

THE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE: A STRONG ARGUMENT FOR CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIANITY

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Abstract

In the study of Christian religion, the first and foremost question is that of its source of authority. The question of Biblical authority is not a new one. From the earliest centuries of the church there have been periodic attacks on Bible's integrity, making it necessary to formulate a basic doctrine of the Scripture. But this attack continues to be renewed. There are many people who do not accept the Bible as final authority in their practice of theology. They substitute a variety of other authorities such as tradition, experience and reason. But none of those is sufficient to be an authority for Christian theology. The Bible is the only and final authority for Christian teaching. This is because the Bible is inspired. Inspiration is a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness.

Keywords: Bible, Authority, Inspiration

Introduction

The question of authority is vital in every field of endeavor. This is not different from Christian religion. In the study of Christian religion, the first and foremost question is that of its source of authority. The question of Biblical authority is not a new one. From the earliest centuries of the church there have been periodic attacks on the Bible's integrity, making it necessary long ago to formulate a basic doctrine of the Scripture. But this attack continues to be renewed. Jack Cottrel observes, "Even though the issues are the same and have been faced and settled many times before, they are being resurrected again, sometimes in subtle ways. Hence it is necessary to meet them again and restate the nature of Biblical authority for the present era" (*Solid* 7). One such subtle way of denial is held by William Countryman when he writes, "I shall begin the construction of a positive statement about biblical authority. But it is first necessary to see what the authority of the Bible is not. It does not consist in the Bible's infallibility, whether as a

source of scientific and historical information or as a sure guide to theology and morality" (24). He believes that one of the approaches that is creating unnecessary problems in the modern age is to insist that "the Bible must be used as a limiting factor, and the Christian religion should not be allowed to go too far beyond what it had originally been" (25). He felt that this is problematic because it will not only be "enough for all Christian teaching to be simply compatible with Scripture; it must be proven by the Bible" (Countryman 25-26). The problem with this view is that how can one talk about authority if it is not to be a final say? On the other hand, how can the Bible be authoritative if it is fallible? John Clifford has well said, "To admit any mistake in the record of events, statement of fact or methods of reasoning, is to remove the Bible from its throne and leave the Christian to the contradictions of his own mind and the confusions of his own intelligence" (30). This study therefore, is to show that the Bible is the only and final authority for Christian teaching.

"Why is this question of authority so

important?” asks John M. Adams (102). It is because many “Christians” take the authority of the Scripture for granted. We do not think through what we mean by saying that it is authoritative. Some have become skeptical about the Bible’s complete trustworthiness while others simply are indifferent to such matters as the nature of the Bible.

The word “authority” is from the Greek, *exousia* and is defined as “the right to do something or the right over something” (TDNT 1:562). It is further said *exousia*, “is the power displayed in the fact that a command is obeyed, i.e., the power to pronounce it” (TDNT 1:563). In other words, authority is the right to command and enforce obedience. Hence, when we talk of the Bible as the authority for Christian religion, we are saying that it is only the Bible that has the absolute power to command what must be obeyed in Christianity. Wayne Grudem writes, “The authority of the Scripture means that all the words in Scripture are God’s Word in such a way that to disobey any word of Scripture is to disbelieve or disobey God” (73). But there are great many people who do not accept the Bible as final authority in their practice of theology. They substitute a variety of other “authorities.”

Sources of Authority

Reason

Some people have appealed to reason as the authority in theology. Jack Cottrell gives three main functions of human reason. There is the speculative or inferential use. In this case reason serves as the very origin of truth. There is also the analytical or instrumental use. Here reason is used to analyze and organize already-accepted truth, with the purpose of understanding it and explaining it to others. Finally, there is the evaluative use, whereby reason is used to examine various positions that claim to be true and determines which of

them is really true by applying to them the acceptable rules of evidence (*Faith* 21). With respect to the question of authority in theology, only the inferential use is relevant. It is held by some that the truth of theology can be attained beginning only with ideas existing in the mind. M. James Sawyer writes that the Enlightenment “was an intellectual movement during the eighteenth century that elevated human reason to near-divine status and ascribed to it the ability to discern truth of all types apart from any appeal to supernatural divine revelation. During the Enlightenment, humans believed it was possible to reason their way to God” (398). Sawyer further writes, “The Enlightenment philosophers attempted to know God as he is in himself by reasoning up to him” (400).

