

## LESSON 3

### BIBLICAL INSPIRATION AND AUTHORITY

#### Introduction

##### The distinction between revelation and inspiration

Revelation and inspiration are two closely related concepts. In the previous lesson, emphasis was placed on the meaning of revelation. *Revelation* is the activity of God in which He makes Himself and His purpose known to man. It is the source of truth received. *Inspiration* is concerned with the method of receiving, interpreting, and recording the truth revealed by God. God has disclosed His nature and will to man through angels, dreams, visions, nature, writings, voices, casting of lots, inner voice of the individual conscience, and His Son ("In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets"—Heb. 1:1, RSV). That which God revealed was received, interpreted, and recorded by the prophets.

The receiving, interpreting, and transmitting of God's revelation involves both human and divine activity. The revelation may be transmitted orally or recorded in documentary form. The divine activity inspires and guides man in his work of interpreting and preserving revelation. The Bible as the embodied revelation of God is both human and divine in origin. Inspiration is the divine activity in which the Holy Spirit guides the minds of selected men and renders them organs of God for the communication of the revelation.

##### The meaning of inspiration

Inspiration may refer to the activity of inspiration or to the result of that activity. Based on the statement in 2 Timothy 3:16, B. B. Warfield described inspiration as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God (the activity of inspiration). The authority of the Scripture depends on its inspiration. The contemporary denial of the authority of the Bible has resulted from a scepticism concerning its inspiration.

#### The Biblical Description of Inspiration

##### The Old Testament

The Lord instructed Moses to put words into the mouth of Aaron, "and I will be with your mouth . . . , and will teach you what you shall do. He shall speak for you to the people; and he shall be a mouth for you, and you shall be to him as God" (Exod. 4:15-16, RSV). Later, God said, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet" (Exod. 7:1, RSV). The concept in these Scriptures is that a prophet is one who speaks words which God puts into his mouth. Amos stated, "The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3:8). When the prophet spoke under the control of the Holy Spirit, he could claim the word to be the Lord's, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Isa. 40:5). God said to Jeremiah, "Behold I have put my words in thy mouth" (1:9).

Revelation is the \_\_\_\_\_ of God in which He makes Himself and His \_\_\_\_\_ known to \_\_\_\_\_.

Inspiration is the \_\_\_\_\_ of receiving, interpreting, and recording the truth revealed by \_\_\_\_\_.

(activity, purpose, man, method, God)

Inspiration is the \_\_\_\_\_ activity in which the \_\_\_\_\_ guides men as they communicate revelation. Therefore, the result of inspiration is the inspired \_\_\_\_\_.

(divine, Holy Spirit, Scripture)

A prophet is one who speaks words which \_\_\_\_\_ puts in his \_\_\_\_\_.

(God, mouth)

## The New Testament

Three New Testament Scriptures set forth the doctrine of inspiration:

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. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, RSV)

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. (2 Pet. 1:20-21, RSV)

In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son. . . . (Heb. 1:1-2, RSV)

These Scriptures teach:

1. The writings instead of the writers were inspired (2 Tim. 3:16—"All scripture is inspired by God . . .");
2. Scripture is of divine origin (2 Tim. 3:16—"inspired by God"; 2 Pet. 1:21—"Men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God");
3. Scripture is the work of human writers (2 Pet. 1:21—"men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God");
4. The Word from God was first spoken and then written (2 Pet. 1:20-21—by implication). Scripture (writing) was spoken by the prophets.

Second Timothy 3:16 places the emphasis on the result of inspiration, the recorded Word or Bible. It is the Scripture which is inspired. Second Peter 1:21 emphasizes that the activity of writing was directed by the Spirit. Hebrews 1:1 seems to include both the agent and the result of inspiration. These Scriptures tell us that man was guided by the Spirit of God in receiving, communicating, and recording the Word of God.

The Holy Spirit was the source of inspiration. No true prophet could speak "Thus saith the Lord" unless he had a special endowment of the Holy Spirit; he must be "moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21, RSV). Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, he interpreted the meaning of that revelation and communicated it to others ("men . . . spoke from God").

