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The Divine Inspiration of Scripture

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The Divine Inspiration of Scripture

Cover Page Footnote

Kate L. Turabian/Chicago Style 9th edition

Introduction

The topic under research is the divine inspiration of Scripture. Given the constraints of this paper, the topic will be limited only to the research and study of the biblical doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture and delimited to the exegesis of appropriate passages and their topics. The paper is structured around four main points: (1) an exegetical analysis of two passages that claim the Bible to be the inspired Word of God; (2) an exegetical analysis of two passages that explain how someone can know the Bible is inspired when they read it; (3) a section dedicated on the self-attestation of the words of Scripture; and (4) a portion discussing how the authors of the Bible were indeed inspired by God. The paper is structured in this way because it is important when discussing biblical doctrine not to start with a doctrine and go to Scripture looking for support (eisegesis), but rather to start with the primary source, the biblical text, and then work exegetically towards a solution (exegesis). Necessary conclusions will be drawn from the available information. Late modern¹ people are skeptical of the God of the Bible, and many do not believe the Scriptures are divinely inspired. In the face of growing opposition, there is sufficient evidence to prove that the Holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God.

The Inspiration of Scripture

All Scripture Are God's Words

Late modern people belong to one of the most skeptical and anti-Christian generations. Because of this, many late moderns do not believe in the God of the Bible, or any other religion for that matter. When approached by Christians who share their faith, they often understand what

¹ *Late modernism* is “the most widely used term for the period of time extending from the middle of the twentieth century to the present.” Late moderns “set the autonomy of the individual and personal freedom over against the claims of tradition, religion, family, and community.” (Joshua D. Chatraw and Mark D Allen, *Apologetics at the Cross: An Introduction for Christian Witness* [Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2018], 205).

the Christian is trying to communicate, however, they do not take it to heart because they hold a presupposition that the Scriptures are not divinely inspired. The individual may not even be aware of this presupposition, and it might be expressed in a statement such as, “I hear what you are saying, but I do not believe in the God of the Bible,” or, “Good for you, but I do not believe that if there is a God he is trying to communicate with me through an ancient, unreliable book written by mere men.” Therefore, a major problem lies in the fact that late modern people do not believe that the Holy Scriptures are divinely inspired. Are the Holy Scriptures inspired?

The Bible Claims That it is Inspired

While there are many claims about how the Bible should be understood, the orthodox view of inspiration is this: “a supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on divinely chosen agents in consequence of which their writings become trustworthy and authoritative.”² The Bible makes many claims in both the Old and New Testaments that the words of Scripture are God’s very words. Here, two New Testament passages will be examined. The first comes to us from 2 Timothy.

Exegesis of 2 Tim. 3:16-17

2 Timothy was penned by the apostle Paul and was written to his disciple Timothy shortly before his death in AD 67. Paul’s purpose in writing this short letter to Timothy was to address some final concerns because he expected to soon be killed (2 Tim. 4:6-8).³ One of the

² C. F. H. Henry, “Bible, Inspiration of,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology: 3rd ed.*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 127.

³ John Koessler, “2 Timothy,” in *The Moody Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible by the Faculty of Moody Bible Institute*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1905.

primary features of 2 Timothy is how the early church viewed Scripture. The passage that will be examined is 2 Tim. 3:16-17. From 2 Timothy 3:10 to the end of the letter, Paul is exhorting Timothy in contrast to false teaching of the day. More specifically, in 3:10-17, Paul is encouraging Timothy to hold fast to Scripture and Paul's example. This is supported by the statement, "But as for you [Timothy], continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed" (2 Tim. 3:14). Moreover, the main verses under consideration state, "All Scripture is breathed out 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).⁴ Verses 16-17 are quoted together because they are one sentence, however, the topic limits the research to "All Scripture is breathed out by God" (2 Tim. 3:16) as the supporting text for divine inspiration.

The translation of *pasa* (All) *graphē* (Scripture [is]) *theopneustos* (breathed out by God) as translated in the ESV, is not without debate. Guthrie states regarding the translation of these words that "the determining factor must be the meaning of *pasa*, *all* (RV 'every')."⁵ The main question is whether or not *pasa* is used by Paul to refer to a specific Scripture, or to refer the OT Scriptures collectively.⁶ Although in English it appears that "all" or "every" is the decision maker of the clause, *pasa* can be translated as either depending on the situation. Therefore, in order to understand this word, *graphē* needs to be defined first.⁷ Unfortunately, scholars

⁴ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *English Standard Version* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008).

