

## INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

### 1. Definition.

- a. The word *inspiration* has a weak sense in ordinary usage today. Every poet or songwriter claims to be inspired to write, and athletes are said to give inspired performances.<sup>1</sup> In Christianity, though, inspiration has a very specific, technical meaning.
- b. Inspiration means “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*.”<sup>2</sup>
  - (1) The word “superintend” allows for the spectrum of relationships God had with the writers and the variety of material. His superintendence was sometimes very direct and sometimes less so, but always it included guarding the writers so that they wrote accurately.
  - (2) The word “composed” shows that the writers were not passive stenographers to whom God dictated the material, but active writers.
  - (3) “Without error” expresses the Bible’s own claim to be truth.
  - (4) Inspiration can only be predicated of the “original writings,” not to copies or translations, however accurate they maybe.<sup>3</sup>
- c. Other definitions.
  - (1) “We believe that ‘all Scripture is given by inspiration of God,’ by which we understand the whole Bible is inspired in the sense that holy men of God ‘were moved by the Holy Spirit’ to write the very words of Scripture. We believe that this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings—historical, poetical, doctrinal, and prophetic—as appeared in the original manuscripts.”<sup>4</sup>
  - (2) “Without impairing the intelligence, individuality, literary style, or personal feelings of the human authors, God supernaturally directed the writing of Scripture so it records with perfect accuracy his comprehensive and infallible revelation to man. Inspiration extends equally to all Scripture.”<sup>5</sup>

### 2. Debate.

- a. When discussing the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture, precision is necessary.
  - (1) “Although those holding many theological viewpoints would be willing to say the Bible is inspired, one finds little uniformity as to what is meant by inspiration. Some focus it on the writers; others, on the writings; still others, on the readers. Some relate it to the general message of the Bible; others, to the thoughts; still

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 81.

<sup>3</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 81-82.

<sup>4</sup> Dallas Theological Seminary.

<sup>5</sup> Unknown.

others, to the words. Some include inerrancy; many don't. These differences call for precision in stating the biblical doctrine."<sup>6</sup>

- b. There is much erroneous teaching around this doctrine.
  - (1) "Formerly all that was necessary to affirm one's belief in full inspiration was the statement, 'I believe in the inspiration of the Bible.' But when some did not extend inspiration to the words of the text it became necessary to say, 'I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible.' To counter the teaching that not all parts of the Bible were inspired, one had to say, 'I believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible.' Then because some did not want to ascribe total accuracy to the Bible, it was necessary to say, 'I believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration of the Bible.' But then 'infallible' and 'inerrant' began to be limited to matters of faith only rather than also embracing all that the Bible records (including historical facts, genealogies, accounts of Creation, etc.), so it became necessary to add the concept of 'unlimited inerrancy.' Each addition to the basic statement arose because of an erroneous teaching."<sup>7</sup>
- c. Our church holds to the unlimited, verbal, plenary, inerrant inspiration of the Bible. This sets us apart from most churches in our city.

### 3. Importance.

- a. The validity of Christianity rests on the trustworthiness of the Bible as a God-inspired text.
  - (1) "How are we to account, then, for the singular constancy of [the church's] confession of the Bible's doctrine of inspiration? ...It is due to an instinctive feeling in the church, that the trustworthiness of the Scriptures lies at the foundation of trust in the Christian system of doctrine, and is therefore fundamental to the Christian hope and life. It is due to the church's instinct that the validity of her teaching of doctrine as the truth of God...rests on the trustworthiness of the Bible as a record of God's dealings and purposes with men. ...[P]ractically we must say that the condition of the persistence of Christianity as a religion for the people, is the entire trustworthiness of the Scriptures as the record of the supernatural revelation which Christianity is."<sup>8</sup>

### 4. Key Passages.

- a. Preliminary points.
  - (1) The doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture is not something theologians have forced on the Bible. Rather it is a teaching of the Bible itself.<sup>9</sup>
  - (2) The Bible boldly claims to be inspired by God. Can that claim be verified?
  - (3) Jesus and the apostles assumed the verbal, plenary inspiration of Scripture.

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<sup>6</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 76.

<sup>7</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 76.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 1:66-68.

<sup>9</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 76.

