

Special Revelation as Scriptural

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The specific question faced in this essay is whether special divine revelation has received embodiment in Holy Scripture. Are the Old and New Testaments to be acknowledged, not only as containing a record of the history of such revelation, but also as being themselves the very Word of God? Do they constitute divine revelation because of their intrinsic character, altogether apart from the response that they may evoke, whether of faith or unbelief?

In connection with the modern occupation with the concept of revelation it is widely insisted that, as divine revelation, it must be viewed as personal. Almost as frequently, perhaps, divine revelation is acknowledged as being historical; revelation consists, it is said, of decisive acts of God in history, in such events especially as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Widely prevalent, moreover, if not dominant, is the attitude that, though divine revelation is personal and may be historical, it assuredly is not embodied in the Sacred Scriptures. To regard revelation as scriptural, it is felt, would absolutize human traditions. To quote Harnack, it would chase the Spirit away into a book.

If, on the other hand, one should maintain that special revelation has found incorporation in Scripture—that to employ a somewhat academic but useful term, it has become *inscripturated*—one would have to make a radically different estimate of the origin and character of the Canon of the Old and New Testaments. One would then recognize not only that God has spoken in Christ to accomplish the salvation of man, but also that in the fulfillment of the grand and comprehensive divine plan of redemption by

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the gracious sovereign action of the Holy Spirit God has met the need of his people by providing them with the inestimable blessing of the written Word. On this view, the recognition of the personal and historical character of special revelation—when these qualities are defined in accordance with the data of this revelation—will open the way to an apprehension of its scriptural manifestation. In brief, as the process of revelation is perceived in its broadest scope, Holy Scripture may be recognized as constituting an aspect—the climactic historical aspect—of that history in which God in Christ and by the Holy Spirit graciously fulfills his redemptive purpose.

In keeping with the foregoing estimate of the issues involved, I shall consider this topic in the perspective provided by the entire history of the process of divine self-revelation. The diversity of the revelation of the two covenants must be taken account of as well as its organic unity. For reasons that are largely obvious the Old Testament will be treated first, and this will involve consideration of its own self-witness. Especially for the Christian, however, even the evaluation of the Old Testament cannot be carried out satisfactorily in isolation from the testimony of the New Testament. Even at this initial point, therefore, the consideration of the revelation of the new covenant is in the foreground. And a preponderant emphasis upon the

revelation of the new covenant comes inevitably to expression in the later sections where the question, most crucial for Christian faith, of the inscripturation of this final revelation is under discussion.

I. REVELATION OF THE OLD COVENANT

The Process of Divine Disclosure

Although we shall have to look beyond the Old Testament, and particularly to the New Testament, for evidence of the inscripturation of the revelation of the old covenant, it remains valuable and significant to reflect upon the process of divine revelation which comes to expression within the Old Testament itself. An indispensable background for the understanding of the ultimate development is thereby provided.

No feature of this revelation is, in our judgment, more basic and illuminating than its covenantal character. The term "covenant" indeed, as a rendering for *berith*, is not entirely felicitous, and thus it is of vital importance that our usage of "covenantal" be informed by reflection on the Biblical point of view. Because of its usage in describing purely human relationships, as in the Wilsonian "open covenants of peace openly arrived at," the term readily brings to mind the notion of a bilateral agreement, and perhaps even that of a contract between two independent parties. While there is, in truth, an element of mutuality in the theological *berith* in the sense that the covenantal relationship of personal fellowship between God and his people is conspicuously in view, it is necessary to insist that even more fundamentally the covenant between God and his people is primarily

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a unilateral arrangement initiated and effected by God himself. The Biblical perspective in this regard comes to accurate expression in Hebrews 8:6 in the reference to the *enactment* of a better covenant. In the foreground, accordingly, is the fact of the sovereign action of God in establishing and bringing to concrete realization an arrangement or administration or "covenant" of grace. This accent upon sovereign grace comes to expression in the words which most simply sum up the approach of the God of the covenant: "I will be your God and ye shall be my people." These same words, indeed, are unspeakably rich in their expression of the privilege of fellowship between God and his people. And they carry with them profound implications with regard to religious and ethical obligation on the part of the men who become members of the covenant. It remains true, nevertheless, that the emphasis falls first of all upon the action of sovereign, efficacious grace. In thus graciously drawing near unto man for his salvation God makes himself known to man, and thus the covenant of grace is at one and the same time redemptive and revelatory.

