

The Inspiration of Scripture

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In any conversation about the Bible, one's presuppositions about inspiration (the God-breathed nature of Scripture) will always come to the fore. Whether it is authority, accuracy, preservation, infallibility, or any pivotal aspect of Scripture, the fact of Scripture's divine origin must and will define our view on every one of them. Scripture is what it is, because it is from God.

An Exposition of 2 Peter 1:12-21

In the first half of 2 Peter 1, the apostle had focused the believers upon the idea of fruitfulness in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He reminded the believers that "His Divine power has given us everything pertaining to life and godliness" (v. 3) and that we have become "partakers of the Divine nature" (v. 4). Such empowered the believers to live fruitfully (v.5-7), as mentioned, on the basis of knowing Christ (v. 8). The believers needed to be reminded of this, because there was the danger of being short-sighted – forgetting their purification from sins, their calling, and their election (v. 9-10). Rather than short-sightedness, there needed to be a focus upon virtuous living and the prospect of an eternal kingdom (v. 11); only by this would there be spiritual consistency.

The Christian's Obligation to Doctrine: Remembrance (12-15). Verses 1-11 give us the content of Peter's "reminder" to the believers, which he brings up in verse 12, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to always remind you of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth." Thus, he begins our section by introducing the Christian's obligation to doctrine: remembrance. Even though Peter's audience was established in the truth, there was an ever-present danger of spiritual lethargy when it came to the truth they possessed. The flesh has a habit of undoing progress for God. Thus, doctrine must not only be learned, but it must be maintained. Hence, we have the desire of Peter to stir up the believers by reminding them of what they had. This was his desire even until the end of his life, in hope that after his death there would still be consistency in doctrine and practice, based on the believers' recollection of truth.

Doctrine, while in some aspects it must be constantly learned, is an unchanging body of truth which must be held and passed down in its entirety generation to generation. Thus, Biblical truth is not simply about learning, but about guarding and enjoying. It is the world that needs "some new thing" (Acts 17) to entertain its mental aspirations. The Christian is a different kind of person altogether. He delights in what he already knows. He remembers what he already has learned. While it is foreign to the mind of man to have a consistent body of doctrine, this is the foundation of Christianity.

The Historical Grounding of Doctrine (16-18). Having emphasized the need to accurately recall doctrine, Peter continues by affirming that doctrine is rooted in historical reality. Rather than doctrine being a mere collection of ideas rooted in human intuition, it is teaching rooted in reality. This lent weight to the unbending establishment in the truth which Peter so passionately

wished on his readers.

Thus, to root his teaching on Christ's power and coming, he expands on his experience of seeing a preview of Christ's Kingdom glory, commonly known as the Transfiguration. What he relayed to the believers is exactly what he saw, nothing less. Yet, rather than expand on what he saw, he focused on what he heard, probably to emphasize the oral aspect of God's revelation as he led up to his great statement on Biblical inspiration. What did he hear exactly? He heard testimony to Christ's honour and glory given by the Father in that moment. God declared without hesitancy: "This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased!" Peter's recollection is associated with a specific memory ("we heard") with specific details (what God said and where He said it from), a specific location ("in the holy mount"), and a specific companion ("with Him"). Peter's doctrine was rooted in historical reality that had no lack of clarity.

This passage is vital in understanding why Christians must so veraciously cling to doctrine. It is not merely because they want to. It is not merely because it is an attractive body of ideas. Christians hold to doctrine, because it is real! Human's don't own truth; truth is outside of us, something objective. Thus, when doctrine is tied to history, it ceases to be an idea; rather it is reality. J. Gresham Machen's words are worth repeating: "'Christ died' – that is history. 'Christ died for our sins' – that is doctrine. Without these two elements, joined in an absolutely indissoluble union, there is no Christianity."¹ He said earlier, "...the Christian movement at its inception was not just a way of life in the modern sense, but a way of life founded upon a message. It was based, not upon mere feeling, not upon a mere program of work, but upon an account of facts. In other words, it was based upon doctrine." Rejoice, dear Christian, that our doctrine is not merely a set of ideas: our doctrine is reality seen through divine lenses. We can be confident: "We have not followed cunningly devised fables."

