


Inspiration & Inerrancy

by

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Introduction

In previous lessons we have looked at the concept of *revelation* both *general* and *special*. In one sense *revelation* involves the self-disclosure of God to man of that which would otherwise remain unknown. As we have employed the terminology in the previous lesson, *special revelation* includes all ways in which God has revealed himself redemptively to mankind. Additionally, it includes both the event of revelation and its interpretation. Thus, the Bible can be said to be special revelation recorded in a durable form. Inspiration, on the other hand, refers to the process of God's superintendence of the human author of Scripture whereby the veracity of the recorded message was ensured.

We legitimately refer to the Bible as *special revelation*, although we recognize that not all the contents of the Bible are directly revealed by God. In so saying we recognize that portions of the Scriptures are historical in nature, and that the human authors at times involved themselves in historical research before they undertook to write their books. Luke informs us, “. . . since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account . . .” Likewise the authors of Kings and Chronicles inform us of the sources which they used in the composition of their works. (These included, the Chronicles of King David The Book of the kings of Israel and Judah, the writings of Samuel the Seer, Nathan the Prophet, Gad the Seer, Iddo the Seer, Isaiah the Prophet, and the Chronicles of the Seer, among others.) Other portions of Scripture are the direct result of *special revelation* (e.g. the creation accounts in Genesis. There were no human witnesses to these events, hence if anything were to be known of them it would of necessity have to be revealed.)

To carry this a step further, the description of many events of is that which is open to the historian. However, the interpretation of these events must come from God Himself and thus be *special revelation*. It is this process of recording the work o God in history and its interpretation which we refer to as inspiration.

This gives God's special revelation

- (1) Immediacy (*i.e.* it has immediate authority as the Word of God.)
- (2) Catholicity (*i.e.* it has universal authority, not just temporary and local authority.)
- (3) Durability (*i.e.* because it continues in written form it continues throughout time to

exercise authority over all who hear it.

Thus it is legitimate to say *Sacra Scriptura est Verbum Dei* (Holy Scripture is the Word of God)

The Fact of Inspiration

The word “inspire” and its derivatives seem to have come into Middle English from the French, and have been employed from the first (early 14th century) in a considerable number of significations, physical and metaphorical, secular and religious. The derivatives have been multiplied and their application extended during the procession of the years, until they have acquired a very wide and varied use. Underlying all, however is the constant implication of an influence from without, producing in its object movements and effects beyond its native, or at least its ordinary powers. The noun “inspiration,” although already in use in the 14th century, seems not to occur in any but a theological sense until late in the 16th century. The specifically theological sense of all these terms is governed, of course, by their usage in Latin theology; and this rests ultimately in their employment in the Latin Bible. . . In the development of theological nomenclature, however, they have acquired (along with other less frequent applications) a technical sense with reference to the Biblical writers or the Biblical books. The Biblical books are called inspired as the Divinely determined products of inspired men; the Biblical writers are called inspired as breathed into by the Holy Spirit, so that the product of their activities transcends human powers and becomes Divinely authoritative. Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness. --B.B. Warfield, *ISBE*, vol. 3, pg. 1453, s.v. “Inspiration.”

qeopneusto"

(B.A.G. p. 357, “inspired by God” (found only in Scripture in 2 Tim. 3:16) cf. Lampe’s *Patristic Lexicon*, “divinely inspired.” The term is late and rare, this has given rise to numerous interpretations of the meaning of the term:

- Some suggest that the term has reference to the *effect* the Scriptures have *on their hearers*. That reading the Scriptures lifts the hearers to spiritual heights (c.f. Cremer). Or to put it another way, Scripture breathes God’s Spirit.
- Some contend that God *inspired* His Scripture. (*i.e.* He breathed into them His Holy Spirit. See previous lecture on C.S. Lewis’ view of Scripture)
- “God Breathed”

Warfield has stridently argued:

qeopneusto" —very distinctly does not mean “inspired by God.” This phrase is rather the rendering of the Latin *divinitus inspirata*. . . The Greek term has, however, nothing to say of inspiring or of inspiration: it speaks only of “spiring” or “spiration.” What it says of Scripture is not that it is “breathed into by God” or is the product of divine “inbreathing” into the human authors, but that it “breathed out by God” or “God-breathed.” In a word,

what is being declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a divine product, without any indication of how God has operated in producing them. No term could have been chosen, however, which would have more emphatically asserted the divine production of Scripture than that which is here employed. The “breath of God” in Scripture is the symbol of His almighty power, the bearer of His creative word. “By the word of Jehovah,” we read in a significant parallel of Ps 33:6, “were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.” . . . God’s breath is the irresistible outflow of His power. When Paul declares, then, that “every scripture” is a product of the divine breath, “is God-breathed,” he asserts with as much energy as he could employ that Scripture is a product of a specifically divine operation. (Warfield, *ISBE* 3:1474 s.v. “Inspiration”)

