

***R. A. TORREY***



***THE FUNDAMENTAL  
DOCTRINES  
OF THE CHRISTIAN  
FAITH***

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# **The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian faith**

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# **PREFACE**

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The author of these sermons has had a feeling for a long time that the great need in our churches in this day is systematic indoctrination. He put his theory into practice last winter in his own church, and these sermons are the result. We were having a great many accessions to our church. In the two years of the church's history we had had something like six hundred accessions to the church, and every month considerable numbers of new members were being added. While many of these came by letter from other churches, many of them were new converts and had had practically no systematic instruction in the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, so we announced a series of sermons on The Fundamental Doctrines of the Christian Faith. There was immediately a large increase in the attendance at the services where these addresses were given, and this increase has kept up until on the last Lord's Day we had much the largest attendance we have ever had, excepting on Easter Sunday. Many have testified to the blessing received from these sermons, and there has been a great demand that the sermons be printed for general circulation. This request has come from ministers of various denominations, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, and others. It is hoped that this volume will be useful to other pastors in suggesting lines of teaching in their regular pastoral work, and also that it may be used widely by pastors and others for circulation among Christians. We live in a day in which many of our church

members are all at sea as to what they believe on the fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith. These sermons have already helped many through their delivery. It is hoped they will reach and help far more in the printed form.

R. A. Torrey.

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# THE FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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# **THE FUNDAMENTAL DOCTRINES OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

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## **I INSPIRATION, OR TO WHAT EXTENT IS THE BIBLE INSPIRED OF GOD? Table of Contents**

"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.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."—2 Tim. 3:16, 17.

Our subject this morning is "The Inspiration of the Bible, or to What Extent Is the Bible Inspired of God?" The subject is of vital and fundamental importance. If we can make it clear that the writers of the various books of the Bible were inspired of God in a sense that no other men were ever inspired of God, that they were so gifted and taught and led

and governed by the Holy Spirit in their utterances as recorded in the Bible, that they taught the truth and nothing but the truth, that their teachings were absolutely without error,—then we have in the Bible a court of final appeal and of infallible wisdom to which we can go to settle every question of doctrine or duty. But if the writers of the Bible were "inspired" only in the vague and uncertain sense that Shakespeare, Browning and many other men of genius were inspired, only inspired to the extent that their minds were made more keen to see the truth than ordinary men, but still only in such a way that they made mistakes, or chose the wrong word to express their thought, so that we must recast their thought by discovering, if we may, what the inspired thought back of the uninspired words was, then we are all at sea, in hopeless confusion, so that each generation must settle for itself what the Holy Spirit meant to say through the blundering reporters; and it is absolutely certain that no generation can determine with anything approximating accuracy what the Spirit meant, and so no generation can arrive at the truth, but simply promulgate blunders for the next and wiser generation to correct, to be corrected in turn by the next generation that follows it. Thank God that this latter subtle but popular doctrine can be proven to be utterly untrue!

There is great need of crystal clear teaching on this subject, because our colleges and seminaries and pulpits and Sunday schools and religious papers are full of teaching that is vague, inaccurate, misleading, un-Scriptural, and oftentimes grossly false. There are many in these days who say "I believe that the Bible is inspired" when by "inspired"

they do not mean at all what you understand or what the mighty men of faith in the past meant by "inspired." They often say that they "believe the Bible is the Word of God," when at the same time they believe it is full of errors.

Now the Bible is as clear as crystal in its teachings and claims regarding itself, and either those claims are true, or else the Bible is the biggest fraud in all the literature of the human race. The position held by so many to-day, that the Bible is a good book, perhaps the best book in the world, but at the same time it is full of errors that must be corrected by the higher wisdom of our day, is utterly illogical and absolutely ridiculous. If the Bible is not what it claims to be, it is a fraud—an outrageous fraud.

What does the Bible teach and claim concerning itself? What does it teach and claim regarding the fact and extent of its own inspiration?

## **I. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN APOSTLES AND PROPHETS DIFFERENT IN CHARACTER FROM HIS WORK IN ALL OTHER PERSONS**

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The first thing that the Bible teaches on this point and claims for itself is, *that the work of the Holy Spirit in apostles and prophets, in the various human authors of the different books of the Bible, differs from His work in other men, even in other believers in Christ.* It teaches that the Holy Spirit imparts to apostles and prophets an especial gift for an especial purpose. We find this clearly taught in 1 Cor.

