



# Canon: Which Books Belong?

## Lesson Four: Inspiration—Theories for Inspiration








1. 📖 The impact of Scripture's inspiration is illustrated by the three historical approaches to biblical authority.


The way you view the inspiration of the Bible affects the way you use the Bible to govern your life. Here are three common approaches to biblical authority. Each reveals a significant clue about how one accepts Inspiration's claims.





- a. 📖 *The old liberal view.* This holds that the only part of Scripture that can be accepted is that which is capable of being explained via human reasoning. Thus, the miracles are purged or explained naturally. This basically rejects Inspiration and places human reason as the supreme authority.
  - b. 📖 *The neo-orthodoxy (existential) view.* This 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. The Bible becomes God's Word only when it has meaning for one's individual life. What may be "inspired" to one may be "uninspired" to another because it "does not speak" to him. This view erases all absolutes; every command becomes relative.
  - c. 📖 *The conservative orthodox view.* This accepts the Bible as God's inspired Book. This view teaches that the Bible is the final authority in matters of life and religion (John 10:35).
2. 📖 We arrive at our view of biblical authority by the way we have concluded that Inspiration guided the writers. We have already concluded that mortal minds needed Inspiration to reveal divine Truth. This conclusion leads to the question that asks, 📖 "How, and to what degree, did Inspiration guide the writers of the Bible?" This question is critical to those seeking to follow God's will. This question introduces us to the discussion of various theories of Inspiration.
  3. 📖 Historically the inspiration of the Bible has been explained by one of the following theories. Notice how each theory impacts biblical authority.
    - a. 📖 *The Bible—A Human Book!* It is viewed as a remarkable book, but one authored totally by humans. Since mortals wrote it, it is not infallible.
      - 1) It is suggested that the "inspiration" of the Bible is the same as found in Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, or Milton.

- 2) It claims that the Bible is a product of “natural inspiration.”
- 3) ☞ This theory fails because...
  - a) ☞ The Person of Christ is greater than any creation of mortal minds. Christ’s love, character, and purity surpass anything found in human literature.
  - b) ☞ The Scriptures are filled with supernatural traits that mark it as a distinctive, divine Book! (See: Rene Pache, *Inspiration and Authority of Scripture*, Moody Press: The moody Bible Institute of Chicago, second printing 1971, 279-302):
    - i. The sublime revelation of God and Jesus Christ
    - ii. Unique revelation of man
    - iii. The plan of salvation is inconceivable to the human mind
    - iv. Predictive prophecies are proof of divine inspiration
    - v. The power of life that emerges from the Bible
    - vi. The eternal youth of Scripture
    - vii. The universality of the Bible
    - viii. The superiority of the Bible over all other religious books—Jewish, Christian, and pagan
  - b. ☞ *The Bible—Partially Divine, Partially Human*. The obvious supernatural quality of the Bible makes any intelligent person admit that it has divine qualities. But 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 is suggested several different ways.
    - 1) ☞ Only the author’s “thoughts,” not words, were inspired. According to this theory, God suggested the ideas and then left man free to express them in his own words. ☐ This theory fails—
      - a) Ideas can only be communicated via words.
      - b) ☞ Paul refuted this theory (1 Corinthians 2:13).
      - c) ☞ Reason refutes this theory—If God could not guide the writers in their words, how could He guide their thoughts? Also, how are we to determine what God’s thoughts are and what are man’s?
      - d) Communication of thoughts requires the authors/speakers 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!

- 2)  Only the spiritual and moral things of Scripture were inspired while the historical matters were non-inspired. This suggests that God only revealed the things that were beyond man’s ability to comprehend and then allowed the writers to record the rest. Thus there are many errors, even legends and myths, in the Bible.  This theory is answered—
  - a) The credibility of the Scripture is ruined because  how can one grasp the whole Truth with any certainty?
  - b)  The Bible affirms its value in all of its writings—historical as well as spiritual (1 Corinthians 10:4, 6, 11; Romans 5:14; 1 Peter 3:21; Galatians 4:24).
- 3)  The Bible “contains” the Word of God but is not “the Word of God.” Many suggest the Bible contains myths, legends, and errors that no intelligent person would ever believe. Thus attempts to “demythologize” the Bible have occurred.  This theory answered:
  - a) If error exists in the Bible, then the Bible cannot be God’s revelation.
  - b)  If this is true then there is no way for anyone today to sort out the error from the Truth. To attempt to decide what is inspired and what is not, is to put oneself *above* Scripture!
  - c)  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.
- c.  *The Bible—Only Divine, having been dictated to man.*  This theory suggests that each writer was wholly passive in writing God’s revelation (i.e. a human tape recorder).
 