Subsequently, the intellectuals of this period rejected external authority and promoted reason as the standard for all beliefs and actions. But while it is the case that reason is necessary in our understanding of God (Ps. 1.2; 1 Pet. 3.15), reason in and of itself cannot be a standard or authority in Christian theology. This is because “human beings are finite creatures who are bound by their egocentric predicament, and thus forever limited in knowledge and liable to error” (Cottrell, *Faith* 23). Bernard Ramm says, “Reason has been made a religious authority by some writers on the subject, but reason is a *mode* of apprehension. If reason apprehends the truth, it is the truth apprehended which is authoritative, not reason” (44). Wolfhart Pannenberg has well said, “Human knowledge of God can be a true knowledge that correlates to the divine reality only if it originates in the deity itself. God can be known only if he gives himself to be known. The loftiness of the divine reality makes it inaccessible to us unless it makes itself known” (189). Apostle Paul writes, “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we

preach to save those who believe” (1 Cor. 1.21).

Experience

Some people hold experience (individual and corporate encounters with life) to be the authority for theology. C. W. Christian writes, “Theology comes from experience” (29). John Wesley, one of the great reformers held experience to be one of the sources of theology. George A. Turner says, “To Wesley experience provided another criterion that served to assure him whether or not a given interpretation was in accord with the Spirit of truth” (176). His method called the “Wesleyan quadrilateral” refers to the four sources to which Wesley appealed for authority in doing theology. These are Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience (Sawyer 112). There is, however, a problem with the Wesleyan method. Stanley J. Grenz observes, “Perhaps, its gravest difficulty lies in its appeal to experience as a theological norm . . .” (15).

While one’s theology may emerge from his reaction to life as he experiences it, experience cannot be the norm for theology. This is because experience is subjective. From his experience, Apostle Paul thought he was right but found out that he was wrong (cf. Acts 26.4-14; Phil. 3.6-8). Grenz holds that experience cannot be a proper source of theology because “any appeal to an unreflective individual experience is by its own nature subjective. It lacks any canon by means of which it can be judged, both as to whether it is real or imagined and as to whether it is positive or negative, good or evil” (16). Similarly, Cottrell writes, “We can never be sure that our inner feelings, experiences, or ‘voices’ are from God, from Satan, or from our own subconscious; and we can never be sure that we have interpreted or even remembered them correctly” (*Faith* 23). Ramm observes, “Experience is the means by which we are put in contact with truth; it is not

itself the truth” (45). While one’s background and ideas are important in the study of biblical truth, they are however, not the truth itself. Paul Tillich voiced a telling criticism of any method that elevates experience to normative status. He notes, “Experience is not the source from which the content of systematic theology is taken but the medium through which they are existentially received” (42).

Tradition

There are some people who hold tradition as an authority for theology. Tradition is from the Greek, *paradosis*. It means, “What is transmitted” (*TDNT abr.* 168). This can be understood in different ways. There is no problem with tradition if it is based on revelation from God. Paul says to the Corinthians, “Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered to you” (1 Cor. 11.2). Similarly, to the Thessalonians he says, “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter” (2 Thess. 2.15). The tradition Paul talked about was alright because it was a product of revelation. But some hold on to tradition which is not a product of revelation. James Sawyer writes that, “The Council of Trent had declared that there were two equal and independent sources of revelation and authority: Scripture and tradition. These two sources were understood to be separate, parallel, and of equal weight” (265).