⁵ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. R. V. G. Tasker (1957; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989), 163.

⁶ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Ned. B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 585.

⁷ *Ibid.*

throughout church history tend to disagree sharply on this matter. In spite of this, a clear answer can be found within Paul's context as he writes to Timothy.

To begin, the Greek word for "Scripture" is *graphē*.⁸ Treier states that "Its plural form denotes the entire collection of such compositions (Matt. 21:42; 1 Cor. 15:3-4), but when used in the singular *graphē* can mean either a specified passage (Mark 12:10) or the constituent body of writings (Gal. 3:22)."⁹ It should be noted that *graphē* is used fifty-one times in the New Testament and in each one of its occurrences, always refers to the writings of the Old Testament.¹⁰ To support this claim, here is an example from the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 22:41, Jesus states, "Have you never read in the *Scriptures*. . ." (emphasis added) and then goes on to quote from Psalm 118:22-23. In this case, "Scriptures" refers to the entire collection of the Old Testament.¹¹ In addition, there are two cases, 1 Tim 5:18 and 2 Peter 3:16, where *graphē* is used to refer to both Old Testament and some New Testament writings.¹²

It can be clearly seen that *graphē* has many uses in the NT and can be either a singular or plural noun. However, how is Paul using *graphē* as he writes to Timothy? If 2 Tim. 3:16 is isolated, one could make a stronger argument that *graphē* is used by Paul to make the main argument of this passage about the entire inspiration of the Old Testament. At first glance this may appear to be so, however, upon further examination, "(1) there is no evidence in the context that inspiration of the Scriptures was being called into question and (2) the emphasis of the entire

⁸ James Strong, "Greek Dictionary of the New Testament," in *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible: With Main Concordance, Appendix to the Main Concordance, Hebrew and Aramaic Dictionary of the Old Testament, Greek Dictionary of the New Testament* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 20.

⁹ R. K. Harrison, "Scripture," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology: 3rd ed.*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 790.

¹⁰ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 74.

¹¹ Harrison, "Scripture," 790.

¹² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 74.

passage is on the usefulness of the Scriptures in fitting the believer for service.”¹³ Support for this position comes from the fact that Paul echoed individual Old Testament passages before and after this verse (e.g., 2:19; 3:8-9, 11; cf. 2:7; 4:14, 17-18). Moreover, if Timothy, a companion of Paul and leader of the early church is questioning the inspiration of the Old Testament, then the early church had a much more dire problem at hand. Paul states that from childhood Timothy had been “acquainted with the sacred writings” (2 Tim. 3:15). Consequently, “Timothy is not therefore being informed of the inspiration of Scripture, for this was a doctrine commonly admitted by Jews, but he is being reminded that the basis of its profitableness lies in its inspired character.”¹⁴ Keep these things about *pasa graphē* in mind, for they cannot form a coherent sentence in English until the final word, *theopneustos* is addressed.

The Greek word for “breathed out by God” is *theopneustos*.¹⁵ According to Treier, “though grammatically passive, this term is dynamic in nature, meaning literally, ‘God breathed’ in an outward rather than inward direction. God has ‘breathed out’ Scripture as a function of his creative activity, making this revealed Word authoritative for human salvation and instruction in divine truth.”¹⁶ Unlike *pasa graphē*, there is uniform consensus among Christian scholarship that *theopneustos* refers to God breathing into Scripture in the passive sense; that God is the real author of all Scripture.¹⁷ The controversy surrounding *theopneustos* is whether or not it should be translated into the sentence as a qualifying adjective (e.g., Every Scripture inspired of God is also profitable), or a predicate adjective (e.g., All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable).¹⁸ It should be noted that the two words that make up *theopneustos*, “*theos* (God) and *pneō* (‘to

¹³ Ralph Earle, “2 Timothy,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: with The New International Version of The Holy Bible*, vol. 11, Ephesians – Philemon, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 410.

¹⁴ Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 164.

¹⁵ Strong, “Greek Dictionary of the New Testament,” 41.

¹⁶ Harrison, “Scripture,” 790.

¹⁷ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589.

