

Inspiration of the Bible - Defined

Introduction:

"Inspiration" refers to the way in which God gave us the Bible. Having revealed Himself to man, God then had this revelation recorded in written form.

There are a number of possibilities here. For example, God's Word could have come to us via an angelic emissary; or, it could have been carved by divine lightning upon the highest mountains; or, it could even have been discovered on neophyte plates buried upon Cumaorah hill...

...BUT IT WASN'T

The Bible itself is very clear as to its origins and its inspiration.

I. Biblical Statements Concerning Inspiration

The two outstanding Scripture references regarding the doctrine of inspiration are:

A. II Peter 1:21

This Scripture clearly teaches two aspects of inspiration:

1. Human Penmanship - "...holy men of God spake..."
2. Divine Authorship - "...Moved by the Holy Ghost."

This particular verse makes it clear that God was the active source of the Scriptures. The word "moved" means "borne along." God did not follow the human writers to correct any of their mistakes, or intervene if necessary - rather, the writers were consciously, willingly, carried along. As God gave the words, they wrote. (The same Greek word is translated "driven" in Acts 27:17, where the ship was totally controlled by the wind, at the mercy of the storm.)

Thus the inspiration of the Bible is a supernatural miracle. God used approximately 40 human writers of varying occupations and education, of a time of about 1,600 years - and gave us a Book with amazing unity.

B. II Timothy 3:16

The important phrase is "...inspiration of God..." Those who delight in the original languages tell us the Greek word translated "inspiration" "*theopneustos*," literally means "God-breathed." This Scripture clearly teaches its divine Authorship.

II. Inspiration Defined

By Inspiration we mean the Holy Spirit moved the human writers of the Bible in such a way that they recorded the very words and sense of God, though couched in their own literary style.

In considering this definition, there is a need for further elaboration, especially in light of the various theories of inspiration found within Bible-doubting, Bible-rejecting Christendom. There are 5 terms we need to be well acquainted with:

A. Confluent Inspiration

By this we mean the Scriptures are a product of two agents, human and divine. The term "in such a way" found in the above definition declares inspiration ultimately to be a

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phenomenon, a mystery - the product of divine/human involvement - this as inexplicable as the Virgin Birth or the new birth.

Many Scriptures affirm that God speaks authoritatively through the word of men. For example:

1. Acts 4:25 - "Who [the Lord] by the mouth of thy servant David hast said..."
2. Acts 13:35 - "...he [God] saith also in another Psalm..."

See also: Isaiah 8:1, 30:8

The following illustration should serve to show what we mean by "confluent inspiration" as distinct from the "mechanical dictation" theory.

"A man picks up a writing instrument and begins writing on a sheet of paper. Having done so, he may then say to another, 'I have written these words.' Strictly speaking, he is incorrect in what he says, for it is the writing instrument which has done the writing. Nevertheless, the instrument could not write anything unless it was moved by the hand of the man, and the words written down are not those of the instrument but the man.

"The physical appearance of the writing will vary according to the instrument selected. Word written with a fine-point pen will look different to the same word written in crayon, or with a paint brush, or with a felt-tipped marker.

"In the same way, God had men write down His words, Thus the Bible is not the word of men, because they wrote only as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. Yet, like the different kinds of pens, God retained the individual characteristics of these men. He used their style, memories, intuitions, judgments, idiosyncrasies, and their research."

Note: This illustration explains the differences in style and content of the four Gospels, where the life of Christ is portrayed from four perspectives.

It also explains the statement of the apostle Paul in I Corinthians 7:12, "...to the rest speak I, not the Lord..." Many would interpret this as meaning some parts of the Bible are inspired and some are not inspired. However, the statement is referring to new revelation from God through Paul as opposed to revelation previously given (in Matthew 19) and cited by Paul. Inspiration provides that new revelation and old revelation were both written down as Paul was moved by the Spirit. A comparison of this Scripture with version 10, 25, 40 will explain further.

B. Verbal Inspiration

By this we mean that the very words of Scripture are God's Words. Inspiration goes beyond the concepts and message to actual words.

I Corinthians 2:13; Matthew 24:35; Jeremiah 1:9

In fact, according to Matthew 5:18, Inspiration extends to even the letters (jot = "yodh") and the parts of letters (tittle). cf. Luke 16:17.

Many Scriptures show the emphasis God places upon "words": Exodus 24:1; Deuteronomy 6:6; 12:28; 17:19; 18:18; 27:3; 31:12; 32:1, 45, 46; Joshua 8:34, 35; 24:26;

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I Samuel 8:10; II Samuel 23:2; Psalm 12:6; Proverbs 30:5, 6; Jeremiah 7:27; 23:36; 26:2; 30:2; Ezekiel 3:10; Daniel 10:9-11; Matthew 4:4; Luke 4:4; John 8:47; 17:8; I Timothy 4:6; II Peter 3:2; Jude 17; Revelation 1:3; 22:18, 19.

C. Plenary Inspiration

The word “plenary” means “extending to all parts alike,” and by Plenary Inspiration we mean all of the Bible is inspired and every part of the Bible is equally inspired.

II Timothy 3:16 “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...”

D. Inerrant Inspiration

The word “inerrant” means “not liable to prove false or mistaken,” and Inerrant Inspiration means the Bible was written down correct in every detail. Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2; Numbers 23:19; John 10:35.

Such inspiration provides that the exact divine message be given. Both God’s truth and Satan’s lie are reported and recorded exactly. (Inspiration does not change truth into lies.)

E. Infallible Inspiration

This means the Bible is without error in its teaching. It is incapable of teaching deception.

Psalm 119:160; John 17:17

The terms “infallible and “inerrant” are often used interchangeably, but there is a difference:

- Inerrant means without error in its recording.
- Infallible means without error in its teaching.

Infallibility takes into account such things as the use of poetic or figurative language, the use of simile, hyperbole, allegory, parable and symbolism, etc.

In most cases, what is inspired is authoritative, but not all cases. Some thing in the Bible, though accurately recorded through inspiration, do not have the authority of God.

e.g. The Book of Job accurately records the words of God, Job, Satan, Job’s wife, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu. Some of the statements in the Book are consequently ungodly or in direct contradiction to other statements of Scripture. They are inspired, but not authoritative.

Many Cults conveniently or ignorantly overlook this very important distinction.

III. Seven Facts About the Inspired Word of God

1. It is Infallible - without error - Psalm 119:160
2. It is Invariable - without change - Numbers 23:19; Psalm 119:89; James 1:17
3. It is Inexorable - without yielding - John 10:35
4. It is Invincible - without conquest - Isaiah 55:11; Jeremiah 23:29; Hebrews 4:12
5. It is Inevitable - without failure - Psalm 126:5-6; Matthew 5:18; 24:35; I Peter 1:23-25

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6. It is Incomparable - without equal - Psalm 119:72
7. It is Invaluable - without price - because:
 - a) It Convicts - Hebrews 4:12
 - b) It Converts - Romans 10:17; James 1:18, 21; I Peter 1:23
 - c) It Corrects - II Timothy 3:16
 - d) It Cleanses - Psalm 119:9, 11; John 15:3; 17:17; Ephesians 5:26
 - e) It Conceives - Matthew 4:4; John 6:63
 - f) It Conquers - Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12
 - g) It Comforts - I Thessalonians 4:18