Another fundamental characteristic of the divine covenant is its manifestation at certain decisive moments in history. The revelation and redemption of the covenant are not repeated from person to person, from family to family, and from generation to generation. This historical character of a covenant appears perhaps most conspicuously in the manner in which God established covenant with Abraham, the father of the faithful. As Paul stresses in Galatians 3, a covenant has been established with Abraham in such a unique and irrevocable fashion that those who are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham, and those who are Christ's are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise. Thus one also encounters in the Old

Testament, as a kind of refrain, a call to remember the covenant made first of all with Abraham.

Nor does the Sinaitic *berith* require an essential modification of this judgment. The redemptive action at the Exodus is described as the result of God's remembrance of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex. 2:24; 6:5). Thus, as Paul also teaches, the law at Sinai was *added* to the covenant established with Abraham and by no means set it aside (Gal. 3:16-22). So significant, indeed, is Moses' role as the representative of God, both as deliverer and prophet, that he occupies a distinctive place in the history of the revelation of the old covenant. He was preeminently the prophet of the old covenant, the prototype of the Great Prophet to come (Deut. 18:15), with whom the Lord spoke face to face (Ex. 33:11; Deut. 34:10-12). The very greatness of Moses, however, as the one by whom the law was given, accentuates the historical character of the Old Testament revelation, for it was through him that God decisively made his will known and wrought redemption for his people. And it is of the greatest possible significance in connection with the consideration of our principal topic to observe that the word of the Lord which came by Moses could be and was,

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because of its historical character, handed down to the people and this from generation to generation. It is obvious that in the transmission of this special revelation the fact of its being so largely committed to writing was highly significant. The fact of its incription assuredly did nothing to modify its essential character as revelation.

Acknowledged as Scripture

The Old Testament as a whole, as distinguished from its various parts, could hardly be viewed as Scripture within the Old Testament itself. The acknowledgment of the Old Testament as canonical, moreover, is evidently not the consequence of ecclesiastical action but rather developed in an historical process in which the writings of the Old Testament accredited themselves to the people of God as being of divine authority. This point of view is reflected in the word of Paul in Romans 3:1, 2 where he indicates that the advantage of the Jew over the Gentile is to be found first of all in the consideration that "they were intrusted with the oracles of God." It is important to remember in this connection also that the Old Testament did not become canonical as the result of the evaluation of it reflected in the New Testament. In particular it was not the action of the Lord or of his apostles that first gave it the status of Holy Scripture. The Lord and the apostles shared essentially the viewpoint with regard to the Old Testament that had come to expression among the Jewish people. Nevertheless, Christian testimony is highly significant. It not merely enlarges our understanding of the view of the Old Testament which prevailed among Jewish people in that era. Most important of all, nothing shows so unmistakably as our Lord's use of and attitude toward the Old Testament that special divine revelation may be, and as a matter of fact is, scriptural.

In view of the fulness with which other chapters in this volume deal with the New Testament evidence concerning inspiration, it is not necessary to undertake a broad survey of the evidence. Only a few details will be recalled here.

The Epistle to the Hebrews, which begins by recalling the fact that God spoke unto the fathers in the prophets, makes abundantly clear especially by its quotations from the Old Testament that it identifies the written documents with the Word of God. For characteristically, rather

than referring to the human authors, it introduces quotations of the Old Testament by referring directly to God or the Holy Spirit as the speaker (Cf. 1:5, 13; 3 :7; 4:3, 4; 8:8, 13; 10:15).

Paul likewise regards the Old Testament as the written Word of God. His Gospel has been made known by the scriptures of the prophets (Rom. 16:26). The action of Scripture is identified with that of God in preaching the Gospel beforehand to Abraham (Gal. 3:8; cf. 3:22). There is a "reading of the old covenant," and though the glory of this revelation is not to be compared with that of the new, that written revelation remains of divine

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authority and will accomplish its divine purpose if only the minds of those who read are not hardened (II Cor. 3). All Scripture is God-breathed and is given to accomplish, by way of its communication of divine truth, a complete salvation of the man of God (II Tim. 3:15-17).

