

Systematic Theology Pt. 5

Bibliology (D)

“Inspiration”

I. The Biblical View of Inspiration; VERBAL

- Verbal Inspiration means that “inspiration is located in the words.”
- Numerous passages in the Bible make it clear that the center of revelation and inspiration is the “written word”; the Scriptures, not simply the idea or even the writer.
- 2 Peter 1:20- “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scriptures is of any private interpretation.”
- 2 Timothy 3:16- “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...”

New Testament- 1Cor. 2:13- “words”

Old Testament- 2 Chr. 34:14- “the Book”; 2 Sam. 23:3- “His word”; Isa. 59:21- “words”;
Zech. 7:12- “the words”

- When referring to the Old Testament as the authoritative Word of God, the New Testament most often (over ninety times) uses the phrase “it is written” (cf. Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). Jesus described this written word as that which “comes out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). So important were the exact words of God that Jeremiah was told:

This is what the Lord says: “Stand in the courtyard of the Lord’s house and speak to all the people of the towns of Judah who come to worship in the house of the Lord. Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word” (26.2).

- So it wasn’t simply God’s message that men were free to state in their words; the very choice of words was from God. Exodus 24:4 records that “Moses then wrote down everything the Lord said...” Again, Deuteronomy adds, “I [God] will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him” (Deut. 18:18).
- Sometimes we are reminded that even the tenses of verbs are stressed by God. Jesus said, “But about the resurrection of the dead- have you not read what God said to you, ‘I am [not was] the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is not the God of the dead but of the living” (Matt. 22:31-32). Paul based his argument on a singular noun versus a plural in (Galatians 3:16) insisting “The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.” Even one letter (“s”) can make a big difference. Recall that when Jesus went so far as to declare that parts of letters are inspired: “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18).

II. The Extent of the Biblical Inspiration; PLENARY

Biblical inspiration is not only verbal (located in the words), but it is also plenary, meaning that it extends to every part of the words and all they teach or imply.

A. What Inspiration Guarantees

- Inspiration guarantees the truth of all the Bible teaches, implies, or entails.
- 2 Tim. 3:16, “all” not some Scripture is God breathed..
- 2 Peter 1:20-21, “no prophecy of Scripture” came from man, but that it all came from God.
- Jesus told His disciples that “the Counselor, [which is] the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26). He added, “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13). And the early church “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching” (Acts 2:42), which was recorded for us in the pages of the New Testament and was considered “Scripture” along with the Old Testament (cf. 2 Peter 3:15-16; 1 Tim. 5:18).
- *“The inspiration of God, then, extends to every part of Scripture, including everything God affirmed (or denied) about any topic. It is inclusive of not only what the Bible teaches but what it touches; that is to say, it includes not only what the Bible teaches explicitly but also what it teaches implicitly, covering not only spiritual matters but factual ones as well. The omniscient God cannot be wrong about anything He teaches or implies”.* -Norman Geisler

B. What Inspiration Does Not Guarantee

1. It does not guarantee that every part of a parable is conveying a truth.
(As opposed to the truthfulness of the point the parable is illustrating.)
2. It does not guarantee that everything recorded in the Bible is true.
(As opposed to what is taught or implied)
3. It does not guarantee that no exaggerations (hyperboles) can be used.
4. It does not guarantee that all statements about God and creation are purely literal.
5. It does not guarantee that all citations of Scripture must be verbatim.
(As opposed to faithful.)
6. It does not guarantee that all citations of Scripture must have the same application as the original.
7. It does not guarantee that the same truth can be said in only one way.
(As opposed to many ways, such as in the Gospels.)
8. It does not guarantee that truth is exhaustively revealed or treated in the Bible. (As opposed to adequately and truthfully presented.)

Henry C. Thiessen: *“A word should be said about the distinction between inspiration and authority. Usually the two are identical, so that what is inspired is also authoritative for teaching and conduct; but*

occasionally that is not the case. For example, Satan's statement to Eve is recorded by inspiration, but it is not true (Gen. 3:4f.) The same thing can be said about Peter's advice to Christ (Matt. 16:22). Since none of these represents the mind of God, they are not authoritative, although they are found in the Bible. The same thing can be said about texts that are taken out of their contexts and given a very different meaning from the one they have in their contexts. The words still are inspired, but the new meaning is not authoritative. We should regard every statement as both inspired and authoritative, unless there is some context that the latter is not the case in a given instance."