While basically agreeing with Warfield on the sense of “God-breathed,” Goodrick objects to Warfield’s “spired” noting, “This word triggers such unacceptable images as a church building, an inflated tire, and a man holding his breath.” He continues:

Etymology forces itself upon rare words, and *theopneustos* is a rare word. It combines two stems and an adjective suffix: *theo-pneu-stos*. The first stem, *theo-*, means “God,” “god,” or “divine.” The second stem, *pneu-*, means “breath,” “breath,” “Spirit,” or “spirit.” And the suffix, *-tos*, makes the adjective passive in voice. In almost all combined form starting with *-theo*, God is the active agent.

When an adjective ending in *-tos* is recast into a transitive sentence the first stem becomes its subject, the second its verb and the noun modified by the adjective its direct object. For instance **qeodidakto**, “God-taught” (1 Thess. 4:9), breaks down into **qeo-** “God”), **didak-** (“teach”), and **-to**. Converting the first stem to subject, the second to verb and the noun modified by the adjective to direct object produces the sentence, “God teaches you.” When you do the same with *theopneustos* you produce the sentence “God breathes the Scripture” or God breathes out the Scripture or (my preference) “God breathes into the Scripture.” So all Scripture is God-breathed” (NIV) suits the etymology plus the patristic idea as stated by Lampe.

I suspect that to one schooled as well as Timothy was in the OT, the new word, *theopneustos*, would have triggered his recollection of that primeval episode in which God, by breathing into the nostrils of an image molded from inert clay, made it spring into life. Certainly Adam was God-breathed. Furthermore, by this analogy, Timothy might effortlessly conceive that as it was with Adam, so also this *theopneustos* is used to describe not only the Bible’s vitality but also the Agent he used to bring it into existence. If this is how Timothy understood the inspiration of Scripture so did the writer of Hebrews, who says that the Word of God is *zon*, (“alive”). The parallel is remarkable, for just like our target text it is an equative sentence with the Bible as subject, an elided copula, and a pair of predicate adjectives, one stating the inspired quality of the Bible and the other its purpose with

considerable amount of subordination elaborating on the value: "For the Word of God is alive and effective." (Heb. 4:12).

The Text: 2 Tim 3:16-17

**paša grafhVqeoꝓneusto" kaiVwǵfel imo" pro"j didaskal ian,
pro|e| egmon, pro"Vēpanorqwsin, pro"Vpaideiān thē
ēn dikaiosunh/ iha aǵtioj' h|ol tou' qeou'
aǵqrwpo"j pro"pah eǵgon aǵaqoē eǵhrtismeno".**

All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

paša, "all" or "every" Scripture?

Pa" can be used collectively or distributively. The question here is how did Paul intend it to be understood? In the immediate context (v. 15) the Scripture is equate with the sacred writings, hence, Paul is here referring collectively to the Scriptures. Therefore *all* Scripture is in view here.

The verse is without a verb.

It could legitimately be translated "every/all Scripture inspired by God is also profitable." This is not however, normal Pauline style (*cf.* 1 Tim 4:4, same author, same grammar). Some who have rejected plenary inspiration have adopted this translation since it seemingly draws a distinction between inspired and non-inspired Scripture. However this sense is not plausible since the previous verse describes the sacred writings which are in this verse described as Scripture. Also, such a distinction was totally foreign to first century Judaism.

grafh. Literally, "the writing"

This is a technical term for Scripture as can be seen from Philo, Josephus and the NT itself.

The Point: God is the author of **all** Scripture. Therefore inspiration is **Plenary** or full

Other Passages: Gal 3:8, 22; Acts 13:32-35; Gal 3:16; Acts 1:16; 4:25; Heb 3:7; 10:15

N.B. In the context in which it was written this passage is speaking of the inspiration of the OT. The NT was not yet completed, nor was there yet a New Testament canon.

The Process of Inspiration

2 Peter 1:20-21

touto prwton ginwskonte" oti paša profhteia grafh'

**idiaj' epilusew" ouj ginetai: ouj gaṛ qel hmati
 ajqrwpou hñexqh profhteia potey aj lalupolpneumato"
 ajiou feromenoi ej al hsan apolqeou' ajqrwpoi.**

First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

Prophecy--profhteia

This is not just the foretelling of an event. Prophecy also involved forthtelling. All Scripture was regarded by the Jews as prophetic, and all scriptural authors were regarded as prophets.

