

LIVES TRANSFORMED: AN EVIDENCE OF AUTHORITY

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"And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:26). With these words and in this context Jesus Christ warned of the apostasy which should prevail in this world as His coming draws near. It appears that the basic manifestation of this apostasy in Noah's day was man's adamant refusal to listen to the Word of God. God warned Noah: "My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:3). God is here extending a period of beckoning grace. However, even though Noah preached grace for one hundred and twenty years, his hearers reacted as if God were not speaking. This is the very reaction so prevalent today. The proclamation of an infallible Word falls on deaf ears while men doubt and deny that it is the Word of God.

As it was in the day of Noah, so today man stands at the crossroads. But God has placed at this crossroads an authoritative signpost which implores one and all, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isa. 30:21). However, it is to be expected that Satan, the enemy of men's souls, will attempt to influence the decision of the wayfarer at this crossroads. He may not be able to remove the signpost, but he does his best to raise questions concerning its authority. Young succinctly states this as follows:

If, therefore, the Church today takes the wrong turning and finds herself in the land of despair and doubt, she has not harkened to the Guidebook, but has allowed herself to be deceived by signposts with which her enemy has tampered.¹

The decisions and battles of the day are won or lost in direct relation to what a man thinks about the Word of God. If the Bible is the divinely inspired, infallible Word of God then it is the authority and not the man who studies it. This is the issue that confronts men today. Young declares:

There is, however, one battleground in particular where the fighting is raging and the battle must be fought to a finish. . . . it has to do with the very nature of the Bible itself. What is the Bible? That is the great question.²

If there was ever a day in which men desperately need to come to grips with the reality of the authority of the Word of God, it is today. But how is this to be realized? It must be

recognized that in the final analysis this battle in which man finds himself engaged is a spiritual battle. God Himself through His apostle informs us: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). Therefore, man should realize that the battle will not be won on the battlefield of his own wisdom. God speaks concerning this: ". . . the world by wisdom knew not God . . ." (1 Cor. 1:21). However, the fact that the Word is the final authority does not mean that God may not use certain truths as evidences of this authority. The Holy Spirit must do the final work of bringing the darkened soul to the light, but this does not negate the value of a given point of evidence. It was upon the basis of this contention that this investigation was conducted and this report written.

THE QUESTION OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD OF GOD

The Attack Against Authority

Historic Christianity sat at the feet of the Holy Spirit to listen as He instructed from the pages of the Bible itself concerning its true identity. But, in contrast to this, man now is told that he sits in judgment over the Word of God and ascertains its authenticity. Liberalism, with its background of rationalism and evolutionism, came along and made man and the "Christian experience" the authority. It is the thesis of this article that an experience in Christ is of evidential value in supporting the authority of the Word of God, but this is not to say that experience is the authority. Machen called this "one of the root errors of modern liberalism." He then concluded: "Christian experience, we have just said, is useful as confirming the gospel message. But because it is necessary, many men have jumped to the conclusion that it is all that is necessary."³ However, this "Christian experience" of the Liberal needs an authority before it can be admitted before the court of enquiry. This authority, he says, is the "authority of Jesus." Now this may sound fine to some, but before the Liberal admits the "words of Jesus" as his final authority they must "first be selected from the mass of the recorded words by a critical process."⁴ This is a dangerous position. Now man is the authority who sits on the bench of judgment deciding what God has said and what He has not. In reality you have no authority. Machen well summarized this position when he said:

It is no wonder, then, that liberalism is totally different from Christianity, for the foundation is different. Christianity is founded upon the Bible. It bases upon the Bible both its thinking and its life. Liberalism on the other hand is founded upon the shifting emotions of sinful men.⁵

Neo-orthodoxy, having recognized the insufficiencies of liberalism, professed to return to the Word of God. But was it in reality such a return? It certainly was not a return to orthodoxy. In his clear presentation of this contemporary school of theology, Ryrie says:

It should be apparent by now that one of the chief differences between orthodoxy and neo-orthodoxy relates to the Bible.