The Christian's Basis of Doctrine: The God-Given Prophetic Word (19-21). After establishing his teaching in a historical eyewitness account, he says something staggering: "We have also the prophetic word made more sure." In other words: yes, the believers were to remember doctrine faithfully, yes they were to appreciate that doctrine is rooted in reality, and yet they needed something surer than an eyewitness account. They needed the God Whose voice Peter heard to speak to them. Thus, the "prophetic word," or the Word of God given by means of prophecy, held far more weight in validating truth than even an eyewitness account. Peter actually believed that God was speaking, and if God was truly speaking, then His word held infinitely more weight than Peter's as a mere eyewitness. So then, we have verse 19 presenting Scripture as the Christian's sufficient source of confidence:

1. The Supremacy of Scripture. We have already seen this in the phrase "a prophetic word made more sure." If Christianity really believed the Bible to be God's Word, surely doctrine would be approached differently. If the Bible is God's Word, it is all true, it is all authoritative, and it is as God intended it to be. Yet we constantly find Christians appealing to "reliable historical documents" as the basis for their belief, rather than the fact that God has spoken. And rather than appealing to Scripture as the sufficient authority, many have pushed for Christianized philosophy, Christianized psychology, Christianized politics, and unfounded

1 Page 27, *Christianity and Liberalism* published by Eerdmans.

organized religion. Yet none of these are from God. Do we really believe that the God of the Bible is the God of reality as well? Then why does this false dichotomy exist between what the Word says and how we interpret reality? Scripture must remain supreme.

2. The Profitability of Scripture. Because the Word of God is the surest foundation, it is the foundation which we are most profited by. It is “the prophetic word... unto which you do well that you pay attention.” What does it mean to pay attention? Is it not to be thoughtful about our steps? Is it not to be detailed in our actions? Is it not to be committed to a pattern? When Scripture calls us to “take heed,” it calls us to obey every part of it. This will affect every aspect of life, meaning God's hand will be upon life's minutest fringes. How could God, Who is “for us,” be involved in every aspect of our lives and not bring the greatest profit in them? What more could we want? The only thing that would want more is our flesh, and it only has corruption as its end. The person wholly guided by Scripture is one of utmost quality – mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. Because God designed reality, His prescription for how to live in it will never cease to yield high-quality results.
3. The Illumination of Scripture. Showing its profitability, Scripture acts as a light in a dark place. Interestingly, the word for “dark” in the original goes beyond mere darkness. It connotes the idea of being dirty, murky, obscure, dry, and thus dark from neglect. It is not merely darkness that affects the eyes, but darkness that can be sensed and felt in a way. Applied to Scripture's illumination, the principle is quite general in its scope. It is the answer for darkness, both of the mind and of the heart. Do we need light concerning doctrine? Scripture is the answer. Do we need light to expose evil? Scripture is the answer. Without light, we have no direction, we have no warnings, we have no way of differentiating between good and evil, and we have no means of understanding. We need the Scriptures!
4. The Anticipation of Scripture. But this source of illumination only anticipates a day of greater light, when the Lord is revealed personally, as Peter caught a glimpse of on the mountain. Many would claim to “love Jesus” while rejecting a passion for the Scriptures, as if God was frivolous when handing to us “the faith” embodied in Scripture. This is inconsistent, because the day of His full revelation is still coming. Meanwhile, God has purposefully given us something to cling to, as we await a full knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Let us ever await His coming, but at the same time get into the book.

Having established the setting in verses 1-20, we now come to Peter's key statements on the nature of inspiration. Only by understanding its nature could Peter's audience have true confidence – confidence that had ground and meaning. Many believe Scripture out of convenience; we only derive true confidence from it, however, when we understand what it is.

So then, the *primacy of inspiration* is established at the beginning when Peter says, “knowing this first...” Why does the believer maintain strength while anticipating the Lord's return? Why does the believer trust the prophetic word more than eyewitness testimony?

Because he holds inspiration dear to his heart. The supernatural origin of Scripture is easy to claim nominally; sadly, this is probably the condition of most professing Christians. But this claim is only meaningful when it is *believed* and acted upon. If we grasped inspiration properly, we would believe the authority of Scripture, the sufficiency of Scripture, the infallibility of Scripture, and the power of Scripture. If we don't really see these core tenets being established in our lives, we don't really understand or believe the true God-breathed nature of Scripture.

He continues by emphasizing that *inspiration is total*. Though he uses a negative to express this truth, it is expressed nonetheless: “No prophecy of the Scripture is from one's own interpretation.” Conversely, one could say, “Every prophecy of Scripture is not of one's own interpretation.” Peter uses the word “prophecy” to tell us that God spoken and the word “Scripture” to tell us that His words have been written. He uses them together to tell us that the full written body of revealed truth is wholly of divine origin. If a written document is not fully God-breathed, it is not Scripture; and if it is not Scripture, it is not God-breathed. Inspiration is total.

