

**A Baptist Page Article
Inspiration of Scriptures
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The First Article of Faith

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its Author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.

This is the first Article of Faith of a great many Baptist churches in our Southland. The first statement is, "We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired." This brings us at once to the subject of the inspiration of the Scriptures. The word inspiration is derived from the Latin word *inspiro* which means "to breathe on" That is the literal meaning of the word.

The theological meaning is to breathe on or to breathe into for the purpose of conveying the Holy Spirit, in order that those inspired may speak or write what God would have spoken or written. That is inspiration.

A Scriptural example of this is found in John 20:22:

And when he said this he breathed on them and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit.

That gives us the true conception of inspiration. Following that, verse 23 gives the result:

Whosoever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.

That is, an inspired man can declare exactly the terms of remission of sins, and the terms upon which sins can cannot be remitted, because he is speaking for God .

The book that a man, so breathed on, writes is called a *theopneustos*, a Greek word meaning God-inspired." Example:

From a babe thou hast known the sacred writings, which are to make thee wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:15-16a).

After God Breathed into Man

After God breathed into man the Holy Spirit in order that he should accurately write the things which God wanted written then the book that he wrote was called *theopneustos*. So that this second passage is a very important one in discussing inspiration, probably the most important in the whole Bible.

If the book is God-inspired, then it is God's Book and not man's book.

Another illustration is found in the second chapter of Genesis:

And Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.

The body was present, but it was dead. It had no vitality. The distinction between a body that is in-breathed and a body that is not in-breathed is the distinction between death and life. Therefore, a man's book is a dead book. I don't care how lofty its thought, how fine its argument, or how perfect its rhetoric, the book will pass away. It has not the principle of eternal life. But books that are God-breathed are called the "living oracles" (Acts 7:38). It is impossible for a God-book to die.

The oldest book that was ever God-inspired is as much living as the latest one, and it will be unto the end of time a living oracle.

What Is An Oracle?

But what is an oracle? In Greece there certain shrines - certain deities - such as the oracle of Apollo at Delphi. There was a priestess that ministered at that shrine. Men would stand before her and ask a question, and the priestess would fall into an ecstasy. While in that ecstasy here answers were called oracles. Heathen oracles are dumb, but these God-inspired oracles are living.

They are not only called living oracles, but they are called the oracles of God, as we see from Romans 3:1-2:

What advantage hath the Jew? Much every way, for first of all they were entrusted with the oracles of God.

The advantage is that these Old Testament books were entrusted to them, not as man's books, but as containing the speeches of God, as well as the works of God.

Now, I will briefly set forth the inspiration of both the Old and the New Testaments. Second Timothy 3:15-16 covers all the Old Testament. Paul says to Timothy: "From a babe thou has know the sacred writings." Any other writing is what is called profane writing, not in our modern sense of profanity, but means not divine, but rather human or secular. "Thou hast know the sacred writings, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation. Every Scripture is inspired of God." etc. He first speaks of the books of the Old Testament in groups, ta hiera grammata, the sacred writings. Then he speaks of then disturbutivley, pasa graphe. Every one of these sacred writings is God-inspired.

We may stand on that one declaration to affirm the inspiration of every one of the Old Testament books.

Another passage bearing on Old Testament inspiration is 2 Peter 1:20:

No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

Here again is the idea of inspiration. An inspired man speaks, does not speak his will. When he writes, he does not speak his will, but he speaks and writes for God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament

Now let us take up the New Testament. In John 14:26 we find that a promise was made, before inspiration was given, that they should be inspired:

But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.

Again in 16:12-13:

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come he shall guide you into all the truth; for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak; and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come.

That is, Christ in His lifetime did not complete the revealed truth. They were not prepared to receive it all. But he made provision for the revealing of the truth by promising the Holy Spirit who would teach them all that it was necessary for them to know. What Christ said in His lifetime, which they had forgotten, the Holy Spirit enabled them to remember and guided them into the completion of the truth. So, after His resurrection, Christ breathed on them and said unto them, "receive ye the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). This is inspiration and fulfills His promise to them. This same thought is emphasized in 1 John 2:27:

But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

One other passage, a very important one, is 1 Corinthians 2:6-13:

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

The Promise

Here is the promise again clearly stated: that what is to be communicated through this inspiration is something eye could not see, ear could not hear, nor the heart of man conceive. It is a revelation, and it comes through the Spirit that knoweth the things of God. As your spirit alone

can know you (your neighbor does not know you as well as you know yourself), so the Holy Spirit alone know the will of God, and that Spirit has communicated it to inspired men in man's words. Mark this verbal inspiration: "Combining spiritual things with spiritual words."

It has always been a matter of profound surprise to me that anybody should ever question the verbal inspiration of the Bible.

The whole thing had to be written in words. Words or signs of ideas, and if the words or not inspired, then there is no way of getting at anything in connection with inspiration. If I am free to pick up the Bible and read something and say, "That is inspired," then read something else and say, "That is not inspired," and someone else does not agree with me as to which is and which is not inspired, it leaves the whole thing unsettled as to whether any of it is inspired.

What is the object of inspiration? It is to put accurately, in human words, ideas from God. If the words are not inspired, how am I to know how much to reject, and how to find out whether anything is from God? When you hear this silly talk that the Bible "contains" the word of God and is not the word of God, you hear fool's talk. I don't care is he is a Doctor of Divinity, a president of a university covered with medals from universities of Europe and the United States - it is fool-talk. There can be no inspiration of the book without the inspiration of the words of the book.

Proof of the Inspiration of the Bible

Very briefly I have summed up the inspiration of the Old Testament and of the inspiration of the New Testament, and now I will give you some Scriptures on both Testaments together. Hebrews 1:1-2:

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son ...

In old times there were inspired men; but the culmination or completion is in the Son. That covers both. Hebrews 5:12 also cover both:

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Here the New Testament is called "oracles" as well as the Old Testament. Those were Christian people who had learned the first principles of the oracles of God and stopped. Another passage is 1 Peter 4:11:

If an man speaketh, speaking as it were the oracles of God.

Peter is here talking about the Old and New Testaments. If a mans gets up to speak, let him remember that there is a standard, and that that standard is fixed. he must speak according to the oracles of God. These Scriptures cover both.

Now let us consider some observations:

First, the books of the Bible are not by the will of man. Not one of the books of either the Old or the New Testament would ever have come into being except by the inspiration of God. I want to give you a searching proof on that, found in 1 Peter 1:10-11:

Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

Moved by the Holy Spirit

Here are men moved by the Spirit of God to record certain things about the future, and they themselves did not understand it. They studied their own prophecies just as we study them. They knew that God had inspired them to say these things, but they did not understand. For example: God instructed a prophet to say that the Messiah should come forth out of Bethlehem of Judea. To show that these things did not come from the will of man, the man himself could not explain them. It was a matter of study and investigation to find out what these signified. They found out what their prophecies were meant for the future, that is, for us.

The second observation is that the propelling power in the speaking or writing was an impulse from the Holy Spirit. They, the inspired men, became instruments by which the Holy Spirit spoke or wrote. Take for instance, that declaration in 2 Samuel 23:2, where David said:

The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and His word was upon my tongue.

In Acts 1:16, we find that the utterances of David were being studied. We have a declaration that the Holy Spirit spake by the mouth of David concerning Judas; and in the third chapter of Acts we have another declaration of the same kind. Always the speaker or writer was an instrument of the Holy Spirit.

The third observation is that this influence of the Holy Spirit guided men in the selection of material, even where that material came from some other book, even an uninspired book, the Spirit guiding in selecting and omitting material.

From such declarations as John 20:30-31 and 21:25, we learn that Christ did many things, that if all were written it would make a book as big as the world; that what has been written was written for a certain purpose. The Holy Spirit inspired Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to select from the deeds and words of Jesus that which God wanted written; not to take everything He said, but only that which was necessary to accomplish the purpose.

The fourth observation is that inspiration is absolutely necessary in order to take away the power of remembrance. John 2:22 says that after His resurrection they remembered what He had said, that is, the Spirit called it to remembrance.

To illustrate, take the speeches of Christ, for instance, that address delivered at Capernaum on the Bread of Life, the Sermon on the Mount and, particularly, the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of John.

There were not shorthand reporters in those days, and there is not a man on earth who could, after a lapse of fifty years, recall verbatim et litere what Christ said. Yet John, without a shadow of hesitancy, goes on and gives page after page of what Christ said just after the institution of the Lord's Supper. Inspiration in that case was exercised in awakening the memory so that John could reproduce these great orations of Christ.

Of the orations of Paul, take the speech recorded in Acts 13, an exceedingly remarkable speech,

or the one recorded in Acts 26, or the one of Mars Hill, in chapter 17, one of the most finished productions that the world has ever seen. Inspiration enabled Luke to report exactly what Paul said. Luke never could have done that unassisted. Luke, as a man, might have given the substance, but that is not the substance, it is an elaborate report, the sense depending upon the words used.

The fifth observation is that inspiration was to make additions to the Scriptures until they were completed, in order that the standard may be a perfect treasure, incapable of being added to, unsusceptible of diminution. We want what is there, all that is there, and no more than is there. Therefore, when we come to the last book of the Bible, this is said which, in a sense applies to the whole Bible:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. (Rev 22:18-19)

The Design of Inspiration

It was the design of inspiration to give us a perfect system of revealed truth, whose words are inspired. As an example of verbal inspiration, take Paul's argument, based on the "seed" in the singular number. Everything in the interpretation depends upon the number of that noun. Apart from verbal inspiration, how on earth would Paul hinge an argument on whether a word is singular or plural?

The next observation is that inspiration was to give different views of the same person or thing by different writers, each perfect according to its viewpoint, but incomplete so far as the whole is concerned, all views being necessary in order to complete the view. There is a Gospel by Mark, written for the Romans, beginning with the public ministry of Christ. Then there are the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, and a gospel by Paul. Each of them is perfect according to the plan which the Spirit put in the mind of the writer. They are perfect so far as the whole thing is concerned, but incomplete so far as the whole thing is concerned. We have to put them side by side in order to get a complete view of the life of our Lord. That is what we mean by harmonical study. Each is infallibly correct, but it takes the blended view of all to make the whole thing.

The Design of Genealogy

Apart from inspiration, no man on earth can account for Genesis. Just see in what small space there is given the history of the world up to chapter 11 - how much is left out. We see the same plan all through the book. It first takes up the wicked descendants, give their genealogy a little way, then sidetracks them and takes up the true line. Then of their descendants it follows the wicked first a short way and eliminates them and goes back and takes up the true line and elaborates that. That principle goes all through the Bible.

For instance, the first missionary period of Paul's life covered a greater period of time than any

other, and there is no record of it, just as single reference to it in Acts. So with his fifth missionary journey. There are only a few referenced to it in Timothy and Titus. But the intervening three journeys are elaborately given.

Now we come to an important point. When these inspired declarations were written, they were absolutely infallible. Take these Scriptures: John 10:35, "The Scripture cannot be broken;" Matthew 5:18, "Till heaven and earth shall pass away, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished:" Acts 1:16, "It was needful that the Scripture should be fulfilled."

That is one of the most important points in connection with inspiration, that the inspired word is irrefragable, infallible; that all the powers of the world cannot break one "thus said the Lord."

Another observation is the power that comes upon the inspired word. Hebrews 4:12:

For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The Object of the Word

Yet another observation is the object of the Word. There are two objects. John sets forth the first one when he says that they are written that we might believe, and, believing, have life, or, as Paul says to Timothy, "which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." They are both expressed in the nineteenth Psalm:

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple."

The last observation is on the sufficiency of the Word; that the inspired record is complete; that is all-sufficient. That is presented in two Scriptures, Luke 16:29: Abraham said to the rich man in hell who wanted a special messenger sent to his brothers:

Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

The Other is 2 Timothy 3:17:

That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.

Let me say further that only the original text of the books of the Bible is inspired, not the copy of the translation.

Second, the inspiration of the Bible does not mean that God said and did all that is said and done in the Bible. Some of it the Devil did and said. Much of it wicked men did and said.

The inspiration means that the record of what is said and done is correct. It does not mean that everything that God did and said is recorded. It does not mean that everything recorded is of equal importance, but every part of it is necessary to the purpose of the record, and no part is unimportant. One part is no more inspired than any other part.

It is perfectly foolish to talk about degrees of inspiration. What Jesus said in the flesh, as we find it in the four Gospel, is nor more His Word than what the inspired prophet or apostle said.

That is the folly of the Jefferson Bible. He purposes to take out of the four Gospels everything that Jesus said and put it together as a Bible.

What Jesus said after He ascended to heaven, though Paul or any other apostle, is just as much Jesus' word as anything He said in the flesh.

Here are some objections:

First, "only the originals are inspired, and we have only copies." The answer to that is that God would not inspire a book and take no care of the book. His providence has preserved the Bible in a way that no other book has been preserved.

The second objection is, "We are dependent upon scholars to determine what is the real text of the Bible." The answer is that only an infinitesimal part of it is dependent upon scholars for the ascertainment of the true text, and if every bit of that were blotted out it would not destroy the Holy Scriptures.