

INERRANCY

II. INSPIRATION

B. KEY PASSAGES AND THEIR TEACHINGS

1. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16-17

2. 2 PETER 1:20-21

2 Peter 1:20-21 is an important passage that gives us some insight into the process by which inspiration has occurred. It helps us see this in very clear ways.

2 Pt 1:19 So we have the prophetic word made more sure,

The prophetic word made more sure; I take as his own experience of the transfiguration of Christ which he referred to in the verses previous.

2 Pt 1:19 . . . to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.

Probably a reference to being with Christ, the Second Coming or being in his presence. In other words: we have the written Word until we stand before the living Word so we do well to pay attention to this sure Word.

2 Pt 1:20 But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 2 Pt 1:21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

A. SCRIPTURE IS NOT OF HUMAN ORIGIN

Clearly that is the case as you can see in verse 21 where he says *no prophecy of Scripture was ever made by an act of human will*. It is very clear that he is stressing that here. Ultimately, you can ask the question of what accounts for this book we call the Bible. Obviously, a whole lot of people wrote various parts of it. It is true that human authors are responsible for writing the books that they did that are here. But beyond that you must say, it is not ultimately owing to what human beings decided to write. Ultimately, it is what God moved them to write. It is of divine origin ultimately. That is why we call it the "Word of God" because he is the ultimate author, even though men write it.

Dr. Bruce Ware adds this argument to how we understand the last part of verse 20:

"The Bible is fully divine in the sense that God is the one ultimately behind every word of Scripture, all of it is, as we saw in 2 Timothy 3:16, inspired by God, but it is also fully human; individual authors wrote what they wanted to write, but ultimately it is from God. The ultimate reason is it's God's Word. Verse 20 ends, "No prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation." (This is the NASB translation). The term that is used is "epilyse_s" which is a hapax (it is only used one time), so it is hard to be certain how to translate it. But if you look at how "epilysis" is used in other Koine literature it is translated variously as explanation or disclosure. Disclosure. Think of that term; no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own disclosure. In other literature, it is used as origination. So you can see how the notion of interpretation, disclosure, and origination are similar. To interpret you disclose the meaning. But I really

think that the emphasis in this context is not, no Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation. Look at the next word "for" ("gar"); for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will. What is he talking about? He is talking about its origin, where it came from. My understanding of verse 20 is that what he is saying is notice first of all that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of private disclosure or individual origination. I think that is the point he is making. It didn't come because Paul wanted ultimately to write it or Peter wanted ultimately to write it or Moses wanted ultimately to write it. For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. If you understand "epilysis" as one's own disclosure or one's own origination, verses 20 and 21 make this point that Scripture is not ultimately of human origin."

B. HUMANS SPEAK FORTH SCRIPTURE

This really is a human product. We should not understand the divine origin of Scripture in a way that undermines or cancels out or trivializes the human fabric of Scripture itself. For example, the gospels, all four gospels, Matthew, Mark Luke and John are all the Word of God. All are accurate representations of the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Christ, and yet they are four different perspectives, four different theological emphases. You haven't had Greek very long before you realize some Greek in the New Testament is easy compared to other Greek in the New Testament. That is why you usually start with John. John's Greek is easier than Hebrews and some of Paul's writings. It is just easier; it has a simpler construction and so on. How does one account for this? These are different men, different people, who wrote these things. The miracle of Scripture is that what you have is God's Word spoken in such a way that human beings wrote what they wanted.

C. GOD PROMPTS THE HUMAN SPEECH OF SCRIPTURE

That is seen in 2 Peter 1:21, "but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." God prompts the human speech. God prompts the speech of Scripture as the Holy Spirit moves them to write what they do. No doubt this process at various times was very explicit, with God instructing prophets and Apostles in various things they were to know and pass on to others. Other times the process was probably hidden to the Apostles; yet they strained and concentrated and wrote as carefully and precisely as they could. Imagine Paul writing Romans 3. What an incredibly dense, carefully constructed theological statement on sin, the cross, and justification. Imagine Paul straining to craft what he wanted to say as precisely as possible. There is no doubt he worked hard at it. Yet men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. I don't think Paul went on autopilot, saying, "Okay Holy Spirit, just have at it, my pen is ready, lead my pen to write what you want." No, he was thinking hard, working hard, and laboring at what he was doing. But what he wrote was what God wanted him to write. Men, moved by the Holy Spirit, spoke from God.

3. 1 CORINTHIANS 2:13

This last passage highlights these same points beautifully.

