

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

(A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO INSPIRATION)

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INTRODUCTION

One book that is familiar to more people than any other book is the Bible. This book is available almost anywhere among civilized people today. It is in the homes of the poor and the humble. It can be found in the homes of the rich and the famous. Almost every library in the world has various translations of this precious book.

The Bible is one gift that is most frequently given to loved ones on birthdays and at Christmas. Millions of Christians read a portion of this book everyday. While millions of others who do not will readily admit that they should. There can be only one reason for the wide distribution and acceptance for the Bible. This is because it is the word of God. Millions have found comfort through its sacred pages. While millions of others turn to it for guidance and understanding in their daily lives.

The scriptures in historic Christendom were of highest authority. No matter what branch of the Christian faith you look into, whether it be Augustinianism, Lutheranism, Calvinism, Baptist, Episcopalian, etc . . ., all held to the scriptures as the very word of God. This word of God has been called the *verbum Dei* [word of God] and the *vox Dei* [voice of God].

The fact that the Bible was written over a period of 1600 years, by approximately 40 authors, yet still retained a unity that surpassed all human comprehension, testifies of a divine authorship. However, in a time when the church has fallen prey to many false movements and teachings the Bible is looked upon as only having a human origin and not a divine one. I will quote from R. C. Sproul at this point,

“Historically the systematic theologian assumed that the Bible is the word of God and as such is not filled with internal conflict and confusion.”^[1]

This is also the very point that Lorainne Boettner made when he said,

“Ignorance concerning the nature of the doctrine of inspiration, or want of clear views concerning it, can only result in confusion. Millions of Christians today are like men whose feet are on quicksand and whose heads are in a fog. They do not know what they believe concerning the inspiration and authority of the Bible.”^[2]

This is so true. Men today in our age of post modernism and moral relativism have rejected divine inspiration due to inner conflict and confusion. Again I quote from R. C. Sproul,

“In the modern church the assumptions of the past are not always retained. Many have rejected the divine inspiration of Scripture and with it any commitment to a unified revelation.”^[3]

To sum up what he stated, he said that since men have rejected the inspiration of the Bible, they have rejected its unifying themes.

There is a marvelous unity in the Bible that attest to a divine authorship. From the beginning the Bible promises the coming of Messiah to bruise the head of the serpent. Through the five books of Moses, the historical books, the Psalms, the prophets, and even into Malachi the Bible continues this theme. Malachi even ends the Old Testament with these words,

“The Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple.”

The New Testament opens up with the genealogy of the Messiah and goes on to tell of his life, death, resurrection, and ascension; while at the same time prophesying of his coming again.

THE WRITERS CLAIM INSPIRATION

The writers of the Bible attest to the fact that the messages that they were speaking is the word of God. They constantly used the phrases in the Old Testament; “Thus saith the Lord.”; while in the New Testament Paul stated that what he commanded was the commandments of the Lord 1 Corinthians 7:10. The Old Testament declared that if a thing come to pass then the prophet has spoken by the Lord Deut. 18:22 and Jeremiah 28:9. The unbridled quoting of the Old Testament in the New Testament testifies that the Old Testament was believed to be the word of God.

In the New Testament the writers themselves claimed inspiration. Jesus told his disciples that when they are delivered up before kings and councils to not premeditate what they should speak, because it would be given them in that hour what they shall say. “For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you” Matthew 10:19, 20. Paul claims inspiration for the gospel that he was preaching. He said, “But though we, or an angel from heaven; should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preach unto you, let him be anathema or accursed Galatians 1:6-9.

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Paul says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is . . .” Paul’s declaration of scripture’s inspiration refers to its origin. He uses the Greek word ‘*theopneust*’, which means ‘*God-breathed*’. Though the word is usually translated ‘*inspired*’, which means to breathe in, technically the word ‘*theopneust*’ refers to a breathing out, which might more accurately be translated ‘*expired*’. Paul is saying that scripture is expired or breathed out by God. This breathing out is the breath of God.

THE PLENARY VERBAL VIEW OF INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

In order to sum up this short article we must establish what type of inspiration we believe that the Bible contains. There have been many theories of inspiration propagated to explain the process of inspiration. We will now discuss three such theories.

