

Who Wrote The Bible?

Last time, I made the case that the Bible is trustworthy. I showed all of the evidence we have to trust that what we have today is what the original authors wrote^[1] (actually, there's *more* evidence that I didn't cover).

Now that we know we can trust the Bible, we're going to take that a little further and talk about some of the qualities of the Bible as a whole. See, the Bible isn't like any other ancient work. The claim of Christianity isn't that just that the Bible contains an accurate record of the things Jesus said and did; the claim is that it is the *actual* Words of God.

So, what makes this book different? What qualities does the Bible have that other books don't? We are going to talk about 5 of them. Grudem lists two more in his text that we won't cover here. Not because I disagree with them. Just because my goal here is to give you an introduction and not go through every single detail.

First, the Bible is *inspired*. Second, the Bible is *authoritative*. Third, the Bible has clarity. Fourth, the Bible is sufficient. And fifth, the Bible is *inerrant*. Today, we're going to talk about what it means when we say the Bible is inspired.

The doctrine of inspiration seeks to answer the question of who wrote the Bible. Previously we talked about the manuscripts and how they were written by the eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry. But, the Bible is also called the Word of God. So, how is it both written by fallible men but also written by God?

The Bible that Protestants use today has 66 books in it – 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament. Catholics and Eastern Orthodox include 7 more books in their Old Testament known as the Apocrypha. When we discuss the actual books included into canon we'll discuss why Catholics include these and why we do not.

These 73 books are not all of the books ever written by Jews and Christians. Jews were still writing up until the coming of Christ (and even after that) even though the Old Testament stops about 400 years before Jesus shows up. And, on the New Testament side, there were many letters written by the early church fathers that we don't include in the New Testament. There are also other books with the title of "Gospel" that we do not include – such as the Gospel of Thomas and the Gospel of Peter.

So what qualities of a book deem it worthy of being included into the canon. This brings us to the doctrine of Inspiration.

The central verse in this doctrine is 2 Timothy 3:16 which states:

2Ti 3.16 **16**All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness,

The New Testament was originally written in Greek. And where it says "breathed out by God" in the ESV that I use (and in the NIV and a few others) that's the Greek word *theopneustos*. Other translations may say "God-breathed". And still others, like the King James and the New American Standard Bible translate it as inspired.

So, what do we mean by "inspired"? "Inspired" here does not mean "inspiring". Yes, the Bible and its words should inspire us to live better lives and draw closer to God. But that's not what we are talking about here. I want to make that distinction because to the progressive church (which we will show some distinctions between the liberal/progressive church and traditional/orthodox Christianity in the weeks ahead) "inspired" gets morphed into "inspiring" – in which they mean that the Scriptures inspiring in the same way the story of an underdog coming out on top is inspiring. But, that's not what we mean here. We mean that the words of Scripture are literally the Words of God written down by human authorities.

What exactly was inspired? Inspiration is not primarily a property of the *authors* of Scripture. It's a property of the *text itself*. Very often people will think the authors of Scripture were inspired by God to write what they did. But that is not, in fact, what 2 Timothy 3:16 says. It's not that the authors of Scripture were inspired; it's that the *end product* is inspired – what they wrote (the text) is God-breathed. So inspiration is first and foremost a property of the text, not of the authors of the text. I think we will see that that is very important.

The next question you might ask is how did the inspiration process work? How did God's Words end up on the pages of Scripture? 2 Peter 1:19-21 gives us the idea

2Pe 1,19-21 **19**And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, **20**knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. **21**For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Here – at least in terms of prophecies that have ended up in the Bible – we can see that it is the work of the Holy Spirit who has guided these people to both give prophecy and write it down in human language. So, the authors of Scripture were moved by the Holy Spirit to say what they said.

Properties Of Inspiration

Let's go a little deeper on we mean by "inspired". What are the properties of inspiration? There are 3:

Inspiration Is Plenary

First, *all* of Scripture is inspired. Not just parts of it, but all of it. The official term for this is "plenary" which means "complete in all aspects". This is what Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:16 when he says "*all* Scripture is God-breathed and profitable for..." So, we can't set aside certain books or passage we don't like. We have to take ALL of it in as the Word of God and work our way towards understanding. That doesn't mean we will understand all of it. We will have to work harder at some parts than others. But, ALL of Scripture is inspired - even the parts that don't make sense and ESPECIALLY the parts we don't like.

It's important to make this statement because we have a tendency to pick and choose which parts of the Bible to follow sometimes. If you don't think every word in the Bible is from God then how do you decide which ones are and which ones aren't?

Red letter Bibles are great. These are the ones where they put Jesus' words in red letters and the rest of the words in black. Unfortunately, this leads to a side effect of only paying attention to the red words and not the other words. Jesus' words only appear in 4 out of the 66 books of the Bible. And, in those, probably less than 40 percent of the words are Jesus' speaking parts. So, what about the rest of the words?

If we understand that the WHOLE Bible is inspired, then we are forced to take that parts we don't like just as seriously as the parts we do.