.....
 In the first place, Barthians align themselves with the liberal school of

Biblical criticism. . . . The damage that liberalism has done to the Bible can never be estimated, and this is what neo-orthodoxy sides with.⁶

However, some will come to the defense of Neo-orthodoxy by quoting Barth, who wrote: "We believe in and with the Church that Holy Scripture as the original and legitimate witness of divine revelation is itself the Word of God."⁷ On the surface this may appear acceptable to the orthodox theologian, but words merely convey a concept in the mind of the writer. What is Barth's concept? Ryrie summarizes his position as follows:

But beyond any doubt the more general Barthian view and the more correct one (the standard of correctness being agreement on the meaning of all the words used in the statement) is that the Bible becomes [emphasis mine] the Word of God.⁸

Now, when the Neo-orthodox maintains that the Bible "becomes" the Word of God rather than that it "is" the Word of God, the doctrine of inspiration is seriously affected. With such positions as these, the conservative theologian is not content.

The Claim of Authority

A cursory study of history should reveal to man his utter failure in every attempt to reach up to God. Observation alone is sufficient to justify the abandonment of any position that maintains the improvement of mankind and his ability to bring in the kingdom. Herbert Spencer in his book First Principles expressed this inadequacy. He wrote: ". . . since man cannot reach up to a knowledge of God, even as the eagle cannot fly out of the air, therefore God must forever remain the unknown and unknowable."⁹ Spencer is right when he observes that man in himself cannot reach up to God, but it does not necessarily follow that it is impossible for God to reach down to man. This is precisely what the Bible declares that God did, not only in the Person of His Son, the Living Word, but also in the Bible, the Written Word. The Bible clearly states concerning itself: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . ." (2 Tim. 3:16). Not only does God tell us that He gave us the Bible, but He also tells us how: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). This does not sound like human origination, but rather like Divine presentation.

Acceptance of this position necessitates the conclusion that God has spoken. The fact that God, if He exists, must have the power to speak should be readily conceded by those who consider Him. That He has infallibly spoken is maintained by those who know Him. If He has infallibly spoken and those words are recorded in the Bible, then that Book is authoritative.

The Need for Authority

In a study of all theologies other than that of the orthodox position, one is impressed in the final analysis with the fact that man becomes his own authority. This is seen in the critically destroyed Bible of the Liberal, the "inspiring" but not "inspired" Bible of the Neo-orthodox, and the "tradition" of Roman Catholicism. But is this really acceptable? This leaves the

Good-Ship-Man adrift without a rudder upon the constantly shifting tides of the sea of intellectual subjectivism. Man needs an external authority, but one in which he can implicitly trust. Thomas declares this need in the following words: "Authority is needed in every walk of life, and it is also essential in connection with religion. Man, even as man, needs a guide. But still more, man as a sinner needs an authority."¹⁰

The Reality of Authority

It is this need for authority which the Bible itself claims to fulfill. A study of the Old Testament does not reveal an attitude of "I think," "it seems to me," or even a "listen to me," but rather an authoritative "thus saith the Lord." Such phrases as "the Lord spake," "the word of the Lord came," or "the Lord said," are used 3,808 times.¹¹ Either the Old Testament is what it claims to be or else we are faced with the fact that the authors of most of the thirty-nine books of which it is composed were some of the greatest blasphemers man has ever known. However, this is not the impression with which one is left upon reading it.

This same conviction is found in the New Testament. The apostles and even Christ Himself so viewed the Bible. Jesus Christ said: "The Scriptures cannot be broken" (John 10:35). This is further seen in the Scriptural formula "for thus it is written by the prophets," as recorded for instance in Matthew 2:5. The verb used here is in the perfect tense denoting the abiding character of action which is passed and could be translated, "it stands written."

An honest appraisal of the testimony of Scripture to itself leads one to the conclusion that it claims to be God's Word and hence authoritative.

The Recognition of Authority

What one does with a given authority, whether he misinterprets it or chooses to disregard it, does not negate that authority any more than driving fifty miles an hour in a thirty mile-an-hour speed zone can be excused before the judge by the offender pleading that he did not think that the sign really meant what it said or that he just did not see it. That a given individual does not recognize the authority of the Word of God does not cancel that authority.

The Question of Evidence

It is not the intention of this article to establish the authority of the Word of God; this was settled in the council rooms of eternity. It may be, however, that God may choose in His infinite wisdom to use a given point of evidence as part of the total work of enlightenment by the Holy Spirit in bringing an individual to the recognition of this authority.

The Admission of the Evidence

There are many points of evidence which can be discerned in a study of the history of the Word of God. One such evidence is its power to transform a life. That God by His own power transforms individuals cannot be denied. This is one of the basic realities of Christianity.