But what should we make of this phrase “from one's own interpretation”? The first question that must be dealt with is, whose interpretation is this speaking of – ours or the prophets'? At this point in his letter, Peter is not concerned with hermeneutics so much as he is the divine origin of Scripture; it would make no sense for Peter to speak of how we interpret Scripture today. So then, it must be the prophets' interpretation that he is speaking of. Today, there are two kinds of interpretation on the part of an author: (1) his own interpretation of his surroundings, which he is trying to convey through writing, (2) his intended meaning of his text of which he himself holds the prime understanding. So with Scripture, the issue at stake is whose mind is being put forward. The authors of Scripture, while they understood what they wrote and were deliberate in their writing, were not writing to be “authors” to prove their own point; rather they were writing as channels of the mind of another. So then, we find that inspiration *excludes the mind of man from being the essence of its message*. A quote from *Matthew Henry's Commentary* explains the concept well:

“Observe, No scripture prophecy is of private interpretation (or a man's own proper opinion, an explication of his own mind), but the revelation of the mind of God. This was the difference between the prophets of the Lord and the false prophets who have been in the world. The prophets of the Lord did not speak nor do any thing of their own mind, as Moses, the chief of them, says expressly (Num. 16:28), 'I have not done any of the works (nor delivered any of the statutes and ordinances) of my own mind.' But false prophets 'speak a vision of their own heart, not out of the mouth of the Lord,' (Jer. 23:16).”

Further, *inspiration is consistent in its nature*, not only in its breadth (all of Scripture) but in its length (for all time), for our passage says “No prophecy was ever made by the will of man.” As a general principle, Scripture does not (present) find its origin in the mind of man, but as a historical reality it never came (past) from the natural impulse of man. Scripture is wholly of God throughout. Scripture will never cease to be of God. And the qualification for true Scripture will never be less than God-breathed prophetic utterances.

Following the previous thoughts, inspiration *excludes the will of man as its origin and basis*. We saw that inspiration as to its nature was both total and timeless. Now we see that inspiration

as to its origin is neither of man's mind nor of his will. Peter says, "Prophecy was never brought forth by the will of man." He does not mean that the prophets and Scripture writers spoke from God against their will; rather he shows that the human element cannot be credited for Scripture's origin, since man would naturally have no inclination toward anything Scripture stands for as a revelation from God. Just as Scripture is not a collection of man's ideas, so it is not a document made to achieve man's purposes. As Mr. Chafer in his *Systematic Theology* has so ably pointed out, "Man could not have produced the Bible even if he wanted to." After all, how could a unified document penned by 40 different authors over 16 different centuries that gives all the glory and supremacy to God while effacing the glory of man be a product of man's purpose and design? It is conceivable for a collection of religious ideals to be penned by man. It is conceivable for changeable philosophies to be penned by man. But a book like the Bible? Man could not, and he would not produce that.

Up to this point we have seen only negatives – what inspiration is *not* – but the final phrase of our passage tells us what inspiration *is*: "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." Rather than speaking their own ideas, men spoke from God. Rather than advancing their own purposes, they were borne along by the Holy Spirit. This clause tells us what inspiration looks like: "men spoke from God." It tells us how inspiration was achieved, "they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

1. *What inspiration looks like.* Because Scripture always started as a historical reality or an oral body of truth, Peter emphasizes the fact that men *spoke* from God rather than *wrote* from God. But they are essentially synonymous, because each is a communication expressed by words, whether received by the ear or by the eye. Essentially then, inspiration is God speaking through words which we possess in written form. It is the breath of God recorded. Thus, we expect any inspired text to intrinsically possess divine authority, establish coherently a God-centered worldview, consistency with honestly-evaluated extra-biblical observations since God created all reality, and the same power that brought the worlds into existence.
2. *How inspiration was achieved.* How did God give us an inspired text? Through men influenced perfectly by the Holy Spirit. The phrase used by the text is the same used for the beginning of verse 21 – "No prophecy was ever brought by the will of man." Thus we read, "They were borne along by the Holy Spirit." So then, the idea of inspiration is that men were borne along by the Holy Spirit. This implies two things: (1) the direction was fully that of the Spirit's (2) the strength was fully that of the Spirit's. And yet the men were truly used in all their unique styles and heartfelt burdens. How exactly was this achieved? We cannot understand it of our own wisdom. Rather, we trust the Divine record that God has provided a perfect written revelation of His heart, mind, and Person.