In the Roman Catholic Church, “tradition” refers primarily to the teachings of the apostles that were passed along to others orally rather than in writing. In the 1994 Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church we have, “Indeed, the apostolic teaching, which is expressed in a special way in the inspired books was to be preserved in a continuous line of succession until the end of time. This living transmission, accomplished in the Holy Spirit

is called Tradition, since it is distinct from Sacred Scripture. . .” (qtd in Sawyer 265). Cottrell observes, “In Catholicism such tradition is seen as having an authority equivalent to Scripture itself, and is a primary source for theology” (*Faith* 22). The Roman Catholic Church apparently affirmed two sources of special revelation: Scripture and the Tradition of the church. But in “recent years, this ‘dual source’ theory has come into question within the Roman Catholic Church” (Sproul 108). On the other hand, every protestant denomination has inherited its own formative creeds, manuals, and practices which constitute a body of unofficial traditions. Cottrell observes, “While these are not regarded as having normative authority, they still may function as a very influential source of theology from generation to generation” (*Faith* 23). But while the tradition of the church which has been passed down to us may help to shape our theology, it is not an authority for theology. This is the case because several people hold on to several different traditions and because of the finite nature of our knowledge, it is hard to pass down accurately any tradition we might have received orally. Furthermore, in Matthew 15.2-9, Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and the Scribes for transgressing the Commandment of God because of their tradition (cf. Mark 7.5-13). This indicates that tradition cannot be put on the same plane with the written Word of God.

The Bible

We have observed that not one of the above positions can be regarded as an authority for theology. We here claim that the Bible is the only authority for Christian theology. Jack Rogers begins his work with the statement, “Evangelicals believe that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God” (17). John Calvin asserts that “True knowledge of God comes only from divine revelation in the Word of God” (Sawyer 310). Similarly, the

Princetonian Scholars who took after Calvin “. . . saw the Scriptures as the foundation of all theological study and authority” (Sawyer 326). Although Karl Barth, the founder of Neo-orthodoxy was inconsistent in his thought (cf. Parker 72),¹ he insisted that theology must be grounded in the Word of God alone (458).

But why is the claim that the Bible alone should be the authority for Christian theology? Some have argued that in religious authority, God is the final authority. This is true but the question is, how does God express his authority? Does He express it through ecumenical councils, religious intuition or through man’s best thoughts about God? Evidently, God expresses his authority through divine self-revelation. If God is the object of Christian theology and He is known only as He reveals Himself, then, there can be no rational objection to the authority of divine revelation. Pannenberg says, “. . . the knowledge of God is possible only through revelation” (189). “In an event of revelation God takes the initiative and acts in such a way that data about himself and his world are made available to us and come into our consciousness” (Cottrell, *Faith* 18).

Sometimes objective revelation is general, being available equally to the whole human race in general (cf. Ps. 19.1; Rom. 1.18-20); sometimes it is specific, being given only to specific people at specific times and places. This form of revelation is both verbal and specific and is called “special revelation.” General revelation however, is nonverbal and is not able to communicate to us the One true God and the redemptive act of God. “No one can tell *a priori* what is necessary for salvation” (Hodge 25). Therefore, if God would want to reveal himself to us with respect to His Oneness and His redemptive

¹ Clark Pinnock also shows Barth’s inconsistency. He writes, “While preaching the errancy of the Bible, Barth practices its inerrancy” (57).

plan, He would do in a special way, through special revelation. Ralph Gilmore has rightly said, “If God did reveal Himself in a special revelation, then it would either be written, oral or immediate to each individual” (191).