- (a) “We believe this doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures primarily because it is the doctrine which Christ and his apostles believed, and which they have taught us.”<sup>10</sup>
- b. **Mt 5:17-19** 17 Do not think that I [Jesus] have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. 18 For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, *not an iota, not a dot*, will pass from the Torah until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
- (1) Key terms.
- (2) Principles.
- (a) Not even the smallest mark of the original writings of the Old Testament may be disregarded.
- c. **1 Co 2:6-16** 6 Yet among the mature we [apostles] do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. 7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 But, as it is written, What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him— 10 *but to us God revealed these things through the Spirit* (ἡμῖν ἔδὲ ἀπεκάλυψεν ὁ θεὸς διὰ τοῦ πνεύματος). For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God [special revelation]. 13 *And we* [apostles] impart this *in words* (λόγοις) *not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit* (ἃ καὶ λαλοῦμεν οὐκ ἐν διδακτοῖς ἀνθρωπίνης σοφίας ... ἀλλ’ ἐν διδακτοῖς πνεύματος) [the inspiration of Scripture], *explaining spiritual truths to the spiritual* (πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες) [the illumination of Scripture]. 14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 16 For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Messiah (νοῦν Ἰησοῦ).
- (1) Key terms.
- (a) ἀποκαλύπτω: “to cause someth. to be fully known, reveal, disclose, bring to light, make fully known” (BDAG, 112).
- 1) **Eph 3:5** 5 ... Which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed (ἀποκαλύπτω) to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.
- (b) διδακτός: “pert. to being communicated as instruction, *imparted, taught*” (BDAG, 240).
- (2) Principles.

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<sup>10</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration*, 1:74.

- (a) “Here Paul made the point that God’s revelation came to us in words. This counters the contention of some that inspiration only relates to the thoughts that God wanted us to know, but not to the words in which those thoughts were expressed. Holding such a view relieves one of holding to the inerrancy of the text, for one could supposedly have truthful thoughts (God’s) conveyed in erroneous words (man’s). But Paul insisted that God’s message came in the words of the text.”<sup>11</sup>
- d. **2 Ti 3:14-17** 14 But as for you [Timothy], continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it 15 and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings (ἱερὰ γράμματα) [Old Testament], which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Messiah Jesus. 16 All Scripture is God-breathed (πᾶσα γραφή θεόπνευστος) and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete (ἄρτιος), equipped for every good work.
- (1) Key terms.
- (a) ἱερός: “pert. to being of transcendent purity, *holy*” (BDAG, 470).
- (b) γραφή: “sacred scripture, in the NT exclusively so” (BDAG, 206).
- 1) This term occurs “fifty-one times and always in reference to some part of the Bible. Sometimes it refers to the entire Old Testament (Luke 24:45; John 10:35); sometimes, to a particular Old Testament passage (Luke 4:21); sometimes, to a particular New Testament passage (1 Tim. 5:18); and sometimes to a larger portion of the New Testament (2 Peter 3:16, referring to Paul’s writings).”<sup>12</sup>
- a) The Greek word γραφή... was a technical term for the New Testament writers and had a very specialized meaning. Even though it is used fifty-one times in the New Testament, every one of those instances uses it to refer to the Old Testament writings, not to any other words or writings outside the canon of Scripture.<sup>13</sup>
- 2) Twice the New Testament is labelled as γραφή.
- a) **1 Ti 5:18** 18 For the Scripture says, You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain, and, The labourer deserves his wages.
1. **Lk 10:7** 7 And remain in the same house, eating and drinking what they provide, for the laborer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house.
- b) **2 Pe 3:16** 16 ...As [Paul] does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures (γραφαὶς).
- (c) πνέω: “to move as wind with relatively rapid motion, *blow*” (BDAG, 837).

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<sup>11</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 80.

<sup>12</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 76.

<sup>13</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 76.