The first theory held by some is called ‘mechanical inspiration’. Those holding to this view believe that God used human agents to write his word. But during the process of inspiration the human agents were purely passive like an ink pen in the hand of the writer. This means that their minds did not contribute in any way to the contents or form of their writings. From what we learn from scripture this view point cannot be true. The writers of the Bible were authors that at times gathered materials from other sources to write, see 1 Kings 11:41; 14:29; 1 Chronicles 29:29; and Luke 1:1-4. These authors at various times shared their own experiences and had their own unique writing style.

The second theory which we will examine is ‘content theory’ of inspiration. This theory suggests that God merely gave the writers the content or idea that he wanted to be made known, but that the writer used his own words to express this content or idea. Jesus himself refuted this theory when he said that every jot and tittle would be fulfilled of the law. This is equivalent to saying that every dotting of the ‘I’ and every crossing of the ‘T’ was inspired of God and would be fulfilled, see Matthew 5:18.

The third theory, of which those who believe the Bible to be infallible hold to, is the ‘plenary verbal’ view of inspiration. This view expresses the fact that God so guided the hands of those who wrote down his word, that when they had finished, what they had written was the word of God.

Jesus in his contest with Satan actually resisted the devil by quoting from

Deut. 8:3 which states, “Man doth not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord, doth man live” Matthew 4:4.

Peter in his second epistle, chapter 3 verse 2 reminded us to be “mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.” In the close of this book Peter affirmed that Paul’s writings were also inspired by God 2 Peter 3:15-16.

Many have tried to explain away this viewpoint of plenary verbal inspiration, however, the texts which teach this viewpoint are innumerable. These text declare that although God superintended the writings of the authors of scripture, so that what they wrote was his word; nevertheless, the authors own vocabulary, styles, and methods of writing were conveyed in the text of which they wrote.

In conclusion, we believe that the scriptures are inspired of God. We believe that the scriptures being inspired by God are therefore infallible and inerrant. This viewpoint speaks concerning the actual autographs [original writings] and not to translations *per se*.

Those today who have rejected the inspiration of the scriptures are in mass confusion. They have slipped into error after error concerning man’s responsibility, sinfulness, and many other things that deal with life and man’s dealings in this world. Because of the denial of inspiration the church is full of all kinds of false concepts such as: rationalism, anti-supernaturalism, postmodernism, moral relativism, pluralism, etc., . . . All these false ideas have lead men into all types of heresy from which they don’t seem to be able to recover. One of the most recent heretical ideas would be the *Church Growth Movement* or *Seeker Sensitive Movement*. This movement denies Romans 3 which teaches that there are none who seek after God in the fallen state. It isn’t until they are regenerated that they began to seek God.

We also have a whole group of people who meet at what is called “The Jesus Seminar.” Through their liberal biases and there non-investigational approach to scripture they have cast doubt on the Bible as a whole. They cast votes on whether they would have said such and such if they were Jesus. But in this approach they are taking for granted that Jesus was just a mere human on their same level. They deny that they are sinful men and that Jesus is God in human flesh. So therefore they certainly would not have said what they

claimed Jesus did not say because they are biased against the things of God.

It is time that we take a stand on the reliability of the Old and New Testaments. This means that if we are shunned, then let us be shunned. If we are persecuted, then let us be persecuted. If we are defamed and lose all our possessions, yea even our own lives, then so be it. However, there are not many who think this way. They are like Demas who have forsook us having loved this present world 2 Timothy 4:10.

I will conclude by quoting from Jesus Christ himself, “. . . nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find [‘the’-Greek] faith on the earth?”^[4]

I hope so! Even so come Lord Jesus.

FOOTNOTES:

- [1] R. C. Sproul What is Reformed Theology? [Understanding the Basics] [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group 1997 Page 23].
- [2] Loraine Boettner The Doctrine of Inspiration [Text Module 201a1 Trinity Graduate School of Apologetics and Theology Page 3].
- [3] R. C. Sproul What is Reformed Theology? [Understanding the Basics] [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Publishing Group 1997 Pages 23- 24].
- [4] Luke 18:8 The New Open Study Bible Edition King James Version [Nashville, Tn. Thomas Nelson Publishers].