God at first began to reveal Himself orally and immediate to certain special people. The prophets were such spokesmen of revelation, and they spoke with delegated authority. At the same time God was sending the prophets to preach, He also commanded them to write down the message. Hence, He intended that the central and representative part of the revelation be preserved. God himself set the pattern by writing the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone with his own “finger” (Exod. 31.18) even after he had spoken them audibly (Deut. 5.22). Moses wrote down the rest of the law at the command of God (Exod. 24.4; 34.27). God also commanded subsequent prophets and apostles to write down the message they received (Jer. 30.2; 36.2; Luke 1.3; Rev. 1.11, 19). Ramm observes, “The written revelation had the same status as the inspired utterance of the prophet” (27).

There are several reasons why it was necessary for revelation to be written. First, “this put it in permanent form so that it is available to future generations as well as to the people who immediately receive it” (Cottrell, *Solid* 26). Since Revelation was given to particular persons in particular historical circumstances, it must be put into a form that is permanently available. Secondly, this makes it become an objective standard, accessible to all in the same form and the same way. Cottrell notes that the written revelation nullifies all appeals to subjective experience such as inner voices, personal “revelation,” intuitive opinions, visions, and feelings (*Solid* 27). The only sure source of truth is the objective word of the Scripture. No wonder Christ and the New Testament writers constantly appealed to the Words of the Old Testament when they said, “It is written” (cf.

Matt. 4.10; Rom. 1.17). Thirdly, this gives it a certain finality that is appropriate for its absolute authority. Whenever a law or a prophecy is written, that makes it final and binding. God ordered his judgments to be written as an everlasting testimony (Exod. 17.14; Isa. 30.8). Once these words are written, they must not be changed (Rev. 22.18-19). It then becomes decisive and absolute, down to the smallest letter (Matt. 5.17-18).

Since God has decided to communicate His words to us through spokesmen, this gives another problem. How can He be sure the spokesmen will remember and present the message in its original form? When He reveals his Word to the prophets, He knows the proper words are being used. But what is the assurance that they will pass out or write the Word just as they have received? Here is where inspiration enters the picture.

Inspiration is “a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness” (Warfield 131). Similarly, Cottrell writes, “Inspiration is the term used to refer to the special supernatural supervision exercised by God over His messengers to make sure they communicate His message accurately” (*Solid* 30). The men who wrote the Bible were thus inspired or supervised; therefore, we can rest assure that it is what God intended the writers to say. Grenz says, inspiration, “is that work of the Holy Spirit in influencing the authors and compilers of Scripture to produce writings which adequately reflect what God desired to communicate to us” (382). Because of inspiration, we know that when we read the Bible, we are reading the Word of God. But there are some who have objected to this view. Clark Pinnock writes,

In its view of biblical authority, liberal theology considers it important to

insist that the Bible is a merely human text—written, copied, translated, and interpreted by fallible people. It contains all manner of internal contradictions, moral blemishes, legend and saga, inaccuracies, and the like. It is a collection of intensely human documents and is not an authority beyond criticism or correction. To regard it as God's written Word is an idolatrous perversion of belief which must be dethroned. (50)

Similarly, Paul J. Achtemeier notes that to the liberalist, "Scripture therefore must be seen as a collection of materials written by fallible men" (43). Pinnock further writes, "The respect liberals have for the Bible is not respect for it as an authoritarian book, but as a classical witness of those in whose lives God once worked which can once again serve to alert us to his reality" (53).

It can be observed that the liberal theologians in totality reject the inspiration of the Bible and its authority. Karl Barth believes that, "The prophets and apostles as such, even in their office, even in their function as witnesses, even the act of writing down their witness, were . . . actually guilty of error in their spoken and written word (528-29). He further writes, "But the vulnerability of the Bible, i.e., its capacity for error, also extends to its religious or theological content" (509). These groups altogether played down the place of the Spirit in the composition of the Bible. This becomes a matter of concern. Edward J. Young has well observed,

Let no one say it is a matter of indifference whether the original [manuscript] was inerrant; it is a matter of greatest importance, for the honor and veracity of God Himself are at stake. If there are actual errors in the original copies of the Bible, the Word

which has come from the mouth of God is not a perfect Word, and the God of truth is guilty of error. (88)