- 1) **Jn 3:8** 8 The wind blows (πνέω) where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.
- (d) ἄρτιος: “pert. to being well fitted for some function, *complete, capable, proficient*=able to meet all demands” (BDAG, 136).
- (2) Principles.
  - (a) The extent of inspiration is total. *All* Scripture is God-breathed. That is, God is the source of *all* 66 books of the Old and New Testaments.
    - 1) A translation, “every Scripture inspired by God is also profitable,” is possible, but unlikely. This interpretation would indicate only part of the Bible is inspired.
  - (b) The means of inspiration is the *exhaled breath of God*. In other words, the Bible originated as an action of God, not of man.
  - (c) The purpose of inspiration is *profit* in teaching, reproof, correcting, restoring, and training believers in righteousness in order they may be complete and equipped for all aspects of the Christian life.
- e. **2 Pe 1:19-21** 19 And we have the prophetic word (τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον) more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture (προφητεία γραφῆς) comes from someone’s own explanation (ἐπίλυσις). 21 For no prophecy (προφητεία) was ever produced by the desire/impulse of man (θελήματι ἀνθρώπου), *but men spoke from God as they were carried along* (φέρω, pres. pass.) *by the Holy Spirit* (ἀλλ’ ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν “ἀπὸ θεοῦ” ἄνθρωποι).
- (1) Key terms.
  - (a) ἐπίλυσις: “the act or process of explaining, *explanation, interpretation*” (BDAG, 375).
  - (b) φέρω.
    - 1) **Ac 27:15** 15 And when the ship was caught and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and were driven along (φέρω, imperf. pass.).
- (2) Principles.
  - (a) The prophetic word is fully confirmed and trustworthy (v. 19).
  - (b) No prophecy of Scripture derives from human explanation (v. 20).
  - (c) No prophecy was ever produced by human impulse (v. 21).
    - 1) The ultimate source of every prophecy was never a man’s decision about what he wanted to write, but rather the Holy Spirit’s action in the prophet’s life.<sup>14</sup>
  - (d) Men spoke from God (v. 21).
  - (e) These men were carried along by the Spirit as they spoke or wrote (v. 21).

## 5. Characteristics.

### a. Verbal.

- (1) Scripture does not simply *contain* God’s word. It *is* God’s word.

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<sup>14</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 75.

- (2) It is not just the *message* of the Bible that is inspired. The very *words* of the Bible are inspired.
  - (3) **1 Ti 4:6** 6 If you [Timothy] put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Messiah Jesus, being trained in the *words of the faith* and of the good doctrine that you have followed.
    - (a) Christian doctrine rises or falls based on the *words of the faith*.
- b. Plenary.
- (1) Inspiration extends equally to *all* Scripture.
  - (2) The New Testament authors consistently attributed to God *all* the words of the Old Testament. All means all.
    - (a) **Lk 24:25** 25 And [Jesus] said to them, O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken!
    - (b) **Lk 24:27** 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, [Jesus] interpreted to them in *all* the Scriptures the things concerning himself.
    - (c) **Lk 24:44** 44 Then [Jesus] said to them, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that *everything* written about me in the Torah of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.
    - (d) **Ac 3:18** 18 But what God foretold by the mouth of *all* the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer, he thus fulfilled.
    - (e) **Ac 24:14** 14 But this I [Paul] confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing *everything* laid down by the Torah and written in the Prophets.
- c. Original manuscripts.
- (1) Inspiration extends only to the original manuscripts, written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek.
  - (2) Properly speaking, no English version of the Bible is inspired. This means the King James Version is not any more inspired than any other English version. It may or may not be a better translation, but it is not inspired.

## 6. Processes.

- a. Preliminaries.
- (1) In between the two extremes of dictation on the one hand, and ordinary historical research on the other hand, we have many indications of various ways by which God communicated with the human authors of Scripture.<sup>15</sup>
    - (a) **He 1:1** 1 Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets....
    - (b) Twice God dictated to the Aramean prophet Balaam what to say (Nu 23:5, 16). The third time, the Spirit came upon him (Nu 24:2-3).
      - 1) **Nu 23:5** 5 And Yahweh put a word in Balaam's mouth and said, Return to Balak, and thus you shall speak.
      - 2) **Nu 23:16** 16 And Yahweh met Balaam and put a word in his mouth and said, Return to Balak, and thus shall you speak.
      - 3) **Nu 24:2-3** 2 And Balaam lifted up his eyes and saw Israel camping tribe by tribe. And the Spirit of God came upon him, 3 and he took up his

<sup>15</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 81.

discourse and said, The oracle of Balaam the son of Beor, the oracle of the man whose eye is opened....

