground without committing Himself to the correctness of their prem-

⁴ J. I. Packer, *"Fundamentalism" and the Word of God* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 60.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 60-61.

⁶ R. V. G. Tasker, *The Old Testament in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1963), p. 37.

ises. . . . He deliberately refrained from unsettling them by questioning their conception of the inspiration of their Scriptures, allowing the gentler processes of passing time gradually to bring home to them the imperfect character of what they had hitherto revered."⁷

Even a casual study of the teaching of Christ reveals the fallacy of such a view. Christ did not hesitate to undermine other current beliefs; and furthermore, He maintains the same high view of Scripture even when alone with the disciples, other individuals and even Satan.

As was indicated earlier, these attempts are rejected not only for their own inconsistencies but also because they impair the person of Christ. Any rejection of Christ's view of the Scriptures is an aspersion upon His holy person. Either His testimony is accepted or His deity, integrity and authority must be denied altogether. To reject His authority is to do so on the basis of one's own authority.

Concerning the Scriptures

This discussion will not be occupied with the questions raised by form and source criticism. The conclusions of men like Millar Burrows on this matter are immediately rejected in favor of the Bible's witness to its own inspiration and infallibility. Burrows says: "It is now clear that we cannot reconstruct the order of events in Jesus' life, nor be sure of the settings and contents of his sayings or their exact wording. We cannot even make a list of sayings that are certainly authentic. The church preserved what it found helpful in winning new converts, guiding the life and faith of believers, and meeting the attacks of its enemies."⁸

In contradistinction to this unbelieving subjective viewpoint this study proceeds on the objective testimony of Christ. The author believes firmly in the total inerrancy of Scripture. He believes, without any qualification, that the words of the entire Old and New Testaments in the original autographs are the inspired words of God. This means of course that the

⁷ J. W. Wenham, *Our Lord's View of the Old Testament* (London: The Tyndale Press, 1953), pp. 18-19.

⁸ Millar Burrows, *An Outline of Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946), pp. 46-47.

records which the Gospel writers left us are authentic and authoritative. I believe these men under the guiding control of the Spirit of God wrote what God wanted them to write and what they wrote is the actual record of what happened, not merely what they thought happened or what they interpreted as having happened. When they tell us what Christ said, I believe He said it. They were a lot closer to the events than any critic, be he ancient or modern.

Edward J. Young voiced this present writer's view concerning the nature and end of contemporary subjective criticism when he said: "The subjective nature of these types of criticism will, as time passes, more and more force itself into the open, and the day will come, we believe, when they will be largely discarded as legitimate methods of studying the Bible. At any rate, we shall regard the witness to our Lord which the New Testament offers as completely authoritative."⁹

Concerning the problem of quotations in Christ's teaching

This discussion will not involve a treatment of the sources and variations of quotations in the Lord's teaching of Scripture. It is presupposed, however, that regardless of the source from which He quoted, or the kind of quotation He makes, the words He spoke and which were recorded by the human writers are the very words of God. This is a theological treatment of Christ's teaching of Scripture and not a literary and linguistic one.

It has been argued by some that because of the variations in quotations from the original text of the Old Testament and even from the use of the Septuagint that verbal inspiration is thereby an impossible position. That these variations do not destroy the doctrine of verbal inspiration is proven by the consideration of several facts. First of all it cannot always be determined when a direct quotation is intended. Johnson argues that quotations were sometimes given from memory, some were fragmentary, some were quotations of substance and some by sound.¹⁰

⁹ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁰ Franklin Johnson, *The Quotations of the New Testament from the Old Considered in the Light of General Literature* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1896), pp. 1-185.

Secondly, all the words of the end product are inspired whether it is a complete and perfect quotation or not. Thirdly, the Spirit of God must be allowed total freedom to modify and select expressions which He inspired in the Old Testament.

Ladd has summarized Christ's method of quoting and the variations which exist: "But there is no proof that in quoting Hebrew prophecy Jesus thought it necessary to confine himself to the exact words, or exclusively to either the Hebrew text or that of the LXX.: sometimes he departs from all known texts, with no assignable reason for his departure."¹¹

It is an interesting and illuminating fact that Christ did not have the originals but only versions and copies and thus His quotations of necessity came from these. It is also significant that no one ever questioned His references or accused Him of misquoting Scripture.

Often Christ's quotations, whether from the Hebrew or the Greek, were free (John 8:17; Matt. 19:5; 22:37-39). Sometimes they were of an interpretive nature (Matt. 11:10; Luke 7:27). On still other occasions He chose from the prophecy that which emphasized His meaning (Matt. 26:31; 15:7-9). Sometimes He combined the Hebrew and the Septuagint version (Matt. 15:9; cf. Isa. 29:13). In Matthew 13:14-16 He gave preference to the Greek version in order to emphasize His point.¹²

Roger Nicole has dealt extensively with this matter of quotations not only in Christ's teaching but also in the entire New Testament. His principles in explanation of the variations and in defense of verbal inspiration in light of the variations will be cited here: "1. The New Testament writers had to translate their quotations. 2. The New Testament writers did not have the same rules for quotations as are nowadays enforced in works of a scientific character. 3. The New Testament writers sometimes paraphrased their quotations. 4. The New Testament writers often simply alluded to Old Testament passages without intending to quote them. 5. The New Testa-

¹¹ George T. Ladd, *The Doctrine of Sacred Scripture* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1883), I, 71.

¹² Pierre Ch. Marcel, "Our Lord's Use of Scripture," *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), p. 122.

ment authors sometimes recorded quotations made by others. 6. Other principles whose application must be limited."¹³

Obviously each of the above principles does not apply in every case of the Lord's quotations. However, they do provide, either as a group or individually, a satisfactory explanation for the variations and apparent discrepancies in Christ's use of the Old Testament.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The present work is a revision of a doctor's dissertation presented to the faculty of Dallas Theological Seminary and Graduate School of Theology under the title "The Bibliology of Christ." The author wishes to express appreciation to the faculty for their kind permission to publish this material.

A word of acknowledgment is due also to Mr. Charles H. Craig and Professor Robert L. Reymond of the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company for valuable suggestions regarding content and style.

Of necessity many passages will be referred to often but each chapter will deal with the central passages involved and will seek to establish the Saviour's teaching on the particular point at hand.¹⁴

¹³ Roger Nicole, "New Testament Use of the Old," *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958), pp. 142-47.

¹⁴ Unless otherwise indicated all Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible*, ed. American Revision Committee (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1901). Permission for quotations is gratefully recognized.

A Biblical Case for Total Inerrancy examines the primary biblical evidence regarding the Bible's inerrancy--what Christ Himself taught concerning the Scriptures. Professor Lightner demonstrates that one's view of Christ and the Bible cannot be divorced from what Jesus Himself believed to be true. Under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, this important study will reaffirm the believer's confidence in the inerrancy of Scripture and rekindle an unshakable love for the Lord of the Scriptures.

“Professor Lightner’s book forms a refreshing contrast to much that is written upon the Bible. We say refreshing advisedly, for the neo-orthodox view of the Bible is really quite dull and uninteresting. It has an air of unreality about it that cannot be completely downed, no matter how orthodox is the phraseology in which it is couched. But the old historic Christian view of inspiration, the view which finds expression in the great creeds of the Church, and, for that matter, in the Bible itself, is full of life and vigor and power.

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Westminster Theological Seminary
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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