However, is it possible for God to bring about this transformation on the basis of the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and that alone? If it can be ascertained that this has taken place, then this fact is confirmatory evidence for the authority of the Word of God. Machen felt that such evidence is admissible, for he wrote: "Christian experience is rightly used when it confirms the documentary evidence."¹² Such instances of God's transforming power can be documented and therefore have a right to a hearing before the bar of investigation concerning the inspiration and authority of the Word of God.

The Implication of the Evidence

Concerning the importance of the testimony of "fruit," Jesus said:

Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. . . . Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.¹³

Since the Word of God apart from human instrumentality is sufficient to bring a person to a saving knowledge of God in Christ, this fact is certainly "good fruit" and consequently is evidence of the "goodness" of the tree, the Word of God. This truth is clearly seen by M'Ilvaine. He stated:

The goodness of a tree cannot be doubted while we know the excellence of its fruit. No more reason have we to question the holy character and divine origin of religion, while its genuine disciples are holy. We may come to an erroneous conclusion by judging erroneously of the fruit; by ascribing effects to causes which did not produce them; by charging upon religion a train of consequences of which it was only the incidental occasion, instead of the natural cause. But these errors are in the application, and independent of the correctness of the test. Whenever you have ascertained the true results of any system of doctrine, you have found a plain and certain expression of its intrinsic character. It is good in proportion as the fruit is good. If its fruit be godly, it must itself be good.¹⁴

It was the concern of the investigation undertaken in connection with this study to ascertain whether or not such "fruit" could be discovered, fruit which was produced by the Word of God alone.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE EVIDENCE OF THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF THE WORD OF GOD

The Approach of the Investigation

Having decided upon the value of such an investigation as this in the area of apologetics and evidences, the gathering of material then became the concern of the writer. However,

such information could primarily be found only in areas where the Gospel had not previously penetrated. This necessitated gathering evidence from various mission fields. A word may be in order at this point as to how the evidence was collected.

Interviews

A series of interviews was obtained with Dr. John T. Dale, Director of the Mexican Indian Mission. The material thus obtained was recorded and later stenographically reproduced. Some of the material thus gained will be presented in this discussion. In addition, many other missionaries were interviewed and much helpful material was thus gained.

Letters

A letter seeking assistance was sent to Wycliffe Bible Translators. Mr. Harold H. Key, the Acting Director of the Extension Department of the mission forwarded the request to the various Branches of that organization. The information obtained through this means came in answer to the following questions:

- 1) Do you feel it is possible for a person to be brought to a saving knowledge of Christ by reading some portion of the Word of God, apart from any contact with a missionary or local believer?
- 2) If so, can you furnish specific examples of this having taken place? The more specific and complete the answer, the more helpful it will be.
- 3) To what extent did the person grow in the "grace and knowledge" of the Lord Jesus Christ before a contact was established with a believer?
- 4) Do you feel it is necessary for the person thus won to Christ to have a continued contact with a mature believer in order to become established in the faith?

It would be impossible to ascertain the number of hours invested by the missionaries of this organization in reply to these questions, but the material thus gained was most helpful in pursuing this study.

In addition, many helpful letters were received from various missionaries not connected with Wycliffe Bible Translators.

Appreciation

A word of appreciation is due Dr. and Mrs. John T. Dale of the Mexican Indian Mission, Mr. Harold Key of Wycliffe Bible Translators and many others without whose help the study would have been impossible.

Testimonies to the Power of the Word

From the four corners of the world came letters in response to the questionnaire. Not one dissenting view was expressed, but rather with varied emphases each responded concerning

his (or her) belief that it was possible for the Word of God alone to be the sole instrument used by the Holy Spirit to bring the hitherto unreached native to a saving knowledge of Christ. From the scores of letters and interviews one excerpt is herewith given as representative of the general response. Dr. Dale stated:

The Bible itself, I am sure, and the power of the Holy Spirit can bring conviction of sin and can, I think, bring a person to accept Christ without any one else being there. I think there are a number of cases where it has been done.¹⁵

Illustrations of Conversions Through the Word

The preceding paragraph noted the universal opinion of those responding to the investigation in support of the contention under consideration. However, it is one thing to agree with a basic tenet of theology, and often quite another thing to come up with tangible illustrations of that given doctrine. However, many such instances were discovered. These will be considered in a rapid survey around the world.