Spoke—ej al hsan

This implies a verbal aspect to the divine communicative process.

From God--apo qeou

This speaks of the origination of the message, Human authors were not involved in the origination of the message but spoke as they were moved by God. They were instruments through whom God spoke,

Moved—feromenoi

This indicates that the human authors did not carry the message, but rather they were carried by the Holy Spirit when writing Scripture. God moved them. They were passive in the message, but active in the writing. The Holy Spirit (**upolpneumato"**) was the active agent.

Acts 27:14-19 gives an illustration of the process. The boat was driven (**feromenoi**) by the wind. On board the passengers and crew had relative freedom. They could go below deck, or up on deck, stern or aft, port or starboard, but the wind (**pneumato"**) determined the course. In this context **ferw** means to be carried along by the power of another .

Illustration of Inspiration

JESUS CHRIST (Living Word)		SCRIPTURE (Written Word)	
Process	Result	Process	Result
Divine (Holy Spirit)	↓	Divine (Holy Spirit)	↓
God-Man		Divine-Human	
Christ		Eible	

Human	↓	Human	↓
(Sinful Humanity=Mary)		(Fallible Human Authors)	
sinless		errorless	
(BIOLOGICAL MYSTERY)		(PSYCHOLOGICAL MYSTERY)	

Note: This is an limited illustration and there it breaks down at several points, however that does not totally invalidate the significant parallels between these two distinct manifestations of the Word.

The Phenomena

There is an Identification of God and Scriptures

OT passages in which God is speaker are quoted authoritatively in the NT under the rubric "Scripture said." Likewise OT passages in which there is no indication that God is the speaker are quoted in the NT under the rubric, "God said."

Word of God=Scripture

God Said	Scripture Said
Gen. 12:3	Gal. 3:8
Ex. 9:16	Rom. 9:17

Scripture=Word of God

Scripture Said	God Said
Gen 2:24	Matt 19:4-5
Ps 94:7	Heb 3:7
Ps 2:1	Acts 4:24-25
Is 55:3	Acts 13:34
Ps 16:10	Acts 13:35
Deut 32:43	Heb 1:5-6
Ps 104:4	Heb 1:5-6
Ps 95:7	Heb 1:5-6
Ps 102:26	Heb 1:5

Note: This is a representative list. Numerous other Scriptures could cited.

The Extent of Inspiration

It extends to the whole Bible (plenary)

John 10:34-36

Timothy 3:16

It extends to every word in the *autographa* (original manuscripts)

Peter 1:20-21

Scripture appeals to grammatical number to establish an argument. (the singular as opposed to the plural of *seed* in Gal 3:16)

Scripture appeals to verb tense to settle an argument. (present as opposed to the past tense: *I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob*. As opposed to *I was the God*. Matt. 22:32)

The New Testament Witness to its Own Inspiration

Peter considers the letters of Paul inspired. (2 Peter 3:15-16)

Paul treats a quotation from the gospel of Luke as inspired citing Luke 10:7 as scripture. (1 Tim. 5:18)

Revelation is adamant about its own inspiration. (Rev 22:18-19 *cf.* 1:10-11)

Paul (at least) was aware that he was writing with divine authority (Cor. 2:12; 14:37; Gal. 1:11-12; Thess. 2:13).

Problems in Verbal Inspiration

Inexact Quotations

Problem:

There are about 300 direct references or quotations in the NT from the OT. Combined with clear allusions to the OT material, this material comprises about 10% of the NT text. There is great liberty taken with these citations. For example compare the following:

Is 6:9-10	Matt 13:15
Is 6:9-10	John 12:39-40
Is 6:9-10	Acts 28: 25-27
Is. 40:3	Matt 3

Answers:

The requirement is not verbal exactitude in citation, but truth without error. (See Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 43-45) The same truth can be stated in a variety of forms while retaining the full veracity of the original.

The scriptural authors were saturated with the OT concepts so they naturally employed these vocabulary and concepts in expressing the truth of the NT.

A writer may only be giving and interpretation rather than a quotation of a particular passage.

Translations produce variations of expression. The dynamic flexible nature of language makes it impossible to render verbally exact equivalent translations. The OT was written in Hebrew (with a small portion in Aramaic) and the NT was written in Koine Greek. One ought not expect one for one verbal exactitude. We see this same phenomenon today in the plethora of Bible translations all based on the same Hebrew and Greek text of the Bible.

Literary conventions for citation of material were different in the first century than they are in the twentieth. They did not have quote marks and they had never heard of Turabian style.