Our Lord's use of Scripture is especially crucial for the evaluation of our subject, and so it may not be passed over here in spite of the fact that a special chapter is devoted to it. We need not, however, dwell upon such explicit declarations as Matthew 5:17-19 and John 10:33-36, nor reflect upon the way in which he distinguished qualitatively between the Word of God and the word of man in such passages as Matthew 15:1 ff. But we may not pass over the evidence provided by our Lord's utter commitment to the divine authority of Scripture which comes to expression in his application of its teaching to his own life and ministry. He was not content with insisting that it and it alone was to be acknowledged as the Word of God by the men he addressed. Regardless of what it might cost him in the way of humiliation and suffering, even if obedience to it marked out for him a course of action and submission from which his soul shrank with the utmost intensity of feeling, even if it demanded that he die the accursed death of the cross, he was resolved and determined that the Word of God declared in Scripture should be perfectly fulfilled in him. As the Messianic Servant of the Lord he was obedient to the Father who sent him and faithful in carrying out the divine plan of redemption. This is reflected pervasively and emphatically in the Gospels as Christ dwells upon the necessity of obedience only to God in setting the course of his ministry and in particular in going up to Jerusalem to suffer, to be killed, and the third day to be raised up (cf. Matt. 4:4; 16:21 ff.; 17:22 f.; 20:17 ff. and parallels). Nothing is more significant for our subject than the observation that the divine necessity that controlled Christ's ministry and compelled him to go to Calvary is acknowledged again and again as a necessity to fulfill Scripture (Matt. 26:24; Mark 14:21; cf. also Mark 9:12; 12:10 f., 14:21, 27, 49; Luke 4:17-21; 22:37; 24:25-27, 44-46). In the most unambiguous fashion, therefore, the proposition that special divine revelation is scriptural is demonstrated not only by the teaching of the New Testament as a whole but also particularly by our Lord's own ministry. Only by way of a basic skepticism regarding the witness of the Gospels, which might call forth a radical reconstruction of the life and teaching of Jesus, could this testimony to the scriptural character of divine revelation be set aside.

II. REVELATION OF THE NEW COVENANT

As Eschatological Fulfillment

Christianity as reflected in the New Testament, as we have seen, looks back upon the revelation of the old covenant, but contemplates it also as a present possession in view of its having found embodiment in the sacred

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Scriptures. Its view of the history of divine revelation is, however, by no means confined to its evaluation of the Old Testament. For no affirmation that Christianity makes is more clearly or more emphatically made than that in the coming of Christ a new epoch of revelation has dawned. As following upon the older revelation it might be thought of simply as standing alongside of the Old Testament and as being an expansion upon it. As divine revelation the new revelation stands in organic connection with the old and necessarily is characterized by unity with the old. Nevertheless, this way of describing the relationship between the new and the old is far from doing justice to the fact that within the new revelation there is the pervasive sense of its being the eschatological fulfillment of the old. This diversity, while coming to expression within a sense of organic unity, recognizes that there is genuine progress in the history of special revelation, so that the new surpasses and transcends the old as fulfillment does promise and reality shadow.

Emphatically indicative of this diversity as well as unity is the consideration that within the revelation of the old covenant there comes to expression an eschatological outlook which, because it possesses the character of divine promise, guarantees that the epoch of fulfillment will come into being. This eschatological outlook within the old revelation comes to expression in remarkably varied forms. The new day in the realization of the divine purpose of redemption is set forth by Jeremiah as the making of a new covenant with the house of Israel. It contains a reiteration of the elemental covenantal promise, "I will be their God and they shall be my people," but carries with it also a divine guarantee that the covenant will be kept and realized in the lives of his people (31:31-34). Another highly significant prophetic strain is that God, whose kingdom ruleth over all (Ps. 103:19), will come as a mighty One and his arm will rule for him (Isa. 40:10). Within this perspective must also be placed the specifically Messianic prophecies of the coming of the great Representative of God, who is depicted as being himself divine, but who also comes as the Servant of the Lord (cf. for example Isa. 9:6 f.; 42:1 ff.; 52:13-53:12). This great day of future deliverance is also depicted as a time when in a manner that transcends the divine action under the old covenant God would pour out his Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28 ff.). This eschatological expectation views the saving transformation that is to be effected as being so thoroughgoing and comprehensive that it finds expression in the prophecy of the creation of new heavens and a new earth (Isa. 65:17).

The Old Testament thus prepares the way for the understanding of the new epoch of revelation as one of eschatological fulfillment, and it is precisely this perspective that pervades the new revelation itself. The Epistle to the Hebrews is preeminently the Epistle of the new covenant, presenting its message as it does in terms of the historical realization of Jeremiah's prophecy in Christ. And our Lord himself, at the very eve of his crucifixion,

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points to the significance of that event for the realization of the new covenant.