In 1 Corinthians 2:11-16, Paul points out that no man knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of that man. Likewise, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. The Spirit is able to make known the mind of God to spiritual man.

It should be remembered that the New Testament Scriptures describing inspiration refer to the Old Testament. The New Testament books were in the process of being written and were recognized later as inspired. The fact that the New Testament came to be recognized as the inspired, authoritative Word of God establishes the inspiration of the Old Testament.

### Jesus' View of Inspiration

Jesus considered the Old Testament to be the inspired and authoritative Word of God. He frequently introduced Scripture by saying, "It is written" (Mark 12:36); however, Jesus did not exclude the human activity of the person who wrote or spoke the Word of God.

Jesus' view of inspiration and authority did not make all of the Old Testament binding for all ages. He believed Moses was the author of the Pentateuch and David was the author of the

Four New Testament teachings concerning inspiration are:

1. The \_\_\_\_\_ instead of the writers were \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Scripture is of \_\_\_\_\_ origin.
3. Scripture is the work of human \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The Word of God was first \_\_\_\_\_ and then \_\_\_\_\_.

(writings, inspired, divine, writers, spoken, written)

The source of inspiration is the \_\_\_\_\_

(Holy Spirit)

The term Scripture in the New Testament refers to the \_\_\_\_\_ Scriptures.

(Old Testament)

Jesus considered the Old Testament to be the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ Word of God.

(inspired, authoritative)

However, Jesus' view of inspiration and authority (did, did not) make all of the Old Testament binding for all ages.

Psalms. He did not consider Moses to have spoken the final word. When he was questioned concerning divorce (Matt. 19:2-9), He quoted from Genesis 2:24 and interpreted the Scripture to mean that a man and his wife were not to divorce. The Pharisees objected to His interpretation by referring to Deuteronomy 24:1, which permitted divorce if the wife no longer found favour in the eyes of her husband. Jesus replied, "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8). Although Jesus regarded the Old Testament as inspired and authoritative, He indicated that parts of it were no longer to be followed as authoritative. However, a person of less authority than Jesus should be cautious about discarding any part of the Old Testament.

Jesus shared a deep reverence and respect for the Old Testament. He stated that He did not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets (Matt. 5:17), but He intended to give a deeper meaning and correct interpretation to them. He did not practise a blind loyalty or formal adherence to Scripture, yet He esteemed it as the Word of God to man (Matt. 22:31). He frequently used the Old Testament to support His arguments and gave no evidence of doubting its authority.

### The Apostles' View of Inspiration

The Old Testament was the Bible of the apostles also. They held to a high view of inspiration and authority. In Acts 1:16, Peter said, "My friends, the prophecy in Scripture was bound to come true, which the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of David, uttered about Judas who acted as guide to those who arrested Jesus" (NEB). According to this Scripture, Peter believed that the Old Testament was the Word of God spoken by David under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Matthew held a similar view: "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet . . ." (Matt. 1:22).

### The Inspiration of the New Testament

#### The Gospels

Jesus claimed He was "in the Father" and "the Father was in Him." The words which He spoke to His disciples were not from Himself but from the Father who dwelt in Him (John 14:10). He claimed His teachings were from God (John 7:17). If these claims are true, and the apostles were convinced they were, the words of Jesus were from the Father; thus His words recorded in the Gospels were from God.

His life was under the control of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 3:16; 4:1), and His work was in the power of the Spirit of God (Matt. 12:28). Inspiration has reference to words and works resulting from the activity of the Holy Spirit. The words and works of Jesus were inspired, and the writers believed this when then they wrote the Gospels.

#### The writings of the apostles

The Scripture states in a number of places that the words of God were put into or expressed through the mouth of the prophet. No explanation is given how this happened. The disciples of Jesus, the New Testament prophets, were promised that in the hour of need the Holy Spirit would speak through them (cf. Matt. 10:19-20). Jesus said of the Spirit, "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). Jesus stated that when "he, the

(did not)

Jesus did not accept Moses' teaching concerning \_\_\_\_\_.

(divorce)

Jesus said He came not to \_\_\_\_\_ the Law or the Prophets, but He came to give them deeper \_\_\_\_\_ and correct \_\_\_\_\_.

