



# THE INSPIRATION OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

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# BIBLICAL VERSES



- ❧ “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2Timothy 3:16-17)
- ❧ Literally: “Every part of the Scripture is God-breathed/the breath of God”
- ❧ “And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but **holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit**” (2Peter 1:19-21).
- ❧ “Jesus answered them, ‘Is it not written in your law, “I said, ‘You are gods’”? If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (**and the Scripture cannot be broken**), do you say of Him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, “You are blaspheming,” because I said, “I am the Son of God”’”? (John 10:34-36)

# JEWISH UNDERSTANDING



- ☞ “Whatever book has been included in the Bible canon must necessarily have been inspired or written by the Holy Spirit (Meg. 7a; Tosef., Yad. ii. 14). Often the words of Scripture are taken to be exclamations of the Holy Spirit intercepting the speaker, and, therefore, also the work of inspiration (Soṭah 9.7; Tosef., Soṭah, 9.2-9; Ab. R. N. 14; Pes. 117a; Gen. R. 68, lxxxv.; Num. R. xvii.; Deut. R. xi.)...”
- ☞ “The Targum, as the recognized traditional interpretation of the Prophets, was regarded as having been written by Jonathan ben Uzziel under the inspiration of the last prophets (Meg. 3a). Similarly the Septuagint translation of the Pentateuch was regarded as the work of the Holy Spirit, or as having been inspired (Philo, "Vita Moysis," ii. 7; comp. Masseket Soferim i. 8; Aristeas, §§ 305-317). Necessarily, inspiration was claimed for the translation of Holy Scripture as well as for the original text; ... It appears from Tosef., Shab. xiii. 1; Shab. 115a; and Masseket Soferim i. 7 that the earlier view regarding the inspired character of the Targum and the Septuagint was later discarded by the Rabbis, though it was maintained in Alexandria, where the apocryphal writings ranked with the canonical literature” (Jewish Encyclopedia, “Inspiration”)

# INSPIRATION



- ✧ Inspiration is the supernatural action of the Holy Spirit on the mind of the sacred writers whereby the Scriptures were not merely their own but the Word of God.
- ✧ The Bible not merely contains but is the Word of God. The written word is at once perfectly Divine and perfectly human; infallibly authoritative because it is the Word of God, intelligible because it is written in the language of men.
- ✧ Since we receive our Sacred Scriptures from the Church, we should first listen to the Church in what she says about them in her traditional formulae: viz, God is the author of the Scripture, the inspired writer is the organ of the Holy Spirit, Scripture is the Word of God.
- ✧ Holy Spirit gave the impulse to write
  - ✧ Inspired prohibition as miraculous as inspired utterance

# REVELATION



- ❧ “God is love” (1John 4:8) and out of His love chooses to make Himself known to us in order to have a relationship with Him.
- ❧ This communication is called “revelation”
- ❧ General (indirect) revelation
  - ❧ Nature, history, and conscience. Communicated through the media of natural phenomena occurring in nature or the course of history. Addressed and accessible to all.
  - ❧ It has for its object the supplying of the natural need of the man and the persuasion of the soul to seek after the true God.
- ❧ Special (direct) revelation
  - ❧ Given to humans in various: miracles, prophecy, in the Person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the Scriptures, personal experience

# REVELATION



- ❧ Difference Between Revelation and Inspiration
- ❧ Revelation has to do with the communication of truth that cannot be otherwise discovered; inspiration has to do with the recording of the revealed truth.
- ❧ **Inspiration has to do with the recording of the truth.** The Spirit of God moved upon men to write the books of the Bible (Acts 1:16; Hebrews 10:15-17; 2Peter 1:21). All Scripture is fully and verbally inspired. St. Paul (2Timothy 3:16) declares that no part of the written word is uninspired, but "All Scripture (lit. "every Scripture", i.e. every portion) is inspired by God (lit. "God-breathed") and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness".