The Dynamics of Inspiration Generally Considered

There are obviously passages besides 2 Peter 1 that speak of God's inspiration of Scripture. For instance, there are over 3,500 uses of phrases like "Thus saith the Lord" throughout the Bible. God has repeatedly embedded in it His stamp of authority and its stamp of authenticity. Specific concepts related to the Old and New Testaments will be given later, but

for now, some general comments from foundational texts need to be made.

The first of these texts should be familiar to every Bible student, 2 Timothy 3:16a – “All/Every Scripture is God-breathed.” The first thing this verse tells us is that inspiration is comprehensive; if something belongs in the body of written revealed truth from God, then it is God-breathed. Secondly, inspiration is deliberate, for it is specifically “Scripture” that is inspired. All Scripture is inspired, and only Scripture is inspired. Thirdly, this verse gives a working definition of inspiration: that God breathed a certain written body of truth.

The second text we find is in Job 33:14 – “For God speaks once, even twice, yet man perceives it not.” The simple, but profound truth in this verse is that inspiration is not equivalent to illumination. This understanding helps in dealing with skepticism. Many dispute the inspiration of Scripture because it does not make sense to their carnal minds; whereas, we realize that truth, being objective, can be valid even apart from a person's perception of it. Thus, the claim that Scripture is not of God because it does not conform to human standards is useless, because God can speak freely even when man cannot or will not understand Him. This understanding also helps when it comes to gospel preaching or reasoning from the Scriptures: it is still authoritative even when man rejects the authority. It is still fully of God, regardless of its lack of recognition by rebels. However, if one is honest with a God-centered (and realistic) world-view, there is no problem in admitting the divine origin of Scripture. May we never see inspiration as either confirmed or denied on the basis of liberal, self-centered standards.

The third text is Mark 12:36-37 in which we find something of the dual-authorship of Scripture: “For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, ‘The LORD said to my Lord, Sit on my right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’ David therefore himself calls him Lord; and how is he then his son?’ And the common people heard him gladly.” For the statement of the Lord Jesus to make any sense, two things have to be true: (1) The Holy Spirit was fully behind the quoted statement, (2) David was also deliberately behind the quoted statement. This is traditionally called the dual-authorship of Scripture – the affirmation that both God and man were deliberately involved in the production of Scripture. More will be said on this later.

The fourth text is Hebrews 1:7 – “And of the angels He says, ‘Who makes His angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.’” This is a quotation from Psalm 104, which is the composition of a worshiper's sentiments of God. Obviously, this had a human author, and yet God is said to be the author when this text is quoted in Hebrews 1. Thus, we find internal affirmation by which God's ultimate authorship is credited. Scripture writers acknowledged other Scripture writers to be speaking on God's behalf or at least according to God's exact purposes.

The Dynamics of Inspiration in the Old Testament

Specifically with the Old Testament, there is a wealth of affirmation that it was from God. In Hebrews 1:1, for instance, we read, “God spoke long ago in various portions and in many ways to the fathers by the prophets.” In other words, what we find in the Old Testament was not given at one time by one person to the same audience. It was progressive. It was partial. But there were two things that remained consistent in Old Testament witness: (1) It was God speaking throughout, (2) It was prophetic in its means of communication. Even though there were many different time periods covered and many different people reached, the fact that God

spoke clearly and authoritatively by human means remained the same.

As to what this looked like, we find an illustration of Old Testament inspiration in Jeremiah 30:2 – “Thus speaks the LORD God of Israel, saying, 'Write all the words that I have spoken unto you in a book.'” Notice what is involved here. First, we have the authority of the Lord God of Israel: this communication is purposeful. Second, we have His exact words being recorded: this communication is accurate. Third, we have the fact that the content of Scripture was often spoken before it was written. This concept helps us understand words like, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.” (2 Thess. 2:15). This does not mean there was a separate body of truth being promulgated apart from the written word (as the Roman Catholic church would teach); rather it is clear that the body of truth presented orally was afterward fully written. Jude 3 is a similar case when it references “the faith once for all delivered unto the saints.” Jude was not the last book written, yet he could say “the faith” was fully delivered as a body of truth. In other words, the truth had been revealed to the apostles once for all, and there is nothing to be added. This may bring up an objection: if Scripture embodies “the faith,” how could Jude claim that the faith was once for all delivered, even when the full Scripture had not yet been fully written? But such an objection falls apart when we understand the nature of Scripture. To claim it is our body of revealed truth for today does not necessitate the claim that the truth did not exist before it was penned, since the truth was often revealed before being perfectly written down by God's chosen vessel.

