

The Inspiration of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Tuesday Class - South Livingston - Oct. 12, 2004

Do You Believe Bible Is Inspired?

- Ask that question & all will answer “YES!”
- But do they really believe in “**inspiration**” as taught in the Bible? **NO!**
- Difference not in words used, but in meaning
 - ◆ Same problem seen with “resurrection of Christ”
 - ◆ God created in “6 days,” but mean different things
- “Inspiration” affirmed by many who deny it
 - ◆ Seminaries equate “inspiration” with talent
 - ◆ Academics use right word, but wrong meaning
 - ◆ May mean thought, talent or ability given by God

Denominational View of Inspiration

(Quotes taken from book, *The Modern Inerrancy Debate*, in chapter on “Revelation and Inspiration: The Biblical Foundation” by Dennis Bratcher)

To say this in a slightly different way, God is revealed to us today through interpreted events. God revealed Himself in history (events) and the Community of Faith interpreted those events to us in what we now have as Scripture. We have no direct access to the events themselves; we only have mediated access through the witness of the community (Scripture, and to a much less degree, tradition).

This does not eliminate any objective grounding to God’s revelation. In fact, contrary to mythical systems of religion such as popular Hinduism, it affirms the **objective basis in history** of God’s self-disclosure, which is why I use the term “event.” But it also affirms that His self-disclosure is mediated to us through testimony, and that testimony itself is not “objective” in the same sense as was the event itself. This is because part of that testimony is also the interpreted “significance” or “meaning” of that event in relation to *past events*, *present experience*, and *future implications*. That is, it is theological (talking about God) in nature and, in the best modern (or actually post-modern!) sense, history (“history” here understood as connections or significance of events rather than data reporting)....

This suggests that the “story of God” was told in ways that were influenced by the people who were telling the story, and that it will also be influenced by people who hear it. While we affirm that the testimony is true, the vehicle of the testimony was conditioned by the culture, language, knowledge (or lack of it), historical experience, personality, ethos, etc., of the people through the centuries who passed on the testimony, and who grappled with the implications of it in being the people of God. So, Scripture as we have it has a dual nature. It is the **story of divine revelation** (God’s word) **told in the vehicle of culturally conditioned literature** (in human words).

It also suggests that the story is likewise heard in the same culturally conditioned ways by us. That is, we bring our own culture, language, knowledge (or lack of it), historical experience, personality, ethos, etc., to the biblical text when we read it. And we grapple with its implications in living out being the people of God. If we are going to take this dual nature of Scripture seriously, we need ways of understanding Scripture and theories of inspiration of Scripture that will likewise take these two aspects seriously....

On the one pole are **dictation** and **verbal** theories that affirm nearly 100% God. Usually, these are heavily influenced both by an absolute sovereignty of God model that allows little human input into anything since humans are totally contaminated by sin and cannot be trusted (with roots in Augustinian influenced Calvinism), as well as by the philosophical model mentioned earlier that equates revelation with all truth. In

these views, Scripture is equated with the mind of God, and He is seen as the primary author of Scripture. Here, the physical text itself is seen as the locus of inspiration and, indeed, revelation of absolute truth.

On the other pole are **elevation** theories that affirm nearly 100% human. Usually, these are heavily influenced either by rationalistic or naturalistic models that do not see God active in the world, or by atheistic or agnostic thinking that will not acknowledge anything other than humanity. In this view, Scripture is just a good book reflecting the same kind of elevated human insight that, for example, might be found in Shakespeare or *Star Wars*. Here, the writers are the source, and most often the only source, of the writing.

Between these poles are various blends of the two....

And yet, the form, the vehicle of that message is dependent upon the people themselves. So, there are cultural oddities. There are personal idiosyncrasies. There are errors of fact, of science, of grammar, of spelling, of data. There are different perspectives from different people from different cultures on different continents over a span of 1,800 years. There are inconsistencies in historical data, in the use of symbols, in views about future events. Sometimes prophets were wrong in how they translated their understanding about God into their interpretation of historical events. Sometimes they even had to change their prophecies. (See [Ezekiel and the Oracles Against Tyre](#))

Sometimes leaders had to go far beyond the old law codes, and sometimes had to invent new responses to ethical challenges (Nehemiah). Sometimes new understandings challenged old orthodoxies (Job, Jonah). Sometimes in one historical situation one view was valid, and in another historical situation the opposite perspective was valid (Deuteronomy, Jeremiah). Sometimes they emphasized one aspect and sometimes another, and sometimes those are not directly reconcilable (Proverbs, Leviticus). After all, the story is in human words.

