

INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY

INSPIRATION

Definition

The Holy Spirit wrote through the biblical writers using their own languages, culture and individual personalities, resulting in God's Word without error in the original.

- To say that the Scriptures are “inspired by God” means that they contain the very breath or words of God Himself
- There are several important elements that belong in a proper definition of inspiration:
 - (1) The divine element—God the Holy Spirit superintended the writers, ensuring the accuracy of the writing;
 - (2) The human element—human authors wrote according to their individual styles and personalities;
 - (3) The result of the divine-human authorship is the recording of God’s truth without error
 - (4) Inspiration extends to the selection of words by the writers
 - (5) Inspiration relates to the original manuscripts.
- Result of inspiration: the human author’s writings are truly words of God AND words of men
- This is an antinomy in Scripture: impossible to explain exactly how this took place
- It is necessary since it guarantees the accuracy of the revelation of God
- If God has revealed Himself but the record of that revelation is not accurately recorded, then the revelation of God is subject to question

The Biblical writers were prepared by God’s divine providence

- (1) The human authors had characteristics common to all people as created in God’s likeness**
- (2) God’s providence brought to each writer his “unique perspective”**
 - Each was conditioned by factors characteristic of his time and place
 - Each had a distinctive heredity and environment, education, interests, etc.
 - Each had a different vocabulary and writing style
- (3) God’s providence included many areas of life**

- God provided the material necessities of life
 - God preserved them from any disqualifying evil
 - God restrained those who would have destroyed them
 - God call them to their ministries as prophets or apostles
- Therefore, God’s writing of Scripture was not a last minute emergency, but by His providence!

Biblical Support

2 Timothy 3:16-17 ~ *All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*

Notice:

1. The Product – “all Scripture”

- Some say this only means the Old Testament – this is true...the NT writers clearly understood that the OT is inspired
- But probably both Old Testament and the portions of the New Testament that had been written by that time are in view
- Why?
 1. Paul quoted both OT (Deut 25:4) and NT (Luke 10:7) in 1 Timothy 5:18

1 Timothy 5:18 ~ *For the Scripture says, “YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.*

Luke 10:7 ~ *Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.*

2. Peter recognized Paul’s writings as “Scripture” in 2 Peter 3:16

2 Peter 3:16 ~ *as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.*

⇒ **Did the NT writers know they were writing Scripture?** – see 1 Corinthians 7:12

2. The Process – “is inspired by God”

- *theopneustos* means “God-breathed” and exhalation of God
- It emphasizes that Scripture is the product of the breath of God.

“Inspiration”

- *Theopneustos*
- *Theos + pneustos*
- *God + breathed (air)*

- The usual translation of “inspired” may be somewhat misleading as it may imply that God simply energizes the human writers
- Men did not write the Scriptures and then God breathed into them
- No, From the beginning they were breathed out by God
- The Scriptures are not something breathed into by God, rather, the Scriptures have been breathed out by God
- God breathing in the Old Testament indicates a creative activity
- Paul’s emphasis, then, is on the *origin* of the Scriptures: that which is God-breathed is “produced by the creative breath of the Almighty.”

Genesis 2:7 ~ Then the Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being

Job 33:4 ~The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life

- The fact that “*inspired*” occurs in the passive voice, and not the active, further emphasizes that God is the origin of the Scriptures, not man.
- NOTE: “Scripture” has to do with the writings. Therefore, in the biblical usage of the concept of inspiration, the writings, and not the writers, are inspired!

3. The Profitability – “*and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness*”

4. The Purpose – “*so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work*”

2 Peter 1:21~ So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. ²⁰ But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Notice:

- Context of vs. 16-21 is Peter on Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17)
- But more wonderful than Peter’s experience on the Mount of Transfiguration is the Word of God which is “more sure” than that experience
- Verse 21 describes how this process of inspiration occurred: “men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God”
- “moved” = borne along; the same word used in Acts 27:15, 17 of a ship carried along by wind filling sails
- Thus, the decision to write Scripture was not a private decision of the human authors

1 Corinthians 14:37 ~ If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.

- Paul claimed that His words were the Lord’s (He knew his writing was inspired)

Extent of Inspiration – How deep does it go?