- (c) It is not important to discover precisely the process by which God inspired every biblical text.<sup>16</sup>
- b. Catalogue.
  - (1) Material directly from God.
    - (a) **Dt 9:10** 10 And Yahweh gave me [Moses] the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that Yahweh had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.
    - (2) Dictation.
      - (a) In the Old Testament, this is frequently seen in the introductory phrase, “Thus says the Lord,” which appears hundreds of times.<sup>17</sup>
      - (b) **Is 38:4-6** 4 Then the word of Yahweh came to Isaiah: 5 Go and say to Hezekiah, Thus says Yahweh, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears. Behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. 6 I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and will defend this city.
  - (3) Prophetic and apostolic material.
    - (a) What the prophet or apostles says in God’s name, God says.
      - 1) **Hag 1:12** 12 Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of Yahweh their God, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as Yahweh their God had sent him. And the people feared Yahweh.
      - 2) **1 Sa 15:3** 3 Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.
        - a) **1 Sa 15:18** 18 And Yahweh sent you on a mission and said, Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.
        - b) **Mt 1:22** 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet....
        - c) **Mk 7:9-13** 9 And [Jesus] said to them, You have a fine way of rejecting the commandment of God in order to establish your tradition! 10 For Moses said, Honor your father and your mother, and, Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die. 11 But you say, If a man tells his father or his mother, Whatever you would have gained from me is Corban (that is, given to God)— 12 then you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or mother, 13 thus making void the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And many such things you do.

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<sup>16</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 81.

<sup>17</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 73.

- d) **Jn 16:13** 13 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.
  - e) **Ac 1:16** 16 Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.
  - f) **1 Co 2:13** 13 And we [apostles] impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.
  - g) **1 Co 14:37** 37 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I [Paul] am writing to you are a command of the Lord [Jesus].
  - h) **1 Th 4:15** 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.
  - i) **2 Pe 3:2** 2 ... That you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles....
  - j) **Re 22:18-19** 18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book. If anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.
- (4) Eyewitness material.
- (a) Joshua's account of the conquest in Joshua, for example.
  - (b) **Jn 14:26** 26 But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.
- (5) Researched material.
- (a) **Lk 1:1-4** 1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.
  - 1) "In his prologue, Luke told us that (a) he consulted eyewitnesses of Christ's life and ministry; (b) he used available written accounts of parts of His ministry; (c) he carefully investigated and sifted through all those sources; (d) he planned out the orderly arrangement of his material; and (e) the Holy Spirit moved and bore him along in the actual writing so that all he wrote was accurate and truthful."<sup>18</sup>

c. Summary.

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<sup>18</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 80.

- (1) “[A]ll that we are able to say is that God’s providential oversight and direction of the life of each author was such that their personalities, their backgrounds and training, their abilities to evaluate events in the world around them, their access to historical data, their judgment with regard to the accuracy of information, and their individual circumstances when they wrote, were all exactly what God wanted them to be, so that when they actually came to the point of putting pen to paper, the words were fully their own words but also fully the words that God wanted them to write, words that God would also claim as his own.”<sup>19</sup>

## 7. Clarifications.

- a. The Bible truthfully records things that are untrue, such as the lies of Satan or the philosophical speculations of Solomon.
  - (1) **Ge 3:4** 4 But the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die.
  - (2) **Ec 2:1** 1 I said in my heart, Come now, I will test you with pleasure. Enjoy yourself. But behold, this also was vanity.
- b. The Bible contains quotations from the writings of unbelievers.
  - (1) **Tt 1:12** 12 One of the Cretans, a prophet of their own, said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.
- c. The Bible includes passages that are highly emotional, yet accurately recorded (e.g., the Psalms of David).
- d. Verbal, plenary inspiration *does not* mean:
  - (1) A passage must give all details of an event.
  - (2) The order must follow a strict chronology.
  - (3) Witnesses can’t have different points of view.
- e. Verbal, plenary inspiration *does* mean:
  - (1) The details of passages are correct.
  - (2) Chronology is accurate if the author intends the text to be chronological.
  - (3) There may be *apparent* contradictions, but there are no *real* contradictions.
  - (4) Interpretations must fit both true exegesis and actual historical events.
  - (5) Words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs are to be understood in a common, literal, normal, plain sense unless the context dictates otherwise.

## 8. Necessary Balance.<sup>20</sup>

- a. The doctrine of inspiration balances three truths. The text of Scripture is:
  - (1) God-inspired.
    - (a) The Bible is God’s book about man, not man’s book about God.
  - (2) Man-written.
    - (a) Without impairing the intelligence, individuality, literary style, or personal feelings of the human authors, God supernaturally directed the writing of Scripture.
    - (b) “God sometimes revealed things supernaturally and directly; sometimes He allowed the human writers to compose His message using their freedom of

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<sup>19</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 81.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Michael Svigel, Dallas Theological Seminary.

expression. But He breathed out the total product, carrying along the authors in various ways, to give us His message in the words of the Bible.”<sup>21</sup>

(3) Non-erring.