(destroy, meaning, interpretation)

The apostles believed God used the \_\_\_\_\_ of the prophets to speak His Word.

(mouths)

The words of Jesus were from the Father (inspired) because He was " \_\_\_\_\_ ."

(in the Father)

The words and works of Jesus were inspired because He was controlled by the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Holy Spirit)

Jesus promised to send the \_\_\_\_\_ to guide the \_\_\_\_\_ in all truth.

(Holy Spirit, apostles)

Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak" (John 16:13).

The epistles of the New Testament are inspired interpretations of the meaning of the life and teachings of Jesus. Paul, John, and Peter wrote to the churches to set forth the kind of life the people should live as Christians and the hope they possessed in a resurrected and ascended Lord. Paul believed he was writing under the direction and command of the Lord. (See 1 Cor. 7:6, 12—Paul explained when he expressed his own opinions with divine inspiration. John claimed to be writing the message which he had heard from the Lord and wanted to declare to the people (1 John 1:5). In the process of canonization, the Early Church came to the conviction that the Spirit of God had spoken the authoritative and inspired Word of God through certain writers.

### Views of Inspiration

Statements of various doctrinal positions should be made cautiously because: (1) theologians of similar views do not agree completely; therefore, a summary statement of a doctrinal position does not describe accurately the position of any particular person, and, (2) it is difficult to be objective and understand the position of those with whom one disagrees.

#### Liberal views

Liberal theologians argue that the world has changed radically since the early creeds of Christianity were formulated. Orthodox theology has to be restated for our modern world. Since the modern world refuses to accept as truth that which is based on authority alone, doctrines must pass the tests of reason and experience. Since new facts are coming to light in our progressive world, the mind must be kept open and pliable to all truth. Dogmatic doctrinal statements are relative to a particular time and place or given culture; therefore, doctrinal propositions cannot be applied universally and continuously.

The liberal believes that all truth must be God's truth. He does not see the necessity of protecting the Bible from critical examination. He uses the same tools of literary criticism which are applied to other ancient writings. Critical scholars have been identified as liberal scholars. It is possible, however, for a critical scholar to hold a conservative theological position.

Liberal scholarship emphasizes the dependability of man's reasoning. The human element in the origin of the Bible is stressed. Most believe the Bible is the result of an evolutionary process. Its inspiration is not to be denied, but the liberal stresses that God speaks in the Bible as He speaks elsewhere—through nature, philosophy, and the arts.

The emphasis on man largely displaces the divine authority of Scripture with that of human experience and enlightenment. Liberal scholars do not place as much emphasis on inspiration of Scripture as conservative scholars. Divine revelation and inspiration are replaced by human reason. The Bible is considered to be inspired but only in the same way as all other books are inspired, that is, by the God who is immanent in all things. They conclude that, since the Bible is produced by humans, it is liable to error.

The liberal view is basically that the Bible *contains* the Word of God along with varied admixtures of the words of men.<sup>1</sup> The Word of God may be found in the Bible by rational and

<sup>1</sup> Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 37.

The epistles of the \_\_\_\_\_  
are inspired interpretations of the meaning  
of the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of  
Jesus.

(New Testament, life, teachings)

Liberals emphasize the dependability of  
man's ability to \_\_\_\_\_.

(reason)

According to liberal scholars, divine  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
are replaced by \_\_\_\_\_.

(revelation, inspiration, human reason)

moral reflection, but one is not to equate the words of the Bible with the Word of God. Not all the words of the Bible, such as the killing of women and children in the wars of the Old Testament, are worthy to be called the divinely inspired, authoritative Word of God.

**Neo-Orthodox views**

Karl Barth began this movement in reaction to the liberal school which emphasized the critical approach and human element of the Bible. He attempted to return from liberalism to orthodoxy. He stopped short of the old theory of verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. He believed the Word of God was given through fallible, sinful men, but what is in the Bible is the Word of God and nothing less.

He presented three forms of the Word of God: preached, written, and revealed. The Bible is referred to as the written Word of God. He sharply distinguished between the revealed *Word* and the written *words* of Scripture. The Word is of God; the words are of men. He refused to limit revelation to the Bible alone. He stated that the Bible is one of the means or organs by which the Word of God operates.