¹⁸ Earle, “2 Timothy,” 410.

blow, breathe on’), does not occur elsewhere in the biblical writings; and since it is found elsewhere only in later writings, it has been suggested that the author of these letters coined it.”¹⁹ It may for this reason that Christian scholarship is divided regarding the translation of 2 Tim. 3:16. Because of this, none of the translations should be ruled out because each of them have strong supporting evidence. Now that *theopneustos* has been defined, all three words can now be used to form an English translation.

The translation of *pasa graphē theopneustos* is best translated as “Every [text/passage of] Scripture is inspired by God,” because it pays attention to the context in which Paul is writing and is in harmony with Greek grammar and syntax.²⁰ Note that “Every Scripture is inspired by God” is not the same as the liberal reductionist rendition of “Every inspired Scripture is also useful.”²¹ The latter opinion gives the idea that only certain passages of the Bible are inspired, whereas others are not. The preferred translation of “Every Scripture is inspired by God” still concludes that the entire Old Testament is inspired, just like the ESV translation, but gives credit to the context by which Paul chooses to instruct Timothy of the pragmatism of each and every text in the Old Testament. To clarify, think of a comparison to oranges. One could say, “all oranges are round,” or “each and every orange is round.” Each version still affirms that all oranges are round, but the latter is merely more specific to mention each orange. The same applies to the preferred translation.

Therefore, it can be concluded from 2 Tim. 3:16 that the Old Testament is the inspired word of God. Furthermore, the Bible claims that its words are the very words of God through additional uses of *graphē* in the New Testament (see, e.g., Psalm 118:22-23; 1 Tim 5:18; 2 Peter

¹⁹ Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 589

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 586.

²¹ *Ibid.*

3:16). Note that “here in 2 Timothy we have the fact [of inspiration] simply and plainly stated; the process of inspiration is not dealt with.”²² Another passage from 2 Peter is helpful when understanding what the Bible says about inspiration. Peter discusses not the fact, but the process and means by which God has chosen to inspire the Scriptures.

Exegesis of 2 Pet. 1:19-21

The authorship of 2 Peter was disputed by the early church. However, internal evidence suggests that “Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:1), is the best conclusion. Peter was writing to Jewish believers of the Dispersion who were scattered in Asia Minor, most likely in AD 67 or 68 with the purpose of (1) “[warning] against false teachers,” and (2) “to encourage spiritual growth.”²³

At the end of the first chapter of his second letter, Peter reminds the churches that the truth of Jesus Christ is rooted in the prophetic nature of Scripture. 2 Pet. 1:19-21 states:

“¹⁹And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, ²⁰knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. ²¹For 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. 1:19-21).

A few things need to be established in this verse in order for the reader to understand the process of how God inspired the Bible.

To begin, in 2 Pet. 1:12-21, Peter is reminding the churches of three things: (1) that they should strive to live holy lives (vv. 12-15), (2) that he himself is an “eyewitness” of Jesus’

²² Earle, “2 Timothy,” 409.

²³ Louis Barbieri, “2 Peter,” in *The Moody Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible by the Faculty of Moody Bible Institute*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1967.

ministry, referencing the glory and honor he saw at the transfiguration and crucifixion (vv. 16-18), and finally (3) that the truth of Jesus Christ is rooted in the prophetic nature of Scripture (vv.19-21). Clearly, Peter is reminding the Christians of these things before he tackles the main theme of the letter, which is the evaluation of false teaching and false teachers.

In verse 19, Peter presents this idea of a “prophetic word” that the Christians is to “pay attention to” (2 Pet. 1:19). Here, Peter is pointing out that the “Scriptures confirm the apostolic witness” of the events the apostle Peter experienced in verse 17, primarily the transfiguration.²⁴ In addition, “until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:19), is a reference to the second advent of Christ. Some believe that the “morning star” is Christ, and the “day” that he will “[rise] in your heart” (v.19) is an expression of the real, but subjective experience that will come to fruition when the believer in Christ is transformed at the second advent (e.g., see Acts 1:11; 1 Thess 4:13-18; 2 Thess 2:8).²⁵

In verse 20, Peter is discussing the concept of *epilyseōs*, the Greek word for “interpretation” in this verse.²⁶ Considering this verse is discussing the origins of prophecy, Blum is careful to point out that “no prophecy of Scripture is to be interpreted by any individual in an arbitrary way.”²⁷ Peter’s main point in verse 20 shows that no prophecy of Scripture, such as the ones that Jesus fulfilled and that Peter was a witness of, originated in the hearts and minds of men. These things are harmonious with the literary and historical context of Peter’s time. For example, the false teachers made up “cleverly devised myths,” (2 Pet. 1:16) whereas the

²⁴ Edwin A. Blum, “2 Peter,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: with The New International Version of The Holy Bible Romans*, vol. 12, Hebrews – Revelation, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 274.