Inspiration Is Verbal

Second, Scriptural inspiration is verbal. It's isn't just the ideas that are inspired, but every word is inspired. Every word is God-breathed. As evidence to this, look at a few examples from Scriptures

In John 10:34-37 Jesus is disputing with religious leaders about his claim to be the Son of God.

Joh 10,34-37 **34**Jesus answered them, "Is it not written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? **35**If he called them gods to whom the word of God came- and Scripture cannot be broken- **36**do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? **37**If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me;

The point right now isn't to get caught up in the argument Jesus is making, but to show that his whole argument hinges upon a single word, namely the word "gods" as used in the Psalm 82:6.

Also, look at Paul's letter to the Galatians. In Galatians 3:16, he writes:

Gal 3.16 16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

Here, again, we see that the argument being made hinges upon a single word. In this case "offspring"

At this stage, a valid question would be to ask which words are inspired? The Bible has been translated from Greek and Hebrew into hundreds of languages. Are English translations inspired? This would seem an odd thing to say because we have so many English translations and they often use different words. They are especially different if they are written in different languages or scripts.

When theologians talk about verbal inspiration what they are referring to are the words in the original languages they were written in. This, I think is a good reason to want to learn the original languages of Greek and Hebrew. So that we can know them and experience them in their original languages.

Inspiration Is Confluent

The third property of inspiration is that it is confluent – meaning it flows together. What we mean by Scripture being confluent is that it is the product of both the human authors and the Divine author. On the human side, the books the authors wrote reflect their unique writing styles, their vocabulary, their personalities, their education levels, etc

Theories of inspiration

A little bit ago, I said that the way inspiration worked was that the Holy Spirit worked through human authors. That's as far as we can take it with the direct Scriptural evidence. But, it does leave the door open to wonder about HOW that process worked. There are three different theories we will look at briefly.

Dictation Theory

The first theory on how God worked through the authors is known as dictation theory. God tells the human author what to write and they put the pen to parchment. Basically, they were like stenographers. This is, in essence, what Muslims believe about the Qu'ran. They believe that Allah dictated the Qu'ran to Mohammad and he wrote it down.

Almost universally, scholars agree that this is not the method by which Scripture was inspired – particularly in regards to the property of confluence. We know that the Scriptures were not pure dictation because the authors put in a lot of minute details that don't make sense if God is telling them what to write.

For example, in Paul's letters, he often ends them with asking the recipient to give greetings to various people. (Romans 16) Or when Paul instructs Timothy to bring him his cloak, his books, and especially his parchments in 2 Timothy 4:19) Are we to think that these trivial details are dictated from God to Paul? Or does it make more sense that the human authors wrote them because that's what one does when writing a letter?

Often times the authors will express their emotions in their writings (the imprecatory Psalms – where the Psalmist calls down the wrath of God Psalm 139:19-24). These emotions don't seem to make sense if they were dictated from God to the Psalmist.

Because there is so much of the individual authors in the things that they write, most scholars do not hold to a dictation theory of inspiration.

Accommodation Theory

The second theory is known as Accommodation theory. In this theory, God accommodates Himself to the limitations of the human author. God is already accommodating Himself by using human languages. For God to stoop down to our level and communicate with us in languages we understand is akin to us using cooing and baby gibberish when we communicate with a newborn.

This theory comes a little closer but still doesn't explain enough how human authors are involved in the process. It doesn't address the other issues we raised earlier with the touches of the human authors.

Supervision Theory

The third theory of inspiration is called Supervision theory. In supervision theory, the Holy Spirit doesn't dictate, but supervises. The Holy Spirit directs the authors what to write. But then the question becomes how can God supervise the human author in such a way that it isn't dictation? How does God, the Holy Spirit get the authors to write the Words He wants written without using them as puppets?

It seems pretty clear that both God and the individuals who wrote down the Scripture both had a unique part in the writing process. If it was pure dictation, it would seem that all the authors would sound exactly the same. When we talked about reasons for why we should trust the Bible, we said that one of the main reasons to trust it was that the eyewitness accounts of

Jesus' life were different. They each saw the same timing differently and therefor wrote about it differently.

If God used the Biblical authors like some sort of conduit for the things He wanted to say then that would also violate Man's free will. But, that Men had a part in the writing also seems obvious.

The answer to how God and Man interacted together to produce the Word of God is, I think, the idea of what is called Middle Knowledge. God knew all of the things it would take to get Paul to freely write Romans - all of the life experiences, all of the people he would interact with, all of the teachers he would need to be taught by. Even all of the teachers that the teachers would need to be taught by. It was his Middle knowledge of all the choices and events that would take place in order to get the end result and not a violation of the free will of the authors.

So, to sum up, the first property of the Bible is that it is inspired. And not just the red words that Jesus spoke - *all* of the Bible is the inspired Words of God. God also worked through humans to author the writings that appeared on the pages. He didn't use them like a radio tower and he didn't directly tell them what to write. He allowed them to tell things in their own way and with their own touches.

Next time, we'll get into the second property of Scripture and that is it's authority.



1. Gilmore, David W. "Why Should We Trust The Bible? | Legati Christi." Legati Christi, 13 Jan. 2025, <https://www.legatichristi.org/training/christian-ambassador-training/revelation/why-should-we-trust-the-bible/>. ↩