12:4, 8-11, 28, 29, where we read, "**Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.... (8) for to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit; (9) to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healing, in the same Spirit; (10) and to another workings of miracles (powers); and to another prophecy; and to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues; (11) but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as He will.... (28) And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues. (29) Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles?"** This chapter is the fullest and clearest chapter in the Bible on the subject of the various gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is the classical chapter on the whole subject, and the teaching of these verses is as plain as language can make it, and it states in terms, the meaning of which is unmistakable, that the gift bestowed on apostles and prophets *differed in kind* from the gifts bestowed on other believers, even though those believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. Not only did the work of the Holy Spirit in the apostles and prophets differ from His work in men of genius, but even from His work in other believers. These verses make it as plain as day that the doctrine which has become so common and so popular in our day, that the

work of the Holy Spirit in preachers and teachers and in ordinary believers, illuminating them and guiding them into the truth and into the understanding of the Word of God, is the same in kind and differs only in degree from the work of the Holy Spirit in Apostles and Prophets is thoroughly unscriptural and untrue. This doctrine overlooks what is here so clearly stated and so carefully elucidated, that while there is **"the same Spirit" "there are diversities of gifts" "diversities of ministrations," "diversities of workings" (1 Cor. 12:406 R. V.) and that not all are Prophets or Apostles. (1 Cor. 12:29.)**

Those who desire to minimise the difference between the work of the Holy Spirit in Apostles and Prophets, and His work in other men, often refer to the fact that the Bible itself says that Bezaleel, the architect of the tabernacle, was to be **"filled with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship," "to devise the work of the tabernacle"** (Ex. 31:1-11), as a proof that the inspiration of the Prophet does not differ in kind from the inspiration of the artist or the architect. This argument at first glance seems plausible, but when we bear in mind the facts about the tabernacle, especially the fact that the tabernacle was to be built after the pattern shown to Moses in the mount (Ex. 25:8, 9, 40) and that therefore it was itself a revelation from God, a prophecy, a setting forth of the truth of God, the argument loses all its force. The tabernacle was the Word of God done into wood, gold, silver, brass, cloth, skin, etc., just as truly the Word of God and the revealing of God's truth as if the truth were printed on a page. So, of course,

Bezaleel needed to be inspired, he was a prophet, a prophet who uttered his prophecies in the details of the tabernacle. There is much reasoning about inspiration to-day that appear at first sight very learned, but that will not bear much scrutiny or candid comparison with the teachings of the Word of God. There is nothing in the Bible more inspired than the tabernacle, and if the destructive critics would study the tabernacle more carefully and thoroughly they would be led to give up their ingenious but untenable theories, not only about the construction of the tabernacle, but about many other things as well. I have never heard or known of a single destructive critic who had ever given a thorough study to the real meaning of the tabernacle in all its parts, or who had any considerable understanding of the types of Scripture. I have challenged the critics in the University centres of England, Ireland and Scotland to name one single destructive critic who had ever made any thorough study of the types, and no one has ever attempted to even suggest one.

## **II. TRUTH HIDDEN FROM MEN FOR AGES, AND WHICH THEY HAD NOT DISCOVERED AND COULD NOT DISCOVER, BY THE UNAIDED PROCESSES OF HUMAN REASONING, HAS BEEN REVEALED TO APOSTLES AND PROPHETS IN THE SPIRIT**

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The second thing taught in the Bible regarding the inspiration of the Apostles and Prophets, the inspiration of the various authors of the books of the Bible, is that *truth hidden from men for ages, and which they had not discovered, and could not discover, by the unaided processes of human reasoning, even human reasoning at its very best and highest, has been revealed to Apostles and Prophets in the Holy Spirit.* We find this very clearly taught in Eph. 3:2-5: **"If so be that ye have heard of the dispensation of that grace of God which was given me to you-ward; (3) how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, (4) whereby when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; (5) which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit."** The meaning of these words is unmistakable. Paul here declares in words the meaning of which is perfectly plain, that God "in the Spirit" had revealed "unto His holy apostles and prophets" "the mystery of Christ" which in former generations had not been made known unto the sons of men, which they had not discovered and could not discover except by revelation from God; Paul and the other apostles and prophets knew it by direct revelation from God himself through the Holy Ghost. The teaching is inescapable that the Bible contains truth that men never had discovered and never could have discovered if left to themselves, but truth which the Father in great grace has revealed to His children through His servants the prophets and apostles. We see in this the folly,

a folly so common in our day, of seeking to test the statements of Scripture by the conclusions of human reasoning, or by the intuitions of the "Christian consciousness." The revelation of God transcends human reasoning, and therefore human reasoning cannot be its test. Furthermore, a consciousness that is truly and fully Christian is *the product* of the study and absorption of Bible truth. It is not *the test* of the truth of the Bible,—it is *the product* of meditation on the Bible. If our "consciousness" differs from the statements of the Bible, it is not as yet a fully "*Christian* consciousness," and the thing for us to do is not to try to pull God's revelation down to the level of our consciousness but to tone our consciousness up to the level of God's Word.