In his teaching our Lord, however, more pervasively makes use of the concept of the kingdom of God. This term likewise serves to bring to expression the feature of the expectation of a new order in which the prophecy of the rule of God comes to pass, as God himself

supernaturally and redemptively manifests his Lordship in history so as to overcome all evil. The fulfillment of Messianic prophecy in Christ is interwoven with the proclamation of the coming of the kingdom of God as expression is given to the glad tidings that it is in Christ that God accomplishes his rule. The ministry of Christ in the days of his flesh, the exercise of Lordship at God's right hand and his coming again on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory constitute, accordingly, decisive divine actions whereby the kingdom of God, in various aspects and stages, manifests itself. In claiming Messiahship, whether by the use of various Messianic titles or by the exercise of Messianic prerogatives and functions, Christ shows that he shared to the full the consciousness that his ministry in its various phases constituted evidence of the manifestation in history of the age to which the prophets had looked forward. From this vantage point one can also understand how that, at one and the same time, he could affirm the authority and validity of the Law and the Prophets and yet create astonishment because he taught as having authority and not as the scribes when he sovereignly declared, "But I say unto you." For he so built upon the foundation of the Law and the Prophets that they were to attain their perfect accomplishment and realization through him (Matt. 5:17-20, 21 ff.; 7:28 f.)

One may conclude with confidence, therefore, that the revelation of the new covenant was not characterized by less glory, truth and grace than that of the old. On the contrary, the saving activity of God in Christ and by the Holy Spirit is even more manifest and recreative in the new. Indeed, the new so transcends the old that when, for the moment, the facts of unity and continuity are not considered, it could be said that "grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). And if the redemptive purpose of God dictated that the revelation of the old covenant should be embodied in Scripture, can one doubt that same divine purpose, as that came to far richer and glorious expression in the revelation of the new covenant, should contemplate that this revelation should likewise be incorporated in Scripture? Thus it might be present with his people to continue to accomplish his gracious purpose.

As Proclamation and Tradition

The revelation of the new covenant, like that of the old, is as to its very nature, we must now emphasize, a revelation *in history*. As the revelation of eschatological fulfillment it consists basically of acts of redemption and

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revelation which form aspects of a single divinely initiated and controlled movement. And since, in particular, divine revelation finds actual embodiment in history, in the great event of Christ and in the great events of his life and death and resurrection, it possesses a once-for-all character. As such it was proclaimed and as such it was handed down and received. Because it is at one and the same time proclamation and tradition it possesses, therefore, an objective character which must be reflected in the communication thereof.

In speaking above of the manifestation of the new covenant in the blood of Christ and of the coming of the kingdom of God in and through the ministry of Christ, the historical character of the new revelation has already been recognized. Hence it is not necessary to show at length that in his preaching of glad tidings to the poor as in his miracles, and thus by his very presence and action with authority and power, Jesus was conscious of bringing to historical manifestation the great age to which the prophets had looked forward (cf. Matt. 11:2-6; 12:28; 13:16 f.; Luke 4:18-21).

This historical character of the divine message which Jesus expressed in word and deed finds the same emphatic expression in the formulation of the apostolic proclamation. As Paul set it forth in I Corinthians 15 it is presented indeed as being "according to the Scriptures." But it evidently consists primarily of the great affirmations that Christ died, that he was buried, and that he was raised up on the third day, together with the declaration of the significance for our redemption of these events. So powerful, in fact, is the emphasis upon the proclamation as history that Paul takes pains to stress at length that apart from the fact of Christ's resurrection his preaching is empty and their faith is futile.

In stressing the historical character of the gospel we should not neglect the subjective aspect of its radical consequences for our lives any more than in emphasizing the objective character of the divine revelation we may minimize or obscure the absolute indispensability of the subjective working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts if we are to receive the divine revelation in a saving way. Nevertheless, it seems to be especially necessary in our day to stress that the Gospel has no meaning or power except as the cross and resurrection, as God's action in Christ, are recognized as actual historical events, which occurred at particular times and places.