III. The Degrees of Biblical Inspiration; EQUAL

Norman Geisler: *"Are there different degrees of inspiration in the Bible? That is, are some things more inspired than others? The answer to this is best understood in terms of what is meant by inspiration, namely, that whatever the Bible affirms (or implies) is true, God affirms (or implies) is true. This being the case, there can be no degrees of inspiration any more than there can be degrees of truth: Something either true or false. One thing is not more or less true than another any more than a woman can be more or less pregnant. Thus, the affirmation that "Jezebel died" is as inspired as "Jesus died." However, while everything in the Bible is equally true, not everything is equally important. The death of the perfect Christ is much more important than the death of the wicked queen. Likewise, the resurrection of Christ is more important than the raising of Lazarus (John 11). In short, there are no degrees of truth, but there are degrees of importance of one truth over another.*

IV. Inspiration summarized.

1. The Bible has a Divine Origin.

The ultimate source of a divinely inspired bible is God Himself, for the Scriptures are "breathed" (inspired) by Him (2 Tim. 3:16): "Every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Scripture did not originate from human impulse, "for prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

2. The Bible Came Through Human Agency.

With the exception of a few occasions, like the giving of the Ten Commandments- which were "inscribed by the finger of God" (Deut. 9:10)- The Bible did not come directly from God but only indirectly from Him through the instrumentality of His prophets. Hebrews 1:1 declares: "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways..." The Holy Spirit "moved" on "holy men of God" (2 Pet. 1:21 NKJV). David said it well: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me, his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2; see also Deut. 18:18; Isa. 59:21; Zech. 7:12; Acts 4:24-25; Heb. 4:7).

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Furthermore, judging by the various vocabulary, grammar, styles, figures of speech, and human interests of the various authors, God did not disregard the personality and culture of the biblical writers when He providentially guided them to be the vehicles through which He revealed His written Word to humankind. On the contrary, the Bible is a thoroughly human book in every respect, except that it is without error.

Regardless of the mystery surrounding how God was able to make His word certain without destroying the freedom and personality of the authors, several things are clear: The human authors of Scripture were not mere secretaries taking dictation; their freedom was not suspended or negated, and they were not

automations. What they wrote is what they desired to write in the style that they were accustomed to using. God in His providence engaged in a divine concurrence between their words and His so that what they said, he said.

3. The Bible Is a Written Authority.

Inspiration deals with the written text of Scripture; it is the grapha (writings) of the prophets that are inspired (2 Tim. 3:16). The phrase “It is written” (cf. Matt. 4:4, 7, 10) reveals that the focus of God’s authority for His people was in His written Word. Nowhere does the Bible speak of inspired ideas or of inspired persons. To be sure, God moved on the writers (2 Pet. 1:20-21), but this was to insure that their writings were inspired. The repeated references to the very “words” of the prophets being from God stresses this point (cf. Ex. 24:4; Deut. 18:18; Jer. 26:2).

4. The Bible’s Divine Authority Is Located in the Autographic Text.

This is important fact of the divine inspiration of the Bible is implied from two facts. First, all the Biblical references to the God-given authority of Scripture are to what God gave or “breathe-out,” which was the original text. Second, not all copies of the original text are perfect; there are minor errors in them, and these can be seen by comparing parallel passages (cf. 2 Kings 8:26; 2 Chron. 22:2). But God cannot lie (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2); His law is “perfect” or flawless (Ps. 19:7). Hence, whatever errors there are in copies of the Bible could not have been in the original text. This leads another characteristic of an inspired text- its inerrancy.

5. The Bible’s Original Text Is Inerrant.

If God cannot err, and the original text was breathed out by God, then it follows that the original text of the Bible is without error. Hence, any real errors found in biblical manuscripts or in translations of them were not in the original. Copies of the original are only inspired insofar as they are accurate copies of the original. As Augustine aptly put it, *“If we are perplexed by any apparent contradiction in Scripture, it is not allowable to say, “The author of this book is mistaken”; but either the manuscript is faulty, or the translation is wrong, or you have not understood.”*

6. The Bible Is The Final Authority.

When speaking of its divine authority, the Bible makes it clear that this is a final authority, the court of last appeal in everything it affirms (or implies). The psalmist said, “For you have exalted above all things your name and your word” (Ps. 138:2). He added, “Your word, O Lord, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens” (Ps. 119:89).

Again, Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18). He rebuked the religious leaders of His day for exalting their teaching above the Word of God (Matt.

15:3-6). Again, the manner in which Jesus and the New Testament writers use the phrase “it is written” in the Scriptures manifests their belief that it was the final court of appeal in all disputes on which it speaks.

7. The Sixty-Six Canonical Books of the Bible Alone Have This Divine Authority.

One other element of the evangelical view of the inspiration of Scripture should be added. This element is one of the distinguishing factors between the evangelical and Roman Catholic views of Scripture: The sixty-six canonical books of the Protestant canon alone are invested with divine authority. No other source equals or surpasses that of Scripture; the Bible, and the Bible alone, is a supremely authoritative book in matters of faith and practice.