(1) Inspiration of the whole

- The Old Testament prophets are viewed as authoritative messengers of God – “thus says the Lord” – shows this is the very Word of the Lord, inspired as a whole
- In His use of the Old Testament Christ gave credence to the inspiration of the entire Old Testament
- Christ affirmed that not the smallest letter or stroke would pass from the law until it would be fulfilled
- “the Law or the Prophets” was a common phrase designating the entire Old Testament
- Thus Jesus affirmed the inviolability of the entire OT and therefore affirmed the inspiration of the entire OT

Matthew 5:17-18~ Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. “For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

- Jesus reminded the disciples that all the things written about Him in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled
- By His 3-fold designation of the OT (law, prophets, Psalms), Christ affirmed the inspiration and authority of the entire OT

Luke 24:44 ~ Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

- When Jesus debated with the unbelieving Jews concerning His right to be called the Son of God He referred them to Psalm 82:6 and reminded them “the Scripture cannot be broken”
- Means that Scripture cannot be emptied of its power by being shown to be in error

John 10:35~ If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken)

(2) Inspiration of the parts

- Christ quoted from the Old Testament profusely and frequently. His arguments hinged on the integrity of the Old Testament passage He was quoting.
- Christ was affirming the inspiration and authority of the individual texts or books of the OT
- How many times didn’t Christ say “Have you not heard?”
- Examples:
 - In Matthew 4:4, 7, 10 Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13, 16,
 - In Matthew 12:18–21 Jesus quoted from Isaiah 42:1–4
 - In Matthew 21:42 Jesus quoted from Psalm 118:22

(3) Inspiration of the words

- Examples of Christ’s argument depending of specific words quoted from OT:

- In defending the doctrine of the resurrection to the Sadducees in John 8, Jesus quoted from Exodus 3:6

John 8:58 ~ Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am."

- In this response Jesus' entire argument hinged on the words "I am."
- In affirming the resurrection Jesus reminded the Sadducees that Exodus 3:6 said "I am"
- If the words of the Old Testament were not inspired, His argument was useless; but if the very words of the Old Testament were actually inspired, then His argument carried enormous weight.
- In fact, Jesus' argument hinges on the *present tense* of the statement. Because it was written in Exodus 3:6, "I am..." , the doctrine of the resurrection could be affirmed; God is the God of the living patriarchs.
- Galatians 3:16 quotes Genesis 12:7

Galatians 3:16 ~ Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ.

- Argument rests on singular word "seed"

(4) Inspiration of the letters

- Christ believed the letters of Scripture were inspired.

Matthew 5:18~ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished.

- "smallest letter" = "jot" = Hebrew letter *yodh*(י)
- "stroke" = "tittle" = minute distinction between two Hebrew letters
 - like distinction between an O and a Q.
 - י vs. ו (יוד vs. וואו)
- Jesus emphasized that all the details of the Old Testament writings would be fulfilled down to the very letter and the very parts of the letter

Conclusion: Inspiration extends to the whole, the parts, the precise words, and the actual letters

→ VERBAL, PLENARY INSPIRATION

Verbal = Inspiration extends to words of Scripture (in original)

Plenary = Inspiration extends to whole of Scripture

Faulty Views of Inspiration

1. Mechanical View - God merely dictated to the biblical authors

- The dictation view states that God dictated the words of Scripture and the men wrote them down in a passive manner, being mere secretaries who wrote only the words they were told to write.

- True, some parts of the Bible were given by dictation (cf. Ex. 20:1, “Then God spoke all these words”), but only a few
- We know inspiration was not mechanical since the books of the Bible reveal a distinct contrast in style and vocabulary, suggesting the authors were not mere recorders
- Examples: Compare writings of John (simple, limited vocabulary) with Luke (more complex, expanded vocabulary)
- If the dictation theory were true, the style of the books of the Bible should be uniform.

2. **Partial View - Degrees of inspiration: doctrinal areas are inspired; historical areas not**

- This view says that the Bible can be trusted in matters of faith and practice, but not when it comes to science, history, and other facts
- In this view God preserves the message of salvation amid other material that may be in error.
- Despite the presence of errors in Scripture, partial theorists teach that an imperfect medium is a sufficient guide to salvation.
- Dangerous view because, if God couldn't get facts about earthly things correct, how do we trust in spiritual things?
- Who decides what is true and what is false? Those who hold this view do not agree on what is error and what is not.
- How can doctrine be separated from history? (For example, the narratives about Jesus' virgin birth contain both history and doctrine.)

3. **Thought/Concept View -God's general thoughts are contained in the Bible, while the specific words are mans, which contain error**

- In this view God gave an idea or concept to the writer who then penned the idea in his own words.
- According to this view there can be errors in Scripture because the choice of words is left to the writer and is not superintended by God.

AUTHORITY

- If the Word is inspired then it is also authoritative

(1) It is to be obeyed

Isaiah 66:2 ~ But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.

John 14:15 ~ If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

1 John 2:3 ~ By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments.

(2) It is to be preached

1 Corinthians 2:1 ~ And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God.

1 Timothy 4:13 ~ Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and teaching.

2 Timothy 4:2 ~ preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.

(3) It is to be treasured

Psalm 19:10 ~ They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

Psalm 119:97 ~ O how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day.

Colossians 3:16 ~ Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

(4) It is to be studied

Ezra 7:10 ~ For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.

2 Timothy 2:15 ~ Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.