Scripture is not to be identified with the revelation of God, but it is a witness to that revelation and becomes the form or event through which God speaks as it is read. It is a record of revelation but not revelation itself. Scripture is proclamation in writing. The Bible is God's Word so far as God lets it be His Word, so far as God speaks through it. Preaching can likewise become the Word of God when God speaks through it. In his view, Barth attempts to rule out bibliolatry (veneration of the Bible) and to minimize the problem of the need of an infallible Bible. According to Barth, the Bible is the human record or witness of special divine events or revelation. Since it is the first witness to the divine events, it is the most important body of writings.

Neo-orthodoxy stresses existentialism, which emphasizes a personal encounter between man and God. Man does not encounter God in the words of the Bible, but when he reads the words God speaks to him in a present and personal way.

Rudolf Bultmann contended that divine truth was clothed in first century pre-scientific terminology. Much of divine truth was expressed in the religious myths of the first century. One must look through and beyond the historical record with all of its myths and errors to the super-historical event. The historically and culturally oriented words of the Bible were not divinely inspired; these words must be stripped away to get divine truth contained in them.

The neo-orthodox view sees the Bible as becoming the Word of God occasionally and subjectively, but it is not the Word of God objectively. Neither the liberal nor neo-orthodox view believes the Bible *is* the Word of God. The liberal view holds that the Bible *contains* the Word of God and the neo-orthodox view holds that the Bible *becomes* the Word of God.<sup>2</sup>

**Conservative views**

*The Verbal Dictation Theory.*—Ultra conservatives or fundamentalists have been accused of teaching mechanical inspiration or verbal dictation. The view states that God dictated the words to the prophets who acted as recording secretaries. Not many theologians would hold to this "wooden view" of inspiration for the entire Bible. Objections to this view are based on the fact that God used human agents, not as passive receptors, but as

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 37ff.

<p><i>Karl B _____ began the _____ movement in reaction to the _____ school.</i></p> <p><i>(Barth, neo-orthodox, liberal)</i></p>
<p><i>Barth distinguishes between the _____ Word of God and the _____ Scriptures.</i></p> <p><i>(revealed, written)</i></p>
<p><i>Barth attempts to rule out _____ and to minimize the problem of the need of an infallible _____.</i></p> <p><i>(bibliolatry, Bible)</i></p>
<p><i>Rudolf Bultmann attempted to distinguish between _____ and the first century terminology in which it was expressed.</i></p> <p><i>(divine truth)</i></p>
<p><i>The Verbal Dictation Theory states that God _____ the words to the _____ who acted as recording _____. This theory is sometimes called the " _____ " of inspiration.</i></p> <p><i>(continued on next page)</i></p>

active contributors in the writing of the Scripture (cf. Rom. 16:26; Heb. 1:1). A reading of the account of the giving of the Ten Commandments may leave the impression of a verbal dictation process (Exod. 31:18); however, archaeologists have discovered that codes of law similar to the Ten Commandments were being used by neighbouring peoples hundreds of years before the birth of Moses. These discoveries do not deny that God guided Moses in the selection of the Commandments, but they point to the fact that Moses already knew many of the laws and was not a passive receptor on Mount Sinai. A second objection is that the verbal inspiration theory does not allow for the distinct and characteristic styles of the various writers. The differences in writing indicate that God is not the actual author of every word. Even the beginning student of the Bible is able to detect differences between Paul's and John's writings.

*The Dynamic Theory.*—Neo-evangelicals propose that it is not the words but the thoughts or ideas that God inspired. God gave the thoughts to the prophets who were free to record them in their own words. This view explains the obvious personality and literary differences reflected in the Scripture. It also maintains that the Bible is the Word of God because the real meaning, or the message, came from God. The biblical writer put God's words into his own words.

*The Plenary Inspiration Theory.*—This theory is claimed by some to be the orthodox view.<sup>3</sup> According to this theory, all the words (verbal) were God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16). God gave full (plenary) expression to His thoughts in the words of the biblical record. He guided the writers in choosing words which were characteristic of their age and culture but which adequately expressed the divine revelation.