(a) God superintended the writing of Scripture so that fallible authors wrote infallible words.

1) **Is 6:5-7** 5 And I [Isaiah] said: Woe is me! For I am lost. For I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips. For my eyes have seen the King, Yahweh of hosts! 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a burning coal that he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 And he touched my mouth and said: Behold, this has touched your lips. Your guilt is taken away, and your sin atoned for.

(b) This is due to God’s attributes of holiness and truth. See *God’s Truth*.

(c) Also see *Inerrancy of Scripture*.

b. Three errors must be avoided. Scripture was not written by:

(1) Erring men (non-truthful).

(a) The finished product was, in its original manuscripts, without error.

(2) Inspired men (non-divine).

(a) God did not inspire the human authors with thoughts and then leave it up to them to figure out how to express those thoughts in a written text.

(3) Passive men (non-human).

(a) God superintended but did not dictate the text.

(b) God fully employed the unique individuality of the human authors.

(c) The minds of the human authors were fully engaged.

c. This balanced view is similar to the balanced view we are to have of the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the deity and humanity of Jesus, and the doctrine of God’s sovereignty and man’s free will.

**9. Benefits.** Several benefits have resulted from the writing down of God’s words.

a. There is a much *more accurate preservation* of God’s words for subsequent generations. To depend on memory and the repeating of oral tradition is a less reliable method of preserving these words throughout history than is their recording in writing.

(1) **2 Pe 1:13-15** 13 I [Peter] think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Messiah made clear to me. 15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.

b. The *opportunity for repeated inspection* of words that are written down permits careful study and discussion, which leads to better understanding and more complete obedience.

(1) **Ezr 7:10** 10 For Ezra had set his heart to study the Law of the Lord, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel.

(2) **Ac 17:11-12** 11 Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica.

They received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see

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<sup>21</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 81.

if these things were so. 12 Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.

- c. God's words in writing are accessible to many more people than they are when preserved merely through memory and oral repetition.
  - (1) **Ac 8:27-28** 27 And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28 and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah.
  - (2) The Bible is the number one best-selling book of all time.
  - (3) It has been translated into more languages than any other book.

## 10. Implications.

- a. All the words in Scripture are God's words.
- b. Scripture contains the most important content of God's special revelation.
- c. Scripture bears the stamp of both divine and human authorship.
- d. We become convinced of the Bible's inspiration as we read it. It resonates with us in our spirit.
  - (1) **Jn 10:27** 27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.
  - (2) **1 Co 2:13** 13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.
  - (3) "We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to an high and reverent esteem of the Holy Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts."<sup>22</sup>
  - (4) "Our ultimate conviction that the words of the Bible are God's words comes only when the Holy Spirit speaks *in* and *through* the words of the Bible to our hearts and gives us an inner assurance that these are the words of our Creator speaking to us."<sup>23</sup>
- e. Proof of the Bible's inspiration is both objective and subjective.
  - (1) "Ultimately the truthfulness of the Bible will commend itself as being far more persuasive than other religious books (such as the *Book of Mormon* or the *Qur'an*), or than any other intellectual constructions of the human mind (such as logic, human reason, sense experience, scientific methodology, etc.). It will be more persuasive because in the actual experience of life, all of these other candidates for ultimate authority are seen to be inconsistent or to have shortcomings that disqualify them, while the Bible will be seen to be fully in

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<sup>22</sup> Westminster Confession of Faith (1643-46), ch. 1, para. 5.