Mexico

One of the most interesting accounts of the power of the Word came from Mexico. John T. Dale recounted the following:

Don Margarito, an Aztec Indian who lived way back up in the mountains in Mexico, led a very wretched life. He was a typical Indian who drank and was vicious with his own family. He came to Tamazunchale because he heard that there were those there who were selling a book, which he heard was the book of the devil.¹⁶ But his condition was such that he felt that even the devil might have something to offer that might be advantageous to him in his wretched condition. So he came to Tamazunchale and bought a Bible and went back. He could read fairly well. He started reading from Genesis right on through. He read the Bible through in fifteen days and nights. Then he said to his wife, "Now, this book is not the book of the devil for there are too many things that speak of God; I am going to read it through the second time." He did so in a fifteen day period, and then he said: "No, the second time is even better. I'm convinced that this is God's Book; now I'm going to read it through the third time." In the month and a half, he read it through three times. All that time of course his crops needed to be harvested and his sons insisted that he needed to be helping, but he would not turn it loose. At the end of the time he said: "No, this is God's Book. Now we are going to live according to the rules of this book. These things (idols) have to come down, because you see we should not have any images of God of any kind."¹⁷

Some time following the extensive reading of the Word and the subsequent change in the life of this Aztec Indian, a native believer, Don Ricardo, visited the village and sought to establish

Don Margarito in the things of the Lord. In connection with some discussion of this particular case, Dr. Dale was asked when, in his opinion, God brought life to this Indian's heart. He replied: "My own guess would be that he accepted Christ even before Don Ricardo came there."¹⁸ The change in his life observed both by the family and the entire village would support this contention.

Beginning the first week of January, 1964, it was my privilege to visit the work of the Mexican Indian Mission at Tamazunchale and the surrounding country. While there I met Don Chencho Lara, one of the elders of the church at Tamazunchale. This is the story of the work of the Word in his life as related by Dr. Dale:

He lived down from Tamazunchale a day and a half ride on horseback toward Tampico. He was quite a wealthy land owner, with beautiful river valley country and he was successful. His father was, as he said, as morally straight a man as you would want; he had heard about the Bible, but he had never seen a copy. The son, Don Chencho Lara, being the oldest in the family, took over and he had in the back of his mind his father's desire to see a Bible, but he had never been able to get one. The story was circulated around that the world was coming to an end and that this was to be found in the book, the Bible. When someone came through selling Bibles, he bought one and began reading it. He told me, and his wife confirmed it, that the impression of the Book was such on him that he began to neglect his business, his farm, and way on into the night he would be reading with a little candle and his wife would try to get him to go to bed and he wouldn't. He would read way on into the morning and then during the day would rush back from his business on the farm to continue reading. He said to me that he was just thrilled with the story and he was being fed at the same time.¹⁹

In this instance the testimony of the man himself confirms the contention that he came to saving faith through the reading of the Word apart from any spoken testimony. He told Dr. Dale: "Not only did it create a hunger and a thirst for the Word, but it was beginning to increase it and to feed me."

The Philippines

In response to the request for illustrations of the power of the Word, Lester O. Troyer wrote from the Philippines:

I can give one very graphic example of this. A young Balangao tribesman came in contact with me in 1957. At that time I sold him an Ilocano New Testament without having much opportunity to witness to him at all, since I didn't speak his dialect. I met him four years later and he had been saved through the reading of the Word and had won others to the Lord also.²⁰

Cuba

G. Christian Weiss, missionary speaker with the Back to the Bible Broadcast, wrote concerning an instance he had discovered in Cuba which testifies to the power of the Word:

While in Cuba a few years ago I learned of a very wicked man who was converted to Christ and his life completely transformed through reading a New Testament which he had secured in a very strange way. There was no Christian to talk to him about Christ or explain the way of salvation. It was purely through the reading of the New Testament that he found the light. He was an established Christian when he first made contact with other Christian people.²¹

Ethiopia

Weiss also wrote concerning a personal contact in Ethiopia which illustrates the contention of this investigation. He recounts:

While in Ethiopia a few years ago I came to know a very outstanding case that took place in the mountains. A single man from the Galla tribe in the Chubo area came into Addis Ababa to do some buying. While in the city he was given a New Testament and some books. The man avidly began reading these books. He testified that he discerned that one Book was "The Word of God." The other books he detected were not divine books, so he turned away from them. He continued to read the New Testament and became a true believer in the Lord Jesus and obviously had experienced the miracle of the New Birth by personal faith in the Saviour. He then read the book and proclaimed its contents to his fellow tribesmen. In due time missionaries of the Sudan Interior Mission heard of a group of true believers in this area. They went to the area and found that it was indeed true. Quite a number of people in this area were genuine believers, some of them with very amazing understanding of the Scriptures. But of course on some points they lacked understanding and maturity.

