



Canon: Which Books Belong?

Lesson Four: Inspiration—Theories for Inspiration

The way you view the inspiration of the Bible affects the way you use the Bible!

THREE COMMON APPROACHES TO BIBLICAL AUTHORITY.

- *The old liberal view* maintains that the only part of Scripture that can be accepted is that which is capable of being explained via human reasoning.
- *The neo-orthodoxy (existential) view* is the willingness to accept only what appeals to the individual's feelings (emotions). Advocates claim that the Bible is not God's Word but it "contains" God's Word. What may be "inspired" to one may be "uninspired" to another because it "does not speak" to him.
- *The conservative orthodox view* teaches that the Bible is the final authority in matters of life and religion (John 10:35).

We arrive at our view of biblical authority by the way we conclude that Inspiration guided the writers. We have already concluded that mortal minds needed Inspiration to reveal divine Truth. This conclusion leads to the question, "How, and to what degree, did Inspiration guide the writers of the Bible?" This question introduces us to the various theories of Inspiration.

EXAMINING HISTORICAL THEORIES

- **The Bible—Only A Human Book**

It is viewed as a remarkable book, but one authored totally by humans. Since mortals wrote it, it is not infallible. It is suggested that the "inspiration" of the Bible is the same as found in Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, or Milton. It claims that the Bible is a product of "natural inspiration." This theory answered...

- The Person of Christ is greater than any creation of mortal minds.
- The Scriptures are filled with supernatural traits that mark it as a distinctive, divine Book!

- **The Bible—Partially Divine, Partially Human**

Some are unwilling to follow all biblical teachings and seek to negate biblical authority by claiming that only "parts" of the Bible are inspired. This theory answered...

- Ideas can only be communicated via words.
- Paul refuted this theory (1 Co 2:13).
- Reason refutes this theory—How are we to determine what are God's thoughts and what are man's?



- Communication of thoughts requires the authors to understand what is being communicated. But Daniel (12:8, 9), Caiaphas (John 11:51), and the old prophet (2 Kings 13:2) all spoke words that were neither comprehended nor willed!
- These deny the miracle of Inspiration but contend for a greater miracle of “personal encounter” as God “makes” portions of the Bible “inspired” to modern readers.

- **The Bible—Only Divine and dictated to man**

This theory suggests that each writer was wholly passive in writing God’s revelation. This theory answered...

- Fails to consider that individual personalities are present in the Bible (Romans 9:1-5).
- The writings show the customs, colors, and places of their times.
- Uniformity should mark the Scriptures if it was all dictated, but such is not the case.

- **The Bible—A Book that is Divine and human and produced infallibly by God’s Holy Spirit overseeing the process of transmission.**

This process is summed up by two terms—“Plenary” and “Verbal” inspiration. The Bible’s inspiration was complete. The writers were so guided that God guided even their choice of expressions.

- **Plenary Inspiration**—Every word in the original manuscript was perfect and lacking error. The inspired revelation is entire; complete so that nothing needs to be added to it (Revelation 22:18-19). “ALL” has been given to us as the authors received and recorded exactly what God revealed to them (Numbers 22:38; 24:13; Psalm 119:42, 43, 86, 89, 96, 97,160; Jeremiah 1:9, 17; 23:28; 26:2; 36:2; Revelation 19:9; 21:5; 22:6).
- **Verbal Inspiration**—Every word was influenced by God so that the words used were actually words selected by God Himself (John 6:63; Jeremiah 1:7, 9; 15:19; 26:2; 36:2; 1 Corinthians 2:13, 16).

Note: This plenary and verbal inspiration marks Scripture as the Word of God. Any writing that fails to demonstrate these qualities cannot be “inspired.”

SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS

- There is a divine wisdom that man is incapable of knowing.
- God has revealed this wisdom to mortal minds.
- God’s revelation was complete and guarded against all error because God’s revelation would not be characterized with contradictions and errors.
- The Bible is marked with this divine protection and even its words are inspired.
- Any other book, which claims to be man’s religious authority, must also pass the test of inspiration. If it does not pass, it cannot be considered as a viable authority for one’s religious beliefs/practices! Thus, “All Scripture (inspired by God) is profitable!”