 This theory answered:

  - 1)  Such a theory fails to consider that individual personalities are very apparent in the writings of the Bible (Romans 9:1-5).
  - 2)  The writings show the customs, colors, and places of their times.
  - 3)  Uniformity should mark the Scriptures if it was all dictated, but such is not the case.
- d.  *The Bible—A Book that is Divine and human and has been produced infallibly by God’s Holy Spirit overseeing the process of transmission.* This process is summed up by two

terms—“Plenary” and “Verbal” inspiration.

4.  The Bible’s inspiration was complete—in the composition of the original manuscript the writers were so guided that even their choice of expressions was guided by God.
  - a. *Plenary Inspiration*—Every word in the original manuscript was perfect and lacking error.
    - 1)  This means that the inspired revelation is entire; complete so that nothing needs to be added to it (Revelation 22:18-19).
    - 2) “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).
  - b.  *Verbal Inspiration*—Every word was influenced by God so that  the words used were actually words selected by God Himself.
    - 1) The sense of Scripture is inextricably linked to the words.  If the words are not from God, then the Scriptures are not from God either!
    - 2)  *Note:* John 6:63; Jeremiah 1:7, 9; 15:19; 26:2; 36:2; 1 Corinthians 2:13, 16.
  - c.  *Note:* This plenary and verbal inspiration marks Scripture as the Word of God. Any writing that fails to demonstrate these qualities cannot be “inspired” and therefore is ill suited to be our religious authority. Any religious authority **MUST** pass this test!
5.  Summary Observations
  - a. There is a divine wisdom that man is incapable of knowing.
  - b.  God has revealed this wisdom to mortal minds.
  - c.  God’s revelation was complete and guarded against all error because God’s revelation would not be characterized with contradictions and errors.
  - d.  The Bible is marked with this divine protection and even its words are inspired.
  - e. Any  other book that 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!”*



# THREE HISTORIC APPROACHES

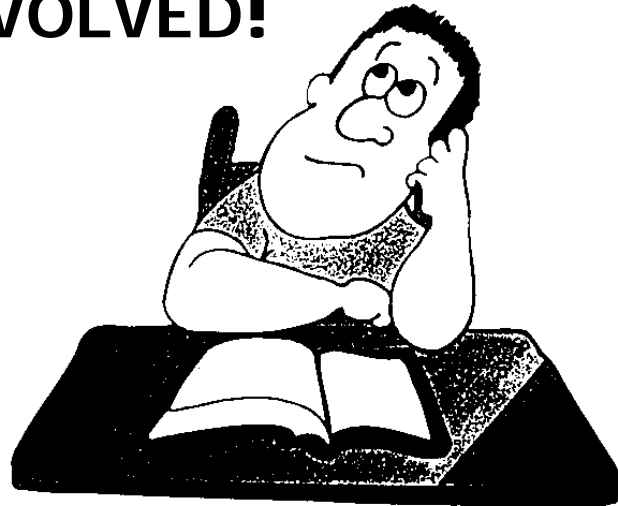
**The Old Liberal View**

**The Neo-Orthodox (Existential) View**

**The Conservative, Orthodox View**

Transparency 4/1

**CONCLUSIONS ARE  
REACHED BY THE  
PROCESS INVOLVED!**



**Two Critical Questions:  
"How?"  
"To What Degree?"**

Transparency 4/2

# **HISTORIC VIEWS OF INSPIRATION**



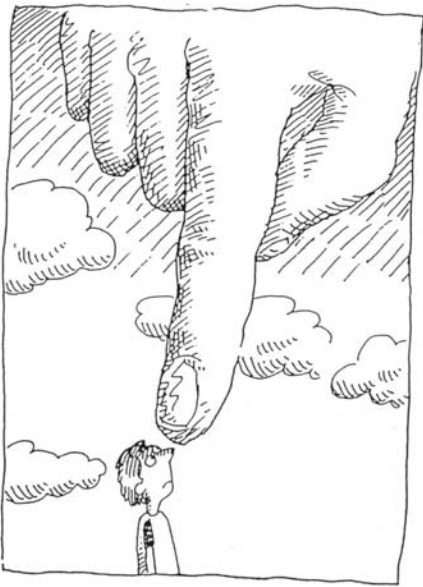
**It is a totally human book!**

**It is part divine and part  
human!**

**It is only divine!**

**It is both divine and human!**

Transparency 4/3



# **THE COMPLETENESS OF BIBLICAL INSPIRATION**

**PLENARY – Perfect!**

**VERBAL – Words Given!**

Transparency 4/4



# **SUMMARY OBSERVATIONS**

**There is a divine wisdom of which  
man is incapable of knowing!**

**God has revealed this wisdom to  
man!**

**God's revelation was complete!**

**The Bible is the product  
of this revelation!**

**Any book, that is a religious  
authority, must pass the test of  
inspiration!**

Transparency 4/5