In Chapter 2, the topic of revelation really begins at verse 6, in which he says, "we do speak a wisdom." Although, he says earlier he doesn't speak the wisdom of the world (meaning he doesn't speak in sort of rhetorical flair trying to convince people of the truth).

1 Co 2:6 Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; 1 Co 2:7 but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory; 1 Co 2:8 the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; 1 Co 2:9 but just as it is written, "Things which eye has

not seen and ear has not heard, And which have not entered the heart of man, All that God has prepared for those who love him." 1 Co 2:10 For to us God revealed them.

The statement in verse 9, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard," refers to things in the past which were not understood, things which the rulers of this age had not understood. If they had understood they would not have crucified the Lord of glory but now to us, Paul says, God has revealed them. Our eyes see them, and our ears hear them now. This is revelation.

1 Co 2:11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so, the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. 1 Co 2:12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.

If you ask the question, how does Paul know the truths that he knows? It is because the Spirit has revealed to him what these truths are. We have the Spirit of God who knows the mind of God, and the Spirit of God has revealed to us what formerly was not known. This mystery, we now know it. That is revelation.

1 Cor 2:12 The things freely given to us by God 1 Co 2:13 which things we also speak,

Now moves from having received this revelation to communicating it and expressing it to others.

1 Co 2:13 which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual with spiritual.

It is hard to know for sure, the NASB translates that as, "spiritual thoughts with spiritual words," which is good. I have seen convincing arguments that it would be more accurate as "combining spiritual truths with spiritual words." The idea being that you have this knowledge, this revelation that was given, these concepts, these truths that have been revealed. The Holy Spirit doesn't stop there and say, okay Paul, now it's up to you to express it right. The Holy Spirit continues working so that as Paul speaks the words he speaks are taught by the Spirit. He can communicate in spiritual words. We have this marvelous statement of the Spirit's work through the Apostle in communicating the truth to others as the Spirit leads him. The Spirit moves in the message given. The Spirit enables the message received. The Spirit gets all the credit for the whole thing!

Inspiration is the marvelous doctrine in which, concurrently God speaks his word, and human beings speak what they wish to speak. Scripture is the product of both divine and human input with it ultimately being the Word of God throughout.

III. INERRANCY

A. THE DEBATE OF RECENT YEARS: WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

For the most part we are past this debate now, but it was a debate that raged in the evangelical movement, particularly in the 1970's and 1980's. It was a very critical issue. What was at stake was the whole notion of the nature of the Bible and about it being the Word of God. This led one group of people to argue that because it is ultimately from God, it must be true because God doesn't lie. It was very easy for the *Inerrantists* to see that inerrancy was in fact an result of inspiration. If you hold that the Bible was inspired, doesn't it logically follow that the Bible is true? To put it differently, if the Bible is ultimately God's Word through the human authors and God does not lie, then must not that word spoken be true?

Another group of people argued that inspiration is conceptual, and it doesn't relate necessarily to exact words, exact statements, exact propositions made, or exact factual claims that are made, but rather it relates to concepts.

If we look back to I Corinthians 2:13 the point he making there is, yes, we have the concepts, we have the truths, but the Spirit moved us in what we actually said.

This other view held that inspiration relates to the concepts of Scripture, and so as human beings write it out and express it, you know they are human; and to be human is to err, so it is very likely that these people (given their understanding of science, history, culture and lots of different things), might have gotten many of the details wrong, but nonetheless, the main message gets through.

In the debate that took place, the question being asked was, "How should we understand this book?" People lined up with either it is fundamentally a human book in which divine concepts are accurately presented but in humanly flawed ways, or it is fundamentally a divine book in which God moved in the hearts of human beings so that they would write correctly.

There was a lot focus on what is sometimes called the "phenomena" of Scripture. You look at portions of the Bible and assess whether or not it is true.

People often mention accounts in the Old Testament where God has the Israelites do things we can't understand a loving God as commanding, or other apparent "contradictions" in the localized text as proof of errors.

How about Jesus camming the mustard seed the smallest of all seeds? Is it an error? It depends. Article 13 of The Chicago Statement On Biblical Inerrancy is very nuanced. It expresses that when we say the Bible is true in all that it affirms; we don't mean that there are no metaphorical statements in Scripture, no phenomenological claims in Scripture. A phenomenological claim would be one like this: Last night we were outside, and I said to my wife, "Kerry look at the beautiful sunset." Now scientists who are listening to this might think, aha, he just spoke an inaccuracy because you see the sun is not setting. We still talk about the sunrise and the sunset, but it is purely phenomenological; that is the way it appears to us. So is it possible that biblical authors can speak in phenomenological ways. The mustard seed in their experience in that part of the world was the smallest seed known.