The five illustrations listed above are but representative of close to one hundred which were discovered in connection with this study. These included the countries of India, China, Japan, France, South America and many islands. Space and not interest necessitated the brief selection.

Jesus said: ". . . in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt. 18:16). In criminal law today one witness is sufficient to bring a conviction (the exception being that of an accomplice, in which case his testimony alone cannot be used to bring a conviction). In civil law, as for instance in the establishment of legal documents, two or three witnesses are required to conclude the final decision. If the law of the land thus recognizes the validity of the testimony of reliable witnesses, it certainly should be granted that the testimonies listed herein are sufficient to establish the reality of the power of the Word of God, by

itself and apart from any contact with a believer to bring an individual to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. If this is not granted, then the burden of proof rests upon those who thus dispute the evidence herein presented. God's Word has the inherent power to lead a "pure heathen" to a conversion experience.

The Power of the Word as Seen in Growth and Maturity

The questions asked in connection with this investigation dealt not only with the power of the Word to lead to conversion, but also the extent to which the Word alone is capable of causing a definite growth in grace. Is it possible for the Word of God alone to cause the individual who has been converted by its power to grow in the "grace and knowledge" of the Lord Jesus Christ? Most of those who replied to the questionnaire definitely felt that it was possible for the new convert to grow in the Lord solely through reading the Word. Troyer is a good illustration of this. He wrote:

If the Word of God is translated into the dialect of people who have no large legacy of other literature, I think it is possible for persons to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, in direct relation to their own spiritual hunger and obedience to the Holy Spirit's leadings.²²

Though a given area of growth in grace may be basically an intangible thing, that growth will be seen in a changed life. This was manifest in the early church and certainly should be in this day. If there is this growth on the part of the person converted on the basis of the conditions set forth in this study, then that growth should be observable by the villagers in whose village the individual lives. In connection with the illustration of the Mexican Indian Don Margarito it was noted that a definite change did take place in his life before a native believer appeared upon the scene. Concerning this, Dale commented: "They had seen something that was a definite asset in the change, both in the home and in the general life. . . . The change that had taken place in Don Margarito was sufficient to convince them that this was worthwhile."²³

In connection with this study, the question was asked: "Do you feel it is necessary for the person thus won to Christ to have a continued contact with a mature believer in order to become established in the faith?" The answers received reveal a general agreement that contact with a mature believer is God's normal plan for growth unto maturity. However, if the mature believer is not available and the Word is, God is not stymied in His desire for growth unto maturity. The answer of Rowan illustrates this respect for the authority of the Word and its ability to do the work in the life of the new believer. He wrote:

There is no reason for saying it is necessary to have a continued contact with mature Christians after conversion, even though the vast majority of cases have happened this way. Again, the Scriptures contain all that is necessary for "doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). The mature Christian's conduct is completely dependent upon his continuing to receive instruction from the Word; the same should apply for the novice, whether he receives the instruction only by

reading the Word or being helped to see the instruction from the Word by someone else. The important factor is that he receive this instruction, directly from the Bible itself, whether someone else helps him with it or not.²⁴

The many illustrations obtained through this investigation should be sufficient to clearly establish the fact that the Word of God completely separated from any spoken witness is all that is needed to bring a lost sinner to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as personal Saviour. Further, the Word can also bring about a definite growth in the grace of the Lord unto at least a certain measure of maturity. This fact carries with it a definite implication.

THE APPLICATION OF THE EVIDENCE TO THE AUTHORITY OF THE WORD OF GOD

The Confrontation by the Evidence

Its Reality

The foregoing instances clearly establish the fact that through the reading of the Bible men have been changed. The number of instances with so many similar aspects in each removes any possibility of explaining this change on the basis of coincidence. It, therefore, should be conceded that the Bible has the power to move men. This change of life is to be explained on the basis of the miracle of salvation. The reader of the Bible, realizing his need and God's answer to it in the person of God's Son, Jesus Christ, accepts that salvation. This in turn results in obedience to the Word of God in the various areas of life.