²⁵ Andrew M. Mbuvi, “2 Peter 1,” In *Jude and 2 Peter PB: A New Covenant Commentary*, ed. Michael F. Bird and Craig Keener (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Lutterworth Press, 2015), 96.

²⁶ Strong, “Greek Dictionary of the New Testament,” 34.

²⁷ Blum, “2 Peter,” 275.

prophecy within Scripture did not come about from “someone’s own interpretation” (2 Pet. 1:20). Peter clarifies in the following verse exactly where prophecy comes from.

In verse 21, Peter makes the bold claim that confirms the concept from verse 20. Blum states that “each prophecy originated in God (*apo theou*), not in the will of man.”²⁸ In other words, Scripture must be interpreted systematically, by the power of the Holy Spirit. This verse supports the idea of dual authorship. In short, God used men as an instrument to convey his very thoughts and ideas to mankind.²⁹ The idea is supported by the Old Testament prophets. Take for example, King David. He states, “The Spirit of the LORD speaks by me; his word is on my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). God also stated of the prophet Jeremiah, “whatever I command you, you shall speak,” and, “I have put my words in your mouth” (Jer. 1:7, 9). These are two examples, where “men spoke from God as they were *carried along* by the Holy Spirit,” hence the concept of dual authorship (2 Pet. 1:21, emphasis added).

Grudem also notes that it was the Holy Spirit’s choice to decide what the prophets spoke and wrote about.³⁰ Even though God used men (i.e., prophets) to relay his message, Scripture is still fully God’s Word. In light of the Scriptural evidence, one can affirm with certainty the *fact* that the Scriptures are divinely inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), and also the *process* by which God inspired those very same Scriptures (2 Pet. 1:19-21). While these two passages are helpful to explain what the Bible says, two more passages are helpful in understanding the subjective element of the inspired Word of God.

People Know the Bible is Inspired When They Read It

²⁸ Blum, “2 Peter,” 275.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 75.

While the objective element of the nature of Scripture (i.e., its inspiration) is easy to affirm for both the believer and non-believer in Christ, it is far more difficult for someone to be convinced that the Bible is truly God's written word. There are two passages from the New Testament that discuss the subjective element of believing in the inspiration of the Bible. The first passage comes from 1 Corinthians, and the second is from the gospel of John.

Exegesis of 1 Cor. 2:14

The authorship of 1 Corinthians is undisputed in scholarship. It is understood that the apostle Paul probably wrote this letter to the Corinthian Church c. AD 53-55 at the close of his three-year ministry from Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:5-9; cf. Acts 19:21-22), with the purpose of correcting ungodly behaviors within the church.³¹

After Paul's iconic epistolary introduction, 1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21 deals with the divisions over Christian preachers, and while discussing the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in chapter two, Paul states, "The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14). Three things can be learned from this verse.

First, *psychikos* is the Greek word for "natural" in v.14.³² Morris states of *psychikos* that "there is nothing inherently evil about it; it does not mean 'sinful'. But it does point to an absence of spiritual discernment, to the man whose horizon is bounded by this life."³³ Because of

³¹ Michael G. Vanlaningham, "1 Corinthians," in *The Moody Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible by the Faculty of Moody Bible Institute*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1773.

³² Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to The Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985), 58-59.

³³ *Ibid.*

this, the *psychikos de anthrōpos* (the natural person) is simply unable to understand the things of the Spirit of God.

Second, another reason the *psychikos de anthrōpos* “does not accept the things of the Spirit of God” is because “they are folly to him” (1 Cor. 2:4). Because this person has not been born again, and they received the Spirit of God, they consider Christ to be foolishness.³⁴

Consider what Paul says earlier in his letter regarding the preaching of Christ crucified: “For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). The wisdom of the Spirit of God only makes sense to those have been chosen by God to be born again.