<sup>23</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 77.

accord with all that we know about the world around us, about ourselves, and about God.”<sup>24</sup>

- f. It is authoritative.
  - (1) God’s word spoken through human lips are *just as authoritative* and true as God’s words of personal address. There is no diminishing of the authority of these words when spoken through human lips. “To disbelieve or disobey any of them was to disbelieve or disobey God himself.”<sup>25</sup>
- g. To disbelieve or disobey the Bible is to disbelieve or disobey God.
  - (1) “Throughout the history of the church the greatest preachers have been those who have recognized that they have no authority in themselves and have seen their task as being to explain the words of Scripture and apply them clearly to the lives of their hearers. Their preaching has drawn its power not from the proclamation of their own Christian experiences or the experiences of others, nor from their own opinions, creative ideas, or rhetorical skills, but from God’s powerful words. Essentially they stood in the pulpit, pointed to the biblical text, and said in effect to the congregation, ‘This is what this verse means. Do you see that meaning here as well? Then you must believe it and obey it with all your heart, for God himself, your Creator and your Lord, is saying this to you today!’ Only the written words of Scripture can give this kind of authority to preaching.”<sup>26</sup>

## 11. False Views.

- a. Natural inspiration.
  - (1) View.
    - (a) The human authors were geniuses who did not need supernatural help.
  - (2) Response.
    - (a) This sort of inspiration could apply to any book written by a “genius.”
    - (b) Under this view, today’s geniuses could write books just as inspired as the books of the Bible.
    - (c) This view makes the Bible man’s book about God rather than God’s book about man.
    - (d) This view ignores the Bible’s claim to verbal, plenary inspiration.
- b. Dynamic or mystical inspiration.
  - (1) View.
    - (a) The human authors were Spirit-filled and guided, just as we can be Spirit-filled and guided today.
    - (b) Some pentecostals and charismatics stray close to this view.
  - (2) Response.
    - (a) If that’s so, other Christian writings may be just as inspired as the Bible.
    - (b) Any great religious literature may contain messages from God.
    - (c) This view fails to acknowledge the special authority of prophets and apostles.

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<sup>24</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 79.

<sup>25</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 49.

<sup>26</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 82.

- c. Degree inspiration.
  - (1) View.
    - (a) Some parts of the Bible are more inspired than others.
    - (b) All the Bible is inspired, but not to the same degree.
  - (2) Response.
    - (a) Although some parts of the Bible are more important, *all* of the Bible is equally inspired.
    - (b) It is impractical and subjective to begin determining which parts of Scripture are more or less inspired.
- d. Partial inspiration.
  - (1) View.
    - (a) Some parts of the Bible are inspired; others are not.
    - (b) Historical portions of the Bible, in particular, do not need to be inspired.
    - (c) We can trust what the Bible says about salvation but may expect errors to have crept in to other parts.
    - (d) The Bible inspired in its purpose and general message but not in its total content.
  - (2) Response.
    - (a) The biblical teaching about salvation is based on historical facts.
    - (b) History cannot be separated from doctrine.
    - (c) It is impractical and subjective to begin determining which parts of Scripture are more or less inspired.
- e. Concept inspiration.
  - (1) View.
    - (a) The concepts of the Bible are inspired and authoritative, but not the words.
    - (b) God inspired the concepts, but the human authors chose the words.
  - (2) Response.
    - (a) The only way to express concepts is through words. Concepts cannot be separated from words. If we change the words, we change the concepts.
    - (b) Verbal inspiration is not dictation. God superintended the writing of each word of Scripture without abrogating the human authors' individuality and style.
    - (c) This view ignores Mt 5, 1 Co 2, and 1 Pe 3.
- f. Neo-orthodox inspiration.
  - (1) View.
    - (a) Jesus Christ is the centre of God's revelation; Scripture lies at the periphery.
    - (b) Jesus Christ is the Word, and the Bible serves as a witness to the Word.
    - (c) The Bible's witness to the Word is uneven. Some parts witness more than others. The important parts are those that witness about Christ.
    - (d) But even those parts are not necessarily accurate. They contain errors.
    - (e) Evangelicals hold a dictation view of inspiration, in which the human authors were mere typewriters on which God typed his message.
    - (f) Scripture is a human product full of errors, which becomes God's Word when it overpowers us experientially.
    - (g) The Bible becomes the Word of God when the Word of God, Christ, speaks to us through its pages in an *existential encounter*.