Its Relevance

Once this change is wrought in one individual's life, then his neighbors see that the Book which he has been reading has real relevance to life. In connection with this aspect of the Word of God in the mission field, Dale said:

It is attractive because it is seen to be relevant, more than as if the missionary were to say, "This is it!" We could say that this is God's Word, but they would reply: "What God and what do you mean by Word?" The question is, is it relevant? Just to say God's Word, is not sufficient unless they understand what you mean by it. What evidence do they have in a life that it is relevant? . . . When those people saw Don Margarito without images and the change in his conduct, they immediately said, "Bueno," ("good"). They recognized that it must be relevant, worthwhile, because of what they saw in Don Margarito.²⁵

Hence, there is relevance in the Word of God. How does one explain this?

The Explanation of this Confrontation

One of the basic laws of reasoning is that every effect must have an adequate cause. Since

the Bible is the cause of the given effect, then how do you explain the cause? There are some today who would attempt to explain it on the ground of purely human reasoning and contend for human origination. But is not this insisting on an even greater miracle than that of divine origination? Has one thus really explained the cause? This is the contention of Horne, when he writes:

A belief in the Christian Scriptures is, indeed, a belief in the reality of past miracles, to confirm a religion worthy of God and useful to man. Such a belief implies no absurdity, or contradiction to any truth or fact. But by rejecting the Gospel, persons are compelled to maintain, in opposition to positive credible testimony, that extensive important events have taken place without an adequate cause.²⁶

Therefore, the most logical explanation of the evidence is that the Bible is a God-given book. Gray maintains this to be the case. He states: "Such a book can only be a transcript of the divine mind, a revelation of the divine purpose."²⁷ Once it is granted that the Bible is a God-given book, then it naturally follows that it is God's truth. Since the Bible is God's truth, then it should be concluded that the Bible must be God in communication. Conservative Christianity is unflinchingly committed to this thesis. Nida, in his excellent work on the communication of the Christian faith, declared:

The New Testament comes, rather, as the communication of a new way of life. Thus the impact of its dissemination is highly significant in any thoughtful study of the principles and procedures of communication.²⁸

The Implications of this Explanation

From the preceding considerations there are certain implications which should be brought sharply into focus.

The Existence of Authority

If it is recognized that Scripture is God in communication with men, then God is the author of that Scripture. When this is posited it immediately follows that Scripture is authoritative. Murray observes this: "It is divine authorship, therefore, that invests Scripture with authority."²⁹ Experience brought about through the power of the Word of God testifies to the authority of that Word, but that experience is not the authority. The heathen thus converted turned to the Word for the authority of his life. This was often discovered, as for instance in the life of Don Margarito who said: "Now we are going to live according to the rules of this Book." The apprehension of this authority by the heathen is of evidential value, not in the establishment of the authority of the Word, but toward the recognition of the authority already established by God Himself in His Word.

The Insistence on Inspiration

Another implication of the evidence gathered in this investigation concerns the doctrine of

verbal-plenary inspiration. This view of inspiration stands or falls with the correct view of authority. Having insisted on the reality of an objective authority which is the Word of God, the logic involved argues back to the recognition of the reality of verbal-plenary inspiration. Witmer traces this logic as follows:

Only with the acceptance of the doctrine of verbal-plenary inspiration of Scripture is the validity of the authority of the Bible safeguarded from deterioration, because only by this doctrine is the existence of the totality of Scripture as "God-breathed," the Word of God, assured. The logic involved is simple. To the extent verbal-plenary inspiration is modified, infallibility is removed. To the extent infallibility is removed, human error is admitted. Since error cannot be ascribed to God, therefore, to the extent that human error is admitted, divine authorship is removed and purely human authorship remains, the authority of God departs. When the authority of God can no longer be ascribed to all the Bible, then some principle for determining which parts have the authority of God and which do not must be adopted. And when the adoption of such a principle is necessary, the external, objective authority of the Bible--the principle of sola Scriptura--is gone, and subjectivism reigns supreme.³⁰