Not only does the Old Testament contain an illustration of inspiration as we know it, but it gives various hints as to a prophet's relationship to divine revelation. Ezekiel 1:3 is an example: “The word of the LORD came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Chebar; and the hand of the LORD was there upon him.” Notice what characterized this Old Testament prophecy: (1) the promulgation of a body of truth not formulated by, but rather entrusted to a prophet (2) an exactness as to what was given (3) a historical rooting (4) the sovereignty of God operating upon the prophet.

All of these are specific examples that show a pattern of Old Testament inspiration. But these observations are incomplete without broader statements concerning the entirety of the Old Testament. Notice how New Testament individuals approached it, revealing their view of inspiration:

1. The Lord acted upon (and thus assumed) the inspiration of the entire Old Testament. This can be seen in Luke 24:27 – “And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things concerning himself in all the scriptures.” (LEB). Notice, the writings of Moses are considered a unit, all the prophets are acknowledged, and “all the Scriptures” are emphasized
2. In John 5:39 the Lord says, “Search the Scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me.” There was no question as to what composed the Scriptures, just as there was no question that the entirety of “the Scriptures” was part of God's testimony of His Son. Both the fact and object of inspiration are without question.
3. The apostle Paul tells Timothy that all Scripture (which, in Timothy's mind, was the Old Testament) is God-breathed. Paul wanted Timothy to hear the voice of God in

every passage of what was then considered "Scripture." The Old Testament as a unit is fully inspired.

4. Paul also acknowledges the role Israel played in the process of inspiration when he says in Romans 3:2, "unto [the Jews] were committed the oracles of God." While this would be discussed further under the topic of the Canon, it is vital to realize the role Israel played in handing down an inspired text. God entrusted them with His words; thus it is reasonable to say He gave them the proper recognition of what composed the body of divine communication in their day.
5. In Matthew 5:17-18, the Lord acknowledges the entirety of the Old Testament, even in its smallest pen-strokes, as being communicated with Divine authority. "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For truly I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law until all be fulfilled." Here the second use of the word "Law" is inclusive of both "law and prophets" as Old Testament sections.

Clearly, in light of the above observations, the Lord acknowledged the entire body of the Old Testament to be inspired, every passage of the Old Testament to be inspired, and every pen stroke of the Old Testament to be inspired. There is no room for anything less than a wholly-inspired Old Testament.

The Dynamics of Inspiration in the New Testament

In the New Testament, there is also abundant confirmation of its inspiration. Rather than being delivered through prophets carrying the oracles of God, the New Testament takes more so the form of letters and treatises by apostolic authority. Ephesians 2:20 describes the foundation of the Body of Christ as being the "apostles and prophets [NT saints with prophetic gift], Jesus Christ himself being the chief Cornerstone." Galatians 1 tells us something of how this worked. Paul says, "I marvel that you are so quickly removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel... But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The original message they received was "set in stone" as it were: even an angel could not legitimately preach something different. Such was how God worked in the first century. He delivered once for all the faith that should be held by all future generations. This task was entrusted to the apostles. "The mystery of Christ... in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

This thought is taken further into, not only the apostolic message, but the apostolic writings themselves. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 14:37, Paul says, "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." The apostle is confident that his writings are directly from God. But there was further confirmation from assembly to assembly by means of prophets (see 1 Corinthians 12:10) and those who had the gift of discerning different spirits. Thus, this was not a subjective claim to the possession of a God-breathed text. Rather the apostles were deliberate in their writing on God's behalf, and the local prophets confirmed what was truly of God and what was not.

Furthermore, the individual believers in Acts 2:42 show universal recognition of apostolic teaching as their rule of faith: "They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." There is actually good weight to this point, because Christ said, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me." The early church universally recognized the body of truth delivered by the apostles to be of divine origin. They heard through the teachings of the apostles the voice of the Chief Shepherd, because it was ultimately of Himself.

Having this established, it is no wonder that Peter equates the apostolic writings with Old Testament prophecies. "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you... that you may 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." (2 Peter 3:1-2). In chapters one and two, Peter spoke of the Old Testament as being God's Word and yet rejected by the people of that day. In chapter 3, he follows the same pattern of claiming apostolic writings to be God's Word and then outlining modern rejection of it. Clearly, just as God spoke to Israel under the Law, so God is speaking just as clearly and authoritatively to the Church under grace.