# AUTHORITY



- ❧ The Holy Bible carries with it the Divine authority of God.
- ❧ Therefore, it is binding upon humans - on mind, conscience, will and heart
- ❧ Man, Creed, and Church are all subject to the authority of the Holy Bible.
- ❧ God has spoken, we must submit.
- ❧ The eternal “thus saith the Lord” is our authoritative standard

# INSPIRATION vs. AUTHORITY



- ☞ Usually, inspiration and authority are identical, so that what is inspired is also authoritative for teaching and conduct
- ☞ But occasionally, not the case:
  - ☞ Satan's statement to Eve (Gen. 3:4f.) – inspired, but not true
  - ☞ Peter's advice to Christ (Matthew 16:22) – does not represent God's mind, and therefore, not authoritative
  - ☞ Wicked men's sayings or doings – simply records, but does not sanction
- ☞ Also, texts taken out of context and given a very different meaning from the one they have in their contexts
  - ☞ "You shall not make for yourself any graven image, or any likeness of any thing... you shall not bow down yourself to them..." (Ex. 20:4-5)



# INERRANCY



- ❧ Not only is Scripture inspired and authoritative, it is also inerrant and infallible.
- ❧ This means – without error in the original manuscripts
  - ❧ As it came out of the sacred writer's pen
- ❧ Inerrant in all that it affirms, whether historical, scientific, moral, or doctrinal matters
  - ❧ Does not mean that Scripture is meant to be a historical or scientific book
  - ❧ Nevertheless, states truths about these matters
- ❧ Inerrancy extends to all of the Scripture (plenary), not limited to certain teachings of Scripture
- ❧ Not a new idea that came with Protestantism – Biblical and Patristic teaching
- ❧ This notion along with Inspiration has become an issue only within modern times

# ILLUMINATION



- ❧ The One Who inspired the sacred writers in the writing of the Holy Bible illuminates the minds of those who read it.
- ❧ Because of sin and the darkened understanding brought about by sin, no one can reach to the proper understanding of Scripture without aid.
- ❧ But the Holy Spirit can enlighten the mind of the believer to understand the Scriptures
  - ❧ “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18)
  - ❧ “But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things...But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him” (1John 2:20, 27)

# ILLUMINATION



“However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written: ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.’ But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. For ‘who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?’ But we have the mind of Christ” (1Corinthians 2:6-16).

# PATRISTIC



- ❧ “Be eager and zealous, brothers and sisters, for those things that pertain to salvation. You have searched the holy scriptures, which are true and given by the Holy Spirit. You know that nothing unjust or falsified has been written in them” (Clement of Rome, *1Clement* 45.1-3).
- ❧ “Confirmatory utterances are found both with the prophets and in the Gospels because they all spoke inspired by one Spirit of God” (Theophilus of Antioch, *Ad Autolyicum* 3:12)
- ❧ “the Scriptures are indeed perfect, and in fact were spoken by the Word of God and His Spirit...through the many diversified utterances (of Scripture) there shall be heard one harmonious melody in us, praising in hymns that God Who created all things” (Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 2.28.2-3)

# PATRISTIC



- ✻ “For he [i.e. the man trained in the music of God] knows that **all Scripture is the one perfect and attuned instrument of God**, producing from its various notes a single sound of salvation for those who are willing to learn, a sound that stills and checks every activity of an evil spirit” (Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* II; *Philocalia* VI)
- ✻ “Nay, I hold that every wonderful letter written in the oracles of God has its effects...It is like the case of herbs; each has its power, whether for health of the body or for some other purpose...the saintly man is a sort of spiritual herbalist, culling from the sacred Scriptures each jot, each chance letter, and discovering the force of the letter and the purpose for which it is of use, and that nothing written is devoid of meaning... **And if you are neither an herbalist of the Scriptures, nor a dissector of prophetic language, consider not that aught in Scripture is without purpose, but blame yourself rather than the sacred Scriptures, when you fail to discover the meaning of what is written**” (Origen, *On Jeremiah*, Hom. 39; *Philocalia* X).