When Paul says that he has been crucified with Christ or made alive together with Christ, there is not the slightest discounting of the cross and resurrection as history; rather by the use of perfect and aorist tenses he is indicating that the meaning for us is bound up with the fact that we were united with Christ in the occurrence of these events. II Corinthians 5:16 is often appealed to as if Paul were giving expression to a basic indifference to "Christ after the flesh," and so to the historicity and historical significance of the actual life of Christ upon earth. This estimate of Paul's meaning is, however, radically at variance with his testimony as a whole, very directly also

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with the emphatic references to the death and resurrection of Christ in v. 15, and with the language of v. 16a which indicates that the words "after the flesh" must be understood as qualifying "know" rather than "no man" or "Christ." In v. 16, accordingly, rather than undercutting the historical foundation of the gospel, Paul is dwelling upon the transforming power of Christ whereby, as a new creation in Christ, one gains a wonderful new apprehension and discernment of Christ and all things. Paul, like the New Testament generally, knows nothing of historic (*geschichtlich*) significance apart from that which is historical (*historisch*).

It remains in this connection briefly to observe that, as historical in the sense indicated above, the gospel is viewed as that which has been handed down. This is a point which has been emphasized by Oscar Cullmann, who felicitously distinguishes between apostolic tradition and ecclesiastical tradition (*The Early Church*, pp. 59 ff.) And it has been recognized even more satisfactorily by Herman Ridderbos in his little book on the New Testament Canon, of which an early translation into English is promised. Paul's opening words in I Corinthians 15 may serve to characterize the New Testament point of view in this regard:

"Now I made known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also you received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the

word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received."

It is significant, moreover, that the tradition which the apostles received from the Lord and they in turn handed down to men comprehended not only the gospel of salvation (I Cor. 15:3; Gal. 1:9, 12) but other aspects of the Christian message as well (I Cor. 11:2, 23; Rom. 6:17; Phil. 4:9; Col. 2:6; I Thess. 4:1; II Thess. 2:15). Thus not only the facts of the proclamation and their interpretation but also the teaching of the apostles as a whole were understood as that which had been committed to them by the Lord for transmission to the Church.

The Epistle to the Hebrews similarly, after having characterized the revelation of the new age as a revelation "in a Son" to distinguish it qualitatively from the earlier revelation, characterizes it as coming with even more solemn sanctions than the word spoken through angels in that it was "at the first spoken through the Lord and confirmed unto us by them that heard" (Heb. 1:1 f.; 2:2 ff.). It is noteworthy also that Luke, in the prologue which appears to have in view the contents of Acts as well as the Gospel, reflects upon the Christian message in terms of "the things which have been fulfilled among us," and speaks of the knowledge of these things as a tradition communicated by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word (cf. my *The Witness of Luke to Christ*, pp. 24 ff.).

The revelation of the new covenant, accordingly, as to its very nature-

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because it is concerned with a disclosure in word and deed originating with Christ and centering in him—is a once-for-all communication. And inasmuch as it has been delivered to the apostles by the Lord himself that they in turn might deliver it to the Church, this apostolic tradition would be recognized as possessing the authority of the Lord. There would be from the beginning a concern for faithful transmission and thus, while even oral tradition tended to assume a fixed form to satisfy the needs of the Church, these needs would be more fully and permanently supplied as the tradition was committed to writing. The new revelation because of its very nature, therefore, no less surely than the old, was virtually crying out for inscripturation in order that the Church might be provided with assured knowledge of the fulfillment of the divine purpose of redemption.

Initial Evidences of Inscripturation

When we come now finally to deal with the scriptural character of the revelation of the new covenant we appear to be at a great disadvantage. For clearly with regard to an acknowledgment of that revelation as having found embodiment in Scripture there is nothing comparable to the testimony of the New Testament to the Old. There are, however, several considerations which should be borne in mind in this connection. We should keep in view, first of all, that the divine authority of the Bible as Scripture is an intrinsic authority rather than one superimposed upon it, and that, therefore, possession of the attribute of divine authority does not have to wait upon the recognition thereof to be valid. Moreover, it may be recalled that evidently the Old Testament likewise accredited itself in the historical process in which God entrusted his people with the divine oracles. Consideration of the parallelism of this process of self-accreditation and acknowledgment will also caution us not to suppose that every part of the Scriptures would have given evidence of its divine character and authority in exactly the same way. A distinctively prophetic work would naturally bear upon its very

surface the marks of its inspiration in a way that would not likely be true of an historical book, while the authority of the Epistles would appropriately come to expression in another distinctive way. Considering all these factors, it is remarkable that there are so many rather than that there are so few specific claims within the New Testament that the divine revelation of the new covenant was regarded as being scriptural in character.