But it is God's story! Or perhaps better, it is a story of God! For me, affirming a dynamic view of inspiration allows the truth about Himself that God has revealed to us to be faithfully and accurately preserved by the community of Faith. This takes seriously the faith confession that God is active in the world, that He reveals Himself to humanity, and that there is a dimension to God that cannot be accessed by human reason or experience. In this sense, the Bible *is God's word*.

However, a dynamic model that sees inspiration of Scripture as a process operating within the community of faith rather than a one time revelation of absolute truth also allows us to examine all the evidence within Scripture honestly without need for apology or rationalization. So, I can conclude based on that evidence that Moses did not write the Pentateuch as we now have it, or that Ezekiel was dead wrong in his prediction about the destruction of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar, or that Isaiah did not have Jesus in mind in Isaiah 7 or 9, without in any way taking anything away from the *message* of Scripture, from its witness to God's revelation of Himself, and the resulting call for us to respond to that revelation.

[Article available online at <http://www.cresourcei.org/revins.html>]

Bible Teaching on Inspiration

All Scripture Is Inspired By God

- Old Testament claims of divine inspiration
 - ◆ Law given by Moses (*Ex. 20:1f; Deut. 5:1f*)
 - ◆ Words of prophets (*Isa. 6:1-13; Jer. 1:4-19; Ezek. 2 & 3*)
 - ◆ Confirmed by Peter (*2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:10f*)
- New Testament claims of divine inspiration
 - ◆ *2 Tim. 3:16f* All Scripture inspired by God
 - ◆ *1 Cor. 2:12f* Origin of message is Spirit
 - ◆ *Eph. 3:3-7* H.S. true speaker of message
 - ◆ *2 Pet. 3:15f* Paul's words = Scripture

Word of God = Scripture

God Said	Scripture Said
Gen. 12:3	Gal. 3:8
Ex. 9:16	Rom. 9:17

Scripture = Word of God

Scripture Said	God Said
Gen 2:24	Matt 19:4-5
Ps 94:7	Heb 3:7
Ps 2:1	Acts 4:24-25
Is 55:3	Acts 13:34
Ps 16:10	Acts 13:35
Deut 32:43	Heb 1:5-6
Ps 104:4	Heb 1:5-6
Ps 95:7	Heb 1:5-6
Ps 102:26	Heb 1:5

How Does Inspiration Work?

1 Corinthians 2:6-13

- God's hidden wisdom revealed by the Spirit
- Spirit was able to know the mind of God
- Apostles received Spirit in order to make known the mind of God to others
- Revelation **not** made known through words taught by man's wisdom
 - ◆ Spirit used man's background, but still in control
- Made known by combining *spiritual things* with *spiritual words*
- *Spirit guided the words chosen by inspiration*

Ephesians 3:3-7

- Gospel was a mystery known only to God
 - ◆ Inspired prophets of old sought to know meaning of words they were given to speak (1 Pet 1:10-12)
 - ◆ They were told it was not for them to understand
- In N.T., made known by revelation of Spirit
- May be understood by reading the words written & perceiving things same as writer
- Content of apostles & prophets' message was result of their inspiration by the Holy Spirit
- *If word not understandable, Spirit is to blame (Eph. 5:17)*

Nature of Inspiration Affirmed

- **Verbal Inspiration**
 - ◆ God chose the words used in Scripture
 - ◆ *1 Cor. 2:12-13* Words guided by H.S.

- **Plenary Inspiration**
 - ◆ Inspiration covers every aspect of revelation
 - ◆ *Psa. 119:128* All precepts concerning all things
 - ◆ *Psa. 19:7-9* True & righteous altogether
- **Inerrancy of Scripture can be true only if...**
 - ◆ Verbal & plenary inspiration are both true
 - ◆ If Scripture is understandable in its message

Divine Protection of Message - Inspiration of Balaam (Num. 22-24)

- “If Balak would give me his house full of gold and silver, I *cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah my God to do less or more*” (Num. 22:18)
- “Have I now any power at all to speak any thing? The *word that God putteth in my mouth*, that shall I speak (22:38)
- “Jehovah put *a word* in Balaam’s mouth” (23:5, 16)
- “I cannot go beyond the word of Jehovah, to do either good or bad *of mine own mind*: what Jehovah speaketh, that will I speak” (24:13)

Divine Provisions in Gospel

- **Point stressed in 2 Timothy 3:16-17**
 - ◆ **Origin:** Inspired of God (God-breathed)
 - ◆ **Use:** For teaching, reproof, correction & instruction in righteousness
 - ◆ **Extent:** Complete, furnish completely to every good work
- Intended as pattern to follow (*2 Tim. 1:9-14*)
- No additions, subtractions or changes allowed
 - ◆ *2 John 9*
 - ◆ *Revelation 22:18-19*

If We Do As Denominationalists...