### Problems in Defining Inspiration

#### The problem of defining the divine-human elements

The Bible is the work of both God and man. The Spirit of God guided the mind and understanding of man in knowing the divine word and will of God. Much of the Bible is a record of historical events. These historical events concerned the activity of God in human history, but they were interpreted by the human writers. The interpretation was directed by the Holy Spirit. Many events in the history of Israel were not recorded. The Holy Spirit guided the writers in selecting and recording the revelatory events.

There is evidence that various books of the Bible contain court records and historical accounts. A number of sources were used in the writing of 1 Kings. Some of the material was taken from the annals of Solomon: "The other acts and events of Solomon's reign, and all his wisdom, are recorded in the annals of Solomon" (1 Kings 11:41, NEB). Other material was taken from the annals of kings of Israel (see 1 Kings 14:19).

The writer of Chronicles used at least five historical books as sources (1 Chron. 27:24; 2 Chron. 20:34; 27:7; 16:11; 24:27). He mentioned also eleven prophetic writers (2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 20:34; 26:22; 32:32; 33:19) and liturgical materials (2 Chron. 29:25; 35:4; 35:15). Approximately twenty sources are mentioned in the books of Chronicles with thirty explicit references to them. There is no indication that the historical court-records and prophetic sources were divinely inspired or dictated by God. There is no reason to doubt, however, that the

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

(continued from page 40)

Two objections to this theory are:

1. God used human \_\_\_\_\_ as active contributors in the writing of the \_\_\_\_\_.

2. This theory does not allow for the distinct and characteristic \_\_\_\_\_ of the various \_\_\_\_\_.

(dictated, prophets, secretaries, wooden view, agents, Scripture, style, writers)

The Dynamic Theory says the biblical \_\_\_\_\_ put \_\_\_\_\_ words into their own words.

(writers, God's)

The Plenary Inspiration Theory proposes God guided the \_\_\_\_\_ in choosing words which were characteristic of their \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, but also adequately expressed the \_\_\_\_\_ revelation.

(writers, age, culture, divine)

The Bible is the work of both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

The \_\_\_\_\_ guided the writers in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the revelatory events.

(God, man, Holy Spirit, selecting, recording)

One of the sources of historical records for 1 Kings was the \_\_\_\_\_ of Solomon.

(annals)

Many of the historical details of 1 and 2 Chronicles were taken from \_\_\_\_\_.

(court records)

writer of Chronicles was guided by the Spirit of God in the composition of the books. He drew the historical information from known sources and was divinely guided in the interpretation and meaning of the history. The divine message lies in seeing God's hand and purpose in the history of Israel and not in the historical details of the exact number of years a king ruled. The latter were taken by the writer from the court records. The interpretation was given by God. The writings were later judged by the leaders of Israel to be inspired of God; therefore, they were recognized as canonical and were judged worthy of a place of authority.

In the New Testament, references to sources are seldom mentioned except with regard to the words and actions of Jesus. An exception is Luke who admitted in the beginning of his Gospel that he was writing an authentic account of the events concerning Jesus (cf. Luke 1:1-4). He made reference to a number of traditions or eyewitness accounts of the life and teachings of Jesus. Even though a number of these were being circulated widely, Luke proposed to examine carefully and research the narratives in order to be able to make available to Theophilus an accurate account. According to Luke's Prologue, the words in the Gospel did not come directly from God to him. This information does not discredit the inspiration of Luke's Gospel, but it does discredit a dictation theory of inspiration.

Although critical scholars have attempted to discredit the accuracy of Luke's history, recent archaeological discoveries have established his dependability as a historian.

#### **The problem of culturally oriented words and thought concepts**

For the original recipients to understand the Word from God through the prophets, divine revelation had to be expressed in words and thought concepts which were understandable to them. The concepts of heaven's being above the earth and hell's being beneath the earth corresponded to their world view that the earth was stationary and that the sun travelled around the earth. In our day of space travel, these concepts present some problems. What is "beneath the earth" and "above the earth" to a generation which is oriented to a new view of the world in which the earth rotates about the sun? Since the earth is now known to be round, how are the spatial descriptions of heaven and hell to be understood?