- (h) The Bible, because it points to Christ, has instrumental authority, not inherent authority.
  - (i) Those parts that point to Christ have more authority than those that do not.
- (2) Proponents.
- (a) P. T. Forsyth (d. 1921).
    - 1) “P. T. Forsyth (1848-1921), an English scholar who had rejected the liberal tradition in 1897 for a warm-hearted, Christ-centered evangelicalism, came to believe that the gospel of Christ was the inspired, infallible revelation of God. The message of redemption, which is available to us through religious experience, is the true Word of God. That is, Forsyth accepted an authoritative Bible, though not an inerrant one. In this way Forsyth could both criticize and accept Higher Criticism. Higher Criticism could be judged for rejecting the historic gospel, but, when guided by spiritual experience and subservient to the gospel, it could function to restore the true Bible. The proof of the Bible’s inspiration for Forsyth was the personal experience of God’s redemptive revelation in it. This ‘lonely prophet,’ being neither a classic liberal nor a traditional conservative, was the harbinger of the later neo-orthodox approach to the Bible. The message, not the context where it is discovered, is the Word of God.”<sup>27</sup>
  - (b) Emil Brunner (d. 1966).
    - 1) “Is everything true that is to be found in the Bible? Let me draw a somewhat modern analogy by way of answering this question.... If you buy a phonograph record you are told that you will hear the Master Caruso. Is that true? Of course! But really his voice? Certainly! And yet—there are some noises made by the machine which are not the Master’s voice, but the scratching of the steel needle upon the hard disk. But do not become impatient with the hard disk! For only by means of the record can you hear ‘the master’s voice.’ So, too, is it with the Bible. It makes the real Master’s voice audible, —really his voice, his words, what he wants to say. But there are incidental noises accompanying, just because God speaks His Word through the voice of man. Paul, Peter, Isaiah, and Moses are such men. But through them God speaks His Word. God has also come into the world as man, really God, but really man too. Therefore the Bible is all His voice, notwithstanding all the disturbing things, which, being human are unavoidable. Only a fool listens to the incidental noises when he might listen to the sound of his Master’s voice! The importance of the Bible is that God speaks to us through it.”<sup>28</sup>
  - (c) Karl Barth (d. 1968).
    - 1) “A discussion of Barthian Christology is a major field of contemporary theology. While agreeing with most orthodox doctrines relating to Christ..., Barth’s approach is more philosophic and experiential in that the

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<sup>27</sup> John D. Hannah, *Our Legacy*, 64.

<sup>28</sup> Emil Brunner, *Our Faith* (New York: Scribner’s, 1954), 10.

Bible is considered a channel of experiencing Christ theologically, but Barth does not hold with orthodoxy that the Bible is factual revelation.”<sup>29</sup>

- 2) “Although Barth tended to reestablish Jesus Christ as the virgin-born Son of Mary who was in fact God and Man at the same time, his failure to be clear on the role of history in revelation and his tendency to regard real communication as suprahistorical has tended to make the main facts concerning Christ experiential. Hence, the Christ of the Scriptures is to some extent supplanted by the Christ of experience, and the resulting doctrines become subjective in contemporary theology rather than historical and revelatory in absolute terms in the Scripture.”<sup>30</sup>

g. Response.

- (1) This is not the view of inspiration held by Jesus and the apostles.
- (2) We do not know anything about Jesus apart from Scripture. What we know about Jesus comes from the Bible.
- (3) We do not have a clear concept of Jesus by which we can test the accuracy of Scripture. If the Bible is erroneous, our picture of Jesus is erroneous.
- (4) Sacred and secular knowledge cannot be split.
  - (a) Consider Francis Schaeffer’s upper story/lower story illustration.
- (5) Historical details are very important to the meaning and the message of the Bible.
  - (a) **Lk 1:1-4** 1 Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us, 2 just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us, 3 it seemed good to me [Luke] also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.
  - (b) **1 Co 15:13-15** 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Messiah has been raised. 14 And if Messiah has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. 15 We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Messiah, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.
- (6) Scripture contains the word of God, and it points to the word of God, but it also *is* the word of God.

h. Summary.

- (1) “The subtleties of the various kinds of defections make it imperative to listen and read carefully to what people say and write about inspiration. The words may seem orthodox, but they may only be covering a very defective view of inspiration.”<sup>31</sup>

## 12. Summary.

- a. “The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God’s revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God

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<sup>29</sup> J. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*.

<sup>30</sup> J. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord*.

<sup>31</sup> Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 86.

for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. It is inerrant and infallible in its original manuscript which is to be taken as verbally inspired.”<sup>32</sup>

### **13. Application.**

- a. Maintain a high view of Scripture.
- b. Join a church that has a high view of Scripture.
- c. Spend more time reading God’s word than man’s word.
- d. Trust God’s word more than your own reason or experience, or the experience of others.
- e. Beware of false views of inspiration.

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<sup>32</sup> First Baptist Dallas, “Articles of Faith.”

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