- Denying the literal interpretation of things revealed as objective truth
- Making literal truths into symbolic lessons
- Explaining words of Scripture as culturally derived
- Seeing deeper “theological” teaching as the true point, rather than the literal statements recorded
- *We Undermine Objective Basis for Inspiration of Scripture*

Marty Pickup (Florida College Lectures 2003)

In his lecture regarding Genesis 3, Marty Pickup introduced the quotes to follow by expressing the view that the serpent is actually an evil spirit. He said we must understand this in “the theological milieu of the Pentateuch” where evil came to the world as a result of rebellious angels fomenting rebellion in humans. He noted, “Reinforcing this understanding is the fact that Genesis 6 explicitly discusses rebellious angels who were responsible for the corruption of the human race which led to the great flood.” He stated that most scholars, ancient and modern, believe the “daughters of men” were humans and the “sons of God” were rebellious angels who “sired children” by those women, evidently in a symbolic sense. Marty noted that “some conservative scholars” argue against this view, but he dismissed their alternate interpretations. He then said, “The parallel between this event and the incident of Genesis 3 is quite precise, particularly if one interprets the serpent of Genesis 3 to be a spiritual being as well.” Brother Pickup then proceeded as follows:

It is also worth considering that *the account* of these events may be, to some degree, accommodative and symbolic. Genesis may use the serpent motif because it is borrowing imagery from the mythological culture of that day regarding a cosmological foe of Deity. Old Testament writers

commonly take features of well-known pagan myths and rework them in order to present the truth of Israelite monotheism. Psalms 29 and 74, for example, recast poetic images about Baal, the storm god, into depictions of Yahweh as the Lord of nature (Craigie 147-151). Isaiah 27 and Psalm 74 transform stories about Baal's primeval defeat of Leviathan, the god of chaos, into accounts of Yahweh's defeat of this creature when He brought order to creation (Emerton 327-328; Hugenberger 109). Many scholars suggest that this kind of reshaping of pagan themes into a presentation of monotheistic truth is, to some degree, what Genesis is doing in its creation account (Boyd 84-85). It is interesting that in the ancient world Leviathan was imagined as a draconic serpent with seven heads (cf. Isaiah 27:1; Ps. 74:14) and Revelation 12 makes use of this same figure to depict Satan: "And behold, a great red dragon having seven heads. . . . And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan" (Rev. 12:3,9).

It is possible, therefore, that Genesis recounted man's primeval fall using the language and symbology that was best suited for its original audience. Since ancient creation myths gave a serpentine form to the being who opposed the order of creation, it was fitting that the tempter in the garden be depicted in this way (Boyd 156). Such a literary device may have been quite obvious to the original audience of Genesis.

It seems likely that later Jews and Christians recognized the various factors discussed above when they identified the serpent of Genesis 3 with Satan. There was no other reasonable conclusion to draw than that which the apostle John expressed: "The serpent of old . . . is the devil and Satan" (Rev. 20:2). What we see here is a "translation" of the antique theological images of Genesis into the cosmic language that had become commonplace by the Greco-Roman period. Yet the essence of what Genesis relates is unaltered (pp. 60-62).

Sound Familiar? It Is Uncannily Similar To Denominational Ideas Quoted Above!

Where Does Such Re-Interpretation of Literal Bible Truths End?

- First, we were told we could not depend on the literal truth of the creation account
- Then, we were told we could not depend on the literal truth of the serpent in Genesis 3
- But we are assured that such positions do not change the commitment to the Bible text
- If we need not believe those literal truths to be committed to the text, how about teaching on...
 - ◆ *Virgin Birth*
 - ◆ *Bodily Resurrection of Christ*
 - ◆ *All Miracles Recorded in Scripture*
 - ◆ *Literal Reality of Heaven & Hell*
 - ◆ *Doctrinal Truth Taught in Literal Terms*
 - ◆ *Organization, Work & Worship of the Church*
 - ◆ *Homosexuality, Divorce & Remarriage, Other Moral Issues (Dancing, Social Drinking, Immodest Dress, Gambling...)*
- ***Ends in growing tolerance for sin & error***

Gospel Message Given Perfectly - It Cannot Be Changed Concerning...

- Morality Required
- Reality of Heaven & Hell
- Plan of Salvation
- One True Church
- Authorized Worship
- Mission & Work of Church
- Any Statement or Instruction Given