

INSPIRATION

“God breathed”

Key question

In what sense is the Bible inspired by God?

Key text

II Timothy 3:13-17

“13 But evil men and impostors will proceed {from bad} to worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned {them}; 15 and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings, which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith, which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

Key Definition

Inspiration

God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings.

A Fundamental of the faith

The Inspiration of the Bible

Belief in the special inspiration and consequent authority of the Scripture (Bible) is the basis of our understanding and intellectual confession of the faith.

Introduction

Special Revelation draws our attention to the Bible and the question of its special character.

II Peter 1:21 “for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.” “moved” = (passive participle) “to be moved upon”

I Corinthians 2:13 “which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

The question is not, “Is the Bible inspired?” but rather, “What is meant by inspiration?”

- A. **It is not enough to say, “I believe the Bible is inspired.” The question is, “What do you mean by ‘Inspired’?”** There are differing views of inspiration.
1. **The Intuition Theory** — The Bible reflects a **high degree of insight**, but is wholly a part of the natural world. Its writers were religious geniuses with a particular aptitude or talent for the religious side of life.
 2. **The Illumination Theory** — The Bible reflects an **elevated consciousness** of spiritual truths. This special work of God’s Spirit is different only in degree, not in kind, from the Spirit’s work with all believers.
 3. **The Dynamic Theory** — The Bible is the product of a combination of divine and human elements. God directed the writers to the **basic concepts** of truth and left them to formulate the final expression of that truth.
 4. **The Verbal Theory** — The Bible is the product of a combination of divine and human elements as in the dynamic theory, but the Holy Spirit actually controlled the selection of **words** used in conveying the message.
 5. **The Dictation Theory** — The Bible was dictated by God to the writers much like the Ten Commandments were given to Moses.

B. **A correct understanding of the Bible’s inspiration should take the following data into account.**

1. The **Biblical teaching** about inspiration:

- a. The Old Testament claims about itself — 3,808 references to “the Lord said,” etc.
- b. The New Testament claims about the Old Testament —

II Tim.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.”

II Pet.1:20-21 “But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is {a matter} of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

I Pet.1:10-11 “As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that {would come} to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.”

- c. Christ’s claims about the Old Testament — Matt.5:17-19; 19:4-5 (Gen.2:24)

John 10:34-35 “Jesus answered them. ‘Has it not been **written in your Law**, ‘*I said, you are Gods.*’? If he called them gods, to whom the **word of God** came (and the **Scriptures** cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said, ‘I am the Son of God.’?’”

- d. The New Testament claims about the New Testament —

I Tim.5:18 “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,’ and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” (quoting **Luke 10:7**)

II Pet.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.” (Paul’s writings are equated with Scripture.)

I Thess.2:13 “And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God’s message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God,”

I Cor.14:37 “If any one thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord’s commandment.”

Gal.1:12-17 “¹² For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but {I received it} through a revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹³ For you have heard of my former manner of life in Judaism, how I used to persecute the church of God beyond measure, and tried to destroy it; ¹⁴ and I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions. ¹⁵ But when He who had set me apart, {even} from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, ¹⁷ nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.”

2. The **characteristics** of the Bible (See notes on Uniqueness of the Bible)

C. We must be careful not to neglect either of the two modes of Biblical inspiration?

1. The **Spirit of God** — II Chron.15:1; Matt.22:43; II Pet.1:21.

I Corinthians 2:12-13 “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.”

2. The **human authors**.

Hebrews 1:1 “God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

- a. The personality, style, and cultural context of the human authors is not superseded.
- b. The vast cultural diversity among the human authors adds to the universal appeal of the Scriptures.
- c. The writings of Scripture were seldom, if ever, the result of mechanical dictation.
- d. The cultural and perceptual limitations of the human authors were controlled by God’s Spirit.

3. **NOTE:** The analogy of the dual nature of Christ is an illustration of the two modes of inspiration.

D. Cultivating a healthy view of the Bible from Psalm 119

1. Two problems:

- a. **Disinterest** – The Bible is discredited by historical critics and seen as irrelevant to modern life. Many evangelical Christians say that they believe the Bible but have little interest in finding out what it teaches.
- b. **Superficial interest** (Bibliolatry) – Interest that is academic only or centered on the letter of the law. This was the Pharisee’s problem.

2. The lessons from Ps.119’s model of how the Word of God is treated.

- a. **Deep respect** - The Book is worthy of reverent and careful treatment. In the case of Ps. 119 we have an artistic shrine of the Book. It is an alphabetical Psalm.
- b. **A window to God** - The reader must see more than the letter of the law. "With all my heart I have sought Thee;" vs.10
- c. **Personal engagement** - The reader must personalize the message of the Book. "This has become mine, that I observe Thy precepts." Vs.56; "With all my heart I will observe Thy precepts." Vs.69
- d. **God's help** - Understanding the Word requires God's grace. "Make me understand the way of They precepts," vs.27; "graciously grant me Thy law." Vs.29

The Point

Inspiration of the Bible involves God's revelation of His heart, mind, and actions through human instruments whose writing is guided by the Holy Spirit.

Response

Head

I am to understand that:

The Bible is the inspired revelation of God's heart, mind, and acts.

Heart

I am to believe that:

The Bible as a love letter from God.

Hands

I am to behave by:

Treating the Bible with great respect.

Pastoral advice

Of what practical value is the inspiration of the Bible?

1. The doctrine of inspiration builds our sense of expectancy in being spiritually edified as we read and study.
2. The doctrine of inspiration leads us to treat the Bible like no other book. It is both the Word of God and yet written in human language.
3. The wonder of inspiration invites us to study so as to know what exactly is meant by the Word of God in written form.

Questions that you should be able to answer.

- 1. Specific facts you should know.**
 - a. What are two key texts that speak of the Bible's inspiration?
 - b. How would you define Biblical inspiration?
 - c. What evidence is there in the Bible that Paul's letters were accepted as Scripture?
 - d. Why is the Catholic Bible different than the Protestant Bible?
- 2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.**
 - a. What are true and false concepts of inspiration?
 - b. How do the divine and human aspects of the Bible relate?
 - c. What are some of the characteristics of the Bible that suggest that it is inspired?
 - d. What criteria were used to define the canon of Scripture?
- 3. Questions you should wrestle with.**
 - a. How can human language be used as inspired text?
 - b. How sound are the reasons for believing in the verbal