# PATRISTIC



- ❧ “We however, who extend the accuracy of the Spirit to the merest stroke and tittle, will never admit the impious assertion that even the smallest matters were dealt with haphazard by those who have recorded them” (Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 2:105)
- ❧ “It is not lawful to say, ‘the author of this book has not spoken the truth.’ Instead, either the manuscript is incorrect, the translator has made a mistake or you do not understand” (Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 11:5)
  - ❧ Divine origin of Scripture (*On the Psalms* 90.2.1)
  - ❧ Inerrancy (*Epistles* 28.3.3; 82.1.3)
  - ❧ Profundity (*Epistles* 137.1.3)

# PATRISTIC



- ❧ “let us act so as to interpret everything precisely and instruct you not to pass by even a brief phrase or a single syllable contained in the Holy Scriptures. After all, they are not simply words, but words of the Holy Spirit, and hence the treasure to be found in even a single syllable is great” (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 1-17, p. 195)
- ❧ “The divinely inspired Scripture was, in a certain manner, sealed by God as one book. For all of Scripture is one book, and has been spoken through the one Holy Spirit” (St. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Isaiah* 29:11-12).
- ❧ Pneumatophoros (“Spirit-bearer”): Seems to be reserved by St. Cyril for scriptural authors, which might be taken to indicate that he views the inspiration of Scripture as a unique moving/working of the Holy Spirit.
- ❧ “it is out of the question for God to speak falsely” (*Commentary on Isaiah* 1:2-3)

# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ Natural Inspiration/Intuition Theory:
- ❧ This theory holds that inspiration is merely a superior insight on the part of natural man. It is merely the intensifying and elevating of the religious perceptions of the writer; but this religious enthusiasm does not differ essentially from that which animated Homer and Plato. This is the denial of everything supernatural, in the ordinary sense of the word, as well as in religion in general.
- ❧ Problem:
- ❧ This view puts some of the Church's great hymns on a level with the Bible. In reality it confuses the Spirit's work of illumination imparted to all the faithful with his special work of inspiration. Illumination does not deal with the transmission of the truth, but with the understanding of truth already revealed.



# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ Dynamic/Partial-inspiration Theory:
- ❧ The writers of Scripture enjoyed the influence of the Holy Spirit to such an extent, that it is the Word, and contains the will, of God. This made them infallible in matters of faith and practice, but not in things which are not of an immediately religious character. Thus the writer could be in error in things which relate to history and science. This theory is prevailing among many protestant groups, and has been held by Luther, Calvin, Baxter, Doddridge and many others. It lays stress upon the sense of Scripture as a revelation of God's will, and leaves room for the full play of human agency in the composition, admitting mistakes (or at least the possibility of mistakes) made by the writers of the Bible in statements related to history and natural sciences. Luther who magnified Paul accused him in one instance of false logic, and spoke disparagingly of Esther [Schaff. P., *A Religious Encyclopaedia...*, vol. II, p. 1105].

# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ Problems:
- ❧ How can we accept one sentence of Scripture and not another? Who can tell us which part is right and which part is not? And further, who can tell us how to distinguish between things that are essential to faith and practice and those that are not?
- ❧ If Scripture were not plenary and verbally inspired by God, its practical utility as a sure guide in all questions directly or indirectly affecting doctrine and practice would be materially impaired. Nowhere does the Bible tell us that inspiration covers only things which relate to faith and practice. It declares in the most absolute comprehensive words that all (lit. every) Scripture is God-breathed (2Timothy 3:16).
- ❧ In fact, a limited inspiration contradicts Christian tradition and theological teaching.
- ❧ This conception of partial inspiration is a modern figment having no support in what the Bible teaches about its own make up.

# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ The Thoughts, Not the Words, are Inspired:
- ❧ God suggested the thoughts of the revelation, but left it up to the writer to put them into words.
- ❧ Problems:
- ❧ The Bible indicates that the words themselves are inspired.
  - ❧ "not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches" (1Corinthians 2:13). He further declares that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (2Timothy 3:16). This means that the very words are the words of the Spirit.
- ❧ Our Lord Jesus Christ stresses the importance of single words or even one jot, i.e. the smallest letter in the Greek and Hebrew alphabet, or one tittle, i.e. the smallest stroke in certain Hebrew letters, using a solemn affirmation to underline the authority of His words about the law, saying,
  - ❧ "For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18; "law" means the whole Old Testament, as John [10:34-35] uses law of the psalms).
- ❧ Additionally, it is difficult to think of thought apart from words. The thoughts are in the words, and the two are inseparable. It is inconceivable to dissociate them from each other. Therefore, the words themselves must be inspired, and not only the thoughts.

# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ The Bible Contains the Word of God (i.e., is not wholly the Word of God)
- ❧ The Bible is a book composed from merely human resources which God can make his Word at the moment of personal encounter. The authors of Scripture wrote of their encounters with God in thought patterns of their days, reflecting their specific teachings, actions, temptations and trials. They incorporated into their writings various supernatural myths and miraculous tales to convey spiritual truths. But their writing still becomes the Word of God to us at that existential moment when God breaks through to us and reveals himself in his Word.
- ❧ Problems:
- ❧ This theory views Biblical inspiration as not differing essentially from the gift of the Holy Spirit imparted to all the faithful. Accordingly, it is, to say the least, an improper use of language to call the sacred text itself inspired. At any rate, this text can, and actually does, err not only in profane matters, but also in those appertaining more or less to religion, since the Prophets and Apostles did not possess absolute infallibility. The Apostles were not perfect in their conduct and judgment as rulers and teachers or the Church (Acts 15:39; 23:3; Galatians 2:12; 2Corinthians 13:12; Philippians 3:12). The grace of God was in them as earthen vessels.

# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ This conception of Biblical criticism does not rest on an innocent view about the negligibility of the factor of inspiration, but on the outright denial of it. Those critics say Scripture must be demythologized. The interpreter's job is to strip away all the mythical embellishments and seek to arrive at the spiritual truth God has for us.
- ❧ The extremists among those critics ridicule the doctrines of Incarnation, Virgin-birth of Christ, his Resurrection and Ascension, the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment. They adopt the same attitude of the Sadducees who "say that there is no resurrection - and no angel or spirit" (Acts 23:8), disregarding Christ's proof of the Resurrection from the Pentateuch (e.g. Ex 3:6, 15) given in his reply to the Sadducees (Matt 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40). Some Anglican clergy published books entitled *Christianity without Christ?*; *The Myth of God Incarnate*; *The Foolishness of God*
  - ❧ [See Bowden, J., *Jesus, The Unanswered Questions*. SCM Press, London 1988, pp. xviii, 82. In pp. 87-89 he says "some theologians now felt the doctrine of Incarnation to be so inadequate that it was time for it to be abandoned... That also explains why in addition to those Christians who were shocked by *The Myth of God Incarnate* as a threat to their faith there were many others, Christians and those of other religions, particularly Moslems, who welcomed it as a positive contribution to the dialogue between religions..."].

# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ Over against these perversive views several things can be said.
- ❧ In the first place, it is a very subjective approach to the Bible. Scripture could be made to say one thing to one person and something else to another.
- ❧ It is not the text which is inspired but the reader. This position discards the objective approach to the interpretation of Scripture.
- ❧ It virtually subjects the teaching content of Scripture to a degree of uncertainty rendering the revelation value of the whole doubtful.

# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ Dictation Theory (advocated by Montanists):
- ❧ The dictation theory holds that the authors of the Bible were mere machines, instruments, pens, amanuenses, not beings whose individualities were preserved and somehow pressed into service in the act of inspiration.
- ❧ Closely related to the dictation theory is the theory that inspiration is an ecstasy, or possession which was propounded by Plato (*Timaeus*, 71), from whom it was borrowed by Philo (*de Spec. Leg.* IV:8), Josephus (*Antiquities* iv:vi:5), and some early Christian writers (e.g. Athenagoras, *Apology* ix).
- ❧ The defenders of the dictation theory claim that there is nothing undignified in dictation, certainly as between God and man. Besides, the statements of the recipients of revelation show that such a process not seldom took place.
- ❧ On this view the style is always that of the Holy Spirit. Some have even argued that the grammar must be everywhere perfect because it is the Holy Spirit's grammar.

# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ The Scriptures recognize an ecstatic condition, but it is something different from the ecstasy of Plato and Philo, except, perhaps, in the case of Balaam, who prophesied against his will. It is not, as Augustine has rightly said, a suspension of mental faculties, but an "alienation of the mind from physical sense-perception" (Schaff, *Rel. Enc.* vol. II, p. 1102).
- ❧ Miltiades, *That the Prophet ought not to speak in Ecstasy*: St. Paul, "The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets" 1Cor 14:32). Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* I: 17) regarded such an ecstatic condition as an evidence of false prophets and an evil spirit.
- ❧ The offence at "dictation" frequently proceeds from an under-estimate of God and an over-estimate of man. Therefore, it matters not at all that the Holy Spirit took men as instruments for writing - compared to pens or to a flute blown by a flute-player, or a plectrum striking a lyre - or used them as hands which wrote down what Christ dictated.



# MODERN THEORIES



❧ But this theory ignores the obvious differences in the style of Moses, David, Isaiah, James, John, Peter and Paul, for example. Some have tried to meet this difficulty by supposing that the Holy Spirit in each case adopted the style of the sacred writer, but there is a better way of accounting for and defending the doctrine of plenary verbal inspiration. We must acknowledge that Scripture is at once perfectly Divine and perfectly human. God used living men, not dead tools. He did not set aside human personality, nor did he divest the writers of their several individualities of style, just as the inspired teachers in the early church were not passive machines in prophesying (1Corinthians 14:32). "Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty" (2Corinthians 3:17). Their will became one with God's will; his Spirit acted on their spirit so that their individuality had free play in the sphere of his inspiration.

# MODERN THEORIES



- ❧ Social Inspiration Theory: (popular with James Barr, Karl Rahner)
- ❧ Inspiration is a charism bestowed upon an entire community rather than upon words, ideas, or writers
- ❧ “If the church was founded by God himself through his Spirit and in Jesus Christ, if the original church as the norm for the future church is the object of God’s activity in a qualitatively unique way which is different from his preservation of the church in the course of history, and if scripture is a constitutive element of this original church as the norm for future ages, then this already means quite adequately and in both a positive and an exclusive sense that God is the author of scripture and that he inspired it” (Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith...*, NY: Seabury, 1978, p. 374)
- ❧ Problem:
- ❧ What is finally inspired, the Bible or the community that formed it?
- ❧ Bible can exist as Scripture only in the Church – side-steps the question whether the Bible itself can be called inspired.

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES



- ✧ Inspiration is inexplicable: the operation of the Holy Spirit
- ✧ Inspiration, in this restricted theological sense, is limited to the authors of the Bible
- ✧ Inspiration is essentially guidance (2Peter 1:20-21)
- ✧ The Holy Spirit preserved the sacred writers from all error and from all omission
- ✧ Inspiration of Scripture is plenary and verbal
- ✧ Inspiration is affirmed only of the original autographic text of Scripture as it left the pen of the sacred writers
  - ✧ Not affirmed of any of the versions, whether ancient or modern, nor of any Hebrew or Greek manuscripts in existence, nor of any critical texts known
  - ✧ But this does not invalidate verbal inspiration