The problems do not deny the reality of heaven or hell; however, the modern interpreter should realize that he must use expressions which communicate divine truth to people whose concepts of the structure of the universe have changed. In considering the inspiration of the Bible, how should one distinguish between the first century language used to communicate divine truth and the divine truth itself? If the writers had used twentieth century scientific language, the message from God would not have been understood in that day. Also our contemporary language and scientific concepts will be outdated within 50 years.

Very little of the Bible is affected by the culturally conditioned language of its day. The task of the interpreter is to understand the message to the original recipients and interpret its application for today. God is able to guide this process by His Spirit.

#### **The problem of avoiding a perversion of divine revelation**

To many people Christianity is rules or doctrine set forth in a divinely inspired book. As long as one "keeps the Ten Commandments," he is satisfied with his spiritual life. He fails to realize that he is responsible to a personal God. He misses the blessings of entering into fellowship with God. He substitutes the Bible, which embodies divine revelation, for God, who makes Himself known to man.

*The divine message consists in seeing \_\_\_\_\_ hand and \_\_\_\_\_ in the history of \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(God's, purpose, Israel)*

*One must distinguish between the first \_\_\_\_\_ used to \_\_\_\_\_ divine truth and the \_\_\_\_\_ itself.*

*(language, communicate, divine truth)*

*The Bible interpreter must understand the message to the original \_\_\_\_\_ and interpret its \_\_\_\_\_ for today by the guidance of the \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(recipients, message, Holy Spirit)*

Knowledge about God as set forth in the Bible and a personal encounter with God cannot be sharply separated. The Bible embodies divine revelation in the words of man. As a divinely inspired book, the words of the Bible are binding today. The divine element in the Bible and the inspiration of the words of the prophets are evident in the prediction and fulfilment of prophecy. The divine inspiration is also evident in the contemporary relevancy of a book which was written 2000 years ago.

The Bible's significance is in its message about a loving Father who forgives and redeems. The biblical proposition or statement that God will forgive those who confess is essential to the experience of forgiveness and the encounter with the personal God. The Bible, containing divinely inspired statements, cannot be separated from existential experience.

### The problem of finding adequate terms

Words as vehicles of communication are adequate only to the degree that they are understood. It is possible for the author of a phrase to mean one thing and for the phrase as interpreted by its recipients to mean something different. Infallible and inerrant are two words frequently used to define the doctrine of inspiration. These two words accurately communicate only if the author who uses them has the same definition in mind as the reader. Perhaps many of the disagreements on the doctrine of inspiration arise from different understandings of the meanings of words.

Inerrancy simply denotes freedom from wandering or going astray from the truth. Edward J. Young defines inerrancy of Scripture to mean that every assertion of the Bible is true, whether the Bible speaks of what to believe (doctrine), or how to live (ethics), or whether it recounts historical events.<sup>4</sup> Does inerrancy require the absence of mistakes in recording historical facts? The authors of Kings and Chronicles depended on other documents for much of their information. The chronologies of the kings of Israel and Judah cannot be correlated. Were these errors in the original sources, or do we have insufficient information to correlate the dates of kings? Conservative scholars have written many pages in attempting to solve these problems. Liberal scholars have used the "inconsistencies" to support their positions. Since the dates of the kings are not matters of divine revelation, should they be considered in the inspiration of the Word of God? The chronologies are included in the Bible, but they are not part of God's self-revelation. God did disclose truth to the writers of the historical books by revealing to them the correct interpretation of blessings and defeats in the lives of the kings.

### The Authority of the Bible

The authority of the Bible is based on the fact that it is the Word of God. The degree of authority attributed to the Bible depends on one's view of revelation and inspiration. The early churches used language ascribing high authority to the Old and New Testaments. Since they believed that the Holy Spirit prompted the authors to write and directed their minds to write as they did, the early Christians spoke of the Bible as the "divine Scriptures," the "sacred books," etc. The Bible was cherished as possessing an authority which was divine.

### The authority of the Old Testament

Israel believed that God had spoken authoritatively to her in the Law and in the Prophets. The Law was given through Moses for guidance in the covenant relationship. The Law included

<sup>4</sup> *Thy Word is Truth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), pp. 113ff.