Variant Reports

Problem:

There are several places in Scripture where the descriptions of the same event given by different authors seem to be at odds with each other. (e.g. the death of Saul, the resurrection of Jesus)

Answer:

The nature of the Historical Method

- An author records what is important to himself as an historian.
- No one has all the details. Hence the details can vary.

Saul's death:

(1) It is reported in 1 Samuel 31 that Saul fell on his sword. It is reported in 2 Samuel 1 that an Amalekite killed Saul at Saul's request. Several possibilities exist. Among the more likely:

(2) Saul took his own life and the Amalekite came upon his body and invented the story to gain favor with David.

(3) Saul fell on his sword but didn't die immediately and the Amalekite finished the job.

(4) It should be noted that 1 & 2 Samuel are one book in Hebrew and the two accounts are back to back. It is likely the whole account was well known in Israel when this was composed and no problem was perceived. It is likely that the account of the Amalekite is included to demonstrate David's character and continuing respect for Saul as the Lord's anointed, even after Saul's death. (see point a. above.)

Perspective (Perspective on an event can alter the way details are reported)

Illustration: 3 blind men and the elephant.

Three blind men came upon an elephant and set about to describe it. The first, feeling the elephant's trunk said that the elephant is like a snake. The second feeling the tall side of the animal said that the elephant was tall, like a wall. The third, felt the tail and said that the elephant is like a tree with flexible branches. Each one described accurately his experience of the elephant, yet the experiences were so vastly different that someone who had never heard of an elephant would not be able to imagine that these three descriptions fit the same beast. Each . account way true, but partial.

Unscientific Expression

The Bible describes things phenomenologically, i.e. as they appear to the human observer. For example the scripture speaks of the sun *rising* in the east. This is a phenomenological statement. Scientifically, the sun doesn't rise at all. The Earth turns on its axis while revolving around the sun. But even the Naval Almanac uses the term *sunrise* and no one would charge the Naval Almanac with error.

The Scriptures have been understood throughout history in all cultures because it describes things the way they appear(i.e. phenomenologically). The point is Scripture is not a scientific text book, and it is not written to the standards of 20th century scientific accuracy. But where it does touch on scientific matter, it does not impart misinformation. (See Gerstner, *The Foundation of Biblical Authority*, p. 24-25); also see Paul Little, *Know What You Believe*, 21-22)

Contradictory Statements

This is the crux of the problem. *If* a true contradiction can be demonstrated irrefutably, then the concepts on verbal plenary inspiration and the deduced concept of the inerrancy of the Scripture as they have been understood must fall by the wayside and some other explanation of the Bible's divine nature must be found.

Most contradictory statements are only superficially contradictory. (e.g. Galatians 6:2, 5 KJV, but cf. The translation of the NASB and the context.

Harmonization with more information

Some contradictory statements are harmonized upon gaining more information. (e.g. the death of Judas as reported by Matthew [27:5] and Luke [Acts 1:16-25] are harmonized through an understanding of the geography.

By way of illustration:

Several years ago I received word that the chaplain of the seminary I attended had died in an automobile accident. Later, I heard that he had died of a heart attack. I was confused, which was it? When more details became available I discovered that he had been driving one icy morning and at a traffic light had had an accident. It was also discovered that concurrently he had suffered a fatal heart attack. It was never determined if the accident caused the heart attack or the heart attack caused the accident.

Real Difficulties

There are a number of real difficulties in the text which without further information we are unable to answer fully. Dewey Beegle cites about a dozen, mostly dealing with the variant numbers between Kings and Chronicles. Many of these have been answered by Edwin Thiele in his *Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*. Some difficulties still remain. We must remember Warfield's comment here:

. . . it is a first principle of historical science that any solution which affords a possible method of harmonizing any two statements is preferable to the assumption of inaccuracy or error—whether those statements are found in the same or different writers. To act on any other basis, it is clearly acknowledged, is to assume, not prove, error. (Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, p. 439)

The Divine and the Human in Scripture

The Divine and the human are not properly conceived of when one element is emphasized so that it excludes the other. (e.g. mechanical inspiration or natural inspiration)

The Divine and the human are not properly conceived of as opposing one another. Over a century ago, William Sanday observed: "The tendency of the last 50 or 100 years of investigation is to make it appear that the human element is larger than had been supposed." The implication is that the Divine element is smaller.

Kirkpatrick stated: "In the origin of Scripture there has been a large human element, larger than was at one time supposed."

G.T. Ladd observed: the chief difficulty in the matter of being the determination on the "exact place where the Divine element meets the human and is limited by it. On this theory, every discovery of a human element in Scripture is a disproving of its divinity—ultimately then the entire Bible becomes human and the Divine is eliminated."