Lastly, the *psychikos de anthrōpos* is “not able to understand” the things of the Spirit of God “because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 1:14). What Paul means here is that the man without the Spirit (i.e., the natural person) is simply incapable of understanding the things of God. While it is a difficult to grasp the concept that ungodly people (i.e., those without the Spirit) are unable to understand the things of God, it is consistent with the rest of Scripture. Consider Jesus’ words to the Pharisees, “Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God” (John 8:47). Even the righteous Pharisees were no better than the *psychikos de anthrōpos* that Paul is referring to. Morris uses a striking analogy that is useful to understand this spiritual concept. He states, “Anyone whose equipment is only of this world, who has not received the Holy Spirit, has no ability to make an estimate of things spiritual.”³⁵

³⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Ned. B Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 116.

³⁵ Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to The Corinthians*, 59.

Moreover, what is meant by “discerned” in this verse. The cause for concern among scholarship is that this term, *anahrino* is only seen ten times in 1 Corinthians, nowhere else in Paul.³⁶ It is possible this was a Corinthian term Paul used to make an argument against the ungodly behavior of the Corinthians.³⁷ However, in each of its uses, it always refers to some sort of judgment or examination, therefore making the rendering of *anahrino* as “discern,” proper.³⁸

Overall, two things can be learned about a person’s knowledge of God and Scripture from this verse: (1) anyone *can* know the Bible is inspired when they read it, but (2) only the Christian *will* accept the claims in 2 Tim. 3:16 and 2 Pet. 1:19-21, and any other claim within Scripture because the “things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:14) can only be understood by someone who has the Spirit of God in them. In other words, it is only the Christian who will be able truly know and believe that the Bible is God’s inspired word because they have the illumination³⁹ of the Holy Spirit. Another passage that is related to this theme comes from the gospel of John.

Exegesis of John 10:26-27

The authorship of the gospel of John is attributed to non-other than the apostle John himself, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23; 21:7, 20). Internal and external evidence support this claim. John most likely wrote this book prior to the destruction of the temple in

³⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 117.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ W. Harold Mare, “1 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: with The New International Version of The Holy Bible Romans*, vol. 10, Romans – Galatians, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 202.

³⁹ King David prayed in Psalm 119:18, “Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.” Like David, we need our eyes to be opened if we are to understand Scripture. This is where the spiritual process of illumination comes in. Finzel states, “*Illumination* deals with the understanding or meaning of the inspired Word of God . . . We study the Bible and learn its meaning as the Holy Spirit teaches us through the words of Scripture.” (Hans Finzel, *Unlocking the Scriptures: Three Steps to Personal Bible Study* [Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook Publishers, 2003], 20.)

Jerusalem in AD 70, but some believe that it was written c. AD 80-90. In either case, John most likely wrote his gospel to non-Christian Jews living outside Israel with the purpose and hope that they would come to faith in Christ for eternal life.⁴⁰

In a section on the events that took place at the Feast of Dedication, Jesus stated this in response to a group of Jews who asked if he was the Messiah: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:26). While the primary purpose and interpretation of this passage is in relation to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints⁴¹, it can be applied to the research question. Two things must be noted about this passage as it relates to knowing the Bible (i.e., the word of God) is inspired when we read it.

First, the word of God was first spoken to people. Therefore, it is only logical to assume that because one can know the word of God is inspired when it is read, one can also know *who* is inspired when it is spoken. In this case, that person is Jesus. The first group of people mentioned here, the Pharisees, are unbelieving and thus do not recognize the “works” that Jesus has already performed. Jesus makes it clear to the Pharisees one verse earlier, “you are not among my sheep” (John 10:26). Morris makes the point that “Far from their heeding the witness, their [the Pharisees] habitual attitude is one of unbelief.”⁴²

Second, the other group of people are Jesus’ sheep. Tenney states, “The sheep that belong to the Lord’s flock are characterized by obedience, recognition of the shepherd, and allegiance to

⁴⁰ John F. Hart, “John,” in *The Moody Bible Commentary: A One-Volume Commentary on the Whole Bible by the Faculty of Moody Bible Institute*, ed. Michael Rydelnik and Michael Vanlaningham (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2014), 1605.

⁴¹ The fifth of Calvinism’s famous five points, the perseverance of the saints, is another way of saying that Christians are eternally secure, that a genuine born-again Christian cannot lose their salvation. Think of the aphorism, “Once saved, always saved.” (For more information, see R. C. Sproul, *What is Reformed Theology: Understanding the Basics* [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012].)