Knowledge about \_\_\_\_\_ and a personal encounter with \_\_\_\_\_ cannot be separated.

(God, God)

Words as means of communication are adequate only if they are \_\_\_\_\_.

(understood)

What is inerrancy? \_\_\_\_\_

(freedom from wandering or going astray from the truth)

The Bible is authoritative because it is the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_.

One's view of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ will determine the degree of authority he attributes to the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Word, God, revelation, inspiration, Bible)

Israel considered the \_\_\_\_\_ and the \_\_\_\_\_ to be the authoritative Word of \_\_\_\_\_.

(Law, Prophets, God)

rules on rituals, morals, and civil matters. According to Deuteronomy 18:18, the body of Law was not to be closed, but additional words were to be forthcoming through a prophet. The Law was authoritative and binding to the extent that the breaking of it annulled the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The result was the forsaking of Israel to her captors by Yahweh.

The prophets spoke with the authority of "Thus saith the Lord." Scriptural references denoting that the words of God were spoken through the mouths of the prophets have already been cited. When the prophets spoke under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they spoke with special divine authority. The recording of their prophecies frequently included a written description of how the Word of the Lord came to them. The Word of the Lord carried such authority that it would not return to the prophet void (Isa. 55:11). It was like a destroying fire for which the people were as fuel (Jer. 5:14).

The New Testament glimpses of the debates between the Pharisees and Sadducees give some indication of the respect for the authority of the Law in the life of Judaism. The Sadducees had accepted only the five books of Moses as being the authoritative Word of God. The Pharisees accepted the books of Moses and the traditional interpretations of the books ("traditions of the fathers"). To a lesser degree, the writings of the Prophets (including our historical books of the Old Testament) and the Writings (including Psalms, etc.) were regarded as the Word of God.

The books of the Old Testament came to have authority within the Church because Jesus Christ showed respect for them. The Old Testament predicted the birth, life, and death of Christ. Jesus freely used the Old Testament in setting forth His own teachings by giving interpretations which often differed from the interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees. He spoke with authority, not as the Scribes. After His resurrection, the apostles began to see additional Scriptures which could be interpreted to apply to a suffering, dying, and resurrected Messiah. The books of the Old Testament came to have authority within the Christian Church because they spoke of Jesus Christ.

### The authority of the New Testament

Every area of Jesus' activity added to the impact of His unusual power and authority. His miracles and resurrection proved His divine relationship. God's raising Jesus from the dead gave unquestionable evidence that God was with Him; therefore, Jesus had acted and spoken with the authority of God. His teachings were recognized at an early date as having authority. Before His ascension, He could state, "All authority has been given unto me. . . ."

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, His words were valued as the Word of God. By the time John wrote his Gospel, Jesus had been identified as the Incarnate Word. Since He was identified as one with the Father, His words and actions were very significant in the lives of His disciples.

The apostles became the official teachers of His words and interpreters of His actions since they had been with Him and had heard Him first-hand. During the years immediately following His death, the teachings and activities of Jesus were transmitted orally to new disciples. Soon the oral traditions were recorded in the gospel accounts. The written Gospels were authoritative because they contained the teachings of Jesus. The Gospels which were related to apostolic authorship were looked upon as authoritative.

Although Paul was not one of the original twelve apostles, his letters to the churches carried special authority because of his vision and encounter with Christ and because of his position as father of the Gentile churches. Paul could not join the original Twelve in a first-hand account of the teachings and activities of Jesus; however, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, he had

*The Old Testament books came to have authority within the Christian Church because \_\_\_\_\_ showed respect for them.*

*(Jesus)*

*The Gospels are authoritative because they contain the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus.*

*(teachings or words)*

divine insight into the meaning of the life of Christ. He gave organization and doctrinal expression to the collected body of teachings of Jesus. His writings were recognized as authoritative along with the accounts of the life of Jesus and the Old Testament which predicted the coming of Christ.