In turning now to consider the explicit evidence we begin with the testimony of Paul. As one reflects, for example, upon the Apostle's exposition and defense of the gospel in the Epistle to the Galatians, where he insists that gospel as he proclaims it is of absolute divine authority and possesses the character of revelation (Gal. 1:6-12), we can hardly allow for any other possibility than that those who received his gospel as true also accorded his written presentation thereof the authority of divine revelation. Inasmuch as he is conscious, as an apostle, of speaking with the authority of the Lord,

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it is not surprising that in the Epistle commonly judged to be his earliest he already adjures his readers "by the Lord that this epistle be read unto all the brethren" (I Thess. 5:27). The authority of his written word, according to Paul's own estimate thereof, also finds significant expression a little later when Paul insists that his command, as expressed in an Epistle, determined the character and limits of their Christian fellowship (cf. II Thess. 3:14). The authority of his Epistles as written documents was assuredly not less than that of the extraordinary claim which he made—in even regulating the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit—when he declared that what he wrote was to be recognized as constituting the commandment of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). The concern for the circulation of his letters which comes to expression in Colossians 4:16 provides further evidence of the fact that, though the Epistles were first of all directed to particular situations, their intrinsic character afforded them a wider relevancy and authority. The response that Paul anticipated for his Epistles does not therefore differ qualitatively from that accorded them in II Peter. For according to II Peter 3:2 the commandment of the Lord and Saviour "through your apostles," no less than the holy prophets, was available in such a form that it could be remembered And in II Peter 3:15 f. there is a specific acknowledgment that the Epistles of Paul were documents "which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction," a statement in which the Epistles are recognized as possessing the same level of authority as the Old Testament, and appear also to be included by implication under the term "Scripture."

In the case of the Gospels, the personality of the individual evangelists remains wholly or largely in the background. The fact, however, that they are publications of the gospel of Jesus Christ must have confronted the Church with the necessity of making a judgment as to their trustworthiness and authority. Moreover, Luke specifically indicates that he is undertaking the preparation of a written work which can provide certainty regarding the things that the Lord had done. And John, who writes in the consciousness that the Spirit of truth was his guide into all truth (John 15:26 f.; 16:12 ff.), in characterizing his book as a whole uses the very language that he and the New Testament commonly use in introducing Old Testament quotations as being "that which is written" (John 20:30, 31; 2:17; 6:31, 45; 10:34; 12:14; 15:25; cf. also 21:24 f.).

Most clearly of all, the scriptural character of the New Testament revelation is reflected in the Revelation of John. At the very beginning its contents are described as a divine revelation or unveiling mediated by Jesus Christ. The contents of the book are therefore understandably spoken of as "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:1 f.; cf. 17:17; 19:9; 21:5; 22:6, 9). The book itself is characterized as a work of prophecy (Rev. 1:3; 22:18; cf. 10:11; 22:6 f., 9 f., 18 f.), and thus appropriately the Spirit is acknowledged as speaking in the book (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29;

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3:6, 13, 22, 19:10; cf. 1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). In view of such claims it is understandable that this book should have come to be acknowledged as worthy of a place alongside the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament. Nothing is left to inference, however, so far as the claims of the author are concerned, for in Revelation 1:3, as he contemplates his Christian readers gathered for public worship—where one leads in the reading of the sacred writings and others have come to hear—he most solemnly pronounces a blessing upon the ones that read and those who hear the words of the prophecy and keep the things which are written therein. And in the epilogue the line of division between divine Scripture and merely human teaching is drawn even more sharply.

"I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18f.). The claim that a writing constitutes Holy Scripture could hardly have been made more unambiguously and emphatically. These solemn words of the epilogue, like those of the prologue, directly apply only to the Book of Revelation, but they show how even within the New Testament the scriptural character of special divine revelation came to explicit expression. On this background one may understand how gradually the New Testament as a whole came to be accorded this status, for the decisive fact was recognition of its revelatory character. Where that was discerned and acknowledged its recognition as Scripture was largely a formality. And thus the process in which the canonicity of the New Testament was recognized, even though considerable time was to elapse before the Church expressed itself with complete clarity and unanimity on this point, was deeply rooted in the New Testament and grew out of the history of special divine revelation contained therein.

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