The Bible in various ways proclaims and asserts its own divinity. It has emphatically declared that in a unique manner it has come to us a Word from God. How do we know this? The Bible clearly teaches that it is inspired. Although the word inspiration does not appear much, the fact that God himself spoke through the Biblical writers is often affirmed. Let us consider some of the testimonies of the Bible about itself. Since an exhaustive survey of the evidence would be impossible, we shall consider few examples. In Exodus 4.10-12 we have this record:

But Moses said to the LORD, 'Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.' Then the LORD said to him, 'Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.'²

Notice that in this passage, the LORD does not just promise a communication of thoughts or concepts alone but also a communication of words. The LORD says to Moses, "Now therefore go, I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." Stewart Custer observes, "This revelation of words is the basis of verbal inspiration" (14). In the giving of the Ten Commandment we have, "And He [God] gave to Moses, when He had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God" (Exod. 31.18). Here we are told that after the LORD

² All Scriptural references are from English Standard Version unless otherwise stated.

has spoken with Moses, He gave him two tablets of stone “written with the finger of God.” In 2 Samuel 23.2, King David says, “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue.” Here David disclaims responsibility for his prophecies. The New Testament confirms this: “Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David . . .” (Acts 1.16).

Prophet Isaiah says, “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7.14). The New Testament confirms that it was the Lord that spoke these words through Isaiah: “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel’ [which means, God with us]” (Matt. 1.22-23). Similarly, God commanded Isaiah to write the word of his prophecy, “And now, go, write it before them on a tablet and inscribe it in a book, that it may be for the time to come as a witness forever. For they are a rebellious people, lying children, children unwilling to hear the instruction of the LORD” (Isa. 30.8-9).

Prophet Jeremiah when describing his call says, “Now the word of the LORD came to me, saying . . . then the LORD says to me, ‘behold I have put my words in your mouth’” (Jer. 1.4, 9). Nehemiah holds that God warns his people by his Spirit through his prophets: “Many years you bore with them and warned them by your Spirit through your prophets. Yet they would not give ear. Therefore, you gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands” (Neh. 9.30). Drawing a sharp contrast between himself and the false prophets of his day, prophet Micah says, “But as for me, I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the LORD, and with justice and might, to declare to Jacob his transgression and to Israel his sin” (Mic. 3.8). Custer correctly observe that, “The

Old Testament prophets disowned all responsibility for the words which they uttered under inspiration of God; they were not proclaiming their own words or opinions, but rather the Words of the Living God. The prophets spoke forth in all faithfulness the words which God commanded them to speak” (31).

The New Testament continues this same teaching that all responsibility for the truth of the Scripture rests on God. When the Lord Jesus promises the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, he says, “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come” (John 16.13). He also says, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (John 14.26).

Apostle Paul knew that the Holy Spirit was guiding him in his writing (1 Cor. 7.40). He writes, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons” (1 Tim. 4.1). Paul also writes, “When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3.4-5)

Paul refers to both the Old Testament and the New Testament as Scripture when he cites Deuteronomy 25.4 and Luke 10.7 together in writing to Timothy. He says, “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,’ and, ‘The laborer deserves his wages’” (1 Tim. 5.18). Since Paul refers to both the Old and New Testaments as Scripture, he is in effect saying that both are inspired. Custer observes, “This shows that

Paul considered the New Testament to be on the same plane as the Old Testament and would quote them both as equally inerrant and authoritative” (50).

The classic affirmation of the inspiration of the Bible is 2 Timothy 3.16: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” It is affirmed here that God breathed forth Scripture with the meaning which He intends to convey to mankind. Cottrell notes, “The divine origin of the written word could not be more clearly attested” (*Solid* 32). Benjamin B. Warfield says, “In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a Divine product. . . No term could have been chosen, however, which would have more emphatically asserted the Divine production of Scripture than that which is here employed” (133). The purpose of the Scripture Paul says, was, “that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3.17). This means that when the New Testament Scriptures were completed, the canon of Scripture was closed. There is no other revelation from God which man needs; otherwise, man could not be ‘thoroughly equipped for every good work’ by Scripture alone. In fact, in the Scripture we are told that God by His divine power, “has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1.3).

