

A Light in the Darkness

THE DOCTRINE OF THE WORD OF GOD

1

Toward a Verbal Theory of Inspiration

- Matt. 22:32
 - Jesus’s argument here depends on the tense of the verb in Ex. 3:6.
 - “... I *am* the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob...” Ex. 3:6
 - Although the patriarchs had all died at this point, Jesus appeals to this verse to indicate that they are nevertheless very much alive, because God is “not the God of the dead, but of the living.” Matt. 22:32
- Acts 2:34-35
 - Peter’s argument (and Jesus’s use of the same verse in Matt. 22:44) depends on the possessive suffix tacked onto ‘Lord’ in Ps. 110:1.
 - “The LORD said to *my* Lord...” Ps. 110:1
 - Additionally, Jesus says that David “in the Spirit, calls him ‘Lord,’ drawing attention to one particular word given by the Spirit (22:43).

2

Toward a Verbal Theory of Inspiration

- Gal. 3:16
 - Paul’s specifically mentions the redemptive importance of the word “offspring” (or “seed,” Gr. *spermasin*) in the singular as opposed to the plural in Gen. 12:7.
 - “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.” Gal. 3:16
 - “Then the Lord appeared to Abram and said, ‘To your offspring I will give this land.’” Gen. 12:7a
- The New Testament writers attribute to God statements that in the original context are not ascribed to him at all, indicating they believed those Scriptures to be the very words of God.
 - Matt. 19:4-5 | Jesus says that the Creator *said* Gen. 2:24.
 - Acts 4:23-26 | Those to whom Peter and John report ascribe Ps. 2:1-2 to the “Sovereign Lord” who “said by the Holy Spirit...”
 - Heb. 1:6-7 | The author of Hebrews considers Deut. 32:43 and Ps. 104:4 what God *says*.

3

Toward a Verbal Theory of Inspiration

- Matt. 5:17-18
 - While not to be overinterpreted in its context, in saying that not an iota or dot (likely referring to the smallest marks within Hebrew script) of the Law or Prophets will pass away apart from their fulfillment, Jesus implicitly endorses the authority of even the minutiae of OT Law and Prophets.
- Other examples could be given: many of the examples provided in the inerrancy module also seem to imply verbal inspiration in addition to inerrancy.

At this point, we have argued for inspiration down to the verbal, as opposed to the thought, level. This, however, does not settle the dispute between those who hold to a verbal theory and those who hold to a dictation theory, as both hold that inspiration extends to the very words.

4

Why Not Dictation?

- 1 Cor. 2:12-13
 - Word-for-word dictation seems to be a very unnatural way to understand the "imparting" and "interpreting" of the knowledge Paul said he (and presumably, others) received from the Holy Spirit and then communicated with "words." Dictation would simply entail saying or writing certain words—no interpretation, combination or comparison required, regardless of precisely how one interprets the verse.
- 1 Cor. 7:12
 - Regardless of one's exact understanding of the distinction Paul is making here (cf. 7:10), this seems to suggest Paul was not aware of any specific words spoken/transmitted to him to write on this issue.

5

Why Not Dictation?

- Many (most?) parts of Scripture evince no evidence that an author was receiving dictated instructions by a divine voice, with "Thus says the Lord" prophetic utterances being an obvious exception. John was commanded to write down what he *saw* (Rev. 1:19), for example, while part of Luke's confidence was the result of historical *investigation* (Lk. 1:1-4). In the absence of such evidence, why adopt the dictation view? How does the dictation view carry the burden of proof in the first place?

6

Why Not Dictation?

- The Vocabulary Argument
 - If God did not dictate the words of Scripture verbatim and instead was limited by the backgrounds, vocabularies and education of each author, then God would have been severely handicapped in giving verbal revelation. It would be an inconceivable coincidence if every biblical author already knew every word God wanted penned in Scripture.
 - Response: God shaped the entire life of each author to acquire the necessary vocabulary to write their portion of the Scriptures; no one author needed an *exhaustive* vocabulary or background knowledge.
- The Sovereignty Argument
 - The only way to *guarantee* the Scriptures contained the words God desired for them to contain is to have complete control over exactly what was written (i.e., dictation).
 - Response: God's complete control is not incompatible with working through beliefs, desires and personalities of individuals; confluence does not entail lack of total sovereignty.

7

Inspiration: What Does it Mean to be "God-Breathed?"

- We have said up to this point that inspiration either *is* or results in Scripture being God's words. But what does that mean, exactly?
 - Isa. 36:1-12 - In what straightforward sense are these "God's words?"
 - Titus 1:12 - In what straightforward sense are these "God's words?"
 - 1 Cor 1:16 - In what straightforward sense are these "God's words?"
- **Text or Authors?**
 - While we regularly (and appropriately) speak of both inspired authors and inspired Scriptures, properly speaking, is "inspiration" a property that *primarily* belongs to Scripture (a very special kind of text) or one that *primarily* belongs to the *authors* of Scripture (a very special kind of influence). Which one more meaningfully explains the other?
- The Challenge of Meticulous Sovereignty
 - God plans every detail of creation according to his will and wisdom and, in one way or another, infallibly brings his plan to pass by his power.

8

Inspiration: What Does it Mean to be "God-Breathed?"

- Grudem: "... the words of Scripture are God's very words."
 - **Pros/Cons?**
- Erickson: "...that supernatural influence of the Spirit on the Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God."
 - **Pros/Cons?**
- Frame: "...a divine act that creates an identity between a divine word and a human word."
 - **Pros/Cons?**
- Davis: "...that influence of the Holy Spirit on the writing of the Bible that ensures that the words of its various texts are appropriate both for the role that they play in Scripture and for the overall salvific purpose of Scripture itself."
 - **Pros/Cons?**

9

Inspiration: What Does it Mean to be “God-Breathed?”

– Warfield: “It is this final act in the production of Scripture which is technically called ‘inspiration’; and inspiration is thus brought before us as, in the minds of the writers of the New Testament, that particular operation of God in the production of Scripture which takes effect at the very point of the writing of Scripture... with the effect of giving to the resultant Scripture a specifically supernatural character, and constituting it a Divine, as well as human, book.”

• **Pros/Cons?**

– Krug: “To say that Scripture is inspired is to say that it is intended by God to serve as the authoritative and preeminent source of divine revelation, instruction and edification for the people of God throughout the ages.”

• **Pros/Cons?**