Concursus: The proper conception

Every word is at once both Divine and human. By way of analogy see Philippians 2:12-13. Also Scripture is attributed to both God and man.

(1) The Bible is truly the Word of God, having infallible authority in all that it affirms or

enjoins.

(2) The Bible is truly the production of man. It is marked by all the evidence of human authorship as clearly and certainly as any other book ever written by man.

(3) This two-fold authorship extends to every part of Scripture as well as to the general ideas expressed

Dr. Basil Manley

Observations on the Dual Nature of Scripture

(1) The Bible is divine yet it has come to us in human form.

(2) The commands of the Bible are absolute, yet the historical context of the writings appears to relativize certain elements.

(3) The Bible's message is clear, yet many passages seem ambiguous.

(4) We are dependent only of the Spirit for instruction, yet scholarship is surely necessary.

(5) The Scriptures seem to presuppose a literal and historical reading, yet we are also confronted by the figurative and nonhistorical (e.g. the parables).

(6) Proper interpretation requires the interpreter's personal freedom, yet some degree of external, corporate authority seems imperative.

(7) The objectivity of the biblical message is essential, yet our presuppositions seem to inject a degree of subjectivity into the interpretive process.

(Moises Silva, *Has the Church Misread the Bible*, 37-38)

Inerrancy

Definition:

“When all the facts become known, they will demonstrate that the Bible in its original autographs and correctly interpreted is entirely true and never false in all it affirms, whether relative to doctrine or ethics or the social, physical or life sciences.” (P. D. Feinberg, s.v. “inerrancy, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*)

Inerrancy: a theological deduction from inspiration.

Inerrancy: not demonstrable empirically because of:

Human finitude

Human sinfulness

lack of complete data

Inerrancy & the *autographa*.

Inerrancy applies to the *autographa*, not to copies or translations of Scripture. This qualification is made because we realize that errors have crept into the text during the transmission process. It is not an appeal to a “Bible which no one has ever seen or can see.” Such a charge fails to take into account the nature of textual criticism and the very high degree of certainty we possess concerning the original text of Scripture.

Inerrancy relates to hermeneutics.

The theologian must interpret the text properly in order to ascertain the truth or falsity of its assertions. Inerrancy also recognizes the analogy of faith and that apparent contradictions be harmonized if possible.

Inerrancy does not demand scientific precision.

The issue is, “Is the truth expressed accurate within accepted cultural norms when it was written?” The issue is not 20th century scientific accuracy. This is a point sometimes missed by defenders of inerrancy who try to establish that the Bible conforms to 20th century norms of precision. (see for example; Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible*)

Inerrancy: not a biblical term,

Inerrancy is not a biblical term, it is theological. Nonetheless this does not mean that it does not express a biblical truth. (cf. The term *Trinity*)

Arguments for Inerrancy

The Biblical argument:

Inerrancy is a necessary deduction from the Bible’s teaching concerning its inspiration.

The Historical argument:

Inerrancy has been the faith of the Church. It is recognized that inerrancy was often assumed rather than explicitly defended. However from its earliest days the Church’s use of Scripture has demonstrated an underlying commitment to inerrancy.

Inerrancy is a capstone rather than a foundational doctrine.

See Warfield, *Inspiration and Authority*, 210-211.

Inerrancy does not demand a “wooden literal” method of interpretation.**Inerrancy and Authorial Intent**

Inerrancy is to be understood in terms of the Author’s intended meaning in the text which is discovered by historical, grammatical, theological interpretation.

Inerrancy and Truth

Inerrancy has to do with truth, simple truth, as opposed to absolute truth. (i.e. the philosophically absolute.)

Inerrancy means having AN ADVANCE COMMITMENT TO RECEIVE AS TRUTH FROM GOD ALL THAT SCRIPTURE IS FOUND ON INSPECTION ACTUALLY TO TEACH. J. I. Packer, “Hermeneutics and Biblical Authority,” *Themelios*, I (1975) p. 11.

The Legionier Statement on Inerrancy

We believe the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired and inerrant Word of God: We hold the Bible, as originally given through human agents of revelation to be infallible and see this a crucial article of faith with implication for the entire life and practice of all Christian people. With the great fathers of the Christian history we declare our confidence in the total trustworthiness of the Scriptures, urging that any view which impure to them a lesser degree of inerrancy than total, is in conflict with the Bible’s self-testimony in general and with the teaching of Jesus Christ in particular. Out of obedience to the Lord of The Church we submit ourselves unreservedly to his authoritative view of Holy Writ.

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