The Accusation of Bibliolatry

Upon the acceptance of the doctrine of verbal-plenary inspiration, the conservative scholar is often accused of Bibliolatry, a worshipping of the Bible rather than the Person of the Bible. But this is not true for the only revelation which man has of Jesus Christ is in the Word of God. If this Word is not authoritative, not trustworthy, then neither is the revelation it gives of Jesus Christ trustworthy. Of course Christ is the final authority, but it is not possible to divorce Him from the pages of the Word and grant to Him an authority which is not inherent in His Word. Thomas succinctly stated this. He wrote: "The Lord Jesus Christ is our supreme authority, and we accept the Bible because it enshrines and embodies that authority. . . . what we want is the best available form of Christ's revelation, and we believe we get this in the Bible and not in any other way."³¹

In the Upper-Room discourse, Jesus said: "I am . . . the truth" (John 14:6). A few hours later in the great high-priestly prayer, He said: "I have given them Thy word . . . Thy word is truth" (John 17:14, 17). Therefore, Jesus Christ Himself equated the authority of the Word with His own authority. This is the very same thing to which the instances in this investigation give testimony. These "pure heathen" have equated the authority of the Person of the Word with the Word itself and manifested this through an acceptance of His Person and a changed life based on the Word of God.

The Reception of This Reality

There are many well-educated people today who do not accept this position. Why is this? The answer to this problem is found in the Word of God itself. It declares: ". . . the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel

of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4). Therefore, the need is not for a change in the evidence, but rather for a change in the observer. Man will not himself come to a realization of the light, and hence its authority, by his reason alone. Neither is it possible for one man, a believer, by his reason to convince another, an unbeliever, of the light and its authority.

However, that which is impossible for man is possible with God. God has provided a means by which man can come to the light and know it as light. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. The Word is authoritative in itself, but it is the Holy Spirit who brings this realization to the heart of man. He uses the Word of God to bring conviction to the heart (John 16:7-11). Then the Spirit brings about the work of regeneration by which the New Birth takes place as the individual believes the message. By no other means can man come to the realization of the authority of the Word of God. From beginning to end it is a supernatural work of God. Hence, God receives the glory.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that the evidence presented in this study will confirm the conclusion that the Bible is the revelation of God, and therefore possesses an inherent authority. It is recognized that this conviction comes by the work of the Spirit of God. Evidences alone are not the final answer, but this does not mean that God may not be pleased to use them to bring us to the knowledge of His will as they authenticate the authority of His Word.

There are certain basic results which should stem from such a study as this. First, is that of evangelism, getting out the Gospel. The authority of the Word of God insists on evangelism. Jesus said: "All power (exousia, authority) is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore . . ." (Matt. 28:18-19). An acceptance of its message into the heart and life insists that this message be shared. There are many facets to the gem of evangelism, but one that shines brightly from this consideration is the necessity of getting out the Word. Man should not be as concerned about defending the Book as he is about spreading it and its message. Lloyd-Jones forcefully brought this to the forefront, when he wrote:

The authority of the Scriptures is not a matter to be defended, so much as to be asserted. I address this remark particularly to Conservative Evangelicals. . . . We need to remind ourselves frequently that it is the preaching and exposition of the Bible that really establish its truth and authority.³²

This is not to contend for the distribution of God's Word alone without the spoken testimony of saving grace in the life, but it certainly should strengthen the faith of the believer in the Word of God and should remind him that God's Word does have the power to lead the sinner to conversion apart from human aid. Therefore, where he may not go, this inspired, infallible, authoritative Book can go and bring some needy sinner to Christ.

Finally, since the Word of God carries such inherent power and infallible authority, each Christian should be zealously concerned about the translation and distribution of God's Word,

and each scholar who attempts to do the tedious work of translation into the language of those into whose hands, guided by divine providence, it may fall, should be prayerfully dependent on the indwelling Spirit of God.

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13. Matthew 7:16-20.
14. Charles Pettit M'Ilvaine, The Evidences of Christianity (New York: The American Tract Society, 1832), pp. 362-63.
15. Interview with John T. Dale, Director, The Mexican Indian Mission, Inc., Apartado 18, Tamazunchale, S. L. P., Mexico.
16. Idle curiosity is insufficient to overcome the barrier which this expression, "the devil's book," would immediately place in the mind of an Aztec Indian. The Holy Spirit must have been at work overcoming this cultural stigma or it would never have been read.
17. Dale, op. cit.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Letter from Lester O. Troyer, Member of Wycliffe Bible Translators, Inc., Nasuli, Malaybalay, Bukidnon, Philippines.
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30. John A. Witmer, "The Authority of the Bible," Bibliotheca Sacra, CXVIII (July, 1961), 270.
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