### **III. THE REVELATION MADE TO THE PROPHETS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS INDEPENDENT OF THEIR OWN THINKING**

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The third thing that the Bible makes perfectly clear as to the inspiration of the Prophets and Apostles is, that *the revelation made by God through His Holy Spirit to the Prophets was independent of the Prophets' own thinking, that it was made to them by the Spirit of Christ which was in them, and that they themselves oftentimes did not thoroughly understand the full meaning of what the Spirit was saying through them, and that what they said was a subject of diligent search and inquiry to their own mind as*

*to its meaning.* This comes out very plainly in 1 Pet. 1:10-12, **"Concerning which salvation the prophets sought and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come to you; searching what time, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the Gospel unto you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from Heaven; which things angels desire to look into."** Here again the meaning is as clear as day and inescapable. We are told that the prophets had a revelation made to them by the Holy Spirit, the meaning of which they did not thoroughly comprehend, and that they themselves "sought and searched diligently" as to the meaning of this revelation which was made to them and which they recorded. The Spirit, through them testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ (e.g. in Isa. 53:3, Ps. 22) and the glories that should follow them. They recorded what the Spirit testified, but what it meant they did not thoroughly understand. It was not merely that their minds were made keen to see things which they would not otherwise see, and which they therefore more or less accurately recorded. No, there was a very definite revelation, arising *not from their own minds at all*, but from the Spirit of God Who made the revelation to them and this they recorded, but it was not of themselves to that extent that they themselves wondered as to what its meaning

might be. What they recorded was not at all their own thought, it was the thought of the Holy Spirit who spoke through them. How utterly different this conception is from that which is so persistently taught in many of our colleges and theological seminaries and pulpits,—how utterly different it is from the conception that was taught a week ago to-day in one of the pulpits of our own city.

#### **IV. NO PROPHETIC UTTERANCE WAS OF THE PROPHET'S OWN WILL, BUT THE PROPHET SPOKE FROM GOD AND THE PROPHET WAS CARRIED ALONG BY THE HOLY SPIRIT AND NOT BY HIS OWN IMPULSE OR REASONING IN WHAT HE SAID**

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The fourth thing that the Bible makes perfectly clear is, that *not one single prophetic utterance was of the prophet's own will (i.e., it was not in any sense merely what he wished to say), but in every instance the Prophet spoke from God, and the Prophet was carried along in the prophetic utterance by the Holy Spirit, regardless of his own will or thought.* We find this stated practically in so many words in 2 Pet. 1:21 where we read: "**For no prophecy** (literally, *not a prophecy*) **ever came** (literally, was brought) **by the will of man; but men spake from God being moved** (literally, carried along, or borne) **by the Holy Spirit.**" There can be no honest mistaking of the meaning of this language. The Prophet never thought that there was

something that needed to be said and therefore said it, but God took possession of the prophet, *carried him along* in his utterance, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and he spake, not from his own consciousness, and not from his own reasoning, nor from his own intuition, but "*from God.*" As God's messenger he spoke what God told him to say.

## V. THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS THE REAL SPEAKER WHO SPOKE IN THE PROPHETIC UTTERANCES

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The fifth thing that the Bible teaches regarding the Inspiration of the Prophets and the Apostles and their utterances, is that *the Holy Spirit was the real speaker in the prophetic utterances, that what was said or written was the Holy Spirit's Word that was upon the Apostle's tongue, and not the word of the Prophet or Apostle.* This is said in the Bible in so many words, over and over again. For example, in Heb. 3:7 we read: **"Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, To-day if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts, etc."** The author of the epistle to the Hebrews is quoting Ps. 95:7, 8 and says that what the Psalmist is recorded as saying "*the Holy Spirit saith.*" Again in Heb. 10:15, 16, we read: **"And the Holy Spirit also beareth witness to us; for after He had said, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws on their heart, and upon their mind also will I write them."** Now the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews is quoting Jer. 31:33, and he

does not hesitate to say that the testimony that Jeremiah there bore is *the testimony of the Holy Ghost*, that the Holy Ghost was the real speaker.