**The authoritative Bible and the Catholic Church**

Throughout the periods of the Early Church and the Middle Ages, the Bible continued to be recognized as the authoritative expression of the Word of God. During the Middle Ages, the Catholic Church developed the dogma that the Church was the official and competent interpreter of the Scripture. A body of unwritten traditions passed on from generation to generation by the Church was considered to be equally authoritative as the written traditions. The Church argued that she was the source of Scripture since it was written by her members and officially canonized by her; therefore, the Church claimed greater authority than the Scripture. The Scripture was looked upon, however, as the Word of God, but the Church reserved the authority to interpret the meaning of the Scripture.

**A doctrinal statement concerning inspiration and authority**

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is the record of God's revelation of Himself to man. It is the perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. It reveals . . . the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.<sup>5</sup>

*Paul's writings carried authority because of his \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ with Christ and because of his position as father of the \_\_\_\_\_ churches.*

*(vision, encounter, Gentile)*

\_\_\_\_\_

*The Bible was written by divinely inspired \_\_\_\_\_.*

*It is the record of God's revelation of Himself to \_\_\_\_\_.*

*(men, man)*

<sup>5</sup>From "The Baptist Faith and Message."

## Home Study Exercises

**Basic assignment** (to be answered from the Study Guide by Levels 1, 2, and 3)

1. Define: Revelation \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Inspiration \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is the activity of inspiration? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the result of inspiration? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4. Give four teachings of New Testament Scriptures concerning inspiration:

(1) \_\_\_\_\_

(2) \_\_\_\_\_

(3) \_\_\_\_\_

(4) \_\_\_\_\_

5. New Testament verses concerning inspiration originally referred to:

(1) all of the Bible; (2) the Old Testament only; (3) the New Testament only. (Underline the correct one.)

6. What incident reveals that Jesus did not consider all laws of Moses to be perpetually binding? \_\_\_\_\_

7. The apostles believed the Holy Spirit used the \_\_\_\_\_ of the prophets to speak the Word of the Lord.

8. Give two reasons we know the words and works of Jesus were inspired.

9. We know the Epistles, which interpret the words and activities of Jesus, are inspired because Jesus promised to send the \_\_\_\_\_ who would guide the apostles \_\_\_\_\_

10. Liberal theologians emphasize (1) unique divine revelation and inspiration; (2) the dependability of human reason; (3) the inerrancy of Scripture. (Underline the correct one.)

11. Karl Barth sees no difference in the Word of God and the words of Scripture. (True or false?) \_\_\_\_\_

12. What two things did Barth attempt to do? \_\_\_\_\_

13. Rudolf Bultmann attempted to distinguish between \_\_\_\_\_ and the first century \_\_\_\_\_ in which it was expressed.

14. List two objections to the Verbal Dictation Theory.

15. Give two sources of historical facts found in 1 and 2 Kings and 1 and 2 Chronicles.

16. What is the responsibility of the interpreter of the Bible concerning first century language and the divine truths it expresses? \_\_\_\_\_

17. Is knowledge *about* God enough? \_\_\_\_\_ What more is needed? \_\_\_\_\_

18. Why did the Early Church accept the authority of the Old Testament? \_\_\_\_\_

19. What is the primary reason the New Testament has divine authority? \_\_\_\_\_

**Supplementary assignment** (for Levels 2 and 3)

1. Give a summary statement of Jesus' view of inspiration.
2. List the factors that should be considered in developing a doctrinal statement concerning inspiration.
3. What is the difference in the Roman Catholic and your concept of authority?

**Advanced assignment** (for Level 3).

Read pages 26–36, 48–61 and review pages 37–47 in Geisler and Nix. Answer the following questions.

1. Distinguish between inspiration and illumination.
2. Are translations inspired? Explain your answer.
3. What is the basic difference in the liberal, neo-orthodox, and conservative views of inspiration?
4. What are the weaknesses of the neo-orthodox view of inspiration?
5. How do Geisler and Nix understand verbal inspiration and inerrancy?

### **Seminar Discussion**

1. What problem were Barth and Bultmann trying to solve? Have their views contributed anything to the doctrine of inspiration?
2. What is the relation between inspiration and authority of the Scripture? What authority does society attribute to the Bible today, and what has led to this position?
3. Can the inspiration and authority of the Bible be proved, or are they matters of faith?
4. What is your view of inspiration?