

1-2010

Question 54 - What are some false views concerning inspiration?

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Recommended Citation

Willmington, Harold, "Question 54 - What are some false views concerning inspiration?" (2010). *101 Most Asked Questions*. 55.

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101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

54. What are some false views concerning inspiration?

There are six main erroneous views in regards to the nature of inspiration:

- A. *The natural theory*: This says God selected certain gifted individuals who were born with exceptional insights to the Bible. Thus, an Isaiah or a Moses received no extra "divine aid" in their writings than did a Shakespeare or a Milton. This theory is totally refuted by the apostle Peter:

"Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21, NIV).

- B. *The mystical theory*: This upgrades the natural theory one step, advocating that God simply heightened the normal powers of the Bible writers. This view however is also rejected by Peter (2 Peter 1:20-21).

- C. *The content (or concept) theory*: Here we are asked to believe that only the main thought of a paragraph or chapter is inspired. Stated another way, God gave a series of key statements to the Bible writer and then instructed him to flush it out in his own words. Both David and Jesus however spoke against this view.

1. David's testimony

"Now these be the last words of David. David the son of Jesse said, and the man who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:1-2).

2. Jesus' testimony

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Mt. 5:18).

- D. *The partial theory*: This says that only certain 'parts' of the Bible are inspired. The liberal theologian would of course hold this position, cheerfully accepting those portions of the scriptures which deal with love and brotherhood, but quickly reject the passages speaking of sin, hell, and future judgment! Paul denounces the partial theory:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Dr. Charles F. Baker writes:

"A certain bishop is purported to have said that he believed the Bible to have been inspired in spots. When asked for his authority for such a statement, he quoted

Hebrews 1:1, stating that this meant that God spoke at various times in varying degrees. Thus, some spots were fully inspired, others were only partially inspired, and still others were not inspired at all. The bishop was embarrassed when a layman asked: 'How do you know that Hebrews 1:1, the one scripture upon which you base your argument, is one of those fully inspired spots?'"

(*A Dispensational Theology*, p. 38)

- E. *The spiritual-rule-only theory*: This says the Bible may be regarded as our infallible rule of faith and practice in all matters of religious, ethical, and spiritual value, but not in other matters such as some of the historical and scientific statements found in the Word of God. This is pious nonsense. Consider the following: Here is a pastor greatly beloved by his congregation. How would this man of God feel if only his "moral" and "spiritual" statements made in the pulpit were accepted by his members? How would he react when the members would smile and take lightly any scientific or historical statements he might make? The fallacy of the spiritual-rule-only theory is that any book or man whose scientific or historical statements are open to question can certainly neither be trusted in matters of moral and spiritual pronouncements. This theory is soundly refuted by Jesus himself in John 3:12: "*If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?*"
- F. *The mechanical theory*: This says that God coldly and woodenly dictated the Bible to his writers as an office manager would dictate an impersonal letter to his secretary. It should be noted here that the Bible is the story of divine love, and God is anything but mechanical or cold concerning this subject. The Holy Spirit therefore never transgressed the limits of the writer's vocabulary. Thus, the educated Paul uses many of the "eighty-five-cent" words, while the less educated John employs more of the "twenty-five-cent" words. But both writings are equally inspired by God. (See 2 Tim. 3:16.)

Dr. Charles Hodge has well written:

"The Church has never held what has been stigmatized as the mechanical theory of inspiration. The sacred writers were not machines. Their self-consciousness was not suspended; nor were their intellectual powers superseded. Holy men spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. It was men not machines; not unconscious instruments, but living, thinking, willing minds, whom the Spirit used as his organs . . . The sacred writers impressed their peculiarities on their several productions as plainly as though they were the subjects of no extraordinary influence." (*Systematic Theology*, vol. I, p. 157)