Again we read in Acts 28:25, 26 that Paul said, **"Well spake the Holy Spirit through Isaiah the prophet, unto your fathers, (26) saying, Go thou unto this people and say, By hearing ye shall hear and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive, etc."** Here Paul is quoting Isaiah's words as recorded in the 6th chapter of Isaiah, the 9th and 10th verses, and he distinctly says that the real speaker was not Isaiah, but "the Holy Spirit" who spoke "through Isaiah the prophet."

Turning now to the old Testament we read in 2 Sam. 23:2 this assertion by David regarding the things that he said and wrote: **"The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue."** There can be no mistaking the meaning of these words on the part of any one who goes to the Bible to find out what it really claims and teaches. The Holy Spirit was the real speaker in the prophetic utterance. It was the Holy Spirit's utterance that was upon the prophet's tongue. The prophet was simply the mouth by which the Holy Spirit spoke. Merely as a man, except as the Holy Spirit taught him and used him, the prophet was fallible as other men are fallible, but when the Spirit was upon him, when he was taken up and borne along by the Holy Spirit, then he became infallible in his teachings; for his teachings were not his, but the teachings of the Holy Spirit. It was God who was then speaking, not the Prophet. For example, Paul merely as a man, even as a

Christian man, doubtless had many mistaken notions on many things, and was more or less subject to the ideas and opinions of his time, but when he taught as an Apostle, under the power of the Holy Spirit he was infallible, or rather the Spirit who taught through him was infallible, and the teachings that resulted from the Spirit's teaching through him, were infallible, as infallible as God. Common sense demands of us that we carefully distinguish between what Paul *may have* thought as a man, and what he *actually taught* as an apostle. In the Bible we have the record of what he taught as an Apostle. Some one may cite as a possible exception to this statement 1 Cor. 7:6, 25, where he says: "**But this I say by way of concession, not of commandment.... Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord, but I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy.**" There are those who think that Paul does not seem to have been sure here that he had the word of the Lord in this particular matter, but that is not the meaning of the passage. The meaning of v. 6 is that his teaching which he had just given was *by way of concession* to their weakness, and not a commandment as to what they must do. And the teaching of v. 25 is that the Lord, during His earthly life, had given no commandment on this subject, but that Paul was giving his judgment; but he says distinctly that he was giving it *as one who had obtained mercy of the Lord to be trustworthy* and furthermore, in the 40th verse of the chapter he distinctly says that in his judgment he had the Spirit of God. But even allowing that the other interpretation of this passage is the correct one, and that

Paul was not absolutely sure in this case that he had the Word of the Lord and the mind of the Lord, that would only show that where Paul was not absolutely sure that he was teaching in the Holy Ghost he was careful to note the fact, and this would only give additional certainty to all other passages that he wrote.

It is sometimes said that Paul taught in his earlier epistles that the Lord would return during his lifetime, and that in this matter he certainly was mistaken. But Paul never taught in his earlier epistles, or any other epistles, he never taught anywhere, that the Lord would return during his lifetime. This assertion is contrary to fact. He does say in 1 Thess. which was his first epistle, the 4th chapter and 17th verse: **"Then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them** (i.e., the believers who had already fallen asleep) **be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord."** He does here put himself in the same class with those who were still alive when he wrote the words. He naturally and necessarily did not include himself with those who had already fallen asleep. In speaking of the Lord's return he does not say nor hint that he will be still alive when the Lord returns. It is quite probable that Paul did believe at this time that he might be alive when the Lord returned *but he never taught that he would be alive*. The attitude of expectancy is the true attitude in all ages for every believer. This was the attitude that Paul took until it was distinctly revealed to him that he would depart before the Lord came. I think it very probable that Paul in the earlier part of his ministry was inclined to believe that he

would live until the coming of the Lord, but the Holy Ghost kept him from so teaching, and also kept him from all other errors in his teachings.

