

BOOK REVIEW
of
Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield,
The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible,
The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1948.

This book is in the Evangel Library,
and this review is presented by Larry D. Paarmann.

Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (B.B. Warfield) prior to his death in 1921 was considered to be one of the three outstanding living exponents of the Reformed Faith, the other two being Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck. In 1886 he was called to succeed A.A. Hodge as professor of Systematic Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, a position he held until his death. Warfield was a prolific writer and this volume contains the principal articles published by Warfield having to do with the nature and authority of the Bible. The book includes a 66 page introduction by Cornelius Van Til.

The table of contents for the book is as follows: Introduction, I. The Biblical Idea of Revelation, II. The Church Doctrine of Inspiration, III. The Biblical Idea of Inspiration, IV. The Real Problem of Inspiration, V. The Terms “Scripture” and “Scriptures” as Employed in the New Testament, VI. “God-Inspired Scripture”, VII. “It Says:” “Scripture Says:” “God Says”, VIII. “The Oracles of God”, Appendix I. The Canon of the New Testament, Appendix II. Inspiration and Criticism.

In the Introduction, Van Til says the following: “If there is anything that is clearly implied in the preceding discussion, it is that the rejection of the Bible as the infallible Word of God is connected with the rejection of that of which the Bible claims to give infallible revelation. . . . The view of Scripture as so ably presented and defended by Warfield is held by orthodox Protestants alone. And among these orthodox Protestants it is only the followers of Calvin who have a theology that fully fits in with this idea of Scripture.”

In Chapter I, Warfield says “The religion of the Bible thus announces itself, not as the product of men’s search after God, if haply they may feel after Him and find Him, but as the creation in men of the gracious God, forming a people for Himself, that they may show forth His praise. In other words, the religion of the Bible presents itself as distinctively a revealed religion.”

In Chapter IV, Warfield makes the point that if we do not trust the testimony of the Biblical writers concerning the God-given nature of the Bible, then we can not, and be consistent, trust their testimony on other teachings either. Warfield uses the following words: “if we refuse to trust them here, we have in principle refused them trust everywhere.”

In Chapter VII, Warfield observes that the writers of the New Testament books freely attribute, when referring to Old Testament passages, the source as being God, even when the passage referred to does not specifically say that God spoke the words. Warfield says “it was all one to the New Testament writers whether they said ‘God says’ or ‘Scripture says.’ . . . Paul, for example, could say alike ‘the *Scripture* saith to Pharaoh’ (Rom. ix. 17) and ‘*God* . . . saith, Thou wilt not give thy Holy One to see corruption’ (Acts xiii. 34). . . . ‘It says’ is the same as ‘Scripture says,’ and that this ‘Scripture says’ is the same as ‘God says.’”

In Appendix II, Warfield makes a strong case that those who oppose the doctrine of the plenary (full) inspiration of the Scriptures, of which there has been a never-ending stream, have consistently been found wanting. Warfield says “in order, therefore, to shake this doctrine, biblical criticism must show: either, that the New Testament writers do not claim inspiration; or, that this claim was rejected by the contemporary church; or, that it is palpably negated by the fact that the books containing it are forgeries; or, equally clearly negated by the fact that they contain along with the claim, errors of fact or contradictions of statement.” He proceeds to show that biblical critics have never shown any of their negative claims to be the true. It should be no surprise to Christians that the enemies of the Faith have not been able to undermine plenary inspiration, for as Warfield says, “Not only does our Lord promise a supernatural guidance to his Apostles, both at the beginning of their ministry (Matthew x. 19, 20) and at the close of his life (Mark xii. 11; Luke xxi. 12, cf. John xiv and xvi) but the New Testament writers distinctly claim divine authority.”

Down through the ages the Biblical writers have claimed divine inspiration, God’s Holy Apostolic Church has always maintained such to be the case, and all those who have opposed this fundamental doctrine have failed in their attempts to undermine it. Our ultimate authority is what God has revealed!