Apostle Peter teaches that the Holy Spirit moved the Old Testament prophets to prophesy concerning Christ:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories (1 Pet. 1.10-11).

He adds that now men are preaching the Gospel with the Holy Spirit sent from heaven: “It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look” (1 Pet. 1.12). Peter clearly shows that it was the Holy Spirit who was responsible for the message of the prophets: “Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 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” (2 Pet. 1.20-21). This means the prophets were not just giving their own interpretations of the works of God.

When Peter says “no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation,” it means that it was “not a result of human investigation into the nature of things, the product of its writers' own thinking. This is as much as to say it is of Divine gift” (Warfield 136). Furthermore, the human writers of Scripture were not free to choose whatever words they wished in proclaiming their messages; they “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Apostle Peter here emphatically denied that prophecy owes its origin to human initiative. Equally is the emphatic assertion that the source lies in God, for men who spoke it, “spoke from God.” The Scripture writers were also said to be, “carried along.” Warfield observes,

What is ‘borne’ [“carried along” ESV] is taken up by the ‘bearer,’ and conveyed by the ‘bearer’s’ power, not its own, to the ‘bearer’s’ goal, not its own. The men who spoke from God are here declared, therefore, to have been taken up by the Holy Spirit and brought by His power to the goal of His choosing. (137)

In other words, the message they spoke under the operation of the Holy Spirit were His message, not theirs. Apostle Peter equated Paul's writings with the Scripture:

And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. (2 Pet. 3.15-16)

Apostle John claims that he was under the influence of the Holy Spirit when he received his revelation: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet" (Rev. 1.10). Seven times over in the messages to the seven churches of Asia John says, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2.7, 11, 17, 29; 3.6, 13, 22). Would John be giving his own thoughts and says that the Holy Spirit is saying them, will at the least be deceitful and at the most be impious and blasphemous. The fact is that John was not giving his own words, he was faithfully writing what the Holy Spirit wants exactly recorded.

Hence, we observe that the Scripture claims for itself divine origin. Because of inspiration we can claim that the Bible is the Spirit's book. This is why the Scripture is authoritative. Grenz says, "Scripture is ultimately a function of the Spirit. It finds its source and its abiding importance in the activity of the one who breathes it" (392).

While we talk of the inspiration of the Bible, there are different views. First, is the "Bible contains the Word of God" theory. This theory "holds that God did not inspire anything relative to language; but perhaps to external

circumstances or surrounding. God may have put Biblical writers in inspirational settings" (Gilmore 102). The aim of those who promote this view is to deny that the Bible is God's Word. "In saying that it contains God's Word, they leave room for it also to contain myths, fables, legends, and various human errors" (McClish 92). It is clear from this view that the reader of Bible must be able to "use his or her critical judgment in deciding what is acceptable as Word of God, and what is simply human words" (Achte-meier 46).

Second, is the theory of "Partial Inspiration." This theory teaches that the sacred writers were guided by the Holy Spirit in all matters essential to the great purposes of revelation, such as matters of doctrine, morals and faith; but in all other matters they were left to their natural powers, and that therefore they were, in regard to these, as liable to mistakes as other men. This view allows for Biblical errors in matters of science, geography, history, and other such matters. Jimmy Jividen rightly observes, "If proponents of this view consider part of the text inaccurate or containing factual error, how can they logically accept another part which cannot be validated by observable facts?" (31-32). "The truth is that the Neo-orthodox enterprise of trying to re-establish the authority of biblical teaching on salvation while rejecting biblical teaching on Scripture is inherently inconsistent and self-contradictory" (Parker 73).