⁴² Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. F. F. Bruce (1971; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1984), 520.

him.”⁴³ In contrast to the Pharisees whose life was habitual unbelief, the life of the sheep was characterized by habitual faith in the Shepherd (Jesus). And while these “sheep” understood that Jesus was the promised Messiah, God in the flesh, Christians today have to reach this same conclusion, not through meeting Jesus, talking to him, or witnessing miracles, but by affirming the testimony of Scripture. As the Christians knows and hears the Great Shepherds voice, we are identified as his sheep.⁴⁴

The point being made is that (1) if the things of God can only be learned and understood by a person who has the Spirit of God, as seen in 1 Cor. 2:14, then (2) John builds on top of this argument by pointing out that the person with the Spirit of God, Christ’s sheep, will here his voice, including within the Scriptures. Grudem affirms this when he states, “those who are Christ’s sheep hear the words of their great Shepherd as they read the words of Scripture, and they are convinced that these words are in fact the words of their Lord.”⁴⁵

Anyone can affirm what the Bible says, it is as easy as opening and reading it. However, it is another thing to truly believe what it says. Therefore, it can be seen from both the apostle Paul and John that it is the spiritual person, those who belong to Christ’s flock, that will believe what Scripture testifies to. Grudem states, “It is rather as people read Scripture that they hear their Creator’s voice speaking to them in the words of Scripture and realize that the book they are reading is unlike any other book, that it is indeed a book of God’s own words speaking to

⁴³ Merrill C. Tenney, “The Gospel of John,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: with The New International Version of The Holy Bible Romans*, vol. 9, John – Acts, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 112.

⁴⁴ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Ned. B Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce, and Gordon D. Fee (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 598.

⁴⁵ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 77.

their hearts.”⁴⁶ In addition to knowing what the Bible claims, and that people can know the Bible is inspired when they read it, the very words of Scripture are self-attesting.

The Words of Scripture Are Self-Attesting

The appeal to the highest authority

A section dedicated to the discrepancy of Scripture and reason is necessary because some skeptics and critics claim that Christians cannot say the Bible is the inspired word of God because they look within the book itself. This line of logic is flawed for a few reasons. First, for the Christian, “Scripture is our supreme legislative authority.”⁴⁷ Erickson points out that if what the Bible claims about itself is really true (i.e., that it is indeed the inspired word of God), then there will be no authority higher than it. Therefore, it is required to look within the Bible to see if it is inspired.

The Christian and skeptic must appeal to the contents of Scripture in order to determine if it is the highest authority. If the Bible claimed that the highest authority was not God’s words, but rather science or some other method, then the Bible’s claims would be measured against that test. But since it does not, one must discover the truth, or in the case of the critic, error, *within* the Bible. Grudem puts it like this, “If we ultimately appeal to human reason, or to logic, or to historical accuracy, or to scientific truth, as the highest authority by which Scripture is shown to be God’s word, then we have assumed the thing to which we appealed to be a higher authority than God’s words and one that is more true or more reliable.”⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁷ Millard J. Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine: Third Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 74.

⁴⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 78.

It should also be noted that this is not a circular argument. Critics might say something like this, “Christians just believe the Bible is God’s word because it claims to be that.” And while that is true, it is not illogical. Self-testimony is considered legitimate in court, and it is then measured against the evidence. Likewise, if the Bible is self-testifying that it is the Word of God, then it must be weighed against the available evidence – the Bible. Therefore, when discussing a case of absolute authority, one “must ultimately appeal to that authority for proof: otherwise, the authority would not be an absolute or highest authority.”⁴⁹ Ironically, most people appeal to circular arguments without knowing it. For example, if a person claims that science is the highest authority to determine truth, then they will use science to do so. Circular arguments are often logical fallacies, but in the case of absolute authority, they should be thought of as a spiral. The spiral should be thought of as the origination point of the claim to absolute authority (i.e., the Bible, science, etc.), where one travels up or down the source (i.e., the Bible) in the motion of a circle (a spiral) to make progress, not through a repetitive, non-progressing, counterproductive motion (i.e., a circular argument).⁵⁰

How Were the Author’s Inspired?

Verbal inspiration

In addition to the various components of biblical inspiration already mentioned, it is also important to discuss the process by which the Bible is inspired. Yes, the Bible claims that the authors (2 Pet. 1:20-21) and that what they wrote are inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), that people can know the Bible is inspired when they read it (cf. 1 Cor. 2:13-14; John 10:26-27), and that the

⁴⁹ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 78-79.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

words of Scripture are self-attesting, but how were the authors inspired? The answer to that question has been debated for centuries.

The simple answer is that the authors of Scripture were inspired *verbally*. But what does that mean? Ryrie's definition of verbal inspiration is this: "God superintended human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings."⁵¹ Four points of explanation are necessary in order to understand this definition. First, God's superintendence was at times more direct and at other times less direct, but in either case God protected and shielded the writers from error, always directing them to write the words he wanted.⁵² Second, the writers were not "passive stenographers," but were real men who had a hand in the writing.⁵³ Third, the Scriptures are inerrant, that is without error.⁵⁴ Fourth, the only words that were inspired are those in biblical Autographs.⁵⁵ This does not mean that the church universal of 2021 does not possess God's word, only that the inspiration from God to the author does not apply to translations and copies of the Bible.

In addition, it should be noted that verbal inspiration extends to the choice of words used in writing. This is not to be confused with *dictation*, where the authors functioned like a stenographer or scribe, merely writing down the words as God spoke them.⁵⁶ While verbal inspiration may appear to be similar to dictation because of the specificity of inspiration, it is not the same. Erickson explains the difference between verbal inspiration and dictation like this: "By

⁵¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986), 71.

⁵² Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 71.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 72, 82.

⁵⁵ An *autograph* is an original copy. It is unknown if the autographs were circulated through the early church. Even if they were, copies were undoubtedly made, sometimes at the instruction of the apostle Paul (see Col. 4:16). In any case, no one today has located the original manuscripts of any biblical text for a variety of reasons. (See Elmer L. Towns and Ben Gutierrez, *The Essence of the New Testament: A Survey* [Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016], 1); Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 72

⁵⁶ Erickson, *Introducing Christian Doctrine*, 53.

creating the thought and stimulating the understanding of the Scripture writer, the Spirit will lead him in effect to use one particular word rather than any other.”⁵⁷ This is verbal inspiration.

Moreover, it is important to note that when defining inspiration and the method of inspiration that God used, one does not start with a definition and then go to Scripture looking for proof texts. Instead, one ought to start with what the Bible claims and seek to create a definition based on the testimony of Scripture, not the other way around. This is the exact process done in this article. Furthermore, more discussion is required about the methods God used when he inspired the biblical writers.

God uses many methods

As previously discussed, Ryrie’s expository definition of verbal inspiration explains that God was at times more direct, and at other times less direct when he inspired the biblical authors. In the case of the Old Testament prophets, sometimes they spoke what God said directly, like in the case of the numerous “thus says the Lord” passages (e.g., Isa. 38:4-6). Or in the case of the apostle John in the book of revelation (Rev. 2:8, 12). But at other times the authors used processes that were more ordinary. For example, Luke interviewed eyewitnesses, gathered historical information, and corroborated his evidence and then wrote his gospel (Luke 1:1-3). In each of these cases, the hand of the Lord was upon the prophets, apostles, and other writers of Scripture no matter the detail involved. Luke, when writing after he had collected data, was just as much inspired as others who had dreams, visions, or heard the Lord’s voice directly.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid., 55.

⁵⁸ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 80-81.

Summary and Conclusions

Late modern people are skeptical of the God of the Bible, and many do not believe that the Scriptures are divinely inspired. As opposition towards the global Christian movement increases, and as tension between the believer in Christ and late modern person rise, there is still sufficient evidence to prove the Holy Scriptures are the inspired Word of God. In summary, two passages were exegetically discussed that show exactly how the authors, (2 Pet. 1:19-21) and the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16) are inspired. Likewise, the apostle Paul (1 Cor. 2:14) and the apostle John (John 10:27) both explain to the reader of Scripture that people can truly know and believe the Bible is inspired when they read it for themselves, and that only the Christian will truly believe. Third, using deductive reasoning it can be seen that the words of Scripture are self-attesting; they testify that they are holy, inspired, and true. And finally, the authors of the Bible were inspired verbally. Therefore, are the Holy Scriptures the inspired Word of God? It is the conclusion of this article that affirms the “verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration”⁵⁹ of the entire canon of Scripture.

⁵⁹ Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, 67.

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