So then, we have found that God has repeatedly established the principle that He is able to clearly communicate truth through human instruments while not compromising His clarity, purpose, or authority. Even though written by men, it is God's Word. The Old Testament is clearly of divine origin in its whole and in its parts, by the affirmation of the Lord Jesus Himself. The New Testament is clearly the exact same type of communication from God as the Old Testament was, but slightly different in its form and mode of delivery. We can be confident that God has spoken clearly, deliberately, and authoritatively through both Old and New Testaments. Our Bible as we know it is God's Word.

Scripture's Description of Inspiration: More on Dual Authorship

No discussion of inspiration is complete without some commentary on the dual-authorship of Scripture – not only the fact that Scripture is written by both God and man, but the implications of what that means and the dynamics of how that functioned. This is a necessary question to assess, because it affects how we approach the authority of Scripture, the interpretation of Scripture, and our appreciation of it.

Any discussion on this topic must avoid two extremes, however. In the first place, there is a chance of stripping Scripture of its genuine human (though God-ordained) sentiments. We should not feel obligated to deny the humanness of Scripture, since God had sufficient power to speak perfectly while using human instrumentation. We also should beware of stripping Scripture of its divine origin in that its primary purpose is to be the authoritative revelation of God. Thus we should neither feel obligated to deny the God's part in Scripture, since its power and authority are rooted in His authorship. Balance must be maintained.

As observed in previous sections, Scripture writers found no problem referencing either the divine authorship or the human authorship of the text. But from either approach there were specific limits to how they were viewed.

With the Divine authorship of Scripture, there had to be an acknowledgment that every

word of the text belonged to God. This will be demonstrated later. But this fact does not imply that every word recorded by the text originated from God specifically. Narratives are obvious examples of this: while God's record of the events is fully His own, the events themselves may have contained statements of error. Though this is a simple example, it helps to form one's general understanding of the nature of Scripture.

As well, the inspiration of Scripture does imply that every word of the original text is according to God's will. But this does not imply that men had no sincerity in writing the text. Again, the balance must be maintained.

Similarly with the human element of Scripture, there were certain limits to what was implied by the doctrine. We do know that genuine human efforts were made to write Scripture texts (Luke is an example). This does not imply those efforts were subject to common human error. Further, we do know that genuine human will was involved in the penning of Scripture, but this does not exclude the overriding of human will in certain instances (Balaam in Numbers 23, Daniel in Daniel 12, Jude in Jude 3).

At this point it is obvious that inspiration was no simple process, as we would define simplicity. Scripture's dual-authorship contributes to this reality. This has caused theologians to search for illustrations that might help us grasp the concept more easily.

Some have proposed a comparison with the two natures of Christ initiated at the Incarnation. Notice the parallel:

- Christ eternally preexisted. His birth was (a) by supernatural conception from the Holy Spirit (b) apart from Joseph who would have passed on both Adam's curse and Jehoiakim's curse (Jer. 22 & 36) and (c) carried out by natural processes after conception. This combined in one Person the full essence of God in all its depth with the ability to be perceived by man on a human level.
- The thoughts of God eternally preexisted. When God put those thoughts into words it was (a) wholly originated by His Spirit (b) wholly exempt from human error and defilement and (c) written and preserved by many natural means subjected to the providence of God. This combined the thoughts of God in all their depth with understandable words which could be received by human minds.

This parallel is interesting to say the least, yet if it is pressed too far it will give way to nonsense. While the Incarnation can parallel in some sense to inspiration, to say Scripture is 100% of God and 100% of man is too unspecific and unhelpful to be a meaningful application of the parallel.

Another parallel one could bring up is the sovereignty of God in salvation combined with the genuine human response given at the moment of salvation. For instance, John 6 describes God's work of drawing a sinner to the Son (John 6:37,44); but Romans 10 describes genuine response to the gospel message. Matthew 11:25-27 describe God's sovereign work of revealing His Son to sinners, while the following three verses (28-30) describe the sinner's genuine response to Christ's open invitation. Perhaps this could illustrate the process of inspiration in that while God was fully behind every word, the mind of man was fully involved in his project. Neither reality invalidated the other. Though such is a mystery to our finite minds, we can at least acknowledge the reality as it presents itself to us.

A few questions undoubtedly arise when the idea of dual authorship is considered. While perfect answers cannot be given, these questions deserve to be addressed.