## **VI. THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE APOSTLES GAVE NOT ONLY THE THOUGHT, BUT THE WORDS IN WHICH THE THOUGHT WAS TO BE EXPRESSED**

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The 6th thing that the Bible makes clear as to the inspiration of the apostle and prophets is that, *the Holy Spirit in the Prophets and Apostles gave not only the thought but also gave the words in which the thought was to be expressed*. We find this very clearly stated in 1 Cor. 2:13: "**Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words.**" One of the most popular of the false theories of Inspiration in our day is that the Holy Spirit was the author of the thought, but that the Apostles were left to their own choice of words in the expression of the thought, and that therefore in studying the Bible we cannot emphasise the exact meaning of the words, but must try to find the thought of God that was back of the words, and which the writer has more or less inaccurately expressed. There are many teachers in our theological seminaries to-day, and in our pulpits, who speak very sneeringly and superciliously of those who believe in Verbal Inspiration,—i.e., those who believe that the Holy Spirit chose the very words in which

the thought he was teaching was to be expressed, but however sneeringly they may speak of those who believe in Verbal Inspiration, certainly the Bible claims that it was verbally inspired. The passage which I have just read makes it as plain as language can possibly make it that the "*words*" in which the Apostle spoke were not "*words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but *which the Spirit teacheth*." Now if this is not the fact, if only the *thought* that was given to Paul was the thought of God, and he clothed the thought in his own words, then Paul was a thoroughly deceived man on a fundamental point, in which case no dependence at all can be placed in his teachings on any point, or else he was a deliberate fraud, in which case the quicker we burn up his books the better for us and all concerned. There is no possibility of finding any middle ground, and the attempts to find a middle ground have landed those who have tried it in all kinds of absurdities. If you have an exact and logical mind, you must take your choice between Verbal Inspiration and bald infidelity. *Paul distinctly states that the words in which he conveyed to others the truth that was revealed to him were the words which the Holy Spirit taught him.* The Holy Spirit himself has anticipated all these modern ingenious, but wholly unbiblical and utterly illogical and entirely false theories regarding his own work in the Apostles. The theory that "the concept" was inspired but the words in which the concept was expressed were not, was anticipated by the Holy Spirit Himself and exploded 1800 years before our supposedly wise 19th century theological teachers conceived it, and attempted to foist it upon an unsuspecting public. It was exploded eighteen centuries

before it was exploited. Furthermore, the theory is absurd in itself. As the only way in which thought can be conveyed from one mind to another, from one man's mind to another man's mind, or from the mind of God to the mind of man is by words, therefore if the words are imperfect the thought expressed in those words is necessarily imperfect. The theory is an absurdity on its very face, and it is difficult to see how intelligent men could have ever deceived themselves into believing such a thoroughly illogical theory. If the words are not inspired the Bible is not inspired. Let us not deceive ourselves; let us face facts.

Furthermore, the more carefully and minutely one studies the *wording* of the statements of this wonderful book—the Bible—the more he will become convinced of the marvellous accuracy of *the very words* used to express the thought. To a superficial thinker the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration may appear questionable or even absurd, but any regenerate and Spirit-taught man who *ponders the words* of the Scripture day by day, and year after year, will become thoroughly and immovably convinced that the wisdom of God is in *the very words* used as well as in the thought which is expressed in the words. It is a significant and deeply impressive fact that our difficulties with the Bible rapidly disappear as we note *the precise language* used. The changing of a word or letter, or of a tense, case or number, would oftentimes land us in contradiction or untruth, but taking the *words exactly as written*, difficulties disappear and truth shines forth. Countless times people have come to me with apparent difficulties and supposed contradictions in the Bible and asked a solution, and I have

pointed them to the exact words used and the solution was found in taking the words exactly as written. It was because they changed in a slight degree the very words that God spoke that a difficulty had seemed to arise. The Divine origin of nature shines forth more and more clearly the more closely we examine it under the microscope. As by the use of a powerful microscope we see the perfection of form and the adaptation of means to end in the minutest particles of matter, we are overwhelmingly convinced that God, a God of infinite wisdom and power, a wisdom extending down to the minutest parts of matter, is the author of the material universe: so likewise the divine origin of the Bible shines forth more and more clearly under the microscope. The more minutely we study the Bible the more we note the perfection with which the turn of a word reveals the absolute thought of God.

An important question, and a question that has puzzled many writers at this point, is: If the Holy Spirit is the author of the very words of Scripture how do we account for the variations in style and diction? How is it, for example, that Paul always used Pauline language, and John used Johannean language, and Peter used language that was characteristic of himself? The answer to this question is very simple and is two-fold: First, even though we could not account at all for this fact, it would have little weight against the explicit statement of God's Word with any one who is humble enough and wise enough to recognise that there are a great many things which he cannot account for at all which could be easily accounted for if he knew a little more. It is only the man who has such amazing and stupendous