Third, is "the Bible becomes the Word of God" theory. This theory "holds that the Bible may be no different from other books as regard its composition, but it is different in that the Holy Spirit can use it and make it a means of revelation by speaking through it to particular individuals and communities" (Marshall 35). Hence, the Bible becomes the Word of God when the Holy Spirit speaks to us personally by it. This view nullifies any teaching of the Scripture that does not appeal

to the reader. The fourth theory holds that the “Bible is only Divine, devoid of any human adjunction.” This is also called the “Mechanical Dictation” theory. This theory holds that the Bible writers were nothing more than tape recorders or printers. I. Howard Marshall observes, “Since the messages which the prophets proclaimed as the Words of God are couched in their distinctive literary styles rather than being in one uniform ‘divine’ style, it seems quite clear that even in the case of the prophets the theory of direct dictation is not universally applicable” (33). This theory does not correspond to the facts in the Bible itself.

The fifth view is that the “Bible is both Divine and Human.” This view holds that “The Holy Spirit superintended the inspiration, even to the level of words chosen. However, individual inspired writers wrote within their own frames of reference. The Holy Spirit guarantees the accuracy of their writing” (Gilmore 106). This is the right view of inspiration taught by the Bible and therefore held by this writer. Several passages of the Bible show both these divine and human elements (cf. 1 Cor. 2.4-13; 2 Cor. 2.13). Cottrell writes, “Even in cases where the Biblical authors were most dependent on the Spirit, they were not in passive, unconscious state . . . They were conscious of their activity; their full natural personality was operative; they spoke and wrote in their own vocabulary and literary style” (*Solid* 36).

The fact of inspiration has been established. We have shown that inspiration applies to God’s messengers. Supernatural power was exerted on men themselves (2 Pet.1.21). But inspiration does not apply to the messengers only. Their word itself is inspired; it is Scripture that is “God breathed” (2 Tim. 3.16). This makes inspiration to be a quality imparted to the writings (original autograph) of God’s messengers as a result of the influence upon them. Since every part of the

Bible was produced under the divine guidance of the Holy Spirit, the whole Bible is inspired. In other word, inspiration is “plenary” or “entire.” This means it is both the Old and New Testaments that is inspired. This also means that every kind of Biblical writings (historical, doctrinal, geographical, moral, faith, etc) bears the quality of inspiration. Jesus rebuked those who did not believe in “all that the prophets have spoken” (Luke 24.25). Apostle Paul holds that he believes, “everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets” (Acts 24.14).

Inspiration is also extended not only to the thoughts being conveyed but to the very words by which they were conveyed. Pinnock thus writes, “If inspiration had nothing to do with words, it would be irrelevant” (qtd. in Cottrell, *Solid* 34). Jesus Christ shows the importance of every Word that comes from God (Matt. 4.4). Paul also emphasizes the importance of every Word of God (Gal. 3.16). Thus, “All Scripture is breathed out [inspired] by God” (2 Tim. 3.16).

Conclusion

What is the result of inspiration? What kind of book is the inspired Bible? Because the Bible is a product of inspiration, it is God’s Word. God was in full control of its production. What was written was what He wanted written. Kenneth S. Kantzer cites John Calvin as saying, “In the Bible we do not have the word of fallible human beings. We do not even have the testimony of perfect finite beings” (121). But it is the Word of God. Since the Bible is the Word of God, it has divine authority. The ultimate authority of Scripture is founded upon its being spoken by God. John H. Gerstner writes, “The Bible’s being the Word of God is the only foundation for full biblical authority” (23). Similarly, Calvin argues, “the highest proof for the authority of Scripture is uniformly taken from the character of Him whose Word it is”

(Kantzer 121). Because the Bible has divine authority, it is the only and final authority for Christian theology. The Bible as final authority is derived from its inspiration by God. This leaves out such things as reason, tradition, and or experience as authority in the practice of theology.

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