1. Can the will of God and the will of man be one in writing? How would this work?
One thing we must understand about the sovereignty of God as presented in Scripture is this: while it is never diminished by human will, it usually works with the will being a genuinely active agent. Perhaps some examples will help. Recall that with Joseph's brothers their genuine desire was to see Joseph riden from their company, and they made a genuine decision to sell him. They were not acting against their will, but rather in line with it. Yet when Joseph reflects on the situation, he credits it fully to God in Genesis 45: "It was not you there that sent me here, but God." Or we see in the cross that men are viewed as both active and passive agents in Acts 2: "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands [you] have crucified and slain." He was "delivered by" God and yet "taken" by wicked hands. The first question is answered quite firmly by these illustrations: yes, the will of God and the will of man can be one in the writing of Scripture, without diminishing the actuality of either. God does not require fatalism or mechanical human choices for His sovereignty to be true and genuine. The fact is clear. The "how" is where we are left without a complete answer. How could we have a satisfactory answer, since it is a paradox to the human mind? Such is where faith comes in. Nevertheless, we can be confident in the full word-for-word inspiration of Scripture, while human sentiments retain their sincerity.
2. Why was it necessary for man to have a genuine part in authorship? There are a couple of reasons. Firstly, man's part in Scripture serves as an apologetic for the authenticity of Scripture. After all, if it was delivered on gold tablets, what viable means would we have to test its authenticity? But since God used man as joint-author, it validates Scripture's truth since man could not produce a document like the Bible on his own. Secondly, it serves to reinforce our ambitions toward godliness, since real authors spoke of real experiences. Entering into the hearts of Bible characters, we find in them something on our level we can relate to.
3. How do we deal with the exclusively human statements of Scripture? An exclusively human statement would be similar to what Solomon conveys in Ecclesiastes, in which there seem to be a number of flesh-based ideas presented. Is God speaking in Ecclesiastes? The point of Scripture is for us to say in every section, "This is God speaking." Even though there may be records of falsehood and of error, such does not compromise the authenticity of Scripture; rather, it means God has given a perfect record of that error or falsehood and desires to perfectly teach us something through it. In fact, if we had a Bible had contained no record of human error (not of the text itself, but an event or saying the text records), we may doubt its practical application or true connection to our reality. Thus, when we come to a book like Ecclesiastes in which Solomon records his flesh-based pursuits, we do not need to doubt its inspiration; rather we designate it as a practical book perfectly spoken by God that accurately reflects the heart-strains of the human author. Is God not free to tell us what He wants? Why, then, would there be any tension between God's perfect

record of human error and His true voice? Is one not free to quote an error such as, "God does not exist" while himself being free from error in saying, "Skeptics say, 'God does not exist.'" While he is not claiming the proposition itself, his record is exactly true, and he is free from error. It can be said legitimately that all of these words are his words, but it does not mean each one holds the same purpose in the same way. So it is with Scripture. There are two main kinds of passages: passages of record (always delineated in some obvious way) and prophetic passages (normative). There never has to be a text we come to in which we have to determine, "Is God speaking?" Rather, we must determine, "What is God trying to convey through His speech? Is He teaching us through a perfect record of someone's experience (always clear in the text)? Or is He speaking directly to me (what is normal in Scripture)?" If we reject Scripture as what God designed it to be due to our preconceived notion of what it should look like, we will always find reasons to question it. But if we accept it as a deliberate and unified revelation from God, all of its pieces will fit perfectly together; and we will be able to claim that every part and the entire whole is fully of God.

What is at Stake? – Implications of the Doctrine

Israel was the nation to which the oracles of God were committed. The idea of having a written and codified law seemed simple enough to them, causing them to vow rather ignorantly, "All that the Lord has commanded, we will do." However, they soon realized otherwise in their forty years of wilderness wandering. Such is what the Lord emphasizes in Deuteronomy 8:

"All the commandments which I command you this day shall you observe to do, that you may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers. And you shall remember all the way which the LORD your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments, or not. And he humbled you, and suffered you to hunger, and fed you with manna, which you knew not, neither did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD does man live." (Deuteronomy 8:1-3).

Truly life without the Word of God is not life at all; rather, it is the mere sentiment of human survival based on an ever changing foundation. If physical life is the essence of one's entire existence, his substance of life changes according to his feeble self-control and frail dependence on circumstances. The futility of life that only recognizes physical realities is proof that "man does not live by bread only." Something more is needed, something to meet the needs of the heart. That something is the Word of God in its entirety. Everything hinges on whether or not God has spoken. Everything depends on the reality of Biblical inspiration.

This affirmation can be taken further to say that, if God has spoken, everything hinges on how He has spoken. The passage does not speak of God's words to anyone particular.

Rather, it emphasizes specific, objective, authoritative revelation outside of man to which he is obligated to respond. If God's revelation were not specific (utilizing words), there would be no clarity in what to obey. If God's revelation were not objective ("from His mouth," not "to my heart"), there would be no consistency in what to obey. If God's revelation were not authoritative (from the mouth of the Lord), there would be no motivation to obey. All of these characteristics of God's Word are understood inasmuch as the subject of inspiration is understood, not only the fact but the details of divine revelation. Thus, the believer's entire outlook and foundation is at stake when considering the subject of inspiration. Notice a few practical examples:

1. *Our view on inspiration (and consistency with that view) affects our view on inerrancy.* The question of Biblical errors – whether historical, typographical, doctrinal, or scientific – has long been the determining factor between liberal scholarship and believing scholarship. Once Scripture is seen to contain error in certain parts, man suddenly becomes the arbiter of which parts those are; and this contradicts the very purpose of Scripture to give man something objective whereby he can judge himself. If Scripture is (a) the communication of God, (b) deliberately given by God down to the smallest pen-stroke, and (c) entire in its authenticity, then it must by necessity be without error, since the omniscient God cannot lie. If Scripture contains a single error, either (a) God, knowing better, lied or (b) God did not have a deliberate part in every aspect and part of Scripture. Thus, either God ceases to be God, or the Word of God simply becomes a collation of documents generally influenced by God, just like any other impactful theological work. If Biblical inspiration is affirmed and consistently held, inerrancy must follow. If inerrancy is rejected, Biblical inspiration must be compromised. We must understand that and how God has spoken.
2. *Our view on inspiration affects our ultimate authority.* Scripture's authority is not rooted in its design, its insight, or its profundity; Scripture is authoritative because it is God-breathed. However, the moment its God-breathed nature becomes partial, man becomes the ultimate authority. If only the concepts and not the words are inspired, man is free to interpret those concepts as he pleases, thus making self the ultimate authority. If only some of the passages are inspired, man is free to determine which ones, thus making self the ultimate authority. If Scripture only becomes the Word of God as it speaks to a person, man is free to determine what speaks to him and what does not. If inspiration is less than total, at best it becomes a mere guide by which man is free to determine the right and the wrong for his life according to his every whim. The chasm between fully of God and partially of God is as great as the chasm between God's authority and man's rebellion.
3. *Our view on inspiration affects our approach to the Bible.* Inspiration claims that the Bible is God's Word; if one believes this, he will approach it with trembling. Inspiration claims that the very letters and tenses are deliberately given by God; if one believes this, he will take the greatest care to formulate a precise interpretation of Scripture. Inspiration claims that the Bible is an objective revelation from God; if one believes this, he will judge himself by it and not it by himself. To fail in our view of inspiration, we fail in our ability to meaningfully expound the Scriptures and do justice to its purpose.

Conclusion: An Affirmation of the Doctrine of Inspiration

To conclude this article, a short affirmation will be helpful to summarize the position held by the author.

As to its definition, I affirm that inspiration is “That act whereby God through human instrumentation breathed out His revelation in the form of spoken and/or written words.”

As to its details, I affirm that inspiration entails:

1. Reality: It is true and existent. It is not simply a fabrication of hopeful minds.
2. Human Authorship: It had genuine authorial intent in most cases. It was not simply the transcription of God's dictation by means of amanuensis.
3. Full Divine Control: It had full subjection to the control of God so that every part of Scripture in the original autographs was exactly how He intended it as a perfect written revelation of Himself. It was not simply the divine approval to man's idealistic thoughts.
4. Completeness: It covers the entirety of Scripture and excludes no part of it. It does not only apply to the scholar-approved sections of the Bible.
5. Exactness: It applies to the structure, words, tenses, letters, and accents of the original text, because God had full control and deliberate action in every section. It does not only apply to the concepts presented in Scriptures, though the concepts are fully of God as well.
6. Objectivity: It makes the Bible God's Word in and of itself. It is authoritative, period. Its divinity does not stem from man's acceptance of it. It does not become the Word of God as it speaks to me; nor is it simply a witness to divine revelation. It is divine revelation.