Give Scripture the benefit of the doubt. When you come across difficulties that you think are hard to explain realize what an audacious thing it is to draw the conclusion, that it is a mistake. Think how much you claim to know to be able to support that charge of inaccuracy. Do you really know enough to say you know that is a mistake and *will you continue working to see if there might be a way of understanding this in which there is consistency and accuracy in it?*

B. DEFINING INERRANCY

There are these two sides: is this fundamentally a human book or fundamentally a divine book? Of course, it is both, but the inerrancy people are going to say it is fundamentally divine, and therefore is truth. This has led, then, to different understandings of inerrancy and different definitions of inerrancy.

1. TECHNICAL INERRANCY

This is the view that was advocated by Harold Lindsell in his book "The Battle For The Bible", and a small number of evangelicals have argued this. Most have not. What Lindsell was arguing is that the Bible can be subjected to the scrutiny of contemporary scientific understanding and be shown to be true on the grounds of contemporary science.

Not just six days of creation and things like that but all kinds of things. People have tried to point to Ezekiel's wheels and all kinds of things saying this is really expressing a technical scientific point.

Well, there is one major problem, and I am not saying that the Bible may not be scientifically accurate on certain things. In fact, if it is speaking of science, it will be. Here is the main problem with the technical inerrancy position: what "canons of contemporary science" do we use to decide whether Scripture is accurate according to that understanding? Do we have such a thing as a uniform fixed permanent standard of "scientific accuracy"? I don't think so. Ask the people who held scientific theories 40 years ago where they are now. Most of them are out the window. You know this, don't you, that science as a discipline is constantly evolving, and theories are being challenged, they are tested by additional data and new data comes in. Thomas Coon in his "Structure of Scientific Revolutions" has shown us that there are massive movements in philosophy of science that lead one to the conclusion that on no one point can we say that this is the scientific view, and it is right, therefore, we are going to decide other things on the basis of it. It just can't be done.

2. KERYGMATIC INFALLIBILITY (PRIMARY INFALLIBILITY)

The "Kerygma" of the Bible is true. The primary message and gospel witness, the preached Word of the Bible is true. "You know, the Bible is clear. Creation: God made a good world. The fall: we messed it up. Redemption: he is reclaiming it. The Bible is clear; it gets the main point across." We have to pick parts of it that are right and other parts of it that aren't. In Kerygmatic Infallibility, the main message is true, but a lot of the details may be wrong.

3. FULL INERRANCY

This is the position most evangelicals have come to. It says is that everything the Bible teaches or claims to be true, we accept as true.

That does not mean that you take a metaphor in the Bible and you treat it as literal. No, take a metaphor as a metaphor. It doesn't mean that there aren't phenomenological statements in the Bible; it doesn't mean that Scripture's authors don't use round numbers. You know, how many were in church today? I think there were 200. I don't say 201 or 198. We use round numbers; they use round numbers, so we ought not make them say something that they are not saying. Respect the language game that they are using; respect the kind of discourse they are using. And when you do that, rightly understood all that they teach, all that they claim to be true, is accepted as true.

C. THE HERMENEUTICAL COMPONENT

One of the greatest benefits that came out of this inerrancy controversy is that hermeneutics rose to a place of critical importance. When we have understood the biblical authors correctly, we accept what they say as true. Then the question becomes, how can we understand the biblical authors correctly? Hermeneutics (this process of interpreting texts, getting at authorial intent, at what the author intending to say in this) becomes for evangelicals one of the main burdens on their hearts. The main task of their mission is to come to clearer, better, sounder understanding of the authors intended meanings of passages.

This whole question of hermeneutics has dominated evangelicalism since the end of the inerrancy controversy in the mid 80's. In the last 30 years, one of the main issues evangelicals have focused on is hermeneutics.

D. AUTHORITY AND INERRANCY

People who subscribe to Primary Inerrancy hold to this claim: the authority of Scripture is not affected, not hampered or harmed by a denial of this inerrancy doctrine that you conservatives insist upon. We deny inerrancy, but we affirm the full authority of the Bible.

Suppose you came into a very busy train station, Grand Central Station or something like this, and as you walked in the door someone handed you a schedule for train departures and arrivals - all the different gates and everything. And they said to you that this just came off the press and I've been told there are a couple of mistakes in it. You would look at them, and what would be your nature question? Where are they? Where are the mistakes? And the person says to you, I don't know where they are. So here you have this train schedule, and you want make sure that you get to the right gate and meet the right person, and now you are told there are a couple of mistakes in it. Well, doesn't that undermine the authority of the document? A couple of mistakes doesn't mean nothing in it is true, but it does mean that you are responsible for trying to figure out what parts are true and what parts are not. That is the point. If you don't have the confidence that all of it is true, then it cannot function as an absolute authority for you. You become the authority in discerning what is acceptable and what is not, even if you admit that most of it is true. Even if there are only a couple of mistakes, they question the authority of the whole document. It doesn't question the truthfulness of most of it. Do you see the difference? You can believe most of it is truthful. It questions the authority of the document. It becomes suspicious; we must figure it out.

People who hold the full inerrancy position, that most evangelicals hold, really have two main questions to ask when they do their Bible interpretation and Bible study. One question is what does the Bible mean? That is a hermeneutical question. How do we understand what the author intended by what they say? And second, how does it apply to our lives? Those are the two main questions you have. What does the Bible mean, and how does it apply to life?

If you hold the Primary Infallibility position, where there are errors in the Bible and we have to discern where they are, then you have three questions instead of two. First you ask what does the Bible mean? But before you ask the question of how to apply it to life, you must ask a second question: Is it true? And then third, if true, how do you apply it to life?

If we are going to be people under the authority of the Bible, all of the Bible, without question, without reservation, whatever it says, then you have to hold to the full inerrancy of Scripture, otherwise it will not be an authority for us.

IV. ILLUMINATION

A. DEFINITION

Illumination refers to the work of the Holy Spirit by which he makes the Scriptures understandable and applicable to an individual's life. It is the work of the Holy Spirit by which he makes the Scriptures understandable and applicable to the believer's life.

That means that revelation has already occurred and inspiration has already occurred. The truths are there; the truths have been communicated, and now we have them "inscripturated"; we have them in the Bible. Illumination is the work of the Holy Spirit to help an individual see and understand and accept and embrace what Scripture teaches.

I have given you a biased definition of illumination. Here is how it is biased. Some would not like the phrase "understandable and". They would rather see illumination strictly as *the Holy Spirit making the Scriptures applicable to an individual's life*. Understanding what the Scripture say is not a matter of illumination, but whether we apply them to our lives is a matter of illumination. I believe that Scripture indicates that both are involved. Understanding and application are both involved in illumination.

B. NEED FOR ILLUMINATION

I think that you can see the need for understanding and application to both be involved in illumination in 1 Corinthians 2

1 Cor 2:14 But a natural man

A natural man. This is the "psychikos" which Paul is contrasting with the "pneumatik_s", the person who has the Spirit. I think the point is the natural man is the person devoid of the Spirit. I think that is the most natural way to understand what he saying.

1 Cor 2:14 But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

It looks like he is making two claims here in this verse, and I see it borne out in the rest of Scripture. There is a level of understanding and a level of embracing. Both understanding and acceptance is involved in Holy Spirit illumination.

1. MORAL ANTIPATHY (TRUTH KNOWN BUT REJECTED)

In terms of accepting it, it is very clear that Scripture teaches that we have, because of sin, what you might call a moral antipathy to spiritual truths or a moral revulsion, a moral resistance to spiritual truth. If this is the case, that we have a moral resistance to spiritual truth, doesn't this indicate that the truth is known and therefore detested? It is known and therefore we find it repulsive.

Jn 3:19 "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. Jn 3:20 "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

If you hate the light, doesn't that indicate you must know something of what you hate. If I say I want you to build up a very fervent hatred for "Melainitra," can you do it? Really get repulsed over it, "Melainitra." You can't, because you don't have any idea of what "Melainitra" is. You can't like it; you can't dislike it. You can only hate something if you know it sufficiently to know it is not what your tastes are. I love my wicked deeds, and I don't like the light.

2. SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS (TRUTH NOT KNOWN)

The Bible teaches people, by sin, are blind to the truth.

2 Cor 4:4 in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

They can't see it; they don't get it. In fact, this is one of the puzzles in Scripture in trying to understand the whole notion of Christian epistemology, how we come know things and what role the Spirit plays in this.

You have one stream of teaching that indicates the truth can be known and hated, and here you say the truth